

<p><i>Anything But Ordinary</i> by Valerie Hobbs Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2007, 168 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Romance/College/Peer Pressure ISBN-13: 978-0-374-30374-7</p> <p>Winifred and Bernie have always been social outcasts, so it's natural when they find each other in eighth grade that they would become close friends and then sweethearts. But then the unthinkable happens—Bernie's mother dies, and he spirals into depression. Their plans to attend college together fall apart, and Winifred sets out on her own, only to discover she's far more susceptible to the pressure to conform than she realized. Soon, Wini is sexy and popular, though her grades are tumbling and she doesn't really know who she is anymore. When Bernie comes to his senses and travels across the country to find her, he is in for a shock. This rich, multilayered story has a compelling plot and a strong sense of place. Hobbs excels at creating dynamic characters and intriguing relationships, and this novel is among her very best.</p> <p>Melissa Moore Jackson, TN</p>	<p><i>The Baptism</i> by Sheila P. Moses Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2007, 130 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Slavery/Identity/Religion ISBN-13: 978-1-4169-0671-1</p> <p>Moses (<i>The Legend of Buddy Bush</i>) returns to Occoneechee Neck, N.C., to explore the remnants of slavery and its impact on personal identity in the life of twin brothers Luke and Leon Curry.</p> <p>The twins' mother has given the 12-year-olds one week to get their act together so that they can be baptized on Sunday, but it's hard when sinnin' is so much fun. The authentic voices of well-rounded characters, and the sobering events in their lives, are balanced with humor and good fun in this lighter, yet still meaningful, story.</p> <p>Melissa Moore Jackson, TN</p>
<p><i>Being</i> by Kevin Brooks Scholastic, 2007, 323 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Human Identity/Science Fiction ISBN-13: 978-0-439-89973-4</p> <p>This gripping novel is epic in nature as it begins in the middle of a frightening operation where the patient is conscious but unable to move. Robert's odyssey continues as he travels across Europe to escape his inhumane would-be captors. It is reminiscent of John Le Carré or Ian Fleming as the international intrigue unfolds. The irony is that Robert, whose humanness is in question, is far more humane than the supposedly human hunters who chase him. The artful use of language draws the reader into this tale of self-discovery and delusion. There are many scenes of exciting action, as well as tender moments between characters. Both antagonist and protagonist are fully rounded since the author uses a first-person narrator who is both cynical and observant. Anglophiles will certainly be attracted to this story, as its settings paint a vivid picture of United Kingdom countrysides and villas. This novel is for older students, as it contains some suggestive material.</p> <p>Kenan Metzger Muncie, IN</p>	<p><i>The Black Sheep</i> by Yvonne Collins and Sandy Rideout Hyperion Books for Children, 2007, 348 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Fiction/Identity ISBN-13: 978-1-4231-0156-7</p> <p>Reality television has made it to young adult literature.</p> <p><i>The Black Sheep</i> chronicles the life of Kendra, a teen who no longer wants to live with her parents and is transported from New York City to Monterey, Calif., in reality television's latest hit show.</p> <p>Kendra dislikes her overscheduled life and thinks she needs a break from her parents, who show affection by buying Kendra lessons and classes instead of giving hugs and kisses. A letter depicting her "horrible" life enables her to win the pivotal spot on TV and the trip to California to stay with a liberal ("hippie") family for a month while their daughter takes Kendra's place in New York City.</p> <p>Teens will dive into this reality world as the plot—and cameras—follow Kendra through her adventures. She finds a humanitarian cause to be passionate about and also discovers her first love. The journey, however, isn't an easy one, as the cold realization of reality show manipulation causes the reader to wonder if Kendra will fight as hard for her family as she does for the sea otter.</p> <p>Jill Adams, Denver, CO</p>

