

<p>Behind You by Jacqueline Woodson G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004, 118 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Death/Interracial Dating/Homosexuality ISBN: 0-399-23988-X</p> <p>Jeremiah Roselind is dead at fifteen years old. Miah, as he is affectionately called by most, was shot and killed by two white cops—a case of mistaken identity. The spirit of Miah whistles through loved ones trying to make sense of his death and their lives as they see them now. Ellie was Miah's white girlfriend. She hurts the most and is trying to overcome the pain of losing her soul mate. Miah is trying to make sense of his death, too, and how to embrace his new role in the afterlife.</p> <p>Woodson reveals the thoughts and personalities of her characters in miniature time capsules. She allows the reader to uncover who Miah was through the characters' actions and their feelings about him. Woodson captures the present world, along with the afterlife, and creatively allows the reader to experience bereavement in both. She touches on social taboos such as homosexuality and interracial dating, while also showing the many facets of grief. A well-written novel, <i>Behind You</i> is both thought-provoking and heartwarming.</p> <p>Jeron Shelton Elgin, IL</p>	<p>Bermudez Triangle by Maureen Johnson Relationships//Homosexuality Razor Bill, 2004, 370 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>ISBN: 1-59514-019-0</p> <p>Nina, Avery, and Mel have been inseparable for years. However, when Nina leaves for summer camp, a secret emerges that shakes the foundation of that friendship: Avery and Mel are in love with one another. When Nina returns, nothing is the same. She feels alienated and struggles to accept the life her friends have chosen; meanwhile, her friends now avoid her to be alone with one another.</p> <p>Avery and Mel are unable to keep their relationship a secret; rumors circulate throughout school. Embarrassed, Avery begins to doubt her newly discovered homosexuality. To figure out what she feels and who she is, she breaks off her relationship with Mel, seeking comfort in the arms of a man. Left alone, Mel turns to Nina for comfort.</p> <p><i>Bermudez Triangle</i> is an excellent portrayal of the realistic struggles associated with homosexuality. Since it does contain scenes with the two lovers, I would not recommend it for middle school or younger high school students.</p> <p>Esther Myers Manhattan, KS</p>
<p>The Big Nothing by Adrian Fogelin Peachtree Press, 2004, 235 pp., \$14.95</p> <p>Relationships/Music/Family Problems ISBN: 1561453269</p> <p>To escape family problems, Justin Riggs sometimes escapes into "The Big Nothing" — a place he can be who he is and not worry about his mom and dad splitting up, his older brother shipping out to Iraq, or whether Jamie Lewis knows he's alive or not.</p> <p>Justin is musically inclined and, when visiting one day after school at Jamie's house, discovers the piano and Jamie's grandmother, Nana Grace. When Nana offers to help him learn to play, he begins spending every spare minute at Jamie's practicing. The angst he seems to feel while his Dad and brother are away is diminished by his connection to the music, and he doesn't mind being around Jamie so much, either!</p> <p>Written more for middle school, Fogelin writes a sensitive, yet humorous, account of a boy coming to grips with adulthood too soon. Highly recommended.</p> <p>Nancy McFarlin Wamego, KS</p>	<p>The Boy with the Lampshade on His Head by Bruce Wetter Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2004, 304 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>ISBN: 0-689-85032-8</p> <p>Stanley Krakow doesn't consider himself to be anything special. He is a young boy whose problems consist of a callous fifth-grade teacher and a bully, who just happens to be Stanley's older brother, Jerold. Concerned with saving his glow-in-the-dark fish and holding his breath long enough to make it into the <i>Guinness Book of World Records</i>, Stanley creates a world in which he is the hero and everything else is out to destroy him. In his role as super hero, Stanley meets Theresa. Theresa's everyday battle brings to life the reality of abuse in the home and the need for friends. Through Theresa, Stanley discovers how special he really is. Stanley goes from being a blood-sucking beetle killer to a brave friend who literally saves Theresa's life.</p> <p>Bruce Wetter does a fantastic job of capturing the imagination of a unique fifth-grader. Humorously introduced throughout the story, Stanley's trials and tribulations are sure to captivate young readers as they reveal an unlikely hero: <i>The Boy with the Lampshade on His Head</i>.</p> <p>Jessica Mattes Elgin, IL</p>

