

<p>Act I, Act II, Act Normal, by Martha Weston Roaring Brook Press, 2003, 160 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Humor/Individuality/Acting ISBN: 0-7613-1779-1</p> <p>After much disappointment that his best friend's comic play is not selected to be the school play for this year, Christopher "Toph" Blakely ends up trying out for a part anyway, only because he promises his best friend, Kit, that he will. Unexpectedly, though, Toph 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, Toph cannot believe he is stupid enough to participate in this childish musical, especially since everyone at school thinks plays are for geeks.</p> <p>However, being the talented actor that he is, Toph 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, Toph 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.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Teresa Lin North Potomac, MD</p>	<p>The Beast by Walter Dean Myers. Scholastic Press, 2003, 170 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 0-439-36841-3</p> <p>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.</p> <p><i>The Beast</i> 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.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ray Castle Phoenix, AZ</p>
<p>Before the Creeks Ran Red by Carolyn Reeder HarperCollins Publishers, 2003, 370 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Civil War Youths ISBN: 0-06-623-615-0</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In a style bound to be 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.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Marjorie M. Kaise Louisville, KY</p>	<p>Blood War by Russell Moon Harper Tempest, 2003, 140 pp., \$6.99</p> <p>Modern Fantasy ISBN: 0-06-440797-07</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In his final book in the <i>Witch Boy</i> 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.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Stephen O'Rear Wheaton, IL</p>

Born Blue by Han Nolan
Dysfunctional Family
Harcourt Inc., 2003, 300 pp., \$6.99
ISBN: 0152019162

This is the story of Janie (who changes her name to Leshaya when she decides to become a blues singer), a girl with a gruesome history of abuse and survival. Born nearly dead to a heroin addict, incredibly, Janie survives the first few years of her life but not easily. Shuffled from foster home to foster home where she is witness to, as well as a victim of, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, drug addictions, and unwanted pregnancy. In the story we meet Leshaya (aka Janie) as she is leaving her childhood behind and trying to make it big by pursuing her dream as a singer. This story asks if a girl like Leshaya/Janie can leave behind the terrible past she has had and find the strength and courage to complete her dream.

This book is definitely for older teens, as it is explicit and graphic in its description of various types of abuse.

Samantha Woods
Mesa, AZ

Caramelo by Sandra Cisneros
Family/ Cultural Heritage
Knopf, 2002, 439 pp., \$24.00
ISBN: 0-679-43554-9

Sandra Cisneros's protagonist, Calaya (Lala) Reyes, like Cisneros herself, experiences much of her childhood in Chicago. Lala's father is a furniture upholsterer who moves his family from Mexico City to Chicago and then to San Antonio in search of a better life. With six older brothers, Lala is her parents' youngest child and only daughter in a novel largely about family history and family stories (not necessarily the same thing) and how members of generations of a family interact. The title comes from Lala's fascination with her friend Candalaria's skin color, which is *caramelo* in Spanish, or caramel in English; Lala notices the various family branches of her relatives have various skin tones, depending on their heritage.

Anyone who has ever gone on vacation to visit a family matriarch can relate to the Reyes family trips from Chicago to Mexico City to visit the "Awful Grandmother." And anyone who lives among multiple cultures will also relate to Lala's experience as a member of at least two very distinct cultures: Mexican and American. Due to its length and complexity, *Caramelo* may be more popular with older, more advanced high school readers.

Melissa Noeth
Phoenix, AZ

Buddha Boy by Kathe Koja
Peer Pressure/Maturation
Frances Foster Books, 2003, 128 pp., \$16.00
ISBN: 0-374-30998-1

Justin and his friends Jakob and Megan are not total social outcasts at Rucher High, but they're not exactly part of the in-crowd—the jocks and bullies who seem to run the school. This is why they're not too keen on making the new kid's acquaintance. They don't want to be associated with a bald-headed monk in oversized T-shirts who begs for change during lunch, lives with his elderly great-aunt, and smiles even when it's clear to others he's in pain. But on his own, Justin reaches out to the artistically talented Jinsen or Michael Martin as he was known before his own transformation and in doing so, begins to contemplate the effects his actions may have on others.

Justin learns the fruitlessness of anger, how hurting someone now can not only make another's life miserable, but have a negative impact on one's own life in the present and future, and most importantly, how good deeds coupled with kindness toward others can reward one immeasurably.

