

Open Shelf

summer
2004

Special Summer Issue



rating system

bad ★

so-so ★★

good ★★★

excellent ★★★★★

city of mesa library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

letter from the editor



The summer is finally here, and we here at YAAC have labored for hours to give you this fruit of our blood, sweat, and tears: the Super-Mega-Ginormous-Mother-of-All Summer Issue. We've got over 90 reviews of all kinds of books for your lazy summer afternoon pleasure, and we hope you'll enjoy all of them.

As this is my last issue ever (I'm graduating), I'd like to offer some valedictory comments. Thanks to Diane Tuccillo for being infinitely patient. Thanks to Ella, Mia, Leon, and the LaHaies for the literary good times. Thanks to the library for supporting this awesome volunteer activity, and thanks to every YAAC member over the past six years for giving so much. I'll quote a past editor for my final words, "Read books. They have redeeming values."

Erin Hutchinson
open shelf Editor

teens_info@ci.mesa.az.us

Reviews by
Remy Albillar

Crime and Punishment

By Fyodor Dostoyvesky

★★★

In this book, a student kills an old pawnbroker and her sister. Who wouldn't want to read about that? It is the greatest psychological drama of his time and has yet to be matched today. Dostoyvesky has created a truly brilliant piece of art.

letter from the advisor

I appreciate this opportunity to thank to all the wonderful YAAC volunteers who have served this year. Everyone has worked hard but also had a lot of fun!

Once again, YAAC has been actively involved with the Teens' Top Ten project for Young Adult Library Services Association of the American Library Association. Participation has required much reading of brand new, hot-off-the-press books, and "galley" copies that have yet to be released for publication. Our YAAC members have been doing evaluations of these books for publishers and reviews for *Open Shelf*. They (and you—all teens are invited to join in) will be able to participate in a national online Teens' Top Ten books

vote during Teen Read Week, October 17-23. Look for information at your local library branch on how to participate by reading the books and voting in the fall. Information can also be found by going to the library web page, mesalibrary.org, then clicking "Teens." Your votes will be totaled with those of other teens from all over the country and will result in a 2004 Teens' Top Ten national list of best books.

YAAC volunteers have also been busy in other ways this year. Some have partnered with me to do reviews of new books for *Voice of Youth Advocates* magazine. Three of our members, Matt Stone, Talisha Royer, and Gerald Del Rosario, served as judges for the Battle of the Bards poetry contest. YAAC members also worked with the publisher of *Anthology* magazine to hold a Teen Poetry Slam in October as a Teen Read Week kickoff. Additional activities included going out to

dinner and then to see "Lord of the Rings; Return of the King" in December; having a joint meeting in March with the members of YAAC from our Dobson Branch Library (who also publish a newsletter, called *Branches*); and seeing the movie "Pirates of the Caribbean" last summer.

Special thanks go to our officers this year: YAAC Representative (to the Library Board), Andrea Alonge; *Open Shelf* Editor, Erin Hutchinson; Secretary, Luke Lambert; and Alternate, Jenny Knatz. Additional special thanks and good wishes go to Erin Hutchinson as she graduates from high school this spring.

Have a great summer and enjoy this review-packed issue! Remember to participate June 7-July 31 in this year's teen summer reading program, "You Can't Win If You Don't Read!"

Diane Tuccillo
YAAC Advisor

As a student contemplates and deals with the consequences of murder in the ghettos of St. Petersburg, he meets with a plethora of personalities that clash with his murderous paranoia in their own special ways.

Read this classic today, but be warned, it's wordy!

Give a Boy a Gun

By Todd Strasser

★★★★

This book details a school shooting. It is unique because the story is told through the eyes of the people around the shooters. The people who tell the story are friends, parents, enemies, teachers and strangers. The story is very strong and the pain of the shooters is felt throughout the book. One is angry and one is sad. The story is very good and true to heart.

Reviews by *Rosalinda Albrecht*

Almost Home

By Nora Raleigh Baskin

★★★

Leah Baer finds herself without the things that have always been there: her home, her mother, her sister, and the wilderness she had cherished. She comes back from her summer camp, only to find that now she is going to be living with her dad and her stepmother instead of her mother. Her mother left and moved to California—without her!

She finds herself rebellious and alone in a place that she used to call home. It means nothing more than the pain of moving now. That is, until the caring boy named Will, who still remembers her from the second grade, befriends her, making her life somewhat more worthwhile. She quests to understand why her mother left her, and tries to find somewhere to belong, somewhere where she can stay...

I found this story very sentimental, a good book about what it truly is to lose it all and find "home," wherever it is. It's about getting over people, and finding out

who and where you are. It really gets you inside of the story, and you find yourself traumatized by Leah's loss, and happy about Will, her new best friend. The truth, the light, and the hurt all seem real, as though not mere words upon paper, but something much more tangible.

Peregrine

By Joan Elizabeth Goodman

★★

Lady Edith, after losing her husband and child to death, decides to embark on a pilgrimage at the time of the crusades to Jerusalem, the Holy City of Christ. Edith's reasons for this spiritual quest are not altogether holy. She fears that Sir Runcival, an evil knight, is trying to wed her. Not wishing to have this happen, she flees on the pilgrimage with her old nurse, Dame Joan, who is overly conservative, meets a wild Welsh girl who is more than she appears, and reunites with her artistic brother upon her travels.

Although it is written in first-person, I did not really find the format very effective in portraying the main character's thoughts. It seemed to be less about real situations, and more about describing the lands she passed through. The characters were a good element, with their varying personalities, but even so, I am sad to say this book bored me. I would recommend it, yet not as avidly as I would other books.

Dreaming in Black and White

By Reinhardt Jung

★★

The dreams of a boy lead him back to "that time," as his parents call it. The time is the Holocaust, during the Nazi persecution in Germany. Being crippled, he is treated differently. Even his own father loves him differently. All he wants is equality, and it is echoed in his nightmare of the time back then.

His dreams are in black and white, he is a cripple and so "not fit for living" according to the Nazi propaganda. He is threatened by them in his dream and won-

ders—is he safe nowhere? He begins to question the loyalty of those around him. Would they give in? Would they rather he die than be made into a black mark and be made political prisoners than save him? Would his own father rather send his son off into death than to protect him and be sent into exile?

This was a different book from any of the others you might read on the Holocaust, such as survivor stories, fiction, documentaries, or books like the **Diary of Anne Frank**. This is all some boy's dream and he is trying to understand life back then. It's a surreal kind of setting, not like the rest with facts and figures, and it cuts out before you know the story. It has some interesting quotes and as far as it goes, it was good. The problem was that it didn't go far enough—not nearly far enough to explain the concept. And that was all it was—a concept book. It gives an elementary perspective on what happened. If you are looking for a short explanation of what went on during the Holocaust, read this book. It isn't bloody or gory, only thought-provoking.

Wolf Tower

By Tannith Lee

★★★

Claidi has lived in the protections of a place called the House all her life. The House was a place full of rituals, set in a time of royalty and social classes. At the lowest is Claidi, a maid. A handsome stranger comes in a balloon and is shot down for intruding over what was thought to be the secure House, and she falls in love with him. Seeing how she swoons for him, Princess Janzina Tiger, an ancient member of the royalty, tells her that she also is royalty. Janzina gives her a mission, to rescue the stranger. Claidi accepts, hoping to see her parents who were banished to the place called the Waste. The Waste was always said to be the ultimate horror, and the House was heaven. Now with the arrival of the intruder, she must travel into the Waste with him and find his home. Along the way she meets a group of bandits, and is made to see who her true love is before one wrong choice

changes her life forever. When she decides to stay with Nemian, the stranger, she finds out how blind her choice was when she realizes how she has trapped herself.

This was an excellent book, hitting on emotional conflicts and with well-defined characters, and including adventure and betrayal. The book is written from first-person point of view as a diary, giving it a more interesting perspective and a more effective way of portraying the main character. You get to know who Claidi is. Often she speaks to you personally, and then rationalizes that you are not really there. This format makes it more readable because you can see her thoughts, and connect better with them.

People who believe in the possibility, the wishing, and the sentiment of love, yet who still realize that all is not as it seems, would enjoy this book.

Wolf Star

By Tannith Lee

★★★★

Claidi, after escaping from the House, finding love, and about to be married, should have had the perfect life and the perfect wedding. Unfortunately, her idea of a picture perfect life faded away when she was taken in a balloon by two strange men, and then on to a new land indeed more strange than that of her captors, where she gets a new perspective from the perfect fairytale ending she wished for.

