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| <p><i>The Awakening</i> (Darkest Powers Book 2) by Kelley Armstrong HarperCollins, 2009, 368 pp., \$17.99</p> <p><i>The Awakening</i>, the second book in Armstrong's Darkest Power series, begins with Chloe, Derek, Simon, and Tori on the run after their escape from the sinister Edison Group. The four teens each possess a power that the Edison Group wants to control. Chloe talks to ghosts, Derek is a werewolf, and Simon and Tori are sorcerers. In addition to dealing with their powers, the four teens also deal with the usual teen issues—Chloe likes Simon but she also likes Derek. Tori has a crush on Simon and Simon has a crush on Chloe. Derek is oddly protective of Chloe but struggles to show how much he cares. Compounding Derek's teen angst are his developing werewolf powers. The Edison Group tracks the teens to their hiding place, so they split up to escape. After they regroup, they leave the city, heading for an adult who may be able to help.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>Becoming Alice: A Memoir</i> by Alice Rene iUniverse, 2009, 273 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Ilse (also called Elsie, and eventually, Alice) is the young daughter of a Jewish-Austrian family living in Vienna at the start of World War II. When her family's bank accounts are frozen as Hitler advances across Europe and violence escalates, Ilse and her family escape across Latvia and Russia to Japan, eventually resettling in Portland, Oregon. Ilse's parents struggle to provide for the family, and Ilse must adjust to a world where everything is unfamiliar.</p> <p>Rene captures the inner world of a child caught in the turmoil of war, escape, and refugee life—a voice fraught with confusion, fear, and playfulness. Ilse, embarrassed about her lumpy European sweaters, long braids, and crazy relatives, grows into an insightful young woman determined to forge an independent life. While some of the most famous accounts chronicle the terrors of the Holocaust, Rene's memoir provides a glimpse into the lives of those who escaped.</p> <p>Rachel Bowers Nashville, TN</p> |
| <p><i>Bloodhound</i> (The Legend of Beka Cooper, Book 2) by Tamora Pierce Random House Books for Young Readers, 2009, 560 pp., \$18.99</p> <p>In this sequel to <i>Terrier</i>, Pierce explores a rougher, less magical side of Tortallan history through the journal of Beka Cooper, junior Dog in the Provost's Guard. Beka's restless tenacity in the hunt runs her afoul of city authorities and criminal leaders alike when she is sent to the neighboring town of Port Caynn to investigate an influx of counterfeit coins that threatens the economic stability of the entire kingdom. Beka must stay focused on her investigation while retaining her cover and navigating her romance with a handsome gambler who may or may not be involved in the counterfeiting ring she is bound, by law and by personal commitment, to sniff out.</p> <p><i>Bloodhound</i> retains the element of fantasy that captivated fans of Pierce's earlier Tortallan legends, but its focus on the coarse realities of city life makes Beka's tale even more relatable to modern readers well-versed in the crime-drama genre.</p> <p>Nicole Barrick Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>Bugboy</i> by Eric Luper Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 256 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>"Shabby" Jack Walsh is only 15 years old and has just hit the big time in horse racing. The Great Depression has hit everyone and everything except the ponies. People still flock to Saratoga to try and make a buck. Jack just wants to work with the best horses. He's already led a very hard childhood, what with being sent away from his family because they couldn't afford to feed him and his sister. Sleeping in the barns is much better for Jack anyway, he thinks. Bigger trials await Jack, though, when he's tempted to fix the biggest race of his life.</p> <p>Even at the very young age of 15, Jack leads a very adult life and has to make very adult choices. Jack must decide what is more important in the horse business—winning the big race or winning at life.</p> <p>Mary Schmutz Junction City, KS</p> |

