

Spellbound by Janet McDonald
Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2001, 144 pp., \$16.00

Teenage Marriage/Dropouts
ISBN: 0-374-37140-7

In this short, moving, fast-paced and often humorous story, 16-year-old Raven Jefferson, an unwed teenage mother and high school dropout “existing” in the housing projects of Brooklyn, is bored with her daily routine and fears the prospect of facing low-paying, dead-end jobs. Encouraged by her college-graduate sister, her mother—herself an unwed mother—and her likeable, loud-mouthed best friend, Aisha—who is expecting her second child and has no real future—Raven enters the “Spelt Success” program.

Before dropping out of high school in her senior year, Raven was a good student—even a bookish one—who planned to attend college herself. Winning the program’s spelling bee is her way of out the projects, since the prize is an eight-week college preparatory course and four-year college scholarship.

Readers will admire and sympathize with determined Raven, laughing and cringing at Aisha’s antics, and wondering if Raven and the well-meaning and guilt-ridden boy who fathered her child will have a future together. However, most of all, readers will be left with hope!

Bill Mollineaux
Granby, Connecticut

Zazoo by Richard Mosher
Clarion Books, 2001, 256 pp., \$16.00

Vietnam War/Family Relationships
ISBN: 0-618-13534-0

Almost 14 years old, *Zazoo* is really “French on the inside” and “Vietnamese on the outside.” Adopted by an older WWII French war hero after a land mine killed her natural parents, *Zazoo* has never questioned anything about her life with her new father, Grand Pierre. She knows that her father fought in WWII, but not in Vietnam. Suddenly, a strange boy riding a bicycle into her village one morning asks a question that causes her to change her views of the people she’s known all her life. As *Zazoo* struggles to reconcile the actions of her friends and family during WWII, the Vietnam War, and their life now, she reveals three love stories at differing stages, one of them her very own.

Woven in and around the story is the healing property of nature and art. *Zazoo* and Grand Pierre’s shared affinity for water and poetry pulls them together to form a tight and loving bond that enables her to cope with her father’s eventual advancing age and memory loss. This book’s tender strength rests in how the author, Richard Mosher, manages to take seemingly unconnected incidents and interweave them into one meaningful and beautiful whole. As *Zazoo* discovers, the past is never over; it simply informs and colors the present and the future.

Mariana Van Meter
Scottsdale, Arizona

Til Tomorrow by John Donahue
Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2001, 165 pp., \$16.00

Growing-up/Historical Fiction
ISBN: 0-374-37580-1

The son of an army officer, 12-year-old Terrence “O.B.” O’Brien has logged a lot of miles in his young life. The family’s latest move has taken them to 1961 France, where they must begin to build a brand new life.

O. B. is a self-conscious adolescent who longs for the support of a peer group. In his quest for meaningful friendships, O. B. finds himself caught between many worlds—that of the army base and the surrounding village, and between a very popular set of local boys, and a faithful, but unconventional companion, whom he fears may tarnish his unblemished reputation.

Set against the backdrop of the building of the Berlin Wall just after the close of WW II, *Til Tomorrow* situates O. B.’s personal struggles within the context of an ever-evolving and often frightening world situation. Readers will relate to O. B.’s struggles, as well as those of the other well-developed characters in this engaging read.

Patricia Crawford
Orlando, Florida

Young Adult Books
In Review
Recently Published Titles
Jeff Kaplan, Editor
3x5 inches to “Clip & File”