This book is as good as, or indeed better, than the first book, **Wolf Tower**. I recommend this to anyone and everyone. I am a huge fan by now of the Claidi Journals. They are smart, inquisitive, humorous, and adventurous. They feature an excellent writing style that makes the reader want to know as much as they can of Claidi and her adventures.

The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big, Round Things

By Carolyn Mackler

★★★★

Virginia Shreves is seemingly the only imperfect member of her family. She, un-

like her workout-crazed mother, is fat. She dislikes this, but merely makes up rules for dating, saying: Guys don't want to be with a fat girl in public, but stay in private, and you'll always have them there. So she goes on living like that, shrugging her life away with stupid "rules," until reality finally hits her family, and she finds out that they are not so perfect after all.

Virginia learns that her brother date-raped a girl, and she finds herself thinking less and less about her excess weight, and more about life. Then, she begins to find out that she is beautiful when she does what she likes, instead of conforming. When she realizes that, she is able to enjoy life.

There are some funny parts to the book, and it was very readable. I saw it as a "be yourself" type book. The theme, "fat girl finds her own way," has been done to death! It wasn't really boring, but it seemed really stereotypical, which annoyed me.

Sabriel

By Garth Nix

★★★★

Sabriel had a good life at her school in Wevelry College, yet soon she found something disturbing that she could hardly avoid. A messenger came to her bearing a sword and a brandolier full of magical bells: her father's gear. Her father was not an ordinary father. This father was the Abhorsen, one whose job was to fend off the dead, and send them to a place where they could not arise again. The bells would keep the dead down, and the sword would help slay the dead that arose. Sabriel is forced to travel into the Old Kingdom, away from the modern Ancelstierre where she grew up for years. She stumbles upon a power that is stronger than even her father's will, a power named Kerrigor. She goes to Abhorsen's house and finds her father guarding Abhorsen from a dangerous creature in the form of a cat named Mogget. When she crashes a craft made to fly her to her father, she finds herself and Mogget in a cave where she frees a man imprisoned in Death. She finds she has feelings for the man, Touchstone, realizes that her father is truly dead, and now must face Kerrigor in order to

secure the world from his evil power.

This story focuses on family, and on doing what is right, even if you must leave comfort to do so. Unfortunately, while it has the excitement to keep the story moving, it lacks the powerful cliffhangers in its sequel, **Lireal**. It does have a vantage point over **Lireal**, though. Sabriel falls in love with Touchstone, which makes the story a bit more exciting in the emotional aspects, though it has little to do with the action, which is almost a separate world than the rest of the book. This love interest comes into play only in the end, however. This is a good read for people who like adventure and action.

Abhorsen

By Garth Nix

★★★★

The sequel to **Lireal**, this book starts off with a bang. **Lireal** and Sam must save Sam's friend from the evil Necromancer, Hedge. Hedge, and Sameth's unknowing friend, Nicholas, are digging something up. This thing threatens to tear the foundations of the earth to shreds, to destroy all the human life that it despises, and to send both the Old Kingdom and Ancelstierre into turmoil.

This book is really the second part of **Lireal**. If you have not read **Lireal**, things might be a bit confusing. I recommend it highly with the other book in the series, **Sabriel**. It holds your attention the way that only a Nix book can, with the effect of climaxing and then moving directly to another part of the story, a great way to keep the reader interested.

Hogfather

By Terry Pratchett

★★★★

In a world where fairytales rule and gods and creatures of urban legends come into being freely, there is something wrong. Around Hogswatch, the time to be happy and jolly, (Discworld's morphed equivalent of Christmas), the Hogfather is someone very different, someone you would not expect to find delivering presents to children, someone much thinner than the fat hogfather—Death (you know, skeleton,

dark cloak, scythe, don't want to meet him on everyday occasions). Not only that, but creatures once believed in are reappearing—the Eater of Socks, the Verruca Gnome, the Oh-God of Hangovers, the Towel Stealing Demon, and (un)Cheerful Fairy.

This was a book full of imagination, inventiveness, and bursting with humor. It has a good plot, intertwining three or four stories into the book. It's funny, so you won't be disappointed. He put a lot of things into Discworld, and into a plot that made sense in the end, along with some stuff that made no sense, but was still hilarious. The culture of his silly world—Discworld—was really interesting, tying in things like the incredibly (non)ingenious inventor “bloody stupid Johnson.” I really like it. I recommend it to everyone.

Reviews by Ashley Alger

A Deadly Christmas

By Francine Pascal

★★★★

Jessica Wakefield is in danger! Finally convinced that her fiancé, Jeremy Randell, is nothing but a two-timing criminal, Jessica plots to get even. But when her devious plan goes wrong, Jessica is caught in her own trap—seconds away from a fiery death.

Elizabeth Wakefield is scared for her twin sister and she doesn't know whom to trust. Has Sue Gibbons really joined their side or are Sue and Jeremy against the twins? If Elizabeth's instincts are wrong, Jessica will go up in flames!

Death Threat

By Francine Pascal

★★★★

Sue Gibbons, Jessica Wakefield's biggest rival, has been kidnapped! Just weeks after gorgeous Jeremy Randell left her at the altar for Jessica, things have gone from bad to worse for the Wakefields' houseguest. Now Sue's captor is threatening to kill her if the Wakefields don't pay up.

Jeremy, Jessica's fiancé, insists he'll find the kidnapper, and Jessica and Elizabeth are determined to help. But when Jessica discovers Jeremy in the wrong place at the wrong time he smells a rat. Will Jessica have to betray the man of her dreams in order to save Sue's fortune—and her life?

Review by Andrea Alonge

Twelfth Night

By William Shakespeare

★★★★

In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, I learned the true meaning of disguise. When you get to the part where the main female character Viola dresses as a man, keep in mind that all Shakespeare's actors were men...rather ironic, if you think about it.

Reviews by Cristina Anglin

The Primrose Way

By Jackie French Koller

★★★

This is a book about a missionary family of Puritans during the 1600s. It has a lot of historical value because the author appreciates historical accuracy. This book has suspense and romance. I liked it because you never know what is going to happen. It's funny to see Rebeka, the main character, and her thoughts on going from being a noble-woman in England, to living in a hovel in the American wilderness, and even falling in love with an Indian. If you're looking for a good read with a lot of suspense, try this book.

Hand Quilted With Love

By Joyce Livingston

★★★★

Glorianna Kane leaves the lower 48 states to go to Alaska after inheriting a quilt shop in a prosperous town. She meets a pilot

named Trapper Timberwolf, and he is dead set on not letting anybody in his life, but fate has another plan. Pick it up and read—it's a wonderful book!

Elizabeth, Book 1

By Francine Pascal

★★★

This is an interesting book, though I recommend you read *Pride and Prejudice* before you read it because the author keeps referring back to that book. This book is really good because it is different from the way she usually writes. If you hate *Sweet Valley High*, then you'll love this book! All in all, it was really good.

Frieda's Song

By Kathleen Scarth

★★★★

Lady Frieda, a frivolous and mischievous woman who is always in trouble, has run off all possible suitors. Then, in walks Klaus, the Prince of the adjoining country. Since she has spurned every other suitor that has come along, her father makes her marry the Prince. This marriage is sabotaged. Will it work, or not? Pick it up and find out.

Review by Danielle Cotie

Typewriter in the Sky

By L. Ron Hubbard

★★★

Mike de Wolf is an aspiring pianist. The last things on his mind are pirates, sailing ships and sword fights. However, he is soon face-to-face with them thanks to his friend, an author. His friend, lacking inspiration, casts Mike as the villain in his newest book. To his great horror, Mike finds himself in the book, struggling to stay alive, outwit the “hero” and earn the respect of his lady love.

I found the writing style of this book excellent and I thought the characters were both interesting and amusing. I didn't really like the ending, though.

Review by Andrew Crandall

Squee! Series

By Thonen Vasquez

★★★

In my opinion, this is a great graphic novel series. I love it, but it will only appeal to some people.

The main character is a kid named Tod Casil, but every one calls him Squee. It is kind of sad because Tod's only friend is the son of Satan, named Pepito. He has all bad luck—aliens abduct him, his parents hate him, and a lot of other horrible things happen to him.

It is a very funny series though, and I would recommend it to anyone. The only thing is that you have to have a different sense of humor, but try reading it no matter what.