Laura Bullock
Pearl, MS

The Cheat by Amy Goldman Koss
Teen Problems/Humor
Dial Books, 2003, 176 pp., \$16.99
ISBN: 0-8037-2794-1

Sarah starts it. The answers to the eighth-grade geography midterm are in her hands. Sarah decides to share her good fortune with a few classmates. Little does she know that this will turn into something far more dangerous than she could have imagined.

A trip to the principal's office is not Rob's idea of a good day at school. Knowing he cannot go home to his father's definite fury, he leaves school in a daze heading straight out of town—on foot. Eleven hours later, Rob is curled up in a doorway on a main street far from anything familiar. Upon returning home, Rob's life is forever changed.

Sarah and Rob are two of six characters giving readers their very own interpretive insight into the scandal. Formatted as personal entries, Koss' book allows teenage readers to unfold the story as each character reveals the progress of the situation in a different light. The issue of cheating is one of character and integrity—and one that every teenager has faced. This book is sure to resonate with today's teens.

Elise Anderson
Alexandria, MN

<p><i>Crispin: The Cross of Lead</i> by Avi Hyperion, 2002, 262 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Adventure ISBN: 0-7868-0828-4</p> <p>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 Aycliffé, 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 life seemed to have dealt him.</p> <p>Historically accurate in its references to the Peasant Revolt of 1381, <i>Crispin</i> 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.</p> <p>Wendy Kelleher Tempe, AZ</p>	<p><i>Faerie Wars</i> by Herbie Brennan Bloomsbury, 2003, 370 pp., \$17.95</p> <p>Fantasy/Mystery ISBN: 1-58-234-810-3</p> <p>Young Henry is experiencing major changes in his family. While doing some odd jobs for a neighbor, Mr. Fogarty, Henry meets Pygus who has crossed over from a parallel (fairy) world where he is prince of the Purple Kingdom. Henry first encounters Pygus 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 Pygus 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.</p> <p>Vinnie Bonnit Phoenix, AZ</p>
<p><i>Flight of the Fisherbird</i> by Nora Martin Bloomsbury USA Children's Books, 2003, 150 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Interpersonal Relationships ISBN: 1-58234-814-6</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Charles R. Duke Boone, NC</p>	<p><i>Geography Club</i> by Brent Hartinger Harper Tempest, 2003, 226 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Sexual Orientation/High School ISBN: 0-06-001221-8</p> <p>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 kids, 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Maria Hernandez Snohomish, WA</p>