T • H • E
ALAN
REVIEW

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| <p><i>Don't Think Twice</i> by Ruth Pennebaker Henry Holt, 2001, 262 pp., \$6.95</p> <p>Coming-of-age/Teenage Mother ISBN: 0-80950-6729-9</p> <p>In 1967, Anne Harper, a cynical yet sensitive 17-year-old, spends the last months of her pregnancy in a Midwest home for unwed mothers. Through her first person narrative, we see Anne come to care very deeply about the baby that she once regarded as a "growth," or more bluntly, a malignancy. Along the way, she teases out anguished stories of girls like Grace, who was raped by her father, and Cheryl, who was seduced by her pastor, and then disowned by her family for her "sin." The survival and coping instincts of the young mothers elevate this novel from overwrought melodrama to serious drama.</p> <p>Set in the 1960s, <i>Don't Think Twice</i> reflects a shift in attitude toward unwed, adolescent pregnancy, including the exacting prohibitions against the use of alcohol and tobacco. Anne's narrative of her journey towards self-discovery and maturity is packed with powerful, incisive, and perceptive descriptions of who she is, and what she wants to eventually become. Moreover, the author takes great pains to show the reactions of all the unwed teenage mothers in this novel as they slowly begin to realize that the burden and responsibility for their pregnancy are ultimately theirs to bear. Truly, this novel is not a romantic picture of the truth. Instead, <i>Don't Think Twice</i> provides an unvarnished version of the truth and a great forum for class discussion.</p> <p>Margaret J. Ford Campbell, Ohio</p> | <p><i>Private Captain: A Story of Gettysburg</i> by Marty Crisp Philomel Books, 2001, 293 pp., \$18.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Civil War ISBN: 0-399-23577-9</p> <p><i>Private Captain</i> is a captivating but brutally realistic story of famous Civil War battle of Gettysburg. The novel follows 12-year-old Ben Reynolds and his faithful dog, Captain, as they search for Ben's older brother, who is fighting for the Union Army in Pennsylvania. Author Marty Crisp has included many historical facts about the America's most famous battle, including authentic period language, and minute details about dress, food, and daily activities.</p> <p><i>Private Captain</i> explores family relationships as they endure the hardships of war and destruction. Seen through the eyes of a young and impressionable boy, this haunting story examines the inevitable futility of conflict that results in battle and the loss of human life.</p> <p>Beautifully written, this can be a most effective work to be used in conjunction with a study of the Civil War.</p> <p>Patricia Cleary Peninsula, Ohio</p> |
| <p><i>Of Sound Mind</i> by Jean Ferris Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2001, 215 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Realistic Fiction/Deafness ISBN: 0-374-35580-0</p> <p>Theo, the hearing son of deaf parents and the big brother of Jeremy who is also deaf, feels the strain of responsibility as his family's main link to the hearing world. Theo's mother, Palma, is a famous sculptor who demands Theo act as a pseudo-parent for Jeremy. As a high school senior, Theo pines for the freedom and stimulation of college, but is torn by his seemingly indispensable family role.</p> <p>Author Jean Ferris allows readers to discover the psychological underpinnings of family dynamics as Theo confronts his growing resentment towards his family. The pressure on Theo reaches insurmountable proportions when his dad becomes ill, and his mother retreats to her artist's studio. Ultimately, his new-found friend, Ivy, helps him negotiate shifting family roles. Although this book offers many explicitly stated lessons that can feel didactic, the themes related to family roles, deafness, and nurturing are so intricate that readers will welcome the complexity and inspiration within.</p> <p>Sherron Killingsworth Roberts Orlando, Florida</p> | <p><i>The Time Warp Trio: See You Later, Alligator</i> by Jon Scieszka The Penguin Group, 2000, 87 pp., \$14.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Adventure ISBN: 0-670-89340-4</p> <p>This is the next book in a series about three time traveling boys—Joe, Sam, and Fred—who find adventure by falling into a magic "Book." This story transports this trio to ancient Rome where the boys find themselves enrolled in a gladiator school.</p> <p>While trying to stay out of fights with various gladiators, the young trio is desperately trying to find the "Book," which will also transport them back home. When the boys enlist the help of a professor, the boys are, unfortunately, promptly captured. Soon, the boys and the professor are scheduled to fight, but the time warp trio cons the Emperor into letting them perform a wrestling match instead, which meets the approval of the ancient Roman spectators.</p> <p>Finally, the boys sneak away from the gladiator arena and hide in the Temple of Vesta to avoid the gladiators who are searching for them. In time, an ancient Roman priestess finds them, and returns their "Book," and the famed trio returns safely home. As Roman tradition says, it was foretold that time travelers would return to claim their missing volume on the first day of the ancient Roman games – and so it happens. Scieszka has written another of one his satirical children's stories – one appreciated by students of all ages.</p> <p>Barbara Wilcox Merritt Island, Florida</p> |