Reviews by Geraldine Del Rosario

Samurai Girl: The Book of the Shadow, Book 2

By Carrie Asai

★★

Heaven Kogo is back! And this time, the helpless, innocent Heaven is not so innocent and heavenly anymore. This time, she trusts no one and is ready to kick some butt.

First, she's ready to be independent. She moves out of Hiro's roof, and finds a job. While mastering the Shadow technique of martial arts, she finds out that her "ever-honorable" father was part of a big Japanese yakuza (which is an extremely dangerous gang/mafia group that, in order for someone to be a member, they have to either get painful tattoos or cut one of their fingers as a "membership card"). In addition to this, Heaven's would've-been-fiancé, Teddy, shows up and offers to protect her, and then he realizes that he's in love with her.

Since Heaven has questions unanswered, she decides to kidnap Teddy. (That's right!) But can she trust his answers? Most of all, who IS really behind all this?

Just as she was starting to believe Teddy's answers, Karen gets kidnapped. And just who do the kidnappers demand in Karen's return? Well, you know who! I gave the first book a 4-star rating because it was the best. But this book, it'll bore you a bit. However, if you are following this series, you should read it.

The Book of Dead Birds

By Gayle Brandeis

★★★★

Ava Sing Lo, half Korean and half black, has been killing her mother's birds accidentally ever since she was only a baby. Despite her title as bird-killer, she sets off to the Salton Sea to help save the birds that are dying off fast from some virus spreading in the air. But she does not only find dead birds, she also finds dead women buried under the sand out in the sea. Can she try and help save the birds before she herself ends up killing them first? And who killed the two women she found in the sea?

The book is more than just dead birds and dead women. It's also about the story of a relationship between mother and daughter that touches the readers deep inside. Ava's Korean mother, Helen, has been troubled by her past for years. When she was young, Helen was forced to prostitution on a segregated U.S. army base as an appalling fate. It was there that she got pregnant with Ava, and an American soldier married her and brought her to the U.S. When her husband saw that the baby was black, he abandoned her and she was left to nurture the child in a foreign country, alone.

It's a remarkable and satisfying novel. That's why I give it my full recommendation.

The Spirit Ring

By Lois McMaster Bujold

★★★★

Spirit Ring is awesome! It's thrilling because of the plot, but frustrating because

of the main characters.

Fiametta, one of the main characters of this book, is the impatient and selfish, but faithful, daughter of the great Master Beneforte, the great artist of both black and good magic. When Montefoglia is invaded by Ferrante, a leader with great power of black magic, Fiametta's father dies trying to escape and save her. But her real problem begins when her father's corpse is stolen by Ferrante's men. Now what do the living want with the dead? To use its soul to create a spirit ring, a ring that will enslave the person's soul to its creator and use it to obtain immortality. Fiametta's own magic is the only way to save her father's soul and all of Montefoglia, except that she is not allowed to use it!

This book is an illuminating read! Get entranced with the spirit of reading with this book.

Pretend You Don't See Her

By Mary Higgins Clark

★★★★

Mary Higgins Clark is once again sending chills down readers' spines with the story of Lacey Farrell, a real estate agent. The story takes place in Manhattan, where Lacey witnesses the murder of Isabelle Waring, the mother of Heather Landi, who is convinced that Heather's death was not an accident and whoever killed her is after her daughter's journal. Lacey makes a promise to the dying woman to take the journal and read it. Lacey's four-year-old niece, Bonnie, is shot accidentally, a shot that was meant for Lacey.

Placed in the witness protection program, Lacey has to assume a fake identity, at least until the killer can be brought to trial. But the killer has traced her to Minneapolis and now she is on the run. Lacey heads back to New York, determined to uncover who's behind the deaths of Isabelle Waring and Heather Landi. Can Lacey solve Heather's puzzling journal before she vanishes from the page permanently? Who killed Heather Landi and why? Read this cat-and-mouse book and find out.

My Brother's Hero

By Adrian Fogelin

★★★★

Thirteen-year-old Ben Floyd is ready for a change of scenery and a taste of adventure. Amazingly, he, his parents, and his younger brother Cody are taking a trip to the Florida Keys over the Christmas vacation. Luckily, he has to baby-sit his brother, but then he encounters the know-it-all, spoiled Mica, which ruins their family vacation. Mica happens to like Ben, and in return he just hates her. Anyway, he likes another girl back home, who happens to be his best friend and neighbor.

Hanging out with Mica just annoys Ben, while on the other hand, he experiences the excitement and the danger of the Keys, and along the way, tests the limits of his own courage. On the last day of their two-week vacation, Ben, Cody, and Mica sail off to wander around for the last time in Mica's rubber Zodiac when the motor runs out of gas. Now they're all alone in the dark ocean—cold, hungry, and lost, not knowing if they're going to survive and be rescued or die in the cold night, surrounded by water.

The book is just great and wonderful. I highly recommend that everyone read it. It's the kind of book that you'll love and enjoy reading.

Hole in the Sky

By Pete Hautman

★★★

A nasty, deadly virus, called The Flu, has taken place in the destruction of earth in the year 2028. The Flu starts out with a headache, followed by a cough. In a couple of days, the virus takes the form of hemorrhagic pneumonia. The victim begins to cough blood and death slowly follows. Scientists find no answer to the cause of the virus and find no cure. Some people who are infected with the virus develop immunity, which allows them not to spread the disease. They are the "Survivors." The Flu left them disabled and bald.

Deep in the Grand Canyon of Arizona, Ceej, an uninfected sixteen-year-old and Tim, a Survivor, are looking for Ceej's sister, uncle, and Tim's dad to save them from

the Kinka, a group of Survivors who spread the disease to pick out those who are immune to it.

In the effort of saving Ceej's and Tim's only remaining loved ones and saving the Grand Canyon from the flood, Isabella, a Hopi, claims that she has been looking for the Sipapuni, a mystical hole that the Hopis believe leads to another world. Although Ceej is not sure about the Sipapuni, he clings to that little bit of hope to escape the world of the deadly Flu, while Tim simply believes that Isabella is crazy.

The book is really great in the beginning and in the middle of the story, but it ended too abruptly. The story just ended where it comes to the very good part. Still, it's worth the time to read this book. It may have an unsatisfying ending, but except for that, it's a great book with a little romance and full of thrilling adventure.

Secrets in the Fire

By Henning Mankell

★★★★

Based on a true story, this book is about a young, remarkable girl, Sofia, who is struggling to survive. The story takes place after a war in Mozambique, Africa.

Sofia, her sister Maria, her mother, and her younger brother, had been running away from their native village. Very few made it, and Sofia's father was not one of the survivors. They finally settled in a particular village occupied by people who had also been running away from bandits. In this village, it's where landmines are buried.

One day, when Sofia and her sister tried to play a new game Sofia invented, Sofia accidentally stepped off the main path and one of her feet hit a landmine. And then the big explosion came...

You should definitely read this stunning, well-written book!

Acorna, the Unicorn Girl

By Anne McCaffrey and Margaret Ball

★★★★

Acorna, half human and half unicorn, has an unusual "deformity." With doubled toes,

fingers lacking a joint, and a horn in the middle of her forehead, she was abandoned when she was still a baby in an escaped pod among the asteroids and was found by three element miners. The three miners, Gill, Calum, and Rafik not only find out that Acorna can grow from a baby to a teenage girl in just one year, but also they find out that she has several peculiar supernatural powers along with her deformity: she can purify water and air, heal wounds, and make plants grow.

Her three uncles take her to the planet of Kezdet where the planet's main living source comes from child slavery, and Acorna is determined to save and free the children. Some people are also determined to capture and make scientific studies out of her, or add her to one of their rare species collections. The mysterious, unknown Piper, who is behind all the child labor and goes by different names, is the most determined of them all.

This is only the first of the **Acorna, the Unicorn Girl** series. It's been a pleasure reading the first book. Read this fabulous collection about the unicorn girl. **Acorna's Quest** is next!

Sword of the Rightful King

By Jane Yolen

★★★★

Jane Yolen is actually a pretty good author. **Sword of the Rightful King** is only the second book by her that I've read, and both books have been superb. This time, Yolen takes you to the court of Cadbury, the heart of Britain where the young version of King Arthur set his throne. This story takes place when the sword that will make him true king of all Britain is first created by the one and only Merlin, the famous old magician and counselor of the young Arthur. When greedy kings and queens like Queen Morgause of the Orkneys try to assassinate King Arthur to steal the throne, hungry for power, Merlin tries to convince and prove to the people of Britain and King Arthur himself that Arthur is the true ruler of all Britain.

