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| <p><i>Absolutely Maybe</i> by Lisa Yee Arthur Levine Books, 2009, 288 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 978-0-439-83844-3</p> <p>Realistic/Humor</p> <p>Maybelline “Maybe” Chestnut is in high school trying to avoid anything that has to do with her mother’s charm school students and pageants. Maybe loves her mother but realizes that she just doesn’t have the mothering skills of the other moms. Her mother refuses to talk about Maybe’s birth father and does not try to protect Maybe from her latest boyfriend. When Maybe’s friend, Hollywood, wins a scholarship to USC’s film school, Maybe tags along. What Maybelline does not realize is that it takes money and looks to survive in California. All those charm school rules will come back to haunt Maybe and perhaps even help her in this new real world. She will realize what true friendship means along the way and gain a new perspective on what defines a parent in her generation.</p> <p>Mary E. Schmutz Junction City, KS</p> | <p><i>Beneath My Mother’s Feet</i> by Amjed Qamar Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2008, 198 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 978-1-4169-4728-8</p> <p>Realistic Fiction</p> <p>This captivating story is about the courage of a young girl named Nazia who has to fight tradition and family to make her own destiny. Nazia has reached a point in life that every young girl in Pakistan must face—marriage. Her mother has been saving for her dowry since the day she was born and was beginning to finish her wedding dress when tragedy strikes. Now faced with the burden of her father not working and older brother not sharing in the responsibility, Nazia has to leave school to help earn money for the family with her mother. It is through her leaving school and cleaning houses to earn money that she is faced with the thought of how she will live the rest of her life.</p> <p>In a heart-wrenching story of struggle, self-discovery and determination, <i>Beneath My Mother’s Feet</i> is sure to touch the pulse of readers.</p> <p>Taneshia Jones Tallahassee, FL</p> |
| <p><i>The Best Bad Luck I Ever Had</i> by Kristin Levine G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2009, 266 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Civil Rights/Friendship ISBN: 978-0-399-25090-3</p> <p>Although many people in Moundville are upset that the Walkers are black, Dit is upset because Emma is a girl; he decides that this is the worst bad luck ever. Dit becomes friends with Emma, and because of their friendship, begins to question why Emma can’t go to his school, why the sheriff is allowed to steal, and why some townspeople won’t allow Emma to be in a school play. Dit’s emerging social and moral conscience causes him to reconsider previous actions and make difficult choices. When Doc Haley, the town barber, who is black, is accused of a terrible crime, Emma and Dit concoct a daring plan to rescue him. This novel is based on the author’s family stories.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>Between Us Baxters</i> by Bethany Hegedus Westside Books, 2009, 306 pp., \$17.95</p> <p>Racism/Family ISBN: 978-1-934813-06-5</p> <p>Twelve-year-old Polly’s life is changing as quickly as the world around her. Set in the rural south at the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, this novel juxtaposes a community torn apart by racism against the struggle of one girl to protect her family and preserve her friendships. One part coming-of-age story, one part social commentary, the novel details Polly’s struggle to make sense of all sorts of changes, from the uncertainty of her own body to the chaos of her larger society. Violence in this small town exposes family secrets, forcing Polly to decide for herself what she believes. An authentic description of race relations in the 1950s, this novel places larger social issues of desegregation within the lives of two families.</p> <p>Catherine McTamane Nashville, TN</p> |