<p><i>Breaking Up</i> by Aimee Friedman Scholastic, 2007, 191 pp., \$8.99</p> <p>Graphic Novel/Popularity/Romance ISBN-13: 978-0-439-74867-4</p> <p>Chloe begins her junior year with her three best friends, expecting a year similar to previous ones. However, the girls' friendship drastically changes when one seeks extreme popularity, another wrestles a boyfriend's unwanted intimacy demands, and one battles over-protective parents. Chloe falls for the school nerd who is talented, intelligent, and kind, but hides their relationship for fear of ostracism.</p> <p>Naturally, these situations become increasingly complicated and divisive, leading to the girls' friendship implosion and Chloe's realization that maturity brings many changes. While all resolve their problems, the girls realize their friendship is changed and it, too, must evolve to remain intact.</p> <p>This graphic novel, drawn and narrated by Chloe, nails high school experiences through its expressive, dynamic illustrations with characters' secret thoughts and imagined scenarios being appropriately hilarious or poignant. Although the plot is familiar with events foreseen, the graphic format makes it engrossing and highlights its valuable messages.</p> <p>Lisa A. Hazlett Vermillion, SD</p>	<p><i>Captives</i> by Tom Pow Roaring Brook Press, 2007, 185 pp., \$17.95</p> <p>Family/Survival ISBN-13: 978-1-59643-201-7</p> <p>Tom Pow's book, <i>Captives</i>, throws us in a world of exotic jungles as we follow the reflective narratives of two tourists, a son and father, who were captured by rebels. The depiction of the rebels, who hope to change the government's influence on the economic destruction caused by big companies, becomes an intimate experience for both the characters and the reader.</p> <p>Pow's two-part story—one from the father's perspective and the second from the son—allow for all of the gaps to be filled in. <i>Captives</i> challenge the ideas of a family and how, through tough situations, it is family who sticks next to you. Despite knowing the climactic end to the story from the prologue, <i>Captives</i> offers a page-turning experience wondering what will happen to the captured hostages as they venture through the jungle.</p> <p>Adam Hofer Brookville, IN</p>
<p><i>Dairy Queen</i> by Catherine Gilbert Murdock Houghton Mifflin, 2006, 275 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Family/Romance ISBN-13: 978-0-618-68307-9</p> <p>D.J. Schwenk has always done as she's told. When her older brothers left home after a family fight, she let it happen. When her father had surgery, she took over the family farm. And when Brian Nelson, quarterback of Red Bend's rival football team, begins working at her farm . . . she falls in love.</p> <p>When Brian first shows up at Schwenk Farm, D.J. is disgusted, but as the two work together, they confide in each other. Soon, they become much more than friends; however, D.J. strains her new relationship with Brian, and with her family, when she makes the Red Bend football team.</p> <p>Readers will fall in love with D.J.'s humor and will relate well to her emotional epiphanies. While initially slow-paced, the story becomes quite interesting as it progresses. For those who think that small-town life is dull, <i>Dairy Queen</i> will offer a new perspective.</p> <p>Megan Callahan Bartlett, IL</p>	<p><i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid</i> by Jeff Kinney Abrams/Amulet Books, 2007, 224 pp., \$14.95</p> <p>Loyalty/Family/Humor ISBN-13: 978-0-8109-9313-6</p> <p><i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid</i> is immediately described as a "novel in cartoons," and that it is. Jeff Kinney transforms his popular web comic of the same name, into a great young adult novel.</p> <p>Greg Heffley, the wimpy kid, begins by telling us that by no means is what we are about to read a diary; it is a journal. He gives us insight into an entire year of his life including everything from wrestling class to trick or treating with his little brother, and of course hilarity ensues. This book is definitely meant to tickle the funny bones inside all of us. Themes include friendship, loyalty, and family, which are all relevant young adult topics. This book is great because it takes these themes and gives them a twist of humor that any young reader is sure to enjoy.</p> <p>Matt Oldenburg Muncie, IN</p>

<p>Echo by Kate Morgenroth Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2007, 137 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Justin Thomas' world was turned upside down the day his younger brother, Mark, died in a terrible accident. In the past year Justin has been fighting for things to go back to normal, but no matter what he does, he cannot stop reliving the day of the accident. On the anniversary of his brother's death, Justin starts hearing a voice in his head, making the "normal" day even more thrilling with unexpected twists. As the story goes on, Justin learns that not all things are what they seem, and there is not always a clear line defining reality vs. illusion. Morgenroth explores the mind of a troubled adolescent discovering the truth about the life around him. Some of the descriptions (including Mark's death) are a bit graphic at times, but nothing too extravagant for a teenage reader. Readers will get trapped in the life of Justin Thomas, figuring out where the line between reality and illusion should be drawn...or if there even is a line for Justin.