The whole book is really good and has a good sense of humor, but it also has a

cheesy ending. It ends with a big twist, but still cheesy.

Reviews by Elizabeth Dormady

Looking Backward

By Edward Bellamy

★★★

The book **Looking Backward** is a social commentary of 1887. It basically points out and ridicules the actions of the elite class during this period. The solution it offers is unquestioned, unbridled socialism. While Bellamy somewhat creates a mantra of "socialism is better," his method of getting his point across comes with an actual plot. A man, Julian West, is submitted to hypnotized sleep in 1887. 113 years later, in the year 2000, he is awakened by a doctor. This man, Dr. Leete, recounts how much the world has changed for the better once socialism was introduced to America.

Although it is highly informative, this is not a cannot-put-it-down type of book. It was mildly entertaining, especially toward the end, when Bellamy introduces something of a love interest to West. However, it does become somewhat repetitive. Overall a good book, and at the top of my list for books I had to read for school.

The Da Vinci Code

By Dan Brown

★★★★

What is more enthralling than a search for the Holy Grail? That's right, nothing. It is classic. A time-honored hunt. Now just throw in a few over-zealous monks, the police, and a couple of murders, and you have one heck of a book.

I personally loved this book, but I am not one to be easily offended. But I know that not all people take insults to the Catholic Church all that well, and so if you are looking for a "Go, Catholics!" book, this is not your best bet. But if you don't mind the blatant questions of faith, then by all means, read **The Da Vinci Code**.

Minority Report

By Phillip Dick

★★★

Yes, that is correct. **Minority Report**. And no, it was not based on the movie. The movie was based on it. Or rather, the movie is based on one of the many short stories contained in this book. All are science fiction in nature, and most have very good premises. However, I give it three stars because it can be somewhat confusing, and quite frankly, one or two of the stories bored me a great deal. But overall, it is very good light reading.

Medea

By Euripides

★★

Killing and revenge are the main points of **Medea**. Basically, the great crusader Jason, of Jason and the Argonauts, cheats on his wife, Medea. So Medea kills everyone.

To really understand this book, you have to have a basic understanding of Greek stories. But in all actuality, the one word that sums up this play is: violent.

Reviews by Jeremy Davis

Nineteen Eighty-Four

By George Orwell

★★★★

Not quite fantasy, not really factual; but gripping nonetheless. Written in 1948, Orwell's conception of life in 1984 is truly inspiring. Winston, a middle-class citizen, must fight to keep his memory and sanity in a time where everything is controlled by the government. The government not only controls what people hear, but also the past. If an event does not conform to a prediction, either the event or the prediction (or both) are changed. But who's to know? How could it be otherwise? Awesome book, you have to read it if you want a good classic.

Flatterland: Like Flatland, Only More So

By Ian Stewart

★★★★

This book takes place in many dimensions, or rather, many sets of dimensions. It begins in a mere two (plus time), where Victoria Line discovers her great-great-grandfather Albert's diary. Albert, a square enlightened by his trips to 3 dimensions (and zero and one as well), was generally regarded as a hoodlum. When Vikki, to the dismay of her parents, follows his instructions, she is carried off by a Space Hopper to many **Alice and Wonderland**-esque adventures, all of which have to do, to some extent, with mathematics. Alas, only the extremely mathematically inclined will truly enjoy this book.

Review by Lora Eubanks

The Rumpelstiltskin Problem

By Vivian Vande Velde

★★★★

Ah, the classic tale of Rumpelstiltskin. OK, well, maybe not. This book contains six twisted versions of the story. Actually twisted might not be a strong enough word. Probably disturbing and oddly cynical would be more like it. I loved it!

Reviews by Jeungri Hori

Artemis Fowl: The Eternity Code

By Eoin Colfer

★★★★

Artemis Fowl II was once an evil, cunning mastermind and boy genius. Not to say he isn't that now. He's just not evil. Why? Because his family's back to normal.

For two years Artemis, Sr. had been

thought dead, lost at sea, when really he was in the hands of the Russian mafia. In those two years Mrs. Fowl was in a state of schizophrenia. It was up to young Master Fowl to tend to the family's criminal businesses. But now, Artemis, Sr. is back, rescued and safe in a hospital bed, and Mrs. Fowl is right as rain, thanks in large part to a fairy, Holly Short.

Mr. Fowl was back, but to Artemis' dismay, not to his old self. He wants the Fowls out of illegal business. This Artemis agrees to do—right after he finishes his final mission.

Using some fairy technology acquired from past experiences, he creates the C-Cube, a machine surpassing today's technology by decades, maybe even centuries, planning to make billions by putting companies out of business. But plans never go as smoothly as they should. Jon Spiro, a president of one of those companies, steals this little marvel, mortally wounding Artemis' manservant and bodyguard, Butler, in the process. To retrieve the C-Cube, Artemis must once again call upon the aid of Holly Short and the LEPrecon squad. But will they agree to help the person who caused them so much trouble last time?

I, Freddy

By Dietlof Reiche

★★★

Freddy is a golden hamster (*mesocricetus auratus*) of the highest order. Born into a petshop, he longs for a better life outside of the small glass box. And so, equipped with the passion of youth and the ability to read and write, he sets off for freedom and a more dignified life. During his travels he'll come across a six year old girl, a couple of smelly guinea pigs and a cat by the name of Sir William. **I, Freddy** is a nice book and reading it will put you in the heads of the domesticated rodents.

Reviews by Erin Hutchinson

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

By James Joyce

★★★

Like logic, reason? Enjoy chronological, connected plot lines and coherent character development?

This is not the book for you.

James Joyce's classic foray into stream-of-consciousness is, well, interesting. Stephen Dedalus is the titular Young Man, an unusual boy who is growing up in Catholic Ireland. We track Stephen's development from a young boy obsessed with language to a poet struggling to free himself from the trio of church, family and state.

While I really enjoyed the character of Stephen Dedalus, the experimental nature of this novel ultimately tends to sabotage an otherwise very well-done book. Some of Joyce's experiments, such as steam-of-consciousness, work pretty well, but other techniques just bore the reader and make each page a drudge. Joyce is a brilliant prose poet, but he fundamentally didn't know how to entertain as well as edify. Brilliant, but deeply flawed.

The Bonesetter's Daughter

By Amy Tan

★★★

Ruth is a Chinese-American ghostwriter living in San Francisco in the modern era, but she is haunted by the ghosts of her mother's past. Frustrated with dealing with her emotionally absent boyfriend, bratty stepchildren, whiny New Age "authors," and most of all her incorrigible Chinese mother, she gains a new perspective on life when she discovers a narrative her mother wrote years ago about her life before immigrating to America in the 1950s. Sound a little cheesy? Okay, it is. **The Bonesetter's Daughter** has basically the

same themes as Tan's other books (**The Joy Luck Club**, **The Kitchen God's Wife**) and can stray a little too far into Touchy-Feely Self Help Land, but her latest book is still relentlessly entertaining and compelling. For all its flaws, **The Bonesetter's Daughter** is a fascinating page-turner that's just about impossible to put down.

Rent (original cast recording)

By Jonathan Larson

★★★

Okay, so I vowed that I would never allow music CD reviews into *Open Shelf*, and now I'm writing one. However, I figure that because they include *Rent* in ASU classes that focus on classic literature, it's kosher. This mid-90s musical focuses on the shifting relationships of a group of bohemians living in New York in the space of a year. Mark, our narrator and a frustrated filmmaker, decides to begin filming the events that happen to him one Christmas Eve. Mark's roommate Rodger, just out of rehab after "his girlfriend April left him a note saying 'We've got AIDS' before slitting her wrist in the bathroom," is trying to write one great song while Mark mopes over his ex-girlfriend, who now has a girlfriend of her own. When their ex-roommate, now landlord, "yuppie scum" Benny asks for the year's rent and Rodger meets the flirtatious junkie upstairs, the stage is set for a year full of drama and lots of spontaneous singing.