<p><i>Call Me Maria</i> by Judith Ortiz Cofer Coming of Age/Survival/Acceptance Orchard Books, 2004, 127 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 0-439-38577-6</p> <p>With <i>Call Me Maria</i>, Judith Ortiz Cofer delivers a poignant story of a sixteen-year-old Puerto Rican girl trying to find her place in the barrio of New York.</p> <p>Maria has gone with her father as he returns to the place of his childhood leaving her mother behind for a temporary time. Maria's father is a superintendent and a jack-of-all-trades as he takes care of the needs of the tenants in the building. Maria accepts the responsibility of making their basement apartment into a home—a home where she sits from her desk doing schoolwork and looking up at the feet that walk down the sidewalk. Maria befriends Whoopie, who teaches her the way of the barrio and how to master Spanglish. When her mother does come to New York a year later, Maria realizes it is only for a visit and not to live. Though both parents want her, Maria decides to stay with her father because she has come to accept the life of the barrio.</p> <p>Maria's voice is a strength in this uniquely written novel as Cofer comfortably transitions between prose, letters, and poetry.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Roger Caswell Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>Children of the Lamp: The Akhenaten Adventure</i> by P.B. Kerr Fantasy/Adventure Orchard Books, 2004, 355 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 0-439-67019-5</p> <p>What do wisdom teeth, <i>The Arabian Nights</i>, an earthquake in Egypt, and a missing couple on a flight to London have in common? Quite a bit, it turns out, for two twelve-year-old twins. John and Philippa Gaunt enjoy an exciting and, at times, dangerous, adventure, thanks to what happens to them after a trip to the dentist—and a little luck. Luck is precisely what these twins need after they go to stay with their uncle Nimrod. Only John and Philippa discover they have much more control over luck than they ever thought possible. The twins must quickly learn to harness their emerging powers to help their uncle solve an ancient mystery. If they succeed, the balance of Good and Evil in the world will remain in homeostasis; if they fail, Evil will have the advantage, and the whole world will suffer.</p> <p>It is no surprise P.B. Kerr is also a writer of adult thrillers, as Phillip Kerr. Although the wit and vocabulary may be beyond some young readers, enthusiasts of the <i>Harry Potter</i> series and similar works will enjoy Kerr's suspenseful, yet fun, tale.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Emily Pauly St. George, KS</p>
<p><i>A Couple of April Fools</i> by Gregory Maguire Fantasy Clarion Books, 2004, 182 pp., \$16.00 ISBN: 0-618-27474-X</p> <p>The children in Miss Earth's class are not having a good spring. What with mutant chickens, an escalating rivalry between the Tattletales and the Copycats (their girls' and boys' clubs), a traitor, and a couple of April Fools pranks gone wrong, they hardly notice the fine spring air or the first forsythia blooms. Their problems reach a crisis point when their beloved teacher disappears. Though Thekla Mustard, former Empress of the Tattletales, suspects a romance gone wrong between Miss Earth and her fiancé, Mayor Grass, her classmates are not so sure. However, they all agree, they must use their excellent education to locate their teacher.</p> <p>In this, book six of the chronicles of Hamlet, Vermont, Maguire uses humor and a fast-paced plot to create a delightfully entertaining story. Despite the quirky names and bizarre events, Maguire's tale captures the essence of pre-adolescent experience: the difficulties of peer relationships and the growing understanding that parents are flawed human beings.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Virginia Beesley Quinter, KS</p>	<p><i>Double Helix</i> by Nancy Werlin Ethics of Genetic Engineering/Family Trust/Loyalty Dial Books, 2004, 248 pp., \$15.99 ISBN: 0-8037-2606-6</p> <p>Eighteen-year-old Eli has always been smarter, faster, and stronger than the average kid. He has never really questioned why until the mysterious and brilliant Dr. Wyatt begins to take a curious interest in him and offers him a job at his renowned lab, Wyatt Transgenics. When Eli's father pleads with him to decline the offer but refuses to explain why, Eli becomes more intrigued. His life gets turned upside down as he begins his search for answers and uncovers some disturbing secrets about his past.</p> <p>This suspenseful book is both mysterious and exciting. Nancy Werlin takes her readers on a wild ride with Eli as he struggles to gain an understanding of the secrets in his own past that may be his only hope in the future. This gripping novel explores some serious themes such as morality and the ethics of genetic engineering. It is also a story of the ties of love and loyalty that bond a father and son.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sarah Briggs Elgin, IL</p>