</p> <p>Lauren Grogan Fishers, IN</p>	<p>The Edification of Sonya Crane Kimani Press, 2007, 248 pp., \$9.99</p> <p>Sonya Crane is a teenager who has experienced some atrocities in her life. Her mother, Doris, a real estate agent with a drug addiction, forces Sonya to move from a middle-class neighborhood in Atlanta to a predominantly black neighborhood in East Atlanta and live with Madison, a drug dealer who supplies Doris with her fix in exchange for sexual favors from Doris and Sonya.</p> <p>Despite her problems, Sonya looks forward to attending high school. On her first day, she meets Tandy. Sonya also develops feelings for Tandy's brother, Kush, who leads a civil rights group. Meanwhile, Sonya's mother goes into rehab, leaving Sonya with Madison's friend, Law, an ex-convict who is mentally challenged. He tries to force himself on her, and Sonya ends up stabbing him to death. As Sonya deals with the consequences of committing a murder and the reality of carrying Kush's unborn child, Tandy begins to figure out Sonya's true identity.</p> <p>Adolescent readers will become enthralled with plot twists in this novel, part of a new series of African-American young adult fiction. This book is suitable for 11th-12th graders due to a few sexually explicit scenes.</p> <p>Anjeanette C. Alexander-Smith Jacksonville, FL</p>
<p>Evolution, Me & Other Freaks of Nature by Robin Brande Random House, 2007, 272 pp., \$18.99</p> <p>How would you like to begin your first year in high school with the whole world hating you? That is how it is for Mena. Because she wrote a letter of support to a boy who was harassed because he was thought to be gay, she lost all her church friends. She is grounded from everything except school, and her parents will hardly look at her, much less talk to her.</p> <p>Mena looks forward to science. Ms. Shepherd is teaching evolution, which causes quite a stir with members of Mena's church. The controversy over evolution and the alienation Mena faces because of her actions are compounded when Ms. Shepherd pairs her with Casey for their science project. Casey has a sister who loves conflict, particularly one involving evolution. When she realizes Mena's old friends are part of the push for Intelligent Design, she involves Mena in a blog from her web site. Mena's belief in God and the support from Casey and Ms. Shepherd carry her through all the controversies.</p> <p>Barbara Ray Tulsa, OK</p>	<p>Feathers by Jacqueline Woodson G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2007, 118 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>"Hope is the thing with feathers." Frannie's teacher had read Emily Dickinson's poem to her class, and she'd been pondering its meaning ever since. Then the new kid arrives that everyone calls "Jesus Boy." He is the only fair-skinned kid in the class, and no one can figure out why he's come to their school on "this side of the highway." While Frannie tries to both understand <i>and</i> ignore him, she also deals with her brother's deafness, her best friend's holiness, and the coming of a new baby to her family. Meanwhile, Frannie keeps thinking about her desire for "the thing with feathers."</p> <p>Set in the 1970s, this is a story of a young girl's search for hope. She discovers that, while it is painful to look beneath the surface of a person's emotions, joy can be found. As the characters face the racial tensions of the era, friendship brings out the basic goodness in each of them. Middle school students who have ever felt like the "odd kid out" will find characters they can relate to in Woodson's latest novel for young adults.</p> <p>Vicki Sherbert Wakefield, KS</p>

<p><i>Fragments</i> by Jeffery W. Johnston Simon Pulse, 2007, 204 pp., \$6.99</p> <p>Chase is the only survivor of a terrible accident. He has partial amnesia of the incident, but it comes to him in fragments. After grueling and stressful days at school, he sees a psychiatrist to help him cope and remember.</p> <p>Before the accident, he tried to commit suicide because he was told to “do it” by a mysterious voice. Memories about his brother, Ben, haunt him while remembering bits and pieces of the accident. Ben appears in and out of his life, as if he were just having memory flashbacks. As Chase remembers more and more, he uncovers a horrible memory that will haunt him forever.</p> <p><i>Fragments</i> is a captivating story of a teenager who goes through social issues in school, suicide, death of people close to him, and sexual abuse. Johnston keeps you glued to your seat with this unforgettable page-turner.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sarah A. Gale Muncie, IN</p>	<p><i>A Friendship for Today</i> by Patricia C. McKissack Scholastic, 2007, 176 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Rosemary Patterson is the fictionalized version of the author; she is one of two black children routed to a previously white elementary school for sixth grade when integration is ordered by the Supreme Court in 1954. The other is her best friend, J. J. Stenson, so Rosemary is confident she is ready for what’s ahead. However, J. J. contracts polio over the summer and cannot be there as her supporter.