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| <p><i>The Demon's Lexicon</i> by Sarah Rees Brennan Fantasy/Magic/Family Relationships Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2009, 322 pp., \$17.99 ISBN: 978-1-4169-6379-0</p> <p>Nick and his older brother Alan are demon slayers; they use swords and magic to fight evil and protect their mother, a witch driven mad by magicians. The three of them are constantly on the move as they hunt and are hunted by demons and magicians. Though troubled by his feelings toward his mother, Nick has no doubt about the love and loyalty he feels toward his brother Alan.</p> <p>A brother and sister arrive needing protection from a demon, and Nick and Alan are forced to make difficult and dangerous choices in order to protect them. As they search for the demon attacking the brother and sister, Nick finds out that his beloved brother has been lying to him about their family's past. The circle of magicians closes in on the two sets of siblings, the danger intensifies, and Nick uncovers a secret that could cost them all their lives.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>Everlost</i> by Neal Shusterman Simon Pulse, 2007, 394 pp., \$17.99 ISBN: 978-0-689-87238-9</p> <p>Have you ever pondered if that brightness at the end of the tunnel is a light of love or flames? What if, on your way to discovering the truth, you were detoured to a place that was a shadow of our world? "Nick and Allie's lives didn't quite flash before them; there was no time." After colliding on their way to the light, these teenagers are prematurely blasted through the black walls of the tunnel, only to wake nine months later in a familiar, yet foreign land.</p> <p>Tribes of children wander between fear of the soul-stealing monster, McGill, and safety with Mary, Queen of Snots, in the ghost structure of NYC's Twin Towers. Everlost is a place where fortune cookies never lie and standing still means sinking to the Earth's core. Neal Shusterman's harrowing tale explains how regardless of what people believe, the universe has its own ideas.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Justin Garwood Nashville, TN</p> |
| <p><i>Geek Charming</i> by Robin Palmer High School/Relationships/Friendship Speak, An Imprint of Penguin Group, 2009, 338 pp., \$7.99 ISBN: 978-0-14-241122-3</p> <p>Dylan Shoenfeld is one of the in-crowd at posh Castle Heights High. Her boyfriend is cool and her friends are oh-so-popular. Dylan leads the school in fun and fashion. Her life changes when she drops her fashionable bag in a fountain and it is rescued by Josh Rowen, a film geek, well outside the popular crowd. Dylan agrees to be the subject of a movie he is making as part of the application process to film school. Dylan finds herself becoming friends with Josh, who moves into Dylan's popular crowd. But Dylan's world comes crashing down when a cut of Josh's film footage shows her as a spoiled, selfish diva.</p> <p>Dylan is faced with tough decisions about her place at Castle Heights High School in this frothy appropriation of the princess and the frog fairytale.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>Giving Up the Y</i> by Serena Robar Teen Romance/Friendship Simon Pulse, New York, 2009, 242 pp., \$8.99 ISBN: 978-1-4169-7558-8</p> <p>Spencer Davis has just turned 16 and has passed into the realm of womanhood. At least according to her mother, who marched her into the OB-GYN's office for her first exam. Spencer left with The Pill and an odd feeling that this was not how her birthday was supposed to be. After all, she doesn't feel that anyone in her school is even pill-worthy yet. But then the heavens part and she meets Benjamin Hopkins, who just moved to May Valley High. Mr. Golden has all the potential of being "the one." Is Ben pill worthy? What about her friendship with Alyssa, who adores Ben?</p> <p>Read how Spencer deals with her outward appearance, her loyalty to her friends, and how she deals with Ben. This is a page-turner full of pure high school drama!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Mary Schmutz Junction City, KS</p> |

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| <p>Hollywood & Maine by Allison Whittenberg Delacorte Press, 2009, 166 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>It is January 1976 and Charmaine Upshaw's life is perfect. She's beginning a relationship with Raymond, trying to get into modeling, maybe acting, and starting her second semester of ninth grade. Then her Uncle E, the ex-convict, returns, and her family takes him back in, even though he left Philadelphia several months ago and cost her family the \$1,000 they had lent him for bail. Maine finds herself without her own bedroom, on the brink of losing Raymond, and her personal life interfering with classroom discussions.</p> <p>Often humorous and always heartwarming, Whittenberg's follow-up to <i>Sweet Thang</i> captures life in the late 70s from the point of view of a black teenager who lives in a close community and finds herself negotiating with the larger themes in the world—such as redemption, doubt, and acceptance.