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| <p><i>Bird</i> by Rita Murphy Delacorte Press, 2008, 150 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>The protagonist and narrator of this story is not quite sure how she ended up in a large tree outside Bourne Manor. All she knows is that the wind carried her, as if has carried her all of her life. Wysteria Barrows, the mysterious and enigmatic inhabitant of the home, gives the girl the name “Miranda,” makes her steel boots so she’ll never fly away, and puts her to work mending nets for the local fishermen.</p> <p>With the help of Dr. Mead and a young Irishman named Farley, Miranda discovers the great mysteries of the house, as well as the great mysteries of her own heart and identity. Students will enjoy the fantastic elements of the narrative and setting, and teachers will appreciate the Mrs. Haversham-esque character that Murphy creates in Wysteria Barrows.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Jacob Stratman Siloam Springs, AR</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Magic Realism ISBN: 978-0-385-73018-1</p> <p><i>The Book of Michael</i> by Lesley Choyce Red Deer Press, 2008, 267 pp., \$12.95</p> <p>This is the story of Michael Grove, who was convicted of killing his girlfriend, Lisa, and his release from prison after his ex-girlfriend, Miranda, confesses to the crime. Michael struggles with depression, loneliness, and fear as he re-enters the “real” world. With the help of his family, friends, and his kooky grandmother, Phyllis, he learns to look past the stares and ignorance of others. He is haunted by the memories of his drug-addicted past, sexual misadventures with his ex-girlfriend Miranda, and the wonderful memories of Lisa.</p> <p>Michael learns to turn his life around and resorts to reading, running, and school work to tame his memory-drugged mind. However, an interesting twist occurs at the end of the novel when letters from Miranda, the murderer of his true love, appear at his door. Letters begging for help and compassion suddenly trigger a whole new route in Michael’s life.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tyler Quinvilan Tallahassee, FL</p> |
| <p><i>Crushworthy</i> by Sara Lawrence Penguin, 2008, 272 pp., \$9.99</p> <p>After a tough semester, Jinx Slater can finally relax on her holiday break—until she discovers her best friend, Liberty, has been dramatically pulled out of England by her strict father to live in another country. As her semester at Stagmount begins, things begin to turn around for Jinx: Liberty is allowed to stay at Stagmount, and it seems as though the stylish, suave Jamie might be interested in Jinx. Jinx’s entire crew even seems to rule the school this year, with their gorgeous looks, name-brand fashions, and the new additions to their clique.</p> <p>With things looking up for Jinx, drama always seems to follow her around every corner. Jamie flirts with Jinx, but then he refuses to call her for a week afterwards. When Jinx and her friends decide to let loose by sneaking out of Stagmount, they put themselves at risk.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Emily Watt Tallahassee, FL</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Relationships ISBN: 978-1-59514-173-6</p> <p><i>Dead in the Water</i> by Robin Stevenson Orca, 2008, 169 pp., \$9.95</p> <p>In this fast-paced high-seas adventure, there are many vivid details based on the author’s real-life experiences sailing from Canada to the Bahamas. Simon embarks on an incredible journey of terrifying adventure and self-discovery. He is never sure who to trust and must do battle with poachers, bullies, and his own ineptitude. By the time he realizes that he must rely on others instead of just himself, he is trapped in the hull of a boat with his homicidal captors. This suspenseful novel holds the reader’s attention from beginning to end with very specific descriptions of nautical skill as well as the ominous power of the sea. It is well suited for middle level and early high school students. This novel would also work well as part of an integrated thematic unit on oceanography, geography, and nautical measurement.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Kenan Metzger Muncie, IN</p> |

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| <p><i>Gringolandia</i> by Lyn Miller-Lachmann Curbstone Press, 2009, 290 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Social Justice ISBN: 978-1093189-49-8</p> <p>It's been five years since Daniel's father was imprisoned and tortured by the Pinochet regime. After being exiled, he rejoins Daniel, now seventeen, his sister, and their mom in Madison, Wisconsin. Battling alcohol and pain from years of torture, Papà is consumed with returning to Chile to continue his revolutionary activities. This story chronicles Daniel and his girlfriend Courtney's relationship with Papà, once known as the underground journalist, Nino, as they follow him back to his home country so that he can continue the fight to liberate Chile.</p> <p>Curbstone Press is committed to publishing multicultural young adult novels that focus on issues of social justice. <i>Gringolandia</i> is a journey through the past which offers a stark glimpse into life under a ruthless dictator and his regime. Just as compelling is Miller-Lachmann's depiction of family and friends torn apart and then brought back together by a revolution.