Clip & File YA Book Reviews

<p>Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case by Chris Crowe Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2003, 128 pp., \$18.99</p> <p>History/Nonfiction ISBN: 0-8037-2804-2</p> <p>This book is a nonfiction companion to Chris Crowe's <i>Mississippi Trial: 1955</i>, the story of the murder of Emmett Till, the trial that followed, and surrounding events. Emmett was a 14-year-old African-American youngster visiting relatives in Mississippi in 1955, who was kidnapped and murdered after alleged remarks made to a white woman. Although two white men, who later admitted to the murder in a magazine interview, were put on trial for murder, they were quickly acquitted by an all-white jury. This was a landmark event that helped to jumpstart the Civil Rights movement.</p> <p>Due to the graphic nature of this story (including one photo which appeared in a Chicago newspaper), it might be disturbing to younger readers. Nonetheless, it would be a good source to use when talking about the Civil Rights movement, and a good paired read with Crowe's aforementioned fictionalized account.</p> <p>Christie Van Sande Phoenix, AZ</p>	<p>Hang On In There, Shelley by Kate Saksena Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2003, 219 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Friendship/Pop Music ISBN: 1-58234-822-7</p> <p>Fourteen-year-old Shelley lives with her mother, known as mom, and her eight-year-old brother Jake, in a flat in south London. There, she writes religiously in her diary about her life and her fascination with the hit pop group, <i>Artic 2000</i>. What she admires most about her rock group is the lead singer, Ziggy, and "the honesty that he portrays of himself" in the many fan magazines that she reads. Impressed, she decides to write him for advice, and to her amazement, she receives a postcard reply—from Italy, of all places.</p> <p>Elated, Shelley corresponds regularly, telling Ziggy about her daily trials and triumphs, and to her delight, Ziggy responds—usually with the telling phrase "Hang in there, Shelley." Gradually, Shelley's fascination with her favorite rock star turns to hesitancy and doubt, as she begins to wonder if Ziggy is really reading her letters. Soon, though, reassuring clues—the mention of her brother, her mother's troubles, and her equal frightful adventure—give her assurance that rock star Ziggy is really penning replies.</p> <p>Gradually, Shelley's mother's problems become too much to bear. She is a down on her luck alcoholic, and Shelley must cope both with her drunkenness and her brother's insolence and fear. This is a good read for young people, particularly middle school students, who long for realistic fiction with an edge and a sense of place and time.</p> <p>Jeffrey S. Kaplan Orlando, FL</p>
<p>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix by J.K. Rowling Scholastic Press, 2003, 870 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Adventure ISBN: 0-439-35806-x</p> <p>This is the fifth book of the Harry Potter series and picks up the story where the fourth left off with the return of Lord Voldemort. In this story, Harry, Dumbledore, and his group, the Order of the Phoenix are trying to warn the wizarding community of the danger. They are hampered by the fact that the Ministry of Magic refuses to believe that the dark lord has returned and tries to discredit Harry and his friends. Harry still manages to return to Hogwarts and finish his fifth year, but the Ministry's representative, Dolores Umbridge, is now closely watching the school. As the ministry tries to take control of Hogwarts, Harry, Ron, and Hermione try to find ways to learn the skills they need to survive and to uncover why Harry is having dreams of Lord Voldemort.</p> <p>Although this book is fairly long, the story is fast paced. Each of the characters is starting to develop to full potential. Motivated by the oppression of the Ministry and the threat of Voldemort, the characters face a variety of challenges and manage to prove themselves. Although adult characters receive rough treatment in this book, young adults will relate to Harry's ongoing story, especially with the ending that reveals the true relationship between Harry and Lord Voldemort.</p> <p>Sarah Dean Tempe, AZ</p>	<p>How I Fell in Love and Learned to Shoot Free Throws by Jon Ripslinger, Roaring Brook Press, 2003, 178 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Family/Identity ISBN: 0-7613-1892-5</p> <p>Angel McPherson is all-star athlete of the girls' basketball team, and Danny Henderson is determined to hook her attention—and affection. Although his free-throw skills are lacking, Danny challenges Angel to a shoot-off at the charity assembly. His loss provides the perfect excuse to request Angel's assistance...and make her fall in love.</p> <p>When Angel accepts his offer, Danny is delighted. His plan unfolds perfectly, until he realizes that Angel is guarding a family secret. But she isn't the only one with a skeleton in the closet; Danny is hiding a secret of his own.</p> <p>When rumors spread and Angel is accused of being gay, both teenagers must confess their secrets and confront the truth. They learn to accept their families and themselves, while discovering important lessons about honesty, trust, and love along the way. Whether basketball player or spectator, guy or girl, this book is sure to score!</p> <p>Jennifer Erickson Wheaton, IL</p>

<p><i>Jackie's Wild Seattle</i> by Will Hobbs Harper Collins Publishers, 2003, 197 pp., \$16.89</p> <p>Outdoor Adventure ISBN: 0-688-17474-4</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Naomi Yamakawa Tempe, AZ</p>	<p><i>Jennifer Government</i> by Max Barry Doubleday, 2003, 321 pp., \$19.95</p> <p>Political Satire/Futuristic ISBN: 0-385-50759-3</p> <p>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 the 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 young adults.</p> <p>Katrina Nelson Phoenix, AZ</p>
<p><i>Keesha's House</i> by Helen Frost Frances Foster Books, 2003, 128 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Poetry/Teen Problems ISBN: 0-374-34064-1</p> <p>Stephie is pregnant; Jason is the father and an all-star on the basketball court. Dontay'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 Keesha, after leaving her drug-abusing father in search of safety, has found a place of refuge the others turn to in times of need.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In <i>Keesha's House</i>, Frost uncovers hard, deep struggles facing teenagers today with an encouraged sense of hope and a desire for a better tomorrow.</p> <p>Kristine Johnson Cary, IL</p>	<p><i>Mates, Dates, and Inflatable Bras</i> by Kathy Hopkins Pulse, Inc., 2003, 160pp., \$4.99</p> <p>Coming of Age/Humor ISBN: 0-6898-5544-3</p> <p><i>Mates, Dates, and Inflatable Bras</i> 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.</p> <p>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 (<i>Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging</i>).</p> <p>Janesse Perrotte Phoenix, AZ</p>

Clip & File YA Book Reviews



The Monster in Me by Mette Ivie Harrison
Holiday House, 2003, 156 pp., \$16.95

Foster Care
ISBN: 0-8234-1713-1

Natalie Willis sometimes dreams she's a monster. She can't believe she's a worthwhile person. If she were, wouldn't her mother do something more about putting her own life together so that Natalie didn't have to move into a foster home?