</p> <p>Jacqueline Bach Baton Rouge, LA</p> | <p>If I Grow Up by Todd Strasser Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2009, 222 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>The first word of the book's title is highlighted—as well it should be. Nothing in the Fredrick Douglass Project is guaranteed except poverty, the drug market, and dodging bullets from guns of rival gangsters. No one knows this guarantee better than DeShawn, who must face the tribulations of school life versus gang life and the difficulties of teenage pregnancy while trying not to die on the streets like his mother did.</p> <p>DeShawn knows what happens to those who let the mean streets become their playground, battlefield, and in some cases—their death. She must make a decision: become more involved in school and find that ticket out of Fredrick Douglass or become engulfed in the culture of the gang. The choice is not easy.</p> <p>This book is suitable for 6th graders and up and illustrates how tough life can be and how hard the choices are that must be made . . . or else.</p> <p>Cord McKeithen Baton Rouge, LA</p> |
| <p>King Lear by William Shakespeare Adapted by Richard Appignanesi, Illustrated by Ilya Amulet Books, 2009, 208 pp., \$10.95</p> <p>Setting the story in the same time and milieu of Fenimore Cooper's <i>Leatherstocking Tales</i>, the adaptors of this drama take on the grand task of translating a complex tragedy into the <i>manga</i> (Japanese comic book) format. The alternative setting highlights political dimensions of the story, with Lear being an Iroquois chief who marries his daughters to British dukes and a French king. The adaptors succeed in capturing the frenetic quality of Lear's madness, particularly in the famous storm scene, as well as conveying the emotional range of many characters, chief among them Lear's daughters, Goneril and Regan.</p> <p>This book should please both students and teachers. There are definite action movie features injected into the tragedy, but the original language is preserved throughout, and there are helpful scaffolds, such as full-page, color character descriptions, a plot summary, and a brief biography of Shakespeare.</p> <p>Stergios Botzakis Knoxville, TN</p> | <p>The Last Olympian by Rick Riordan Hyperion Books, 2009, 500 pp., \$17.99</p> <p><i>The Last Olympian</i>, the conclusion in the Percy Jackson series, is full of betrayal, romance and humor as it follows ancient Greek gods and mythological creatures through their modern adventures. Percy often narrowly avoids mistakes that could eventually lead to his death; he makes the same kinds of mistakes that many kids make. In this final installment, the Titans have escaped from Tartarus and plan to take over the world, casting humankind into chaos. With the help of centaurs, Cyclops, and hundred-handed ones, Percy and his friends must defeat the Titans and restore power to the Gods at Olympus. Riordan's jokes and puns make ancient Greek mythology accessible to kids of all ages, from Hermes' Delivery Service, a package service relying on the god Hermes' fleet feet, to Auntie M's Lawn Gnome Emporium, where the proprietress can turn you to stone with a single look.</p> <p>Che Pieper Nashville, TN</p> |

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| <p><i>The Locked Garden</i> by Gloria Whelan HarperCollins, 2009, 168 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Historical fiction/Family/Mental Illness ISBN: 978-0-06-079094-3</p> <p>In the year 1900, Verna's papa, a well-known psychiatrist, has moved her, her younger sister Carlie, and their stern Aunt Maude to Michigan where he will work in an asylum with mentally ill patients. After losing their mother to typhoid, the girls are hesitant to leave the city, but eager for new adventures in their country home. When Eleanor, one of the patients who has made a remarkable recovery, comes to work for the family, Aunt Maude objects, voicing the prejudices and rumors that abound regarding those who live and work in the asylum.</p> <p>Whelan's descriptions and characterization give the reader a taste of what it was like for those whose mental illness was not treated as an illness in the early 20th century. By choosing an adolescent girl to narrate the story, Whelan allows the reader to approach this topic with innocence, compassion, and kindness.</p> <p>Vicki Sherbert Wakefield, KS</p> | <p><i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> by William Shakespeare Adapted by Richard Appignanesi, Illustrated by Emma Viecelli Amulet Books, 2009, 208 pp., \$10.95</p> <p>Drama/Graphic Novel ISBN: 978-0-8109-4323-0</p> <p>This book succeeds in translating Shakespeare's romantic comedy into the popular <i>shōjo manga</i> (Japanese girls' romance comic) format. The simultaneous matching up of sisters Beatrice and Hero with friends Benedick and Claudio are presented in accessible and fun ways. The format works well in portraying the back-and-forth repartee of Beatrice and Benedick while also being well suited in playing up the soap-operatic qualities of Don John's villainous machinations.