</p> <p>Jacqueline Bach Baton Rouge, LA</p> | <p><i>A Little Friendly Advice</i> by Siobhan Vivian Push, 2008, 248 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Friendship/Love/Divorce ISBN: 978-0-545-00404-6</p> <p>This is an engaging story told in first person through the eyes of a sixteen-year-old girl named Ruby. Ruby has the ability to understand her friends and read their actions and words so that the reader knows all the characters very well. Ruby and her friends struggle through disappointments with parents and broken families and form bonds that provide support in times of need.</p> <p>The girls argue, get into trouble together, fight with their parents, and navigate the perils of teen society. With the exception of a few flashbacks, the story takes place in real time as we discover with Ruby the truth about her father and her friends. This would be an excellent book to talk about relationships and broken homes. It does contain some mild references to sex as well as specific references to teenage drinking, so it may not be suitable for younger readers.</p> <p>Kenan Metzger Muncie, IN</p> |
| <p><i>Living Dead Girl</i> by Elizabeth Scott Simon Pulse Books, 2008, 170 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Abduction/Child Molestation ISBN: 978-1-4169-6059-1</p> <p>Childhood is a time of innocence, a time of imagination, and a time of bliss. School should be a place of discovery filled with opportunities to explore the world through textbooks, playing, and fieldtrips. A fieldtrip shouldn't be the beginning of a five-year nightmare. But for Alice, it was that and much, much more.</p> <p>Ray, an older guy, abducts her from an aquarium where her classmates have abandoned her over a silly argument. The author's short chapters and vivid imagery paint a portrait of a young girl who is subjected to the cycle of abuse. When Alice's body matures, Ray demands that she find a replacement, or he will murder her family. Will Alice assist Ray with the creation of another <i>living dead girl</i>?</p> <p>Due to the mature content of this young adult novel, teachers are advised to use it with 9th–12th graders or mature 8th graders.</p> <p>Anjeanette C. Alexander-Smith Tallahassee, FL</p> | <p><i>1968</i> by Michael T. Kaufman Roaring Brook, 2008, 148 pp., \$22.95</p> <p>Historical Nonfiction ISBN: 978-1-59643-428-8</p> <p>For any American history buffs out there, <i>1968</i> is a must-have. This enchanting book includes the now historic sit-ins, teach-ins, and demonstrations of that year. Filled with exceptional photographs that capture the images emblazoned in people's minds, <i>1968</i> delivers a powerful punch. Kaufman's storytelling and commanding pictures take us all back to 1968.</p> <p>The book includes interviews and moving first-person accounts to help us recall those times. With award-winning photographs and headline newspaper articles included, it brings to life the tone that existed in <i>1968</i>. The book captures the feelings of people in America who opposed the war and people who were for the war. This book even goes so far as to show the Vietnam War from the other side of the fence.</p> <p>Kaufman delivers with a story like no other.</p> <p>Kendra Nichols Tallahassee, FL</p> |

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| <p><i>Nothing Pink</i> by Mark Hardy Boyds Mill Press, 2008, 109 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Homosexuality ISBN: 978-1-932425-24-6</p> <p>Sin is a major part of Vincent's life; it must be identified and then destroyed. Every moment since hearing the word "queer," Vincent has known he was gay and prayed for salvation. He prayed every day until he met Robert. Now, as he revels in the joy of being loved, he must also face the prospect of awaiting damnation. However, the discovery of his homosexuality is accompanied by a freeing religious revelation. <i>Nothing Pink</i> by Mark Hardy opens up the closed book policies when talking about gays and religion. Placing a homosexual young man in the family of a Baptist minister produces the unique conflict present in this novel.</p> <p>Hardy writes about issues that adolescent readers are deeply invested in. Written with a strong voice, yet still filled with topical sensitivity, <i>Nothing Pink</i> will allow students to validate their own thoughts and experiences concerning homosexuality.