<p>The Flame Tree by Richard Lewis Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2004, 272 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Twelve-year-old Isaac is struggling to remain loyal to the Christian faith and values with which he was raised. In the wake of the 9-11 terrorist attacks, while living a mission life with his doctor and nurse parents in Wonobo, Indonesia, Isaac is taken hostage by anti-Christian Muslims after an attempted evacuation of all Americans goes terribly wrong. He undergoes a transformation throughout this horrible ordeal and discovers more about the driving forces of the Islamic people and, in the end, finds the faith in Jesus that he had lost.</p> <p>Richard Lewis dynamically explains the faith journey of Isaac Williams in a creative and unique way. He takes his young readers on a journey of their own through the Christian and Muslim faiths, with gruesome yet truthful detail. This book is rich with description, and despite violence and heartache throughout, readers who stick with Isaac will be rewarded.</p> <p>Katie Nedli Elgin, IL</p>	<p>Fortune's Bones: The Manumission Requiem by Marilyn Nelson Front Street, 2004, 32 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>A skeleton has been lurking in Mattatuck, Connecticut, for more than 200 years. Historians have recently discovered that the bones belonged to a slave named Fortune who was owned by a local doctor. Following his death in 1798, Fortune's bones were preserved by his former owner to help further his medical studies.</p> <p>In <i>Fortune's Bones</i>, Marilyn Nelson tells Fortune's story in verse, adapting various elements of a traditional funeral mass. Her poetry has a simple voice, yet a strong tone; it both mourns Fortune's death, while celebrating the freedom from slavery that his death has provided.</p> <p><i>Fortune's Bones</i> is beautiful and haunting; it is an excellent introduction to poetry for young readers, particularly those with an interest in history and/or slavery issues.</p> <p>Amy Anderson Manhattan, KS</p>
<p>Foxmask by Juliet Marillier TOR, 2004, 464 pp., \$27.95</p> <p>Thorvald talks his friend, Sam, into setting sail to find his father. Creidhe hides in the boat, because she knows that her friends will need her on their journey. After several weeks in the North Sea, they land on a Foroes Island between Norway and Iceland. The island is ruled by the evil Asgrim. Criedle stays with the women, while Sam and Thorvald go off with the menfolk to prepare for the Hunt on the Isle of Clouds. Then Criedle is kidnapped.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Asgrim's son had hidden the seer of the Unspoken tribe on the Isle of Clouds. They, too, are preparing for the Hunt. Near the Isle of the Clouds, Criedle escapes by jumping over the side of the kidnapper's boat and drowns.</p> <p>Marillier weaves a delightful adventure of lies, deceit, secrets, misunderstandings, and romance in this sequel to <i>Wolfskin</i>. Middle school and high school students will be standing in line for <i>Foxmask</i>.</p> <p>Ruth Prescott Manhattan, KS</p>	<p>Hawkes Harbor by S.E. Hinton TOR, 2004, 251 pp., \$21.95</p> <p>While S.E. Hinton's first new novel in more than 15 years is marketed as an adult novel, her name recognition will no doubt cause young people to seek out <i>Hawkes Harbor</i>. (Sections of the book, in fact, read very much like a young adult novel. Readers will notice an echo of Ponyboy in the protagonist.)</p> <p>On the surface, the book is a mere re-working of a stock horror story. And even if, as some have suggested, the plot of the book is drawn directly from the televised series <i>Dark Shadows</i>, the book is much more than a simple horror story. The characters are well developed and believably unbelievable. We get to know the young protagonist, and we watch the roles of hero and villain shift as the plot develops. Ultimately, the book is a dark allegorical exploration of the descent into madness and the journey toward atonement. The elements of horror are best read as metaphor for the inner workings of the mind. Hinton graphically portrays the depths to which the human mind can sink, yet she also demonstrates our capacity to heal.</p> <p>Mature, sophisticated older adolescents will find the novel worthwhile. The book should not, however, be recommended to young people simply because they enjoyed <i>The Outsiders</i>. Hinton's first novel was a gritty young adult novel. Her most recent is a gritty adult novel.</p> <p>Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>