</p> <p>Along with the illustrations, the adaptors preserve the use of Shakespeare's original language, albeit in word balloons. The cartoonish pictures go a long way in carrying the story, but there are also a few other built-in teaching tools, such as the full-color character pages that front the story and two pages at the end of the book that contain a full plot summary as well as a capsule version of Shakespeare's life.</p> <p>Stergios Botzakis Knoxville, TN</p> |
| <p><i>Once Dead, Twice Shy</i> (Madison Avery, Book 1) by Kim Harrison HarperCollins, 2009, 240 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Fantasy ISBN: 978-0-06-171816-8</p> <p>Finding out your dad arranged for the cute guy you were beginning to like to ask you to the prom is bad. Finding out in the middle of prom is worse. As prom nights go, Madison Avery doesn't think hers could get any worse. She finds out that it can when she flees her prom (and the date her father arranged) and survives a horrible car crash, only to be killed by a guy with a large sword. As she's dying, she grabs the guy's necklace and then wakes up several hours later in the morgue. She meets Barnabas, a light reaper, and he helps her get acclimated to her new life. She rescues souls from dark reapers, battles with timekeepers, and meets angels and seraphs—all the while trying to fit in at high school.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>News from the Dead</i> by Mary Hooper Roaring Book Press, 2008, 272 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Historical/True Story ISBN: 978-1-59643-355-7</p> <p>In 1650, a teenage housemaid, Anne Green, was hanged for infanticide; she woke up in her coffin several hours later. This novel is based on Anne Green's case and opens with the line, "It is very dark when I wake." The reader immediately experiences Anne's thoughts and her frantic struggle to figure out where she is and how she got there. Anne's experiences—the sexual abuse at the hands of her employer, her pregnancy, and the trial, are juxtaposed with the narrative from the young surgeon who is attending his first dissection. The young surgeon thinks he sees eye flutters and movement from the "corpse" of the young housemaid and has to convince the other doctors that Anne is, in fact, alive.</p> <p>The author uses historical accounts, pamphlets, and documents from the time period to add to the authenticity of the novel. Some of the original documents are included.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p> |

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| <p><i>Out of Left Field: Marlee's Story</i> by Barbara L. Clanton Regal Crest Enterprises, LLC, 2009, 172 pp., \$11.99</p> <p>As the Clarksville Cougars softball team prepares for the upcoming season, star-pitcher Marlee McAllister is facing challenges on and off the field. An ambitious athlete but struggling student, Marlee is a pretty typical high school junior trying to find her place in a complicated social world. Marlee's surprising connection to Susie Torres forces her to confront her sexual identity and the implications it has for her friends and team.</p> <p>Well-written and authentic, Clanton's story offers a thoughtful presentation of the struggles of lesbian teens. Her fully developed characters allow the issues of sexuality to be addressed respectfully and without over-simplification. Sexual details are included, but appropriate. <i>Out of Left Field</i> is a compassionate and realistic story suitable for a wide range of student readers.</p> <p>Catherine McTamanev Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Demigod Files</i> by Rick Riordan Hypertion Books, 2009, 151 pp., \$12.95</p> <p>This companion book to the series Percy Jackson & The Olympians, set in the modern United States and based on Greek mythology, is set up as a field guide for avid fans. Percy Jackson, the 12-year-old son of Poseidon, continues his adventures with the Olympians in 3 short stories, accompanied by interviews with Camp Half-Blood (hence, the demigod designation) residents, his sidekick Annabeth's trunk, a camp map, plus puzzles and games for those who await the publication of the fifth and final volume in the series.</p> <p>Percy uses his wits, an arsenal of special powers, and his engaging personality to conquer dragons, monsters, and other challenges that lurk in and around 21st century New York City. The clever illustrations and captions add to the fan's appreciation of this clever, action-packed fantasy series and is a must-have for Riordan's many admirers. A preview of the upcoming series closer is included.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p> |