</p> <p>Caroline Coy Tallahassee, FL</p> | <p><i>Peace, Locomotion</i> by Jacqueline Woodson G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2009, 136 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Family/War/Loss ISBN: 978-0-399-24655-5</p> <p><i>Peace, Locomotion</i> is the lyrical and thoughtful companion text to Woodson's National Book Award Finalist, <i>Locomotion</i>. Lonnie Collins Motion, aka Locomotion, struggles to find his place in his new foster family. He loves his new family but misses his sister, Lili, who was placed with a different family. He is dealing with the loss of his parents while his new family is struggling with his foster brother's war injury. The novel's backdrop is a country questioning what peace means during the time of an unwanted and unpopular war and provides a timeless quality to the story. Woodson once again shows her ability to create a thoughtful and reflective character who confronts and grows from dealing with his fears and insecurities. While this story deals with social issues and societal concerns, it does so without the bleakness often present in texts focusing on loss, grief, war, and foster families.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p> |
| <p><i>Piggy</i> by Mireille Geus Front Street, 2008, 110 pp., \$14.95</p> <p>Autism/Emotional Problems ISBN: 978-1-59078-636-9</p> <p>Lizzy Bekell, whose nickname is Dizzy, is a 12-year-old autistic girl who possesses some interesting quirks. Dizzy struggles to fit in; she is different, and is made fun of by her classmates for it. The other kids call her names, while her mother tells her she is special. One day, a girl named Margaret, or Piggy, approaches Dizzy at her bus stop hangout. Margaret finds that she can easily manipulate Dizzy to get what she wants, even going so far as to create a fair-weather friendship. This begins a sequence of events that will change Dizzy and Piggy forever.</p> <p>Even though the book was translated from Dutch to English, it retains all of its emotion and vigor. The significance of autism and its effects are truly brought out by author Mireille Geus. <i>Piggy</i> is short and sweet, with a rollercoaster-like pace that doesn't let up.</p> <p>Alex Platt Tallahassee, FL</p> | <p><i>The Postcard</i> by Tony Abbott Little Brown, 2008, 354 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Action/Adventure ISBN: 978-0-316-01172-3</p> <p>Jason is finally a teenager and is excited to have the summer all to himself and his best friend, Hector, when his mother announces that she is shipping him to St. Petersburg, Florida, instead. The first line in the story proclaims that his grandmother has just passed away, so Jason must help his father bury her. Everything seems to be going all right until a mysterious phone call shakes Jason to the core. Suddenly, he is swept into a world of old, secret-coded postcards and hidden stories, family secrets, and late-night missions.</p> <p><i>The Postcard</i> is an enthralling story about unsolved family mysteries and secret orders. It is a story within a story containing vivid images of old-time and modern-day Florida. Postcards, journals, and magazines are pieced together to find the truth of what really happened to Jason's grandmother. It turns out that death is only the beginning.</p> <p>Courtney Burr Altamonte Springs, FL</p> |

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| <p><u>Rehab</u> by Randi Reisfeld Simon Pulse, 2008, 225 pp., \$8.99</p> <p>Kenzie Cross is an up-and-coming starlet. She is the breakout star on the hit TV action drama <i>Spywitness Girls</i>. She falls in with the party crowd, develops a drug problem, and becomes the darling of the tabloids. Nonetheless, she is chosen for the lead role in the much-anticipated dramatic film <i>The Chrome Hearts Club</i>. But when her drug problem affects the press for the movie, the director gives her an ultimatum: go to rehab or you're out of the film. Kenzie chooses rehab.</p> <p><i>Rehab</i> follows Kenzie as she struggles to accept and overcome her drug addiction. Reisfeld parallels Kenzie's story to those of Hollywood starlets today. Reisfeld makes her characters relatable to readers of all ages. Her references to popular culture and flowing story line make <i>Rehab</i> a great read.</p> <p>Beth Brenner Tallahassee, FL</p> | <p><u>Seaborn</u> by Craig Moodie Roaring Brook Press, 2008, 208 pp., \$17.95</p> <p>Luke and his father get caught in the middle of a storm off of the coast of Nantucket, and Luke's father is thrown from the yacht with nothing but an inflatable lifeboat to save him. After the storm subsides, Luke is left alone in the yacht and his father is missing. At the end of the novel, Luke finds his father adrift in the ocean while simultaneously coming across a boat that is in the same area. They are eventually saved and Luke's father admits that he cheated on his mother, which is why she left.</p> <p>The author spends a lot of time explaining the events leading up to the climactic storm, but fails to expand on many details of the storm and its repercussions. The plot was resolved in such a predictable manner that it gave the book a lackluster finish.</p> <p>Alyssa Licitra Tallahassee, FL</p> |