The Ghost and Mrs. Hobbs by Cynthia De Felice
Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2001, 180 pp., \$16.00

Supernatural/Friendship
ISBN: 0-374-38046-5

Fresh off the case of *The Ghost of Fossil Glen*, 12-year-old Allie Nichols finds herself summoned again to come to the aid of a ghost. When Allie's teacher assigns an interview for Elders' Day, she is compelled by a handsome ghost to talk with Mrs. Hobbs - the scarred, shriveled and obviously evil cafeteria lady. During the interview, Allie catches a glimpse of compassion emanating from this strange woman, but is interrupted when suddenly, her reporter's notepad spontaneously combusts and the school is evacuated. As more unexpected and unexplained fires result in public panic, Allie and Mrs. Hobbs are plunged into a sea of trouble.

Amidst this turmoil, Allie's relationship with her old friend Dub becomes more complicated as she struggles with feelings of jealousy. With Dub's help, and then with the help of her father and her little brother, Allie learns that appearances can often be deceiving and that ghosts cannot always be trusted.

Cynthia DeFelice makes frequent references to the prequel *The Ghost of Fossil Glen*, so readers might enjoy reading that book first. Nonetheless, DeFelice's characters are warm, thoughtful, and courageous, and her language simply and easily understood, conveying a sense of suspense that will leave young readers eager to follow Allie on any adventure.

Moncia McEnery
Vergennes, Vermont

All the Way Home by Patricia Reilly Griff
Delacorte, 2001, 169 pp., \$15.95

Friendship/Loss
ISBN: 0-385-32209-7

Mariel, a sixth grader, works hard at not letting her polio-deformed leg define her. She lives happily in Brooklyn with her adoptive mother, although she yearns to know the whereabouts of her biological mother. Suddenly, though, Brick, the son of a family friend, is living with Mariel and her family, because Brick's parents can no longer support themselves on their family farm. At first, Mariel fears Brick but is gradually surprised, and pleased when Brick doesn't consider her different because of her "damaged" leg. In turn, Mariel sees the sadness and embarrassment beneath Brick's pretend bravado and indifference to his parents' poverty.

Brick's demeanor belies his loneliness, and soon, he announces he must return to his home, Windy Hill, to help his parents and elderly neighbors harvest their apple crop. Coincidentally, Mariel wants to return to Windy Hill where as a child she was hospitalized when she contracted polio. There, she hopes to locate her mother.

Mariel's determination helps both her and Brick get what they want as together, they learn the power of strength and love to come from unexpected places. *All the Way Home* is a gentle story of the unfolding of a special friendship, the building of trust, and the sharing of vulnerabilities.

Diana Mitchell
Williamston, Michigan

Tender by Valerie Hobbs
Frances Foster Books, 2001, 245 pp., \$18.00

Overcoming Fears
ISBN: 0-374-37397-3

Young adult readers will enjoy following Liv from New York to California as she moves from a life with Grandmother to one with a father she has never known. Author Hobbs tells of Liv's "growth to awareness" story beginning with a description of "life with Gran."

When Liv was born, her mother died and her father gave her to her grandmother. The readers meet Liv just as her grandmother dies. Suddenly, Liv realizes that her father, Mark Tapert, is the only family she now has, and she knows she must now go to California and live with him and his new girlfriend, Samantha. During the story, Liv and Samantha form a friendship, but her father remains very distant. And above all, Liv can't forgive him for abandoning her when her mother died. Then, one day, life comes full circle when she finds herself literally with her father's life in her hands.