Chances are, you've probably heard of *Rent*, for it has definitely been coronated as the musical of our generation. Rightly so, for Jonathan Larson has an ear for character and dialogue that few professional writers can match. Despite the seemingly dreary characters and setting, you'll find yourself laughing out loud as if you were listening to the conversations of your own friends. But there's serious stuff here too, and it's worth paying attention to Larson's incisive commentary on living with AIDS. First-time listeners who've never seen the musical (like myself) would be well advised to follow along in the included lyrics book to get acquainted with the plot. Of course, the music is amazing, and not your usual overblown musical

fare. Larson's songs are about a thousand times more compelling than anything on rock radio these days, and the singing is straight-up amazing. Songs like "Seasons of Love" ("Five-hundred, twenty five thousand, six hundred minutes...") and "Light My Candle" will be stuck firmly in your head for days. *Rent* is a must-listen for any person born in America at the end of the millennium.

Reviews by Mary Beth Hutchinson

Perks of Being a Wallflower

By Stephen Chbosky

★★★★

We've all had moments in our life in which we hang back, try and blend into the scenery, and just watch life slip by. Charlie has done this his entire life. When he finally tries to involve himself in his life, he finds friends who see the perks of being a wallflower and at the same time start changing him. You follow Charlie through his first year in high school and the experiences that go with it. If by reading this review you come to the conclusion that this is just another sappy, "boy finds himself" young adult book, you would be sorely mistaken.

Told through letters to a nameless person we never meet, the reader finds insight rare in many adult books, let alone teen novels, and without the after-school special ending.

James Dean Died Here: Locations of America's Pop Culture Landmarks

By Chris Epting

★★★★

Ever wondered where Marilyn Monroe was born, where Lizzie Borden gave her parents 40 whacks, or where the horse had its heart attack in the classic frat house comedy "Animal House?" No? You mean you've never cared about any of those

things? Well, welcome to the book that will make you care about all of America's pop culture landmarks, and will have you planning your cross-country pilgrimage to each site.

There are hundreds of sites across the country on topics ranging from movie sets, to crime and murder, to famous sports moments. All of the historical events that you had heard of but never had known the details of are explained. This sounds like the kind of book that would be terrible to read straight through. However, I had to keep telling myself "just one more page, then I'll put it down," but I kept reading and couldn't stop. It is a rare book that makes you want to visit Redwood National Park, where Endor was shot in "Return of the Jedi," and act like an Ewok. In fact this may be the only book.

From Beirut to Jerusalem

By Thomas Friedman

★★★★

For all of us who have watched night vision green images of bombs exploding over some Middle Eastern city on CNN and never understood what could be causing the violence, there is Thomas Friedman. He is a writer for the New York Times who spent time in the war zones of Beirut and Jerusalem during the explosive 1980s. Without using esoteric political jargon, Friedman breaks down the mind-boggling complexity of the region for the lay reader. You're more likely to find a story of a local shopkeeper than of a king in this book and this is part of what makes it so readable. Friedman reserves his pages for the men and women actually in the middle of the bombs and the bullets. When you read Friedman's work you finally get an idea about why the entire region is blowing itself up.

The Iliad

By Homer (Translated by Robert Fagles)

★★★★

For all those doubters who think poetry could never be exciting, pick up Robert

Fagles' translation of the Greek epic poem, **The Iliad**. Eighteen thousand lines of brutal spearings, stabbings, and skewerings fill the pages. Most people are familiar with the plot. Agamemnon, commander-in-chief of the Greek armies, insults the greatest warrior, Achilles, and leaves his Greeks at the mercies of the Trojan armies. The Greeks are hammered until Achilles' brother-in-arms is killed by Trojan Prince, Hector. The story rises to a crescendo as Achilles rejoins the fray, and he and Hector battle.

Feel free to skip over the multiple pages of lineages that clutter a normally fast paced narrative. Otherwise savor Fagles' word play and Homer's epic.

Mormon America

By Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling

★★★★

Those who have ever looked for a book on Mormonism know that the books usually fall into one of two categories: rabid, foaming-at-the-mouth rants on how Mormonism is supposedly poisoning all of America or flowery discourses that focus on the sufferings of the Mormon people and conveniently gloss over any historical unpleasantries. Luckily, **Mormon America** is one of the rare books that falls into neither. Accounts of persecution share the pages with stories of polygamy and other incendiary topics with journalistic objectivity. Written for both Mormons and non-Mormons alike, it combines historical fact with modern views to form a scrupulously detailed, yet still fascinating, story. Some of the chapters are bound to rub some people the wrong way but no one could fault the authors for that. It is a truly unbiased book that is not only informative but excruciating to put down.

The Jungle

By Upton Sinclair

★★★★

This is the book that helped pass a major piece of legislation, turned my English teacher into a vegetarian, and made Teddy Roosevelt throw his breakfast sausage out the window. Chances are you've heard of

the stomach-churning reputation of this modern classic, and I'm here to tell you it's all true. There are scenes in this book that will make even the most red-blooded, meat-lovin' American's inner PETA member leap up in protest.

However, if when reading this book you never get beyond gastronomical abominations you will miss the main point of this story. Jurgis moves from his peasant life in Lithuania with relatives and his fiancé to America after being promised wages beyond anything at home. When they arrive in Packingtown, the beating heart of Chicago's meat packing industry, they are awed at the seamless efficiency of the factories. Soon though they understand at what price that comes. The Packers run every aspect of their lives: their wages, the government, their survival. The Packers take the humanity from their workers. Why care about your employees when there are thousands of desperate unemployed men standing outside your door willing to do it for less? Jurgis and his family soon learn the ways of Packingtown after being cheated out of everything they own and hold dear.

I know that after finishing this book I will never look at immigration the same way. Sinclair shows the evil capitalism can create and after you see it, the socialism trumpeted at the end of the book sounds like a very good alternative.

Reviews by Jenny Knatz

The Unicorn Sonata

By Peter S. Beagle

★★★★

Finally, a good book! Joey is a thirteen-year-old girl with few friends and a passion for music. She spends every spare moment in Papa Music, so it's no surprise that she is there when Indigo arrives with his beautiful flute. Haunted by the music that she can now hear everywhere around her, Joey wakes up in the middle of the night and follows it straight to its source—a world called Sh'eirah—where unicorns, satyrs, and miniature dragons abound.

Wow. Once more I am amazed with Peter S. Beagle's creativity and his knack for making an easy-to-read absolutely fabulous fantasy story. Kudos to you, Mr. Beagle. You rock.

Angelic Layer Series

By Clamp (Creator), et al.

★★★★

Ah, good ol' manga. It's been a while since I've been able to review any manga (stupid Lent sacrifices), so here we go!

Misakichi goes to live with her aunt in Tokyo after having been living with her grandparents in rural Japan. Her father had died and her mother had left her—but Misakichi doesn't care. Upon getting off the train, Misakichi gets her first glance of *Angelic Layer*, the hit new game sweeping across the nation. Angels—little dolls—battle each other in artificial terrains called layers and respond to the commands of their deus (controllers).

Misakichi gets her angel and is proved an instant prodigy at the game. But—who is this who is always watching her? A woman? Could it be her mom?

Funny, cute, and refreshing, **Angelic Layer** is good for a break from life.

Wolfskin

By Juliet Marillier

★★★★

Eyvind is a warrior, a *Wolfskin* proud of his ability to wield axe and sword, to swim and hunt, and of his vows to his war-god, Thor. He has been blood-sworn to his friend, Somerled, and by that oath he is required to do anything Somerled asks him in honor of their blood. Perhaps this vow might have been an honorable one, should Somerled have lived up to the potential Eyvind saw in him. But as things progress, a darkness holds the two young men under its choking veil and begins a terrible path of destruction.

Okay, sounds a little cheesy, but regardless of any ineloquency on my part, *Wolfskin* is yet another awesome book by Juliet Marillier. Once again, she brings back an ancient people and place to life in brilliant, cunning detail. Yay, **Wolfskin!**

The Diary of Ellen Rimbauer: My Life at Rose Red

By Ellen Rimbauer, ed. by Dr.

Joyce Reardon

★★★★

Whoa. Talk about a confusing book! Ellen Rimbauer is the wife of wealthy oil company owner, John Rimbauer. The mansion they live in, *Rose Red*, is possessed. Okay, so I figured that much out. But, supposedly, the Rimbauers were real people, and *Rose Red* is a house in Seattle. The editor, Joyce Reardon, works in the psychology department at Beaumont University. But then, its supposedly a science fiction novel...? What is real, and what is not? Not only between book and reality, but in the book itself. Is Ellen really being haunted by her house, or is she just insane? Aaaaah!