| <p><u>The Secret Story of Sonia Rodriguez</u> by Alan Lawrence Sitomer Hyperion Books for Children/Disney Book Group, 2008, 312 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Sonia Rodriguez lives each day caught between two worlds. As the only daughter in the family, she struggles to balance the demanding old-world expectations of her traditional Hispanic household with the expectations of her friends and teachers at her California high school, as well as her dream to become the first in her family to graduate. The trajectory of Sonia's life ultimately hinges upon two important events—her decision to focus on doing whatever it takes to graduate from high school coupled with a trip to Mexico to visit with her grandmother. She notes that the important story she has to tell involves “sex and violence and drugs But there is love too.” In telling her own secret story, Sonia follows through on this promise (directly and frankly, at times) and finds not only her voice, but also a way to reconcile the best of both of her worlds.</p> <p>Kevin Kienholz Emporia, KS</p> | <p><u>See No Evil</u> by Jamila Gavin Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009, 208 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Antonietta (Nettie) Roberts has led a life of luxury so far in her twelve years. She has her own nanny, her own butler, her own chauffeur, even her own suite of rooms to run through. She has also never attended a formal school. She was tutored for as long as she could remember by Miss Kovachev. Suddenly, Miss Kovachev deserts Nettie and all of her dreams without leaving so much as a note.</p> <p>Nettie's father, Vladimir, adores his little girl and will do most anything to make her happy. Unfortunately, this could mean that he would do illegal things. Nettie and her new friend, Bennie, learn all about seeing, hearing, and speaking evil in Regent Mansion in London, England. What kind of secrets does Nettie's home hold? The mystery does not unfold until the absolute end! Ages 12+.</p> <p>Mary E. Schmutz Junction City, KS</p> |

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| <p><i>Sitting on the Edge</i> by C. Lee McKenzie Westside Books, 2009, 268 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Family/Self-mutilation/Suicide ISBN: 978-1-934813-06-5</p> <p>“Something’s wrong.” So begins the story of Shawna Stone, the street-wise 16-year-old who has learned not to rely on anyone but herself. Abandoned by her mother with only a bus ticket and the name of the grandmother she’s never met, Shawna sets out for Kay’s horse ranch in California. McKenzie tells Kay and Shawna’s stories in alternating voices, an effective means of uncovering how deeply Shawna’s pain runs, how tightly both Kay and Shawna hold to their secrets, and how privately they each yearn for more. This is a novel for older students, as it includes details of Shawna’s cutting herself and multiple attempts at suicide.</p> <p>Catherine McTamane Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>Step to This</i> by Nikki Carter Dañna/Kensington Press, 2009, 232 pp., \$9.95</p> <p>True to Life/Teen Christian Fiction ISBN: 978-0-7582-3439-1</p> <p>Gia Stokes is a fifteen-year-old who is grounded in her faith and in her self-esteem. Her mother keeps her in line through church functions and tough love because she does not want Gia to become a teen mother. Gia has her head on straight with AP classes, an SAT high-frequency-word vocabulary, and creative dancing ability. But her identity and faith are challenged when she decides to try out for the Hi-Steppers dance team at her high school.</p> <p>As she claims one of the top spots in the group, Gia’s popularity soars. Valerie, the leader of the Hi-Steppers, hooks Gia up with a makeover and a football player named Romeo. These changes cause Gia to lose touch with herself and her best friend, Ricky. She weaves a web of lies that puts her in a challenging position.</p> <p>Middle school and high school readers will enjoy this engaging page-turner!</p> <p>Anjeanette C. Alexander-Smith Tallahassee, FL</p> |