Hobbs creates a realistic memory for her readers as they watch Liv determine her father's fate. It is an engaging read for adolescents who are struggling with their own tenuous family relationships.

Jeanne Gerlach
Arlington, Texas

A Face First by Priscilla Cummings
Dutton Children's Books, 2001, 137 pp., \$16.99

Physical Disabilities
ISBN: 0-525-46522-7

When Kelley Brennan awakens in the hospital burn center, unable to feel her fingers on her face, she knows that her life has been changed forever. In *A Face First*, Cummings describes the physical rehabilitation Kelley endures, culminating with her leaving the hospital wearing a plastic mask.

The novel also portrays Kelley's emotional turmoil - from seeing herself in the mirror, to accepting the mask, to forgiving her mother for running the red light and causing the accident that cost Kelley several fingers and half her face. Through the weeks of skin grafts, dressing changes, physical therapy, visits, letters, and phone calls from family and friends, Kelley grows to accept herself, realizing she's still Kelley on the inside.

This is a well-told story about a very real-to-life trauma; it reminds us that all of us, no matter how strong and full of life, are only a moment away from losing everything. Young readers will enjoy the strong emphasis on the power of family and friends to rescue those in need.

Lisa Winkler
South Orange, New Jersey

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| <p><i>A Group of One</i> by Rachna Gilmore Henry Holt, 2001, 184 pp., Unspecified price</p> <p>Family/Cultural Differences ISBN: 0-8050-6475-3</p> <p>Tara Mehta is made to feel an outcast in her social studies class when her teacher, Mr. Tolly, asks what her native language is. Tara was born and reared in Canada and resents the implication that she is somehow "foreign." The intensity of these feelings increases when Tara's grandmother comes to visit from India. As Tara begins to learn about her grandmother's youth and adolescence, she gains not only an understanding of her cultural heritage as an child of India, but she becomes even more determined to confront the implied racism of her teacher and some of her classmates.</p> <p><i>A Group of One</i> explores a culture not often represented in young adult literature. The information about the Quit India Movement and other historical references make this book a natural tie into world history classes. Readers will appreciate how the issues are confronted with brutal honesty. Above all, they will enjoy reading Tara's up and down experiences of adolescence, from first love, to embarrassing parents, and more.</p> <p>Teri Lesesne Huntsville, Texas</p> | <p><i>A Question of Will</i> by Lynne Kositsky Roussan Publishers, 2000, 141 pp., \$5.95</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Shakespeare ISBN: 1-896184-66-9</p> <p>The premise that Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, wrote the works of William Shakespeare is demonstrated through the adventures of modern day teen Perin Willoughby. During a class trip to the Globe Theater, she loses her way, and suddenly travels through time and enters Elizabethan England. Unconcerned and unfazed, Perin finds herself auditioning at the original Globe, becoming an Elizabethan actress, and surprisingly, delivering de Vere's plays to Shakespeare, himself, who subsequently pens in his name on those now famous plays.