| <p><i>The Pharaoh's Secret</i> by Marissa Moss Amulet Books, 2009, 320 pp. with 40 illus., \$15.95</p> <p>Talibah means "seeker of truth," and her name frames the plot of this tale of intrigue and adventure set in modern Egypt. Talibah and her younger brother Adom accompany their Egyptologist father on a research field trip. While there, the teen heroine becomes tangled up in a mystery surrounding an unusual queen who ruled as a pharaoh. She seems to be disappearing from the ruins around Luxor along with her high priest protector.</p> <p>Talibah and Adom combine wits and ingenuity to overcome ancient curses, curious relics, near drowning, a poisonous scorpion, and a deadly cobra, along with an evil uncle as they help the female pharaoh resume her place in history. At the same time, the two discover a link with their Egyptian mother, who died mysteriously. The author includes notes that detail her interest in ancient Egypt and the grief of losing a loved one.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p> | <p><i>The Real Spy's Guide to Becoming a Spy</i> by Peter Earnest with Suzanne Harper Abrams Books, 2009, 143 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Calling all readers who have ever dreamed of working in the exotic and clandestine world of international espionage. <i>The Real Spy's Guide to Becoming a Spy</i> is about as authentic as it gets: co-written by Peter Earnest, a former CIA operations officer and founder of the International Spy Museum in Washington DC, this helpful book paints an enticing picture of what it means, and what it takes, to be a spy.</p> <p>Learn the professional lingo, try your hand at cracking codes, and figure out how to spot a bugged phone and hidden cameras.</p> <p>Matthew Lukach Nashville, TN</p> |

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| <p><i>The Red Queen's Daughter</i> by Jacqueline Kolosov Hyperion, 2009, 432 pp., \$8.99</p> <p>Fantasy ISBN: 978-1-4231-0798-9</p> <p>No one knows for certain what became of Mary Seymour, sole heir of the virtuous Queen Katherine Parr. When author Jacqueline Kolosov pulls her from the shadows of Tudor history, Mary is an orphan with a mysterious past and an uncertain future. Her destiny is revealed by the clairvoyant Lady Strange, Mary's guardian: Mary is to become a white magician, protecting Queen Elizabeth's rule with insight, magic, and, most important, a vow never to sacrifice herself for love.</p> <p>Mary's faithful dog Jack and a host of spirits and spells give her confidence when she is called to duty in Elizabeth's court. Navigating the passion and politics that destroyed her parents proves more challenging than she imagined. Mary protects her character and the crown by realizing that good and evil must coexist in the world for people to find their destiny.</p> <p>Caroline McCoy Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>Running for My Life</i> by Ann Gonzalez Westside Books, 2009, 238 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>High School/Family/Mental Illness ISBN: 978-1-934813-00-3</p> <p>Ann Gonzalez dedicates <i>Running for My Life</i> "to the many teenagers who are handed unfathomable challenges and who, nevertheless, find their way to freedom." Gonzalez gives us an intimate look into the life of one of these teens with Andrea McKane, a fourteen-year-old girl who, despite the odds, learns to live with courage and strength. In addition to the typical problems of a teenage girl, Andrea must cope with her mother's schizophrenia, a disease that transforms the mother she loves into an abusive stranger. While she longs to cling to the comforts of her stuffed bunny and happy childhood memories of her mother, Andrea must confront the pain of her mother's illness and learn to stand on her own.</p> <p>Gonzalez clearly understands the complex issues of growing up in today's world. <i>Running for My Life</i> provides an example of one teen whose bravery shines as she lives day to day.</p> <p>Lindsey Bollinger Nashville, TN</p> |