<p><i>Here Today</i> by Ann M. Martin Coming of Age/Historical Fiction/Realistic Fiction Scholastic Press, 2004, 308 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 0-439-57944-9</p> <p>In <i>Here Today</i>, Ann M. Martin addresses the problems of social ostracism, broken families, and one girl's struggle to define who she is. Eleanor Roosevelt Dingman is a sixth-grade girl living in the small town of Spectacle, New York. She practices the art of camouflage to escape the cruel taunts of the Sparrows, the popular clique of girls at school. Her mother, Doris Day Dingman, is the prettiest woman in all of Spectacle, the star of local plays, and the Bosetti Beauty.</p> <p>Everything begins to change when John F. Kennedy is assassinated. Doris decides that life is too short and leaves for New York City to pursue her dream of acting on Broadway. Elle is left to care for her brother and sister, all the while struggling to discover who she is and why her mother could leave her behind.</p> <p><i>Here Today</i> is an engrossing story about the strength inside of us all. This book would be appropriate for sixth- to eighth-graders and for anyone student who is struggling with divorce.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Karolinde Young Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>How My Private, Personal Journal Became a Bestseller</i> Self-image by Julia DeVillers Dutton Children's Books, 2004, 212 pp., \$15.99 ISBN: 0-525-47283-5</p> <p>Jamie Bartlett is a fourteen-year-old freshman at Whitaker High School who wishes she was popular. Jamie always has problems with the "I think I am so much better than you" girls. Lacking courage to stand up for herself, Jamie journals about a girl named IS, who is everything Jamie is not. IS has self-confidence, high self-esteem, courage, and strength that can overpower the "Evil Clique of Populars" with the flick of her wrist. Accidentally, one of Jamie's journal entries is turned in as an assignment, and suddenly she becomes a best-selling author. She is now getting TV, radio, and newspaper interviews. Through all this fame, Jamie becomes popular at school; however, she gets so caught up in her fame that she neglects her true friends.</p> <p>Julia DeVillers reaches the hearts of young girls in this "chick" book that encourages them to be themselves. Her story sheds light on the realities teen girls face and offers hope. This one will keep the girls reading!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Samantha Sojka Elgin, IL</p>
<p><i>I Walk in Dread: The Diary of Deliverance Trembley, Witness to the Salem Witch Trials</i> by Lisa Rowe Fraustino Scholastic, 2004, 203 pp., \$10.95 ISBN: 0-439-24973-2</p> <p>Fans of the <i>Dear America</i> series are sure to enjoy this novel of the afflictions, accusations, and fear that gripped the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1690s.</p> <p>The novel reads as the diary of a twelve-year-old Puritan girl who lives with her uncle and her sister on a farm outside Salem, Mass. Their guardian leaves to find work at sea, and the sisters must keep up the farm. When a blizzard forces a businessman and his son to seek refuge on their farm, the men eventually weave their way into the girls' lives, adding a slightly romantic subplot. Meanwhile, the girls find themselves in the midst of a hysteria overtaking the town. When other girls began accusing citizens of practicing witchcraft, the community must confront the idea that some citizens allegedly signed a pact with the Devil and are inflicting harm throughout the village.</p> <p>The author demonstrates how it is easy to let fear dictate action and emotion rule logic and leads the reader to realize that taking a stand for truth is not always an easy task, but most certainly a necessary one to promote justice.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Emily Pauly St. George, KS</p>	<p><i>ID!OT!</i> by Colin Neenan Brown Barn Books, 2004, 152 pp., \$12.95 ISBN: 0-9746481-1-6</p> <p>Jim is sixteen and can talk to his best friend, Zanny, about anything until he realizes (during tryouts for <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>) he's madly in love with her. He emails her as "John Kurtz," sharing his feelings, only she's convinced "John" is Jim's twin brother Jake (reknown for his hippie hair and clothes, drinking and drug-induced state). At the cast party, Jim gets drunk for the first time, planning to unburden himself to Zanny, but when he's told she is with Jake, he hooks up with Jake's girlfriend.