Despite my utter confusion, I have found this book to be good. It is well-written, suspenseful, and intriguing. Just...be warned: so confusing!

Sweep Series

By Cate Tiernan

★★★★

Morgan Rowlands is a 17-year-old in *Widow's Vale*, upstate New York. She thinks she knows who she is, what she is, and where she's going in life. But things change when a Wiccan, Cal Blaire, comes to town. He brings doubts into her mind about her faith, her family and her path. She discovers that she is an adopted blood witch (a witch whose lineage can be traced back to the original seven clans). That's how the series starts off, at least. More and more things happen in this 14-book set (14 books and more events? Wow, whoul'da thunk?) to keep the readers veritably addicted. I fell in love with the characters and the setting, and yesterday, when I found that Tiernan had another new **Sweep** novel, I flipped. Please read—they're so good!

The Rumpelstiltskin Problem

By Vivian Vande Velde

★★★★

There are a lot of problems in the original Rumpelstiltskin story. Why would a miller tell a king his daughter can spin straw into gold? Why would the king believe it?

Vivian Vande Velde comes up with a half-dozen different versions of this tale, each one more witty and creative than the last. Gotta love the stories, gotta read the book!

Reviews by Luke Lambert

Inferno

By Dante Alighieri

★★★★

This book is practically the source book of all books on hell. I mean, if you are interested in the underworld, this is the book to read. Vivid descriptions bring this book to death. Read!!!

Stairway to Heaven

By Richard Cole

★★★★

This is a book only for the hardcore Led Zeppelin fan! With that out of the way, it's totally awesome at what it does which is document all the crazy stuff about the band! Yeah, it's a good book.

Wheel of Time series

By Robert Jordan

★★★★

Looking for a series to enthrall you through the summer days? Then look no further! This is the best fantasy series since **Lord of the Rings**. Thirteen books of total awesomeness. So read this series now! Yes, now! Go, if you're still reading this review. Go! You should be into the YA section by now. Go!

Pyramids

By Terry Pratchett

★★★★

Yet another **Discworld** novel by comedic fantasy author Terry Pratchett. This particular one follows assassin Teppic, who is, incidentally, the prince of The OID Kingdom. His father dies, he must return, but what is an assassin doing ruling a country? Read this book to find out!!!

Reviews by Patricia Langevin

Ella Enchanted

By Gail Carson Levine

★★★★

From birth, Ella has been cursed to be obedient. Whenever she is ordered to do something she has to do it thanks to a "gift" from a fairy. But when her mother dies her life turns from bad to terrible. From her wicked stepsisters exploiting her curse and missing chance after chance to catch up with the fairy who cursed her to get it removed, just one disaster follows another. When the Prince falls in love with her and she with him, life turns upside down, as she dodges him to keep him out of the danger that her curse would bring him. Love's a beast, ain't it? A modern day fantasy, now in theaters too.

Dealing with Dragons

By Patricia C. Wrede

★★★★

Do you remember those old fairy tales that you heard when you were little? This book takes place in the universe of long ago and far, far away. The big difference is that Cimorene is a Princess who is tired of being a princess, sick to death of sewing, bored of Princes she doesn't even know looking to marry her. She runs away and volunteers to be a Dragon's princess, where she can do what she wants and doesn't have to marry anyone she doesn't want. That is, until her father says that the knight or prince who rescues her gets her hand in marriage and half the kingdom.

Now she has to deal with every guy with a sword trying to save her, wizards who are nothing but trouble, and other princesses. Cimorene went looking for a little adventure and found a whole lot more!

Dragon of the Lost Sea

By Laurence Yep

★★★★

Think Medieval China, think dragons, think legends, think magic, and there you have Dragon of the Lost Sea. Shimmer, the Dragon Princess, is hunting a witch—a witch named Civet who stole her clan's sea for her own purposes. When Civet slips through her claws and leaves a clue that will lead her to the witch, she teams up with a human child named Thorn and goes after her. Now, with help from her new friend and a sage named Monkey who really is a monkey, she may just catch the witch and restore her home.

Review by Mandi Levendowski

Harley: Like a Person

Cat Bauer

★★★★

Wow. I mean "WOW." I started this book and just could NOT put it down. Harley (not the motorcycle—after her mother's mom) is an art freak who is working on a painting for the school's production of Anastasia. Unfortunately, it's not enough to block out her drunken, abusive father or completely passive mom. There are so many side-plots, but here are the main ones:

She has to deal with losing "Mr. Right" (more like Mr. Useless) to the future Prom Princess, and with finding first love.

She finds a harlequin with a little note about daddy loving her forever and a day—and it's not in her dad's writing.

She loses her best friend...whose dad has the same handwriting as the note!

She slips in school because of how horrible everything is going.

Harley has to go on a journey to discover herself and what she wants. I espe-

cially loved how the author keeps referencing John Lennon (she was born during a JL memorial concert, is totally obsessed with the Beatles and was born on the anniversary of his death). This book is so well-written. It's a must-read for anyone who's ever wondered about their past, lost a friend or crush or wanted to find out who they really are inside. SO READ IT NOW!

Reviews by Lindsay Lutes

Say Yes

By Audrey Coulumbus

★★★★

The author of this book is really good. She also wrote **Getting Near to Baby**. This one is about Casey, a 12-year-old girl whose mother and father both died. She lives with her stepmother, Sylvia, who takes extremely good care of her. One day, Casey comes home to find that Sylvia isn't there. Casey looks all around town but Sylvia has left...for good. Paulie, the foster son of a person in the apartment complex, offers to help Casey, but if she says yes, she'd have to break the law. She would have to rob an old lady, and she decides to do it and to live with it. She, in a way, also becomes infatuated with Paulie. All this bad stuff just keeps happening to her. This book is really good and I would recommend it to anyone.

Shattering Glass

By Gail Giles

★★★★

This is about a boy named Young and his friends, Rob, Bob (Bobster) and Coop. They decide to turn the class nerd, Simon Glass, into "Mr. Popular." They succeed and Young finds out about Rob's past. Soon, Simon pretty much turns on them and they kill him. I'm not giving anything away because the very first paragraph of the book says it!

"Simon Glass was easy to hate. I never knew exactly why. There was too much to pick from. I guess, really, we each hated

him for a different reason, but we didn't realize it until the day we killed him."

This book was really, really good! I would recommend it to anyone.

A Ring of Endless Light

By Madeline L'Engle

★★★★

This is about a girl named Vicky Austin. She and her family get to go spend the summer with her grandfather, who is very sick. Her grandfather lives on an island. Her brother is studying Marine Biology and that's how she meets Adam Eddington, a student working on a project with dolphins. But there's also two other boys, Leo, who's longing for romance with Vicky, and Zachary, the dreamy guy who's wishing the same thing. Soon, Vicky realizes that she can communicate with dolphins. Her summer is definitely one to remember.

I like this book because Madeline L'Engle is the only author who can really express physical feeling with words. I like L'Engle's style of writing and this book is my favorite ever written.

Holes

By Louis Sacher

★★★★

Before you see the movie, READ the book. The story takes place in different periods of time. Long ago, in a European country, a man, Eli, falls in love with a girl, who is extremely dimwitted, and Eli breaks a promise with a gypsy and gets cursed. Other scenes in the story are set in the western days where a white girl by the name of Katherine Barlow falls in love with a black man, which is forbidden. The third scene, which is the main setting of the story, is in present time. It's about Stanley Yelnats, who ends up in the wrong place at the wrong time and is sent to Camp Green Lake juvenile detention center. The story is basically about how the three scenes come together.

My opinion is, it's really good. After reading the **Wayside School** series, I never thought Louis Sacher would be able to write such a serious book, but he did.

Review by Carolyn Massia

Sea Gift

By John Ashby

★★★

Lauchie is a 13-year-old boy who lives on the northwestern shore of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Lauchie tries to persuade his mom to let him go lobster fishing with his neighbor, Ian. His mom is really uneasy about the whole situation, but she soon gives in when Lauchie turns it into a school science project. When Lauchie finally starts fishing he shortly finds a strange object that Ian calls a "sea gift." But inside the object is a treasure map that leads Lauchie and Angus on a great adventure throughout their land.

The Sea Gift is a wonderful story that teaches you to look around and see what other people see as ordinary life. I think that this book has characters we can all relate to one way or another, and it shows a great way to think about how people found lost historical artifacts.