</p> <p>Although historically implausible, younger readers will enjoy Perin's intrepid escapades and her ribald impressions of her surroundings. Yet, Perin is a narrator, rather than a character, and the Elizabethan era and its people are depicted solely by her slangy, less than sophisticated attitude.</p> <p>Nevertheless, when Perin returns to contemporary time, and discovers that her textbooks have credited de Vere's writings, she realizes the hidden purpose to her fanciful adventure. In conclusion, an author's note asserts the validity of de Vere's authorship, but as Perin's experiences fail to conclude credible and objective sources, readers have scant reason to believe that anyone but Shakespeare wrote the great plays.</p> <p>Lisa Hazlett Vermillion, South Dakota</p> |
| <p><i>One True Friend</i> by Joyce Hanson Clarion Books, 2001, 160 pp., \$14.00</p> <p>Family/Relationships ISBN: 0-395-84983-7</p> <p>After his mother and father die, Amir is placed in many different foster homes. But now he has landed in a good place. Grace and Alvin Smith are good foster parents, but Amir has trouble opening up to them. In addition, he is living with his younger brother Ronald.</p> <p>Still, Amir is troubled because he cannot find his other brothers and sisters. Luckily, in the end, Amir finds someone to whom he can truly open his heart: Doris, a friend who lives in his old Bronx neighborhood.</p> <p>Much of <i>One True Friend</i> is the exchange of letters between Amir and Doris, sharing all of their feelings and concerns about their respective environments. Eventually, Amir and her foster parents, the Smiths, are successful in locating the rest of the family, thus providing another problem for Amir: with whom should he live?</p> <p>Novelist Jane Hanson provides strong characters and a letter writing format that is carried out effectively. Above all, the plot moves because the reader becomes engrossed in the characters' revealing and engaging letters. This is a companion book to <i>The Gift-Giver</i> and <i>Yellow Bird and Me</i>, and it is best suited to the younger student in the young adult range.</p> <p>John Bushman Overland Park, Kansas</p> | <p><i>Anne Frank and Me</i> by Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2001, 291 pp., \$18.99</p> <p>Holocaust ISBN: 0-399-23329-6</p> <p>Boy-crazy and blasé about school, tenth grader Nicole Burns doesn't finish her assigned reading of <i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i>, and only half listens to her English class's guest speaker, a Holocaust survivor. Then, on a tour of a Holocaust exhibit, Nicole falls and suffers a concussion, which sends her back in time so she becomes Nicole Bernhardt, a Jewish girl living in Paris in 1942. With familiar-looking people from her 21st Century life taking on the roles of family and friends, a confused Nicole suffers the atrocities of the Holocaust with anti-Semitic laws, arrests, physical abuse, concentration camps, and the gas chamber – plus a personal encounter with Anne Frank herself. Was this real-life experience only a dream?</p> <p>Although some serious readers of the Holocaust may find this story too contrived and trifling, other young adults may be hooked by the present and past connection between the lives of today's students and those teenagers who had lived and died during this tragic event.</p> <p>Kay Park Haas Ottawa, Kansas</p> |