</p> <p>Full of passion, regret, and humor, <i>ID!OT!</i> conveys the uncertainties of romance in the lives of youth and their parents. The framework of the story (that this is Jim's unsanitized account of what caused him to end up drunk in a tree, eating his own words—literally, his emails to Zanny—and have his picture plastered on the front of newspapers across the country) adds to its cleverness and the ambiguity of Jim and Zanny's relationship. The cover art is a cartoon and too juvenile for the content, but librarians who can sell the story inside will find a receptive audience with guys and girls alike.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Melissa Moore Jackson, TN</p>

<p><i>Kira-Kira</i> by Cynthia Kadohata Atheneum Fiction, 2004, 244 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>To Katie, Lynn is . . . older sister . . . best friend . . . and greatest teacher. Lynn begins Katie's life lessons, teaching her her first word: kira-kira (Japanese for glittering; shining). Katie plasters the world with it. She gives the name to everything from kittens to colored Kleenex. Katie views life as kira-kira. She carries this outlook with her as her parents close their small oriental food store in Georgia and move the family from their supportive Japanese community to an unfamiliar Iowan town. There, her parents work almost 24 hours a day at a chicken hatchery, where they are being treated as animals themselves and making scarcely enough money to support their family.</p> <p>Katie and Lynn, and a new baby brother, Sammy, view an adult's world through children's eyes. They learn the importance of family interdependence—one person hurting meant they all were hurting.</p> <p>Cynthia Kadohata creates a masterpiece of specific moments entwined in emotions. This novel has the ability to inspire the reader to remember what it is to live with the heart of a child.</p> <p>Natalie Whetzel Elgin, IL</p>	<p><i>KLEPTO</i> by Lori Weber Lotimter & Co, 2004, 160 pp., \$4.99</p> <p>Kat's authentic voice shares the disturbing tale of the abuse she has experienced at the hands of her older sister Hannah. When Hannah is sent to a group home for dealing drugs, Kat is the only one relieved at her departure. Yet, for reasons she doesn't comprehend, Kat begins to shoplift and relishes the feelings of control. When it's clear Hannah is soon to return home, Kat's stealing escalates, rushing to consequences inevitable yet surprising.</p> <p>Weber's first novel honestly conveys the anguish over parental neglect, the oftentimes ugliness of life, and brutality of an abortion (Hannah's). The heaviness of Kat's story is alleviated in part by best friend Anita's search for her birth mother and next-door-neighbor-turned-hunk Andy's gentle, supportive presence. Kat's tale addresses important issues in a tone which respects teens and their issues. Because of the nature of some of these issues, this title is recommended for readers age 14 and older.</p> <p>Melissa Moore Jackson, TN</p>
<p><i>L'Chaim! To Jewish Life in America! Celebrating from 1654 until Today</i> by Susan Goldman Rubin Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2004, 173 pp., \$24.95</p> <p>The first recorded settlement of Jews in the United States was in 1654; they came looking for religious freedom. For 350 years, they have played a role in building America and retained their heritage.</p> <p>This attractive book features many photographs and images from the The Jewish Museum. Chapters are in chronological order, and topics include Colonial, American Revolution, Immigration, American West, Alaska, World War I and II, and the Great Depression.</p> <p>So many influential people are included in <i>L'Chaim!</i> This would be an excellent resource for research ideas. Fifth- and sixth-graders may find this book useful for information on immigration.</p> <p>Ruth Prescott Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>Meanwhile Adventures, The</i> by Roddy Doyle Arthur A. Levine Books, 2004, 174 pp., \$16.95</p> <p><i>The Meanwhile Adventures</i> is a fun, fast-paced, and entertaining story that follows the Mack family through their exciting escapades. After Mister Mack is arrested, his three children and dog set out to find their record-breaking mother and help their father escape. What follows is the intermingling of each character's crazy adventure that leads to the exciting conclusion where the family finally comes together.</p> <p>The best thing about this book is Doyle's use of language and his bizarre and hilarious scenarios. It would be hard not to laugh out loud at some of the kooky scenes. Doyle also includes little side notes to the readers that explain certain situations, as well as sections where he banters back and forth with the anonymous reader.</p> <p>Although it contains somewhat crude language at times, <i>The Meanwhile Adventures</i> is an entertaining book for older elementary and middle school students. It would also be a great piece to read aloud.</p> <p>Jennifer Sloan Manhattan, KS</p>