Review by David Justin Millar-Haskell

Starcraft #1: Liberty's Crusade

By Jeff Grubb

★★★

Danny Liberty was a great reporter. Too good apparently, as Danny Liberty is re-assigned to a fringe colony world after nearly discovering some information damaging to the ruling party and the families. His comfortable life is shattered when he finds himself in an inter-species war. The ravenous Zery horde, the technologically advanced, and the crumbling Hunan Empire battle across galaxies to determine the fate of the universe. (This book closely follows the storyline of the game *Starcraft*, by Blizzard Entertainment.)

Reviews by Deidre Oberpriller

Faerie Wars

By Herbie Brennan

★★★★

If you liked **Artemis Fowl**, you'll love **Faerie Wars**. At first it's a bit confusing because the storyline jumps from the Analogue World (our world) to the Faerie Realm, and among the characters, but once you figure out how to follow the story, it just sucks you into it and you never want to put it down.

The two main characters are Henry Atherton, the human boy who is working for Mr. Fogarty, and Pyrgus Malvae, Crown Prince of House Iris. Pyrgus is a softie for animals, which would be fine, if he hadn't stolen Faerie of the Night Lord Black Hairstreak's golden phoenix (his father, the Purple Emperor, has been working on negotiations with Lord Hairstreak and some other Faeries of the Night), and then (while running from thugs he thought were employed by Hairstreak), he trespasses into Chalkhill and Brimstone's new glue factory, finds out that their "secret ingredient" is a kitten, steals the mother cat and her kittens, and frees them (he had freed the Phoenix sometime before). Of course, he is caught by one of the factory's guards, and then every bad thing that could happen, happens. The Purple Emperor sends his son to an island in the Analogue World...or not. Someone has tampered with House Iris's "multi-directional" portal (a portal that can transport you to more than one place, unlike most natural portals), and instead of landing on an uninhabited Pacific Island, Pyrgus appears in England, specifically in Mr. Fogarty's shed, while Henry is trying to clean it. The rest of the book is telling the story of how Mr. Fogarty and Henry help Pyrgus get back, and how the three of them divert a Faerie War between the Faeries of the Light and the Faeries of the Night (aided by the demons from Hael). As I said, this book is as good as **Artemis Fowl**. Read it!

Sojourn: From the Ashes

By Ron Marz, et al.

★★★★

This is the first book in the **Sojourn** series. Mordath, the Warlord, has been dead for two hundred years, but some idiot has to resurrect him (of course—otherwise it wouldn't be a good book). Anyways, Mordath finally takes over all the Five Lands (by force obviously) and keeps the Lands under his rule by—guess, come on, guess!—force. But one woman from a village he ordered totally obliterated, survived. Her husband and daughter, however, did not. So she decides to take revenge. Of course, it does help that she is an accomplished archer and swordfighter. This book follows the beginnings of her quest against Mordath, and is very good. READ IT!

Sojourn: The Dragon's Tale

By Ron Marz, et al.

★★★★

This is the sequel to **From the Ashes**. In that book, Arwyn, the archer, is given a quest to collect the five fragments of the arrow that killed Mordath two hundred years ago. Legends say that if the arrow is reunited, Ayden, the warrior who killed Mordath, will come back to aid the Five Lands. I can't really say much about this book without giving it away, but I will tell you this—the only reason I picked up the **Sojourn** series was the dragon on the cover of this book. Although a minor, one-time character, the dragon plays a big role in finding the first fragment.

Sojourn: The Warrior's Tale

By Ron Marz, et al.

★★★★

Arwyn has the first fragment and is now going to Ankhara to find the next one. The people of Ankhara are "winged warriors." Anyway, the Ankharians are in the middle

of trying to win back their freedom, and of course, Arwyn and Gareth, an archer she met in book one, walk right into the midst of it. The reason this book got a 3 instead of a 4 is because they kill off one of my favorite characters. But I'm not saying who! This is the third book in the **Sojourn** graphic novel series. Very cool fantasy.

The Young Man and the Sea

By Rodman Philbrick

★★★

Skiff Beaman's mother has died, and his father doesn't want to leave the couch. But just in case, Skiff tries to keep his dad's old fishing boat, the Mary Rose, above water. Finally, the Rose sinks. Skiff enlists the help of Mr. Woodwell, an old friend of Skiff's dad who knows everything about raising and repairing a boat. To help pay for materials to repair the Rose, Skiff tries trapping lobsters and then blue fin fishing. This book tells of his adventures and how he finally makes a name for himself.

Review by Maya Patel

Princess Diaries, Volume IV, Princess in Waiting

By Meg Cabot

★★★

Mia has to go to Genovia for her winter break. She is not happy that she is going to a foreign and weird place when she would rather be with her new boyfriend, Michael, back at home. Throughout the book, she is telling about her experiences at the Genovian castle and how being a princess is a lot harder than people think it is. When she gets back to the loft, all she can think about is if Michael still loves her and if he didn't just think of her as a friend. She is a normal teenager going through all of the obstacles in life, only she has to do it with the press and public following

her and her friends, often not knowing how she really feels.

My opinion of the book is that it feels like I am reading my own writing and it's just like a note from your friend that you don't mind reading. It is very realistic and has a good sense of humor and a good plot to it. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to just kick back and relax and read. It isn't challenging and is very fun.

Reviews by Alyssa Ratledge

Hole in My Life

By Jack Gantos

★★★★

As I was apparently the only person left on Earth who had yet to read **Hole in My Life**, you may as well skip this review. But if I'm wrong and you too haven't read Jack Gantos' biography, this is for you!

I am so not a biography fan, especially autobiographies (I fell asleep in Ben Franklin's, one of only two books to do this to me; the other was my geometry book), but this hardly reads as one. Maybe it's because his life is/was so entertaining: at a tender age he leaves his family and (semiunknownst to him) joins a boatman who smuggles hashish into America.

Gantos accounts his life, in and out of prison, with a dry humor that keeps you reading until the very last page, all the while not bored with this nonfiction tale.

The Tail of Emily Windsnap

By Liz Kessler

★★★

Who hasn't thought, while lounging poolside on hot summer days, about being a mermaid? Emily Windsnap hasn't. Although she lives with her mother on a boat, she has never once been swimming. Then she finally does, causing trouble both on land and beneath the waves.

This is a cute little story, perfect as a

relaxing afternoon read. The characters and plot are overly predictable, but you find yourself cheering for Emily and her family anyway.

Absolute Friends

By John le Carré

★★★★

Ah, the awesomeness of John le Carré. In my opinion, this is his best novel yet, which is an impressive feat. Match an awesome plot with very quotable moments ("if America is leaning to the right, and the right is making strides all over Europe, don't you shudder a little for world peace?") and you've got a very necessary book for this day-and-age.

Ted Mundy is a British guy born in India who learned German in college and got into a German commune, then spied for Britain, but spied for East German Sasha, but thought he was still on Britain's side. "Lying for one's country is an honorable profession, so long as one knows what the truth is," but Ted doesn't anymore.

John le Carré subtly blasts both the Vietnam War and the Iraqi War through his characters by showing how our mistaken actions in both wars directly affect the state of the world today. Yay, John le Carré!

Review by Rochelle Reyes

Of Mice and Men

By John Steinbeck

★★★

The setting is a few miles south of Soledad, California—meaning loneliness. Two men, George and Lennie Small, travel together. Lennie is small-minded, but he's a big guy. George looks out for Lennie. They are forced to work on a ranch where they meet a lot of people including Candy, Slim, Carlson, Curley, and Curley's wife. Curley's flirtatious wife gets Lennie into some big trouble, and even George can't help him.

I liked this book a lot, but I wasn't satisfied with the ending.

Review by Chrissey Rubenstrunk

Last Act

By Christopher Pike

★★★★

This story takes place in a small town called Careville at a small high school called Care High. The main character of this story is Melanie Martin, who moves to this town after her parents divorce. Now she lives with her father in a place she is not familiar with. She spends most of her summer in her house with no friends, feeling that life really stinks right now. Later, she meets a friend in math class who forces Melanie to try out for the school play. Then a disaster happens on opening night. Melanie ends up accidentally killing a fellow performer who wasn't meant to die. Everyone she ever made friends with is affected by the death and the book shows you the struggle Melanie goes through to find out who switched her blank, which killed a friend, a sister, an enemy, a loved one, a fantasy.