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| <p><i>The Wish</i> by Gail Carson Levine HarperCollins, 2000, 197 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Popularity/Friendship ISBN: 0- 06-027900-1</p> <p>Wilma Sturtz, an eighth grader, feels rejected and ignored after her two friends move. She has trouble making new friends, until one day she gives an unusual elderly woman her seat on the subway. Impressed by Wilma's manners, the old woman asks young Wilma "if she could have anything, what would she want?" And then, just as suddenly, she grants Wilma her wish: to be the most popular kid at Claverford, her exclusive, private school. Instantly, Wilma is the center of attention. Every girl wants to be her friend, and every boy wants to take her the graduation night dance. Wilma, though, dreads graduation, because that is day this wonderful "wish" ends. In the end, though, Wilma learns to accept herself for who she is, and not because of the 'magic spell.'</p> <p>Preteens will enjoy this story, which explores the real meaning of popularity, and makes it clear that friendship can never be forced. Above all, it taps into the deep-seated desire of every preteen to be liked and accepted.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Deena Wilma Newman Rockledge, Florida</p> | <p><i>Beatnik Rutabgas From Beyond the Stars</i> by Quentin Dodd Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2001, 216 pp., \$17.00</p> <p>Science Fiction/Humor ISBN: 0-374-30515-3</p> <p>Walter Nutria, bored with high school, enters the spaceship that suddenly has mysteriously dropped to Earth. Little does he know, though, that he has been sought out by the Lirgonians, aliens dressed like middle-aged men in footie pajamas, to be their commander in a war against the Wotwots, who look like rutabagas.</p> <p>The Wotwots have had the same idea, however, and recruit Walter's friend Yselle Meridien as their commander.</p> <p>Neither wins. Instead, the two warring alien parties, the Lirgonians and the Wotwots, end up with their spaceships stuck together, and they have to go for help. As Walter and Yselle try to convince the space aliens they have no need to fight, the Space Mice from Galaxy Nine steal the stuck spaceships, and the Wotwots and the Lirgonians have to team up together to get them back.</p> <p>This book won't appeal to the general reader, but the sophisticated, lighthearted reader who enjoys science fiction – of all sorts – will enjoy the humor in this crazy, fanciful story.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Connie Russell Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin</p> |
| <p><i>A Diamond in the Dust</i> by Carla Johnson Dial Books, 2001, 197 pp., \$17.90</p> <p>History/Coming of Age ISBN:0-8037-2511-6</p> <p>The coal mines kill, and Katy's father, brother, and boyfriend are all deep in the mines everyday. Yet, 16-year-old Katy wants more, and her teacher, Miss Maplewhite, and her brother, Tim, see her potential to be an educated and successful woman. In the early 1900s in Illinois, though, women, including Katy's mother, married young, had children, and waited every day in fear of the siren that cuts through the sky, shrieking death of their coal miner husbands.</p> <p>Katy inspires readers as she struggles to break away from traditional expectations to achieve new dreams. Teenage readers especially will connect with Katy as they themselves search for ways to become who they want to be in the face of expectations from society, their family, and their friends.</p> <p>The characters in this book – from Katy's stoic mother to the young, arrogant boss at the coal mine – are vivid and believable in their honest struggles with a changing world.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Susanne Nobles Fredericksburg, Virginia</p> | <p><i>What Became of Her</i> by M. E. Kerr HarperCollins, 2000, 244 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Interpersonal Relationships ISBN: 0-06-028435-8</p> <p>Serenity is a small town where everyone knows each other. Rosalind Slaymaster, a wealthy eccentric, returns to Serenity with her leather doll companion Peale and her teenage niece Julie to get revenge on those that wronged her in the past.</p> <p>As a teenager, young Rose was taunted for her stutter, her innocence, her work at the Dare funeral home, and her mentally handicapped father. As the returning Rosalind Slaymaster, she is tough and demanding – even taunting her teenage daughter, Julie, someone she has adopted to keep her life-size doll company.</p> <p>Once in town, a Edgar Tobbit befriends Julie when his mother is asked by Mrs. Slaymaster to do the astrology chart. Through Edgar, Julie is introduced to Neal Craft. Together, the three of them have a close and special relationship. Soon, Edgar realizes a connection between Neal's family and Mrs. Slaymaster. The result is Julie's desire for revenge on her mean-spirited adoptive mother.</p> <p>Fans of Kerr will recognize the familiar themes in the struggles between the haves and the have-nots, the interwoven stories of two generations, and the cruelty of teens to their peers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Michelle Rich Oviedo, Florida</p> |