<p><i>Names Will Never Hurt Me</i> by Jaime Adoff</p> <p>Dutton Children's Books, 2004, 186 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Bullying/Suspense ISBN: 0-525-47175-8</p> <p>Almost a year ago, a student was violently murdered on Rockville High grounds. With suspense hanging in the air, four students battle their way through high school.</p> <p>Kurt tries his best to get through a day of school without turning into a human punching bag, or worse, having to swallow someone else's spit at the bottom of the drinking fountain.</p> <p>Tisha, who deals with bullies herself, wants people to accept her for who she really is, but who is that really?</p> <p>Floater is transformed (by the principal) from being picked on into something even worse: a power-hungry kid who looks to rule the school.</p> <p>Ryan, the star quarterback, is the king of the school. When the four of them collide, Ryan's dark secret comes out of hiding.</p> <p>Jaime Adoff brings to life a brutal story of the realities of high school via four intriguing main characters who cement the reader to the story. Adoff does an excellent job of describing events in a way that ensures the reader will enjoy it.</p> <p>Barbara Wilson Elgin, IL</p>	<p><i>One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies</i></p> <p>Death/Change by Sonya Sones</p> <p>Simon and Schuster Books, 2004, 268 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>ISBN: 0-689-85820-5</p> <p>Ruby Milliken shines as a saga unfolds from the mind of a teenager in this fast-paced novel of vibrant emotions and high drama. Ruby is a fifteen-year-old who has just lost her mother, home, and reason for living. She moves across the country to live with her movie star father leaving behind her boyfriend, Ray, and best friend, Lizzie.</p> <p>A look into the mind of Ruby is like boarding a jolting roller coaster as she thrives on impulsive decisions and peaks of emotion. At one moment, she will be fired up about how she thinks this "loose" girl named Amber is trying to steal Ray; another moment she'll be writing an e-mail to her dead mother.</p> <p>Sones writes with a poetic, plot-driven style magically connecting each new character to the next event. Having experienced the culture shock of Hollywood herself, Sones equates some of her experience through Ruby, causing the first-person narrative to come alive in a natural way. Young readers will be drawn to the journalistic feel, poetic set-up, and page-long chapters.</p> <p>Mary McCoy Elgin, IL</p>
<p><i>The Orange Trees of Versailles</i> by Annie Pietri,</p> <p>translated from the French by Catherine Temerson</p> <p>Delacorte Press, 2004, 137 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Historical Fiction ISBN: 0385731035</p> <p>Fourteen-year-old Marion is uniquely suited to her work as the servant of Louis XIV's favorite mistress, the Marquise de Montespan. The loss of her mother affected Marion's ability to sleep for more than one or two hours at a time, making her an ideal "busy girl" for the marquise, who demands a servant's presence to guard her through the night.</p> <p>During her vigils, Marion crafts exquisite fragrance blends for the marquise. But after the marquise gives credit for the perfumes to another, Marion begins to understand her true character. When the king and queen come to Versailles to celebrate a victory, Marion must use her gift with scents to help prevent the marquise's plot to secure a higher place at court and in the king's heart.</p> <p>Readers might be confused as to how a girl of Marion's station learned to read and write and why she sleeps so little, but Pietri eventually ties up these questions. This story is a satisfying read for those interested in life during the time of the Sun King.</p> <p>SarahEllen Morrow Tempe, AZ</p>	<p><i>Pepperland</i> by Mark Delaney</p> <p>Interpersonal Relationships/Mothers and Daughters/Death and Dying Peachtree Press, 2004, 184 pp., \$14.95</p> <p>ISBN: 156145317X</p> <p>Star is a not-so-typical 16-year-old in the 1980s—she is dealing with the grief that comes with losing her mother, her best friend Doooley's mood swings/search for identity, her own search for her place in the world, and attending therapy sessions.