</p> <p>Rosemary is spunky, proud, and unafraid of anything, except the separation of her parents as her father leaves home for another woman. Mama, however, possesses the common sense, courage, and inner strength to keep Rosemary’s life in as much balance as possible.</p> <p>McKissack has written an uplifting story she fictionalized in every way, except for the cat Rags, who had been left abandoned in the street after being hit. Rosemary insists the badly injured cat will live, and with the strength and will to survive that both have, they inevitably do.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Judith Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>
<p><i>Games: A Tale of Two Bullies</i> by Carol Gorman Harper Collins Publishers, 2007, 279 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Mick Sullivan and Boot Quinn, 8th-grade rivals, know just which taunts to fling to provoke each other. After two fights in the first week of school, a yearlong battle was set to begin. But neither boy counted on new principal, Mr. Maddox. He “sentences” the boys to spend one and a half hours each day playing games together, unsupervised, in his office. With each boy determined to win, the conflicts move beyond the game table and into the world outside of school. But somewhere along the way, they get to know each other’s deepest fears. Unintentionally, they become rescuers for each other.</p> <p>Gorman addresses bullying by giving us a glimpse of both characters’ inner struggles. As we get to know Mick and Boot, the boys also get to know themselves. Once this self-revelation is under way, each boy discovers the personal conflicts at the root of their behaviors. This book is a wonderful springboard for discussion with adolescents.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Vicki Sherbert Wakefield, KS</p>	<p><i>Harlem Summer</i> by Walter Dean Myers Scholastic, 2007, 176 pp., \$15.99</p> <p><i>Harlem Summer</i> is the raucous story of 16-year-old Mark Purvis; the year is 1925, and he has the summer to fill with adventure. Mark’s brother, Matt, is heading off to college; Daddy works as a handyman, while Mama tries to corral her three men into good behavior.</p> <p>Mark goes to work at <i>The Crisis</i>, published by the man who believes in the concept of the New Negro, William E. B. DuBois. Mark makes friends with the literary editor, Jessie Fauset, and Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Alfred Knopf and more—many of the contributors to the Harlem Renaissance. At the same time, he becomes involved with running illegal whiskey. His dream to be a jazz musician has led him to an unhealthy relationship with Fats Waller, the famous blues pianist.</p> <p>Mark learns, like all of us, that making choices has consequences. This book is a page-turner, rich in historical detail.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>

<p>HEAR US OUT! Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present by Nancy Garden Farrar Straus Giroux, 2007, 230 pp., \$18.00</p> <p>This collection of short stories, all written by Garden, portray gay and lesbian teens from the 1950s to 2000 and beyond. The book is sectioned by decades, each featuring an historical account of the era as applicable to the homosexual community, followed by two short stories featuring gay and lesbian teens during that time.</p> <p>The historical accounts are richly detailed and full of lesser-known facts, with Garden's personal commentary interspersed throughout. The stories are of quality but contain little topical information, making many difficult to date, if read separately. Such details would have provided a stronger sense of each era and issues faced by respective characters.</p> <p>Still, earlier stories are marked through social acceptance, and later by HIV-AIDS, PFLAG groups, or gay marriage, ending with a futuristic view of gays and lesbians enjoying full social acceptance. This is a must-read for its historical sections alone, and Garden's newest stories fail to disappoint.</p> <p>Lisa A. Hazlett Vermillion, SD</p>	<p>Homeboyz by Alan Lawrence Sitomer Jump at the Sun, 2007, 224 pp, \$16.99</p> <p>Teddy "T-Bear" Anderson is a computer genius caught up in gangsta drama when his sister is shot because she was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Teddy is not involved in gang activity, but he definitely wants to avenge his sister's death.</p> <p>He sets out to make the gang pay. His plan would've worked, too, but a store owner draws a gun on Teddy. His life continues to unravel as he awaits his preliminary hearing on a slew of serious charges. Teddy eventually gets placed on probation, where he is introduced to an officer who wants to help young wannabe gangsters leave gangs.</p> <p><i>Homeboyz</i> is the successful conclusion of Sitomer's Anderson family trilogy featuring <i>Hoopster</i> and <i>Hip-Hop High School</i>. This book is fast-paced, and it highlights a very intelligent African-American male character in Teddy. Sitomer expertly weaves a plot that lets the reader see who Teddy Anderson really is, while suffering with him as he is labeled a gangster.</p> <p>Tate Thompson Junction City, KS</p>