| <p><i>Stepping Up</i> by Mark Fink Westside Books, 2009, 216 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Self-Discovery/Friendship/Basketball/Bullies ISBN: 978-1-934813-03-4</p> <p>Basketball. Making friends. Talking to . . . <i>girls</i>. All of these teenage pursuits come easily to his best friend, Mike, but not to Ernie Dolan. On the basketball court, Ernie can keep up, but he is a little too slow and a little too short to ever be “the man.” Ernie often finds himself on the outside looking in. On the first day of a competitive basketball camp, Ernie is nicknamed “Choke” by the camp bully. By the third day, Ernie and Mike are barely friends anymore. At the dance with the girls’ camp, Ernie humiliates himself by spilling soda on several girls. However, kind coaches, new friends, and a near-fatal tragedy help Ernie discover that by being himself, he really can find the confidence to “step up.”</p> <p>Blake Tenore Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>Suite Scarlett</i> by Maureen Johnson Point, 2008, 368 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Family ISBN: 978-0-439-89927-7</p> <p>Scarlett is the third of four children in the Martin family, who own, operate, and inhabit the historic Hopewell Hotel in NYC. The hotel once hosted some of the most glamorous movie stars in its 27 rooms; however, today the building is shabby and rundown. On her 15th birthday, Scarlett is put in charge of one of the hotel’s 27 rooms, the Empire Suite. Scarlett finds herself maintaining the room of Mrs. Amberson, a failed 1970s starlet who has returned to the city to write her memoirs.</p> <p>Throughout <i>Suite Scarlett</i>, the theme of family unity runs deep. Maureen Johnson does a great job of portraying an American family with financial problems and busy schedules. In addition, the members of the Martin family all begin to realize the things in their lives that are the most important and meaningful. Overall, Johnson’s characters are quirky, memorable, and overall believable people.</p> <p>Melissa Zamonis Tallahassee, FL</p> |

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| <p><i>Thief</i> by Brian James PUSH (Scholastic), 2008, 247 pp., \$8.99</p> <p>Elizabeth, known as Kid, may be a thief, but she is also a victim. With an abusive father in jail, an emotionally fragile mother in medical care, and a foster parent, Sandra, who demands she steal to earn her stay, Kid's life is more complicated than it may appear.</p> <p>Wishing only to belong and be loved, Kid pours herself into relationships with Alexi and Dune, Sandra's band of thieves. Where her friendship with Alexi is ruled with fear, Dune's love is unconditional. Alexi's jealousy of newcomer Dune eventually leads to the ultimate betrayal, and Kid and Dune are on the run. After a short respite in suburban malls, Kid and Dune learn they aren't nearly as safe as they may feel.</p> <p>Kid narrates the story beautifully. Symbols of wings and wishes crop up throughout the piece, as Kid remains hopeful that she will find something that lasts forever.</p> <p>Faith H. Wallace Kennesaw, GA</p> | <p><i>The Twilight Zone: Walking Distance</i> Adapted by Mark Kneene, illustrated by Dove McHargue Walker, 2008, 72 pp., \$9.99</p> <p>ISBN: 978-0-8027-9715-5</p> <p>In this adaptation of a classic <i>The Twilight Zone</i> screenplay, high-strung Martin Sloan is struggling to deal with everyday pressures and longs for days gone by. In a strange turn of events, he does, in fact, return to his past, desperately trying to warn the younger version of himself of what lies ahead. Will anyone believe that Sloan has actually traveled in time? How will he return to his own life? Will there be consequences? Clues in the graphic novel format let the reader in on a few details in advance of Sloan, himself!</p> <p>In addition to <i>Walking Distance</i>, other classic <i>The Twilight Zone</i> screenplays have been adapted, including <i>The After Hours</i>, <i>The Odyssey of Flight 33</i>, and <i>The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street</i>. In this new adapted format, <i>The Twilight Zone</i> stories will find a new audience.</p> <p>Faith H. Wallace Kennesaw, GA</p> |
| <p><i>Three Cups of Tea</i> by Greg Mortenson & David Oliver Relin Adapted for Young Readers by Sarah Thomson Puffin Books, 2009, 209 pp., \$8.99</p> <p>ISBN: 978-0-14-241412-5</p> <p>"Greg Mortenson was lost. He didn't know it yet." So begins Greg Mortenson's inspirational story. He attempted to climb K2, the world's second tallest mountain, but he never made it to the top and ended up lost in Pakistan. The people of Korphe took him in and helped him. He was so moved by their generosity that he vowed to build a school for the children. He spent several years raising money to build over 60 schools. Over the course of his work in Pakistan, he has had to deal with soldiers, Taliban officials, village leaders, politicians, and the mujahideen. "With the first cup of tea, you are a stranger," a villager tells Greg. "With the second cup, you are an honored guest. With the third, you become family." The generosity of the Pakistani people with whom Greg becomes family contrasts sharply with the image that many Americans have.