</p> <p>When musician Star comes across her mother's old guitar in the attic, as well as a letter her mother wrote to John Lennon stuck in an old yearbook, she senses that something is about to happen in her life—she <i>wants</i> something to happen. Delaney takes us on a tender and touching journey of a young girl coming to grips with life—and finds the courage to step up and take it by the (guitar) neck.</p> <p>I recommend this highly for older middle school and high school students. The trip back was great for me, too!</p> <p>Nancy McFarlin Wamego, KS</p>

<p>Raising the Griffin by Melissa Wyatt Wendy Lamb Books, 2004, 279 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>When Communism is overthrown in Rovenia, the people establish a constitutional monarchy, in hopes a royal family will attract the attention of tourists and act as a focal point in rebuilding the poor country. Their decision will change the life of Alex Varenhoff, great-grandson of the last ruling Varenhoff.</p> <p>Alex never dreamed his family might be asked back to the country they were cast out of; he would rather be at school in England. Being a royal is even harder than Alex imagined. He is surrounded by bodyguards, monitored by publicists and the press, followed by screaming girls, in danger from people opposed to the monarchy, and angry with his parents for changing his life. His rebellion has the potential to endanger Rovenia's democracy. It takes a tragedy for him to be allowed to choose his own fate.</p> <p>Wyatt provides a realistic portrayal of the trials and choices of a young man forced to face a destiny he thought was buried in the past. Alex's emotions and responses should resonate with young adults living in situations not of their own making.</p> <p>SarahEllen Morrow Tempe, AZ</p>	<p>Sam I Am by Ilene Cooper Scholastic, 2004, 252 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Twelve-year-old Sam finds the month of December a bit confusing: His mother, who is Christian, and his father, who is Jewish, are divided on the issues of religion and holidays. This year, the Hanukkah Bush is knocked over by the family dog, and the family sees it as a sign for change and compromise. Both grandmothers get an invitation to a religion-neutral holiday, but the fondue does not make anyone happy.</p> <p>Sam has many questions: Does he have to choose a specific religion? Will his parents and grandmothers hate him if he chooses the wrong one? Does Heather like him? No twelve-year-old can have all the answers, except Sam does find out his crush is not as wonderful as he first thought when she makes a racist comment about the Jewish religion and the Holocaust unit they are studying in school.</p> <p>Cooper accurately portrays an interfaith family. This family has arguments, confusion, questions, and no easy answers. Neither does the book, which is refreshingly honest. She is also quite accurate in her portrayal of twelve-year-olds and their emotions, questions, and, almost certainly, first crushes.</p> <p>Jennifer Judy Oxford, OH</p>
<p>So Super Starry by Rose Wilkins Dial Books, 2004, 230 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>In <i>So Super Starry</i>, Rose Wilkins delivers a unique look into the lives of London's rich and famous. Octavia Clairbrook-Cleeve is the daughter of a director of low budget films and an American TV actress. She attends a very posh high school, Darlinham House, which only the elite attend. Her schoolmates include sons and daughters of movie and rock stars. Even though her mother and father are famous, Octavia is an outsider at her school because of her awkward height and average appearance.</p> <p>Octavia finally gets her chance to receive star treatment and become popular when a high-profile boy asks her out on a date. Octavia must decide between staying true to herself and giving into the shallow superstar way to stay popular. She realizes she would rather know herself than give into the superficial ways of her peers. Now she just has to tell her parents.</p> <p><i>So Super Starry</i> is an intriguing and amusing coming-of-age story, best suited toward high school readers due to the content of the book and allusions to other works.