| <p><i>Seattle Blues</i> by Michael Wenberg Westside Books, 2009, 236 pp., \$12.99</p> <p>Family Relationships/War ISBN: 978-1-934813-04-1</p> <p>It's 1970 and thirteen-year-old Maya is a kid sorting a lot out on her own. Sent by her mother to live with her grandmother, Maya wants to know why she had to leave the life she knew, a life made even more challenging when her father goes missing in Vietnam. At first angry and sullen, Maya wants to rebel against her grandmother, until she discovers a part of her family's history that she'd never known before, and she realizes that she has a lot to learn from both her mother and grandmother.</p> <p>Well-intentioned, <i>Seattle Blues</i> is weakened by an inconsistent writing style and an underdeveloped voice for Maya. The many challenges that Maya faces, from race riots to autism, seem forced, making the narrative cumbersome. This novel is best recommended for students who are already interested in the story's emphasis on the redeeming power of music.</p> <p>Catherine McTammany Nashville, TN</p> | <p><i>The Sorta Sisters</i> by Adrian Fogelin Peachtree, 2007, 279 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Relationships./Families ISBN: 978-1-56145-424-2</p> <p>Two girls, two worlds, but so much in common. Mica lives on a houseboat in southern Florida with a marine scientist father, and Anna lives in northern Florida with a foster mom who is a science teacher. Both girls love science and are hoping to find a true friend. They become pen pals and share much of their lives. Each letter includes a token from nature that they think is interesting. Their friendship brings both girls joy and sorrow, but we see the girls' lives change as time passes. Life does not always have perfect answers, but it can provide challenges and resolution. Students can identify with so many aspects of this book—dysfunctional families, alcoholism, loneliness, friendship, and rejection. This book will find many eager readers.</p> <p>Joy Frerichs Chatsworth, GA</p> |

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| <p>Squiggle by B.B. Wurge Leapfrog Press, 2009, 152 pp., \$9.95</p> <p>Family/Friendship/Self-discovery ISBN: 978-0-9815148-9-5</p> <p>When nine-year-old Lobelia Squagg's once-in-a-lifetime shot at a moment of magic goes awry, her soul ends up stuck in a toy stuffed monkey. No longer a TV-watching, soda-drinking, chip-eating, rude, and spoiled little girl, Lobelia must figure out how to survive as a walking, talking, soft-speaking, fuzzy monkey named Squiggle. With the help of kind (and quirky) friends—including the magical “pickfloo,” whose potion first turned Lobelia into a monkey, Squiggle discovers what matters most and travels from New York to France and back to reunite her family and become a polite and happy little girl.</p> <p>B.B. Wurge manages to balance the absurd and the familiar in this strange tale: even in the context of eyeball traders and a land-roaming pet octopus, connections to the real world are never far off. This delightful, hilarious, and wacky story brings together a cast of oddball characters for a page-turning adventure.</p> <p>Nate Phillips Nashville, TN</p> | <p>Struts and Frets by Jon Skovron Amulet Books: An imprint of Abrams, 2009, 304 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 978-0-8109-4174-8</p> <p>Friendship/Self-discovery/Music</p> <p>For Sammy Bojar, it's not about fame; it's about the music. He doesn't want to front a band that makes it big. He just wants to be part of a band that makes great music. But making great music while kicking off a more-than-friends relationship with his longtime best friend Jennifer, worrying about his grandfather's deteriorating sanity, and trying to keep his other friendships intact can get complicated.</p> <p>I can't imagine a title that better describes both the music at the heart of this novel as well as what it is to be a vulnerable, hopeful, and talented young musician than <i>Struts and Frets</i>. Jon Skovron's debut is, at turns, funny, sad, inspirational, and honest. And woven throughout is the music—driving Sammy and driving the story.</p> <p>Nate Phillips Nashville, TN</p> |
| <p>The Sweet Far Thing (Book 3) by Libba Bray Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2008, 848 pp., \$10.99 ISBN: 978-0-440-23777-8</p> <p>Fantasy/Friendship/Adventure</p> <p>In the last installment of Libba Bray's trilogy, Gemma Doyle and the young ladies at Spence Academy are restless. Gemma has finally unlocked the door to the realms, and thus, for her friends, unlocked the hope for independence and enchantment. Although she enjoys bestowing magic on her friends, the pressure to create peace in the realms as well as the academy becomes daunting. Gemma's mysterious visions soon force her to navigate uncharted territory in both worlds, compelling her to make meaningful decisions and explore the darkest corners of her past.</p> <p>The conclusion to Gemma's adventures can be enjoyed without reading Bray's preceding novels. Young women will appreciate the character's struggle to accept responsibility for her actions, conform to societal conventions, and please her peers. In the end, Gemma's true magic resides not in her spells, but in her capacity for self-reflection, a power all readers are likely to covet.