I thought this book was great. It shows you the struggle people go through when someone close to you dies. It kept me on my toes and forced me to want to find out what happens on the next page. This book made me read it over and over. It has got a wicked twist at the end that will make you ask if your friends really like you.

Reviews by Chris Smith

Death Gate Cycle Series

By Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

★★★★

The old world has been destroyed, split into six different parts. The people who sundered the world, the Sartans, intended to rule it, but suddenly vanished, leaving the mensch, humans, elves, and dwarves, to rule themselves. The Patrins, the Sartans' enemy, planned to take over, but

first had to break out of The Labyrinth, a prison made by the Sartans.

After hundreds of years it finally happened. The Patryns, some of them anyway, broke out. Their leader, Xar, sent another Patryn, Haplo, to each of the worlds, hoping to send them into chaos. He then planned to go to the worlds as a savior. Haplo did as his master wished, but then befriended a Sartan. Find out how they became close friends and saved all of the different worlds by reading this series.

X-Men 2

By Chris Claremont

★★★★

Magneto's threat to the world is ended, and he is imprisoned in a high security compound. The X-men feel the world is safe again, but they are wrong. A man with a vendetta against mutants comes up with a way to kill everyone with mutant abilities, but he needs two things: Professor Charles Xavier, the strongest mutant Mind-Reader, and the ultimate weapon only the professor can use, Cerebro.

Cerebro was originally built to unite all mutants together, but Stryker is going to force Xavier to use it to kill all the mutants on the Earth. In a desperate final attempt, Magneto, his followers, and the X-men unite to save their world, and in doing so destroy the facility in which they fought.

*Review by
Melodie Stapley*

Not Quite a Stranger

By Colby Rodowsky

★★★★

In **Not Quite a Stranger**, the main characters are Tottie and Zachary. They live in Baltimore, Maryland, where Zach goes to Xavier Boys School. Tottie is at her house with her family when the doorbell rings and Zach is there. Dave, who turns out to be his father, thought Zach had been adopted, but the mother secretly took care of him until she got cancer and died. Zach, no longer a secret, is now here at his

father's house where Tottie is the only one who doesn't accept him. They go through many emotional trials until Tottie almost gets him kicked out. Soon she realizes she doesn't want that, and everyone unwinds and shares their feelings.

The outcome is exciting and it's a great book. I would recommend this book to anyone getting an addition to their family. The way it's written is brilliant.

*Review by
Matt Stone*

The Keys to the Kingdom: Mister Monday

By Garth Nix

★★★★

Being ruler of the universe would be a stressful job, and Arthur Penhaligon is the heir to it all. In this fantasy adventure, Arthur is called into "the house" to take up his role but unfortunately doesn't want to. He doesn't have a choice, however. So Arthur and the frog-shaped Will go on a quest to regain the keys to the kingdom and rule the house. What really makes this book worth reading is how the author carries out the plot. All the characters have their idiosyncrasies to spice the book up. Read this book over a weekend, because it won't take long to finish, but definitely read it.

*Review by
Matt Taylor*

Hogfather

By Terry Pratchett

★★★★

Death takes the job of the Hogfather to save the world from the auditors, the ultimate parents. Then his granddaughter takes his place as Death.

It was a hysterical comedy.

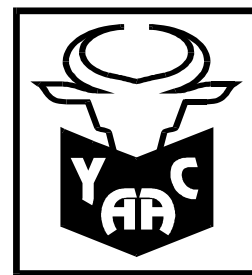
**Review by
Jasmine Williamson**

Skeleton Key

By Anthony Horowitz

★★★★

Once again we meet Alex Rider, the fourteen-year-old teenage spy for M16, a British intelligence agency. He is asked to be a ball boy at Wimbledon, or is there more to this ball boy job? He is almost killed by a crazy gang member at Wimbledon and once again is surfing on a huge wave. M16 decides its better if Alex "lays low" for awhile, so they send him to work for the CIA in America. He isn't actually supposed to be doing anything except pretending to be the son of two CIA agents. Alex doesn't trust that this is really a vacation to Skeleton Key, and island near Cuba. He is correct. This is an adventure story that will keep you guessing the whole time you read it.



What is YAAC?

The Young Adult Advisory Council (YAAC) is a group of teens from many of Mesa's junior and senior high schools. They hold meetings twice monthly to review books for this newsletter and to plan special activities. They also help the librarians in the City of Mesa Library's Young Adult Room at the Main Library as volunteers and assist with programs.

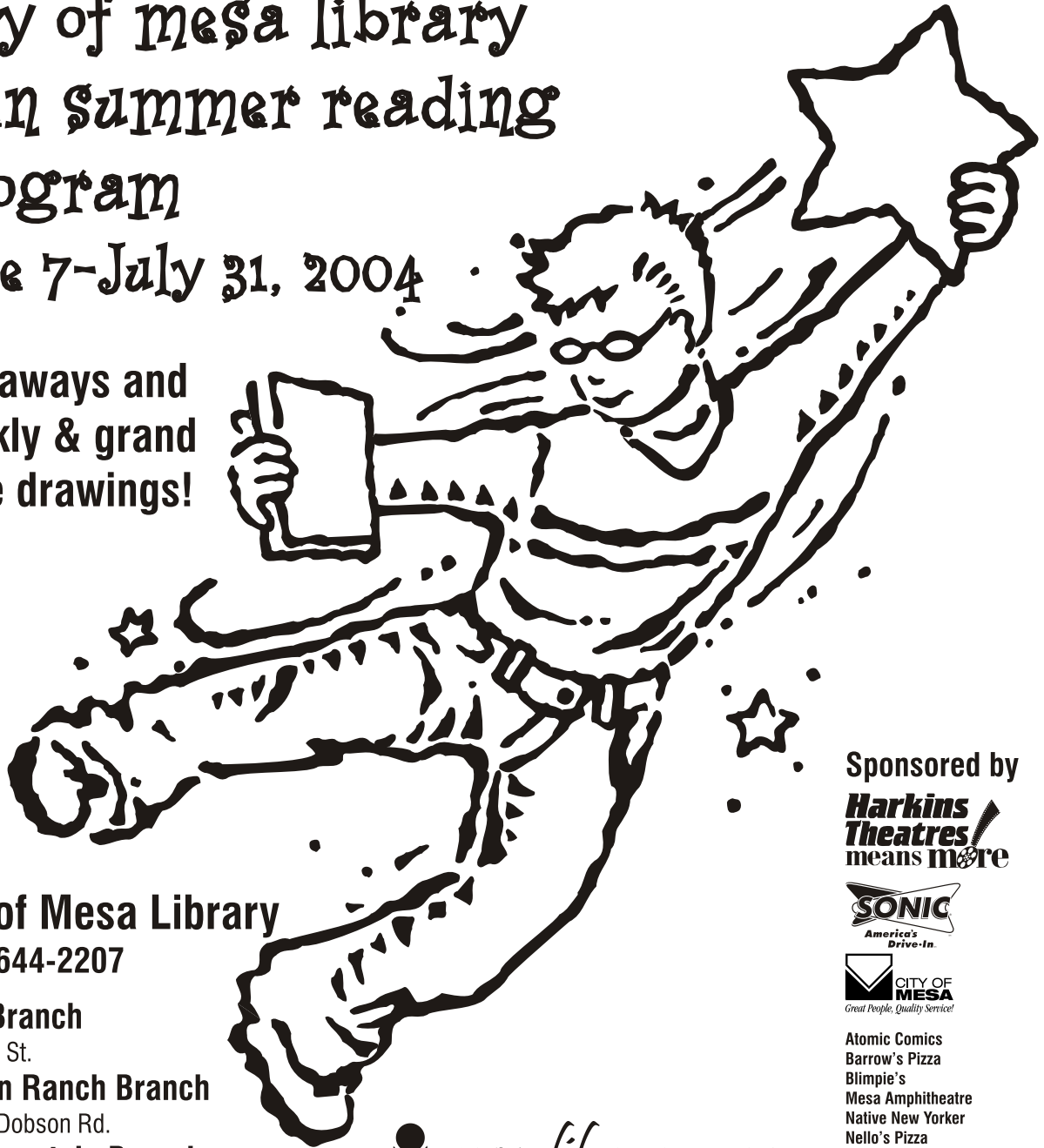
If you are interested in becoming a member of YAAC, call (480) 644-2734 or stop by the Young Adult service desk and ask for an application.

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