<p>How to Steal a Dog by Barbara O'Connor Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007, 176 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Barbara O'Connor's book is an intriguing read that delves into the helplessness felt by many struggling families. This book is from an interesting perspective, which will definitely appeal to adolescent readers.</p> <p>Georgina, the main character, is fed up with her family's situation and decides to take matters into her own hands. The reader is taken on a journey of right vs. wrong, and how that line can sometimes blur when survival (or fitting in) is at stake. This book also possesses the ability to make the reader question whether Georgina is actually doing anything wrong. It creates a situation in which maybe, just maybe, it is OK to choose the lesser of two evils, in this case, stealing.</p> <p>Darcy Pearson Muncie, IN</p>	<p>In Their Shoes: Extraordinary Women Describe Their Amazing Careers by Deborah Reber Simon Pulse, 2007, 411 pp., \$12.99</p> <p><i>In Their Shoes</i> offers middle school and high school girls an opportunity to explore an astonishingly wide variety of career paths. With entries for such diverse career paths as accountants, animators, and yoga instructors, each entry provides a detailed personal portrait of one individual working in that career. Typical entries include not only the nuts and bolts issues of qualifications, salary, dress code, and stress levels for the career, but readers are also offered a look behind the curtain at the individuals' typical day, journal entries, and so on.</p> <p>While the collection includes entries on a few individuals with some name recognition (e.g., Senator Barbara Boxer), all of the entries detail the lives of individuals to serve as positive role models.</p> <p><i>In Their Shoes</i> will be an important addition to school and public libraries. Just as importantly, teachers and guidance counselors will find the book a valuable resource for units of study regarding career and life choices.</p> <p>F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>

<p><i>Lost It</i> by Kristen Tracy Simon Pulse, 2007, 276 pp., \$6.99</p> <p>ISBN-13: 978-1-4169-3475-2</p> <p>Sex/Identity/Family</p> <p><i>Lost It</i> will have readers falling in love with the captivating and seemingly real-life story of the main character, Tess, who has her first sexual experiences with her older boyfriend, loses her best friend to her therapist aunt due to a pool explosion incident, and is dealing with her parents suddenly leaving for a wilderness survival camp in the middle of a Utah desert. While Tess often finds herself in questionable scenarios that are a bit out of control or out of her hands altogether, she also learns to let go of her fears and allows herself to grow in her mistakes, leading her into the right direction of becoming a young woman. Kristen Tracy has a very successful way of getting inside the head of a teenage girl, and she has the reader feeling as if he or she is right there with Tess, experiencing everything with her.</p> <p>Karena Nedza Medaryville, IN</p>	<p><i>The Rise of the Black Wolf: Grey Griffins Book 2</i> by Derek Benz and J. S. Lewis Orchard Books, 2007, 320 pp., \$12.99</p> <p>ISBN-13: 978-0-439-83774-3</p> <p>Fantasy/Supernatural</p> <p>The Grey Griffins (Max, Harley, Ernie and Natalia) are invited to spend Christmas break with Max's dad in Scotland, where they experience more dangerous encounters with the Black Witch (Morgan Lefay) and her minion, led by the Lord of the Black Wolves. According to legend, whoever possesses the Spear of Ragnarok will control the world and wreak havoc from the underworld. The Grey Griffins must locate the spear and offer it as payment for Max's dad, who has been kidnapped. The Griffins are pursued across Scotland through portals that transport them to Germany, Iceland, and several hinterland environments. Max puts his life and the lives of his pals on the line to save his dad, only to discover that things are not as they should be.</p> <p>Young readers who enjoy the supernatural will encounter goblins, wolf-like soldiers, werewolves, Vlad Dracula, Morgan Lefay, deceitful adults once trusted by the Griffins, and a myriad of environments from mud-sucking bogs, portals, ice cities, and a virtual library.</p> <p>Linda Broughton Kennesaw, GA</p>