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| <p><i>Racing the Past</i> by Sis Deans Henry Holt & Company, 2001, 151 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Family/Violence ISBN: 0-8050-6635-7</p> <p>Although it's been two months since their father's fatal car accident, Ricky Gordon and his little brother, Matt, are still haunted by memories of violent beatings and loud, hurtful rants. And it doesn't help that the kids at school, as well as the whole town, will not let Ricky forget that the Gordon name is bad news. To avoid all the taunting and fighting after school and on the bus, Ricky takes to the road as a distance runner each morning and afternoon.</p> <p>Although Ricky realizes he cannot run away from his past, the strength he finds within himself, during his long treks, helps him understand the he need not live his life under the his father's dark shadow. The disturbing flashback scenes of family violence are tempered with riveting accounts of long distance running through the Maine countryside. Finally, the author's beautifully crafted descriptions of character and setting make up for some less than authentic sounding dialogue.</p> <p>Rob Linne Garden City, New York</p> | <p><i>A Long Way Home</i> by Nancy Price Graff Clarion Books, 2001, 208 pp., \$15.00</p> <p>Vietnam War/Family Relationships ISBN: 0-618-12042-4</p> <p>Riley, Kate, Stan, Mary, Clair, Sam, and Sharon – are all the main characters except Sharon. That's because Sharon is Sharon, Vermont, where the 4th of July parade takes 15 minutes to go the three blocks through town. The town where Riley and his widowed mom move to live in his grandfather's old and falling down home. It also the town that has NOTHING except a drunken war hero, Stan, and a vegetarian conscientious objector, Sam, an old high school friend of his mother's.</p> <p>Riley is resentful of Sam, especially when he finds out that Sam is a pacifist who refused to fight in the Vietnam War. Sam has a hard time accepting Riley's resentment. Riley is pulled against understanding why Sam, the draft dodger, is as he is, and tolerated by the village folk, while gentle Stan, the town drunk, is shunned. In fact, everything in this nothing place seems to go against Riley, even his Civil War hero great, great, great grandfather who was on the wrong side at Gettysburg. Eventually, Reilly develops an avid interest in the Vietnam War, and begrudgingly develops a relationship with Sam, though he cannot accept what Sam did.</p> <p>This is a coming-of-age story with the characters living through and beyond the Vietnam War, and its ensuing years of political unrest.</p> <p>C. Anne Webb St. Louis, Missouri</p> |
| <p><i>Raising the Shades</i> by Doug Wilhelm Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2001, 181 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Alcoholism/Family Relationships ISBN: 0-374-36178-9</p> <p>Casey Butterfield is 13 years old, in seventh grade, and his life is going rapidly downhill. His parents are divorced, and his mother and sister have moved to another state. His father comes home at night, and drinks himself into either a rage, or just plain stupor.</p> <p>To help matters, Casey finds solace in his good friends Oscar and Tara, but his father's ugly and drunken behavior is terribly threatening to his friendships. To his rescue comes his Aunt Jolie, who wants to arrange an intervention to confront Casey's troubled father with his destructive behavior. Casey isn't sure that's the right thing to do.</p> <p>Above all, Casey feels trapped, and he sees no viable way to deal with his problems. With the adults around him offering conflicting advice, Casey has to find his own path though his difficulties.</p> <p>This is a book that deals with alcoholism and dysfunctional family relationships in a clear, strong, and realistic way. <i>Raising the Shades</i> is not only readable and entertaining in its own right, but it also offers bibliotherapeutic value for trained teachers and counselors.</p> <p>June Harris Sierra Vista, Arizona</p> | <p><i>Equinox</i> by Monte Killingsworth Henry Holt & Company, 2001, 128 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Coming of Age/Family Relationships ISBN: 0-8050-6153-3</p> <p>Autumn believes she has the perfect life on small Douglas Island, where her intimate relationships with the weather, the landscape and the island's few inhabitants are deftly described by novelist Monte Killingsworth. Although her mother works on a larger nearby island, and is only home on weekends, she and her father are very close.</p> <p>Now, that she is 14 years old, Autumn's father decides they should all move to the larger island, presumably so she can have more educational opportunities. As Autumn fights to stay on Douglas Island and keep her world intact, she discovers a devastating secret about her mother, and the real reason her father wants to move. Soon, she begins to question all that had seemed certain in life. However, in time, Autumn discovers that she can move on through difficult times and changes in life, and still remain close to the people she loves.</p> <p>Killingsworth artfully shows that honesty between parents and children is essential. Though Autumn, readers see that often the only choice we have in difficult situations is how we choose to deal with unchangeable circumstances.</p> <p>Susanne L. Johnston Menomonie, Wisconsin</p> |