Natalie loves to run. Maybe, if she keeps running, all of her problems will go away. Maybe, she won't have to face the fears and the pain. Maybe, the Parker family will work out their own problems once she's no longer in the way. But foster-dad John, school-acquaintance Mary, and Coach Landers stand at her crossroads, keeping Natalie on the winning path toward the end of her run, Mom and home.

In this stunning first novel, author Mette Ivie Harrison takes the reader inside the thoughts of a young girl, forced to face a world filled with adult problems. You'll find yourself running along with her every step of the way.

Lu Ann Brobst Staheli
Spanish Fork, UT

Or Give Me Death by Ann Rinaldi

Gulliver Books, 2003, 226 pp., \$17.00

Historical Fiction
ISBN: 0-15-216687-4

Set in colonial times, this fictionalized account of American hero ("Give me liberty or give me death.") Patrick Henry and his family, suggest "what if" the family had a private life, entangled in a web of secrets and lies that never made the headlines. In Rinaldi's alternate universe, Sarah, Patrick's wife, is a "lunatic," but the family sweeps her mental illness under the rug. After she tries to drown her newborn son, however, they lock her in the family cellar for four years. Besides keeping her mother's illness a secret, Anne, the middle daughter, is burdened with another secret. During one of Mrs. Henry's ravings, she claims to know that one of the daughters will inherit her madness, the identity of whom she reveals only to Anne. The novel goes on to unravel a twisted knot of family life and to suggest an alternate origin for Mr. Henry's famous statement in defiance of the British hangman.

Young readers will be taken in by Rinaldi's strong storytelling and forget that they are reading historical fiction as they are transported to another time when the country was on the verge of war and Patrick Henry was making history, and many will identify with the heart-wrenching, confusing, and difficult decisions that the Henry family must make.

Kim Grozek
Tempe, AZ

My Mother's Daughter: Four Greek Goddesses Speak

by Doris Orgel

Greek Mythology
ISBN: 0-7613-2808-4

Roaring Brook Press, 2003, 122 pp., \$17.95

If you are a lover of Greek mythology, you know these names—Leto, Artemis, Persephone, and Demeter. They are magical, eternal beings—both Greek goddesses and real life mothers and daughters—who do everything real human beings normally do, share, argue, and come back together. Their stories are the stories of the human condition, and as told in their own voices, author Doris Orgel makes these remote Greek gods seem very much alive and real for young and old alike.

In this wonderful work, four Greek goddesses—Leto and her daughter Artemis, and Demeter and her daughter Persephone, explain in straightforward and engaging language their own personal stories about their lives, loves, and passions. Intriguing to read, and easy to follow, their stories will entice young readers to learn about Greek gods, and underscore for older readers, the significance of Greek mythology in our everyday understandings of the human condition. These larger-than-life and ancient tales are a must read for budding Greek scholars and a must have for the bookshelves of teachers who are planning a unit on ancient Greek mythology.

Anita F. Kaplan
Boynton Beach, FL

Pool Boy by Michael Simmons

Simon and Schuster, 2003, 164 pp., \$23.90

Realistic Fiction/Greed
ISBN: 0-7613-1885-2

Insider trading. Brett Gerson remembers their rip-off lawyer saying that was why his father has been dragged off to jail. Yet, what really irked him was when they lost the house....his house, the pool, the Mercedes, and his brand new \$5,000 stereo system.

Brett struggles to adjust to life across the tracks, where he now lives with his aunt. His mom makes him get a job, and Brett soon finds himself cleaning his friends' pool with Alife Moore, an eccentric 70-year old. Will his friends, and most importantly, the girl of his dreams, like him now that he is poor? Author Michael Simmons challenges the reader to decide what really matters, and raises the issue of anger, family, and forgiveness. *Pool Boy* is a fast and entertaining read that won't lose you in its depths, but to be sure, it isn't shallow water.