<p><i>The Secrets of Peaches</i> by Jodi Lynn Anderson Harper Collins, 2007, 297 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>ISBN-13: 978-0-06-073308-7</p> <p>Friendship</p> <p>Darlington Peach Orchard, inauguration grounds for a tenacious friendship between a trio of girls who spent a summer pulling peaches from the branches of its trees. This book picks up where the girls ended their summer in the prequel <i>Peaches</i>.</p> <p>As Murphy, Leeda, and Birdee approach graduation, they realize the next step of their lives may not be as easily implemented as the formation of their friendship in the orchard. Murphy faces her dream of moving to New York, Leeda faces the obstinacy of her sick mother, and Birdee faces the idea of finding herself alone on the orchard. While the girls confront the issue of what exactly the "next step" means for them, they tackle the true meaning of relationships, friendships, and moving on.</p> <p>This story is an inspiring read, with well-developed characters and a plot that may send you walking down memory lane, or perhaps cause you to think that some endings are merely just new beginnings.</p> <p>Lindsey Deweese Muncie, IN</p>	<p><i>Shark Girl</i> by Kelly Bingham Candlewick, 2007, 288 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>ISBN-13: 978-0-7636-3207-6</p> <p>Physical Loss/Courage</p> <p>Jane Arrowood loses more than her arm in a shark attack—she loses her spirit. Once a 15-year-old aspiring artist who looked forward to driving and dating, she now struggles to define herself by what is left, rather than by what is missing. Each phantom pain of her right arm, however, is a harrowing reminder that things will never be the same. Jane has never seen the attack that was captured on video and sensationalized in the media, but memory of its preceding events haunt her every attempt to draw, cook, clean, and socialize again. It's the infectious strength of a wheelchair-bound ten-year-old that finally helps Jane find hope in surprising places.</p> <p>Jane's young life—scattered and scarred—is pieced back together through Kelly Bingham's poignant collection of poetry, letters, conversations, and newspaper articles. The story is in the same breath, simple and profound. Anyone who has ever experienced the stunning sorrow of unexpected loss will relate to Jane's slow and, at times, surly path to healing.</p> <p>Jennifer Funk Manhattan, KS</p>

<p><i>Sophisticated Ladies: The Great Women of Jazz</i> by Leslie Gourse Dutton Children's Books, 2007, 64 pp., \$19.99</p> <p>Whether readers have an ear for jazz or not, they will find <i>Sophisticated Ladies</i> an entertaining compilation of the stories of fourteen female jazz musicians—each story as colorful as the pages that tell it. Strikingly similar tales of misery in impoverished childhoods, failed marriages, and substance abuse, give rise to the unique, soulful rhythms of greats like Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Peggy Lee. Each profile, less than three pages long, introduces readers to the life, music and legacy of a different woman who helped define an entire genre of music.</p> <p>At times Gourse's language is itself lyrical, while French's pictures are loud and dynamic, much like the performers they depict. A mix of memorable anecdotes and musical-technique explanations make this book creatively educational. Paired with a musical anthology, the stories of these women would easily burst off the pages and into the ears of young readers.</p> <p>Jennifer Funk Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>Soul Eater</i> by Michelle Paver Katherine Tegen Books (Imprint of HarperCollins), 2007, 323 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>As the third installment in <i>The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness</i>, <i>Soul Eater</i> invites readers to journey into the prehistoric Far North on a quest to save Wolf, Torak's pack brother. Infused throughout with a sense of mysticism and danger, this story allows the harsh landscape as well as creatures to function as interesting and vital characters, alongside Torak and his friend Renn. Readers will appreciate the chance to explore an unfamiliar, ancient world and, at the same time, explore perennial, contemporary issues such as the nature of friendship and the importance of loyalty. The book's title anticipates the pervasive sense of darkness that hangs over much of this novel—a feeling of impending doom that Torak and Renn overcome only by displaying great courage and resourcefulness in the face of evil. This novel challenges readers with an interesting narrative structure which invites readers to consider the story from multiple perspectives beyond that of the determined 13-year-old protagonist.</p> <p>Kevin Kienholz Emporia, KS</p>