Down the Yukon by Will Hobbs
HarperCollins, 2001, 193 pp., \$15.95

Adventure/Historical Fiction
ISBN: 0-688-17472-8

In this sequel to *Jason's Gold*, the Hawthorn brothers are now successful lumber mill owners/operators in Dawson City, Canada. Ethan, Jason's brother, is tricked into boxing the former British champion. In a brutal fight, Ethan wins, but his new notoriety changes his attitude. Ethan eventually loses the lumber mill by drunkenly signing a document which gives up his rightful ownership.

Jason and his love, Jamie, decide to participate in a great race down the Yukon, the prize money to be used to buy back the mill. Their adventurous trip is full of danger from nature's forces, the river, and Donner, a contestant in the race who is the man who tricked Ethan into signing away the lumber mill.

This is a wonderful romantic story, supported by Hobb's careful historical and background research. *Down the Yukon* depicts an accurate portrayal of this time in history, one to be enjoyed by readers of historical fiction.

Edgar H. Thompson
Emory, Virginia

Hurry Freedom: African-Americans in Gold Rush California by Jerry Stanley
Crown Publishers, 2000, 86 pp., \$18.95

Biography
ISBN 0-517-800894-2

In the heart of Gold Rush, California, African-American entrepreneur Mifflin Gibbs established a successful commercial business. In this biography, we experience through Gibbs' eyes the struggle to succeed in an area known to have been prejudiced against African-Americans, and, along the way, see in vivid detail elements of Gibbs' day-to-day life. We accompany him in his interactions, from employers to fellow merchants to those he helped through his philanthropy and his role in promoting civil rights.

Gibbs' story—he went on to earn a law degree and be elected as a City Judge in Little Rock, Arkansas, and serve as a United States Ambassador to Madagascar—is well-told. With rich narrative and historical photographs and illustrations, the author paints a portrait of the Gold Rush Era, of race and relations during the latter half of the 19th century, and especially of Gibbs, whose frustrations and triumphs will touch all who read about his life and times.

Kristen Sternberg
DeLand, Florida

This Side of Paradise by Steven L. Layne
North Star Books, 2001, 215 pp., Unpriced

ISBN: 0-9712336-9-1

High schooler Jack Barrett's father has an inherent drive for perfection. He works for a mysterious Eden Corporation, and his is forcibly relocated to Paradise, a village that is literally owned by Eden's CEO. There, Jack unwittingly uncovers a secret plot that threatens the lives of everyone he loves.

As Jack delves further into the secrets of this remote village, he learns to what lengths his father and fellow villagers are willing to go to achieve perfection. Soon, Jack is confronted with an ethical dilemma – does he hide the terrible secret in this Utopian universe and risk alienating his father, or does he expose the secret and reveal to the world the depths and depravity of this sinister world?

In a fast-paced, action-packed plot, Layne raises ethical questions about the drive for perfection and the pacing of technological advances being made by our society. Layne exposes the deficits of a Utopian society with a unique and alarming twist that adolescent readers – especially young readers who like their adventure stories laden with science fiction – will particularly enjoy. Engaging characters, witty humor, and page-turning plot make for an exciting read.

Jeffrey S. Kaplan
Orlando, Florida

Dancing in Cadillac Light by Kimberly Willis Holt
G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2001, 167 pp., \$15.99

Coming-of-Age/Death and Dying
ISBN 0-399-23402-0

The time is 1968 and the place is Moon, Texas. Eleven-year-old Jaynell Lambert, a tomboy at heart, is full of dreams and boyish playfulness – especially as she climbs into abandoned cars in Bailey's Automobile Salvage, pretending to drive motionlessly. Life, though, takes on new meaning when her aging grandfather comes to live with them upon the death of their grandmother. Jaynell watches over her saddened grandfather, hiding his depressed, strange behavior, and trying to avoid his going to a nursing home. Grandpa impulsively purchases a Cadillac, taking Jaynell driving, and even, letting her learn how to drive – while her youngest, more girlish sister, Racine, dances in the car's headlights.

Sadly, Grandpa dies of a heart attack while driving, leaving Jaynell and her family to adjust to still another loss, and to cope with Grandpa's quirky past and the financial security that he has provided for them – including real dancing lessons for Racine.

Younger readers will enjoy this sensitive story of life in a rural Southern town which manages to teach "true values" without being preachy.

Edna Earl Edwards
Oxford, Mississippi

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