Dan Reinhold
Wheaton, IL

<p><i>The Second Summer of the Sisterhood</i> by Ann Brashares Friendship/Coming of Age Delacorte Press, 2003, 373 pp., \$15.95 ISBN: 0-385-72935-0</p> <p>The highest compliment one can pay an author is to eagerly await a sequel (to <i>The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants</i>) and rush out to get it as soon as it comes out. As soon as <i>The Second Summer of the Sisterhood</i> 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Rebekah Crutchfield Queen Creek, AZ</p>	<p><i>The Speed of Light</i> by Ron Carlson Sports/Coming of Age Harper Tempest, 2003, 280 pp., \$15.99 ISBN: 0-380-97837-7</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>William Konigsberg Tempe, AZ</p>
<p><i>A Time to Love: Stories from the Old Testament</i> by Walter Dean Myers Religious/Short Story Scholastic Press, 2003, 127 pp., \$19.95</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The collection of stories makes for an interesting commentary on love. Love is illustrated as a perfect emotion, employed by imperfect people.</p> <p>April Anderson Tempe, AZ</p>	<p><i>Twists and Turns</i> by Janet McDonald Friendship/Urban Life Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003, 135 pp., \$16.00 ISBN: 0-374-39955-7</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Karen Conner Mesa, AZ</p>

<p>Victory or Death: Stories of the American Revolution by Doreen Rappaport, Greg Call and Joan Verniero HarperCollins, 2003, 120pp, \$16.99</p> <p>ISBN: 0-06-029516-3.</p> <p>History/Diversity</p> <p>Authors Rappaport, Call and Verniero cover famous and not-so-famous people whose contributions to the American Revolution helped to ensure victory. Based in fact, each story tells how a lesser figure in American history acted to help the cause; for example, letters to his mother provide an account of how Peter Brown, a 20-year-old corporal, fought at Lexington and Concord and helped to build a fort on Breed's Hill. Francis Salvador, a Jewish nobleman with a wife, four children, a home in London, and a family plantation in South Carolina, traveled throughout the back country of the colonies, gathering signatures for the oath of loyalty in support of independence. Abigail Adams served as a "home-front reporter" when she and her four children left Boston and moved to their farm in Braintree, Massachusetts, while her husband, John, served as a delegate to the Continental Congress. Sixteen-year-old Sybil Ludington rode 40 miles to alert her father's troops that they were needed to stop the British from taking the Hudson River. Additional stories tell how others put their lives on the line as spies, soldiers, and couriers.</p> <p>Beth Bareham Tempe, AZ</p>	<p>Warrior Angel by Robert Lipsyte Harper Collins, 2003, 186 pp, \$15.99</p> <p>Sports/Mental Health ISBN: 0-06-000496-7</p> <p>Twenty-year-old Sonny Bear is now the world heavyweight champ, but he's not happy and his life is spinning out of control. As the fourth novel in Lipsyte's "The Contender" series begins, Sonny is preparing for what should be an easy fight in Las Vegas, a warm-up for what will certainly be a more difficult challenge against Floyd "The Wall" Hall, whom Sonny Bear beat to grab the heavyweight title. But the fight is anything but easy; Sonny barely wins and afterwards runs away to escape his corrupt promoter and trainers. An e-mail from someone calling himself "Warrior Angel" brings him back to life and helps him find the strength to return to his roots. He meets Warrior Angel there, who turns out to be Starkey, a teenage boy with severe mental health issues, including voices he hears in his head. Starkey and Sonny seem to be a symbiotic combination.</p> <p>Readers will not only enjoy the excitement and quick pace of the writing, especially the boxing scenes, but will also be intrigued by this new character, the danged-but-benevolent Starkey. Reading the other three novels in the series will help readers to better understand the supporting characters, many of whom have played major roles in the previous stories.</p> <p>Bill Konigsberg Tempe, AZ</p>
<p>The Way A Door Closes by Hope Anita Smith Henry Holt and Company, 2003, 52 pp. \$18.95</p> <p>Loss of a Parent/Poetry ISBN: 0-8050-6477-X</p> <p>This collection of poems all revolves around 13-year-old C.J. This collection is written in story form. Each poem represents a different family member who explains a bit of their life. Grandmomma explains how she had to sit on the back of the bus during segregation. Daddy tells C.J. he is "almost a man." Then everything changes after Daddy loses his job. He leaves the family. The family goes through a great deal of pain but learns to heal. Almost a year later Daddy returns. This time C.J. knows Daddy is going to stay. Through these poems C.J. finds a way to show his hurt, healing and the power to "open the door again."</p> <p>I would use this book when teaching about segregation and in my poetry unit. This collection is a terrific example of a different format poems can take. Students could write a different ending to this story by creating different poems. They could write about how this collection of poems affected them when they read them.</p> <p>Paula Schuster New Harbor, Maine</p>	<p>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review, send a copy of the book to:</p> <p>Lori Goodson 409 Cherry Circle Manhattan, KS 66503</p> <p>To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Lori Goodson at lagoodson@cox.net</p>