<p><i>Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood</i> by Ibtisam Barakat Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007, 192 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Ibtisam Barakat writes an inspiring story of how life must go on even in a country where the threat of war is about them every day. The story begins with Ibtisam and her family fleeing their home in Ramallah when 3-year-old Ibtisam becomes separated from her family. They are later reunited in the caves the family flees to. It is the beginning of the many separations the family must undergo before returning to their home. When they return, they cope with Israeli soldiers practicing literally in their back yard.</p> <p>She writes about how a father goes out of his way to protect his family from these dangers and a mother's way of coping with day-to-day fear for herself and her children. This story also tells of how children are the same, no matter where they are, when curiosity outweighs their fear.</p> <p>Teresa Wells Wamego, KS</p>	<p><i>Titans of Chaos</i> by John C. Wright Tor, 2007, 319 pp., \$25.95</p> <p>John C. Wright's <i>Titans of Chaos</i> rounds out his <i>Chronicles of Chaos</i> trilogy in spectacular fashion. Amelia, a fourth-dimensional being; Vanity, a lost Phoenician princess; Victor, a synthetic man; Colin, a psychic; and Quentin, a warlock, all discover even more powers as they seek to find out who they are and establish their freedom while the Olympian gods pursue them at every turn. This book manages to blend just about every form of fantasy fiction into one fast-paced read. With mythologies ranging from ancient Greek to those of Jules Vern and scientific philosophies spanning from Aristotelian to Newtonian, Wright presents some heady concepts in a way that is not only understandable, but enjoyable as well.</p> <p>Bret Booher Muncie, IN</p>

<p>21 Proms, David Levithan and Daniel Ehrenhaft, eds. Poetry/Short Stories/Play Scholastic Point, 2007, 289 pp., \$8.99 ISBN-13: 978-0-439-89029-8</p> <p>This is a collection that includes one poem, one play, and nineteen short stories about one of the most anticipated, or dreaded, events in the life of a high school student. The stories range from the true to life to the outright fantasy, from heartbreaking to hilarious, and they are told from every conceivable point of view, girls, boys, and parents. There are stories about courage, embarrassment, new found love, old friendships renewed, and father's anxiety. This collection crosses the boundaries of race, social class, age, and sexual orientation.</p> <p>Many of the stories could be used on their own as supplemental material in various units. I would caution that sex, drugs, and course language are often part of the story, but do not seem contrived in their usage.</p> <p>At first glance, and by reading the title, I would say this book would appeal to teenage girls, but having read the stories, many would also appeal to the boys.</p> <p>Rhonda Bowser Matthews, IN</p>	<p>Walking on Glass by Alma Fullerton Death/Suicide/Depression HarperTempest, 2007, 131 pp., \$15.99 ISBN-13: 978-0-0607-7851-4</p> <p>This is a free-verse novel that tells the story of a teenage boy's loss of his mother. The book is written as the boy's journal as he is living through his mother's suicide attempt. She is living in the hospital, but on life support, and he is facing a very tough decision. Would it be murder to shut off the machines that are keeping his mother alive? His father is suffering from terrible depression and cannot make the decision himself. His best friend, Jack, is turning into a juvenile delinquent, and he cannot stand to be around Jack anymore. He dates a girl at his school, but she can't help him, either. This book deals with some very tough issues that soon teens have to face. It has some questionable language and subject matter for use in a classroom setting.</p> <p>Mary Cohat Muncie, IN</p>
<p>Way Down Deep by Ruth White Mystery Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007, 208 pp., \$16.00 ISBN-13: 978-0-374-38251-3</p> <p>Abandoned as a little girl in 1944 in the Appalachian town of Way Down Deep, West Virginia, Ruby June finds love and acceptance among the townsfolk. However, she remains haunted by the fact that her own origins remain a mystery. The pace of this often funny story quickens when she finds out that the truth behind her family history will soon be revealed. And although she must taste some "bitter berries" along the way, she eventually comes to an understanding of who she <i>was</i> before arriving in Way Down Deep and who she is <i>becoming</i>, all just in time for her thirteenth birthday.</p> <p>Readers will enjoy making the acquaintance of the kindly, somewhat eccentric citizens of Way Down (as the locals call it), while the story of Ruby June prompts them to consider issues such as kindness, belonging, and the meaning of family.</p> <p>Kevin Kienholz Emporia, KS</p>	<p>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy of the book to: 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>