</p> <p>Caroline McCoy Nashville, TN</p> | <p>Terrier (Book 1 in the Beka Cooper trilogy) by Tamora Pierce Random House Books for Young Readers, 2007, 608 pp., \$9.99 ISBN: 978-0-375-83816-3</p> <p>Fantasy</p> <p>The Lower City of Corus is a rough neighborhood—so rough that no rookie in the Provost's Guard would request duty there. None but Beka Cooper, that is. She may be just a Puppy, but her upbringing in the Lower City and her ability to hear the voices of the dead allow her insight into the twisted workings of the city's criminal community. Someone is preying on the poor families of Corus, and Beka must use her unusual “birdies” to prove that the Shadow Snake is not just a scary children's story.</p> <p>With Beka, Pierce gives us another powerful heroine whose flaws are as familiar and endearing as her strengths. <i>Terrier's</i> journal format lends intimacy to a novel that is part <i>bildungsroman</i> and part mystery, and as Beka's voice develops, she earns her place in the record of Tortallan legends and as one of Pierce's most human and complex characters.</p> <p>Nicole Barrick Nashville, TN</p> |

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| <p><i>This Family Is Driving Me Crazy: Ten Stories about Surviving Your Family</i></p> <p>Edited by M. Jerry Weiss and Helen S. Weiss G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2009, 222 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>ISBN: 978-0-399-25040-8</p> <p>“Midnight Bus to Georgia.” Walter Dean Myers’s story of an African American family going to outlandish lengths to support one another—and keep each other out of jail—concludes this volume on a raucous high note. The entire collection of stories, told exclusively through voices of adolescent narrators, includes the adventures of an extreme-thrill-seeking family, a boy who learns to love writing via his eBay sales, two tales in the “my crazy sister is getting married” genre, a near-death-fantasy-baseball experience, an obsession with eating pork that “saves” the preacher, and two stories of the “fixing” of “broken” families.</p> <p>Young adolescents won’t find any hard-hitting “problem stories” in this volume, but they will find some fun adventures with fortuitous turns and happy endings all around. The writing is serviceable, readable, and uncomplicated, and Myers’s contribution, though not his strongest work, is definitely the “literary” highlight of this collection.</p> <p>Blake Tenore Nashville, TN</p> | <p>Short fiction/Family</p> <p><i>Troy High</i> by Shana Norris Amulet Books, 2009, 272 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8109-4647-7</p> <p>Nothing quite depicts the intensity of a high school football rivalry like Greek mythology. Shana Norris has brilliantly recast the entire ensemble of Homer’s <i>Iliad</i> to fit the contemporary setting in her novel, <i>Troy High</i>. The battlefield has transformed into the football field, and the beautiful Helen of Troy is now Elena of Troy High. The Trojans and the Spartans are now football teams. Readers will be seduced by the watchful observer, Cassie, who narrates the story with a simply honesty and takes you page by page into this vengeful tale of pride, love, and glory.</p> <p>Matthew Lukach Nashville, TN</p> |
| <p><i>Wings</i> by Aprillyne Pike Harper Teen, 2009, 294 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Laurel grew up in a beautiful forest area; she was homeschooled by her parents and spent all of her spare time in the forest or by the river. When she was fifteen, her parents decided to move into town and enroll her in high school. She has trouble getting used to being surrounded by people and being cooped up inside. Her new life is not at all what she expected. She feels as though she is completely different from the kids around her. In fact, she felt different even before she grew wings.</p> <p>David, one of the few friends she does make, discovers that her cells are more plantlike than human. Laurel returns to the forest where she feels safe and meets the mysterious Tamami, who tells her she isn’t human at all; she’s a faerie. Laurel must not only choose between David and Tamami, she must also save her forest from the trolls.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p> | <p>Fantasy/Fairies/Friendships ISBN: 978-0-06-166803-6</p> <p><i>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy of the book to:</i></p> <p>Melanie Hundley 1021 Delmas Ave. Nashville, TN 37216-3630</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> |