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>3 Willows: The Sisterhood Grows</i> by Ann Brashares Delacorte, 2009, 318 pp., \$18.99</p> <p>ISBN: 978-0-385-73676-3</p> <p>Realistic Fiction</p> <p>After four summers with the sisterhood of the traveling pants, Brashares introduces us to the next generation of best friends whose lives are linked not by pants, but by willow trees. Polly, Ama, and Jo have just finished eighth grade when they find themselves dealing with a new job, an unexpected adventure, and complicated family circumstances. Separated for most of the summer, the three become distant only to be pulled back together by tragedy. Younger readers who enjoyed Brashares's previous novels will enjoy this one as well.</p> <p>Their story is told from three different points of view, and Brashares includes observations about willow trees as a device for setting up each section. Although <i>3 Willows</i> seems to have been marketed as part of the original series (and the previous characters make cameos in the story), this novel can stand on its own and is undoubtedly destined to have a sequel.</p> <p>Jacqueline Bach Baton Rouge, LA</p> |

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| <p><i>Well Defined: Vocabulary in Rhyme</i> by Michael Salinger</p> <p>Illustrated by Sam Henderson Wordsong-Boyd's Mill Press, 2009, 64 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 978-1-59078-615-4</p> <p>A book based on defining words may seem an unlikely choice for a classroom library, but <i>Well Defined</i> is light and fun while still being informative. Salinger defines “two-dollar words” (p. 7),—like equivocal, recalcitrant, and transmute—in poetic form. Carefully crafted definitions (with their own two-dollar words) are told through story-like context with plenty of personification; students will have plenty of fun as they try to imitate the new words. Cartoon-like illustrations accompany many of the poems and provide visual cues for readers. Parts of speech of each word are included in the table of contents, and dictionary definitions are listed at the bottom of each poem.</p> <p>Faith H. Wallace Kennesaw, GA</p> | <p><i>What They Always Tell Us</i> by Martin Wilson</p> <p>Delacorte, 2008, 291 pp., \$15.99 ISBN: 978-0-385-90500-8</p> <p>Friendship</p> <p>Teen angst just got a much needed 21st-century perspective in this genuine story of two brothers and their struggle to come together throughout a turbulent school year. James was once close to his younger brother Alex, but things have changed. James, a senior, does not care to be associated with Alex, a loner trying to find his niche. James has his own issues to deal with: picking a college, going to parties, girls, and finding a way to stay sane in small-town Alabama. Alex must overcome his shaky past and the pressure to live up to his big brother's reputation. James and Alex discover the value of family and friendship in this powerful tale of self-acceptance and growing up. James and Alex's perspectives alternate through the chapters. Alex's chapters capture his loneliness and desire for social recognition while James's focus on his insecurities and concern for the future.</p> <p>Bryce Lewis Tallahassee, FL</p> |
| <p><i>Unwind</i> by Neal Shusterman</p> <p>Simon & Shuster Books for Young Readers, 2007, 352 pp., \$16.99 Science Fiction/Dystopia ISBN: 978-14169-1204-0</p> <p><i>Unwind</i> takes place after the Second Civil War, a long and violent war between the Pro-life and Pro-choice armies. According to the Bill of Life, a set of laws passed to end the war, life is sacred from the point of conception until the age of 13. Between 13 and 18, a child may be retroactively “aborted” as long as the child's life doesn't technically end. The process by which a child is both terminated and yet still alive is called “unwinding.”</p> <p>Connor's parents choose to “unwind” him because he gets in trouble at school. Risa, an orphan, is unwound by the state because there isn't enough money to take care of her. Lev's family is religious, and his “unwinding” has been planned since his birth. He is raised to see himself as a “tithe.” These three teens meet by accident and struggle to survive until they are 18.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy of the book to:</i></p> <p><i>Melanie Hundley</i> <i>Dept. of Teaching and Learning</i> <i>Box 230</i> <i>230 Appleton Place</i> <i>GPC</i> <i>Nashville, TN 37203</i></p> <p><i>To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Melanie Hundley at melanie.hundley@vanderbilt.edu.</i></p> |

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