</p> <p>Kristine E. Tardiff Manhattan, KS</p>	<p>Spilled Water by Sally Grindley Bloomsbury, 2004, 224 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Sold at the age of eleven by her uncle, who considers a girl child about as valuable as spilled water, Lu Si-Yan finds herself the slave/housemaid of the Chen family, who consider her to be an utter failure at her duties, but a potential future wife for their brain-damaged son. Mrs. Hong, the mother of Mr. Chen, gives Lu Si-Yan some money to escape, yet Lu Si-Yan has her money stolen and must work for a toy factory to repay the ferry fare. When she collapses at the factory after coughing up blood due to the horrible factory conditions and is sent to the hospital, she is reunited with the uncle who sold her, now regretful of his decision.</p> <p>Though the writing occasionally lapses in to dragging exposition, Grindley's work deftly demonstrates the harsh factory life, low wages, and grim reality many around the world face each day. Truly an interesting find, this novel will find a place in the hearts of those teens who care for the underdog and for those interested in modern day child labor abuses.</p> <p>Jennifer Judy Oxford, OH</p>

<p>Starfall: Phaeton and the Chariot of the Sun by Michael Cadnum Mythology Orchard Books, 2004, 120 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 0-439-54533-1</p> <p>After chaffing under the jibes of a young man in his village, Phaeton confronts his mother, Clymene, about his parentage. Clymene confirms her tryst with the sun god Phoebus Apollo, and she urges Phaeton to seek his father. Leaving home, Phaeton travels to the far reaches of the world before finding his father, Apollo.</p> <p>To prove his devotion to Phaeton, Apollo promises his son anything he desires. Unfortunately, Phaeton asks to drive the chariot of the Sun. Regretting his rash promise, Apollo allows his son to drive the chariot. Unable to control the horses, disaster soon follows. Havoc is wrecked upon the earth, and Phaeton is killed. This classic tale is a most readable story. This is the first in a trilogy of retellings from Ovid.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Joy Fenichs Chatsworth, GA</p>	<p>USS Constellation: Pride of the American Navy by Walter Dean Myers Non-Fiction/American History/Naval Holiday House, 2004, 85 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 0-83243-1816-2</p> <p>Beginning with the privateers which harassed British ships and allowed colonists to sell products at a fair price on the world market, Myers tells the story of the first <i>Constellation</i>, a wooden frigate in the fledgling American Navy. This ship fought in the War of 1812. Later, after 1857, the second <i>Constellation</i>, built with materials from the original, intercepted the slave trade and took part in the Civil War.</p> <p>The U.S. Navy, perhaps because of miserable living conditions and long absences from home, allowed black seamen to take a proud place in American naval tradition. With the advent of steam power and iron hulls, wooden ships became obsolete; nevertheless, this ship lives on as a museum.</p> <p>The book, full of details of life at sea, details of sea battle, authentic photographs, and the origins of such idioms as “showing the flag,” “knowing the ropes,” and “loose cannon,” will catch the imagination of young people about a little-known part of American history.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Myrna Dee Marler Late, HI</p>
<p>Vegan Virgin Valentine by Carolyn Mackler Coming of Age/Identity Candlewick Press, 2004, 228 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 0-7636-2155-2</p> <p>Mara Valentine has it together; she is a straight-A senior, a vegan, and a perfectionist. She is in a duel-to-the-final-GPA race with her ex-boyfriend for the coveted valedictorian spot, has been accepted at Yale, and is ready to leave home and high school in glory.</p> <p>“The first thing V did upon arriving in Brockport was fool around with my ex-boyfriend,” a reference to Vivienne Vail Valentine, Mara’s niece through an estranged older sister, who comes to spend a semester of her junior year with the family.</p> <p>That first tantalizing line in the novel spells the end of Mara’s rigid control of her life as she narrates her own tale of learning more than school offers and growing up in ways she never imagined. V has spent her life without supervision; her flirting, flaunting, and flippant attitude drive Mara batty. A potential new romance with her hunky boss and doubts about her vegetarianism add to the chaos in a breezy, humorous, and revealing novel, as Mara finally gets a clue and comes to grips with the real world.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Judith Hayn Chicago, IL</p>	<p>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review, send a copy of the book to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">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>