



Branches



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Book Review Newsletter of the City of Mesa Library
Dobson Ranch Branch Young Adult Advisory Council

Letter from the Editor!

As I write this, I'm enjoying the pattering of rain on the roof, and grinning from ear to ear. This might seem strange to someone who doesn't live here, but after 140-plus days of desert dust and dryness, I am SO READY for a rainy afternoon that I can spend curled up with a few good books! Here at the Dobson Library, we've taken the liberty of putting together a few suggestions for your next rainy day read – just take one teenager, and mix with an armchair, a blanket, and a mug of hot cocoa for a deliciously *different* sort of Arizona day!

– Hilary Waterman
Branches Editor



Don't Look Behind You

By Lois Duncan ★★★★★

April has a perfect life: she has a handsome boyfriend, popularity, and a good chance of becoming a tennis pro. Well, at least she has a perfect life until she and her family must disappear. Why? - You kind of have to when someone is trying to kill your father. They must enter the Federal Witness Security Program, take on new names, and move somewhere far away. Whether or not April *wants* to do this, she has no choice.

I think this book was funny and horrifying at the same time. It has a type of suspense in that story which keeps you reading, even through slower parts.

- Kelley Pong

the largest magical library in existence, performs a feat of real magic; he spells the statues in a church to come to life for an afternoon. After he overcomes the predictable obstacles, he is a sensation; a practical magician in existence! And when Jonathan Strange becomes his apprentice, they are welcomed by everybody who is anybody. Yet all is not well, for their divided opinions about the Raven King, the man who brought magic to England, threaten to destroy them and all those around them.

If you have a lot of time on your hands, READ THIS. If not, it's probably best not to start, because once you do, you won't be able to think about anything else.

- Shaoyuan Wu

Doctor Illuminatus: the Alchemist's Son

By Martin Booth ★★★

Life has taken quite a turn for Pip and Tom! Moving into an old English country manor, they knew that they'd find dust and cobwebs in the nooks and crannies, but they never expected to find a mysterious little *boy* hiding out in the walls of their house! That boy, Sebastian, turns out to be the son of a famous medieval alchemist – and he's been asleep for the past five hundred years! Awakening only to battle the evil alchemist de Loudéac, who has risen again, Sebastian drags Pip and her brother into the thick of it.

Throw in a botany lesson, a dash of macabre scare tactics, and a band of wandering English hippies, and you're in for quite a ride.

I thought this book was fairly good, offering a nice introduction to the real history of alchemy and riddled with Tim's deliciously sarcastic sense

Rating System

start a fire ★

punishment for bad children ★★

decent ★★★

I would read it again ★★★★

masterpiece ★★★★★

Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell

By Susanna Clarke ★★★★★

What can I say about this book? It's wonderful, charming, dark, ironic, heartbreaking, and very, very, *very* long. And I absolutely loved it.

Two magicians shall appear in England. The first shall fear me; the second shall long to behold me... This is part of the prophecy of the Raven King, the mysterious man raised by Faeries who rule three kingdoms – Northern England, part of Faerie, and Agrace, on the far side of Hell – before he disappeared. Since then, English magic has declined until the only magicians left are theoretical magicians – magicians that don't do any magic, only study it. But one day, the reclusive Mr. Norrell, owner of

of humor. However, there were several story lines that the author began and just seemed to forget about, even though they could have greatly enriched the plot. If you can get past that disappointment (and Sebastian's persistent self-sacrificing complex), then the Alchemist's Son makes a nice afternoon read.

- Hilary Waterman

Frankenstein

By Mary Shelley ★★★

Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley, is the tale of a brilliant young man's monstrous creation—and all the resulting chaos. Victor Frankenstein, a charming, intelligent young man from Geneva, goes to the city of Ingolstadt to further his knowledge, and it is there that he discovers something terrible. He learns how to duplicate life, so he decides to make a person. His creation, however, is more dreadful than ever Victor imagined, and when he and other people scorn the monster, the creation sets out to exact his revenge on all of mankind. This was actually better than I thought it would be, though I thought that all the characters in the book were absolutely horrid to Frankenstein's monster.

- Nikki Swanson

The Ishbane Conspiracy

By Angela, Karina, & Randy Alcorn
★★★★★

Open up this awesome book and follow the lives of Jillian, Ian, Brittany, and Rob, four typical, modern-day teenagers with their everyday ups and downs of life. But be prepared! This is no ordinary novel. In the opening pages, you are dropped into the New Year's Eve bash of some fun-loving teens, all of whom appear pretty ordinary and are easy to relate with. But like a bolt of lightning and crash of thunder on a sunny day, the story takes a startling crash into classified correspondence from the realm of heinous conspirators. Back and forth throughout the whole book you are teased with a tiny morsel of the riveting plot and then whisked right back to eavesdrop on the strategies and tips used to trap and destroy each of these students' individual lives. This story instantly sets you on a

roller coaster ride of events, making it impossible to put down and never letting up until the last page. Written with amusing humor, thrilling suspense, and even dashes of the mysteries of the occult, New Age, and the supernatural, there's no other book out there that hits on just about every topic a teen has ever thought of and more. This novel was unlike anything I've ever read before! You will be blown away! So, if you have nothing to do for your school break or you're wishing for something you can really get into, there's The Ishbane Conspiracy just waiting for you to be its next unsuspecting human!

- Kierstyn Lyts

The City of Ember

By Jeanne DuPrau ★★★★★

The book begins with our two main characters Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow on their last day of school, known as the "Assignment Day." In the city of Ember children go to school until the age of 12. On the last day they are given jobs to do, which will, if they perform it adequately, be their main jobs for the rest of their lives. Readers learn that the City of Ember, led by a selfish and greedy mayor, is getting worse by the minute. The great lights that make the city work have begun to flicker, and the blackouts are lasting longer. Lina discovers an ancient parchment which could reveal a way out of the city – if they can decipher it before time runs out and their city falls to darkness.

I finished this book in less than a day. It is one of the most exciting and interesting books I've read, and that's saying a lot, considering that I've read Harry Potter. Doon and Lina are very mature and relatable 12 year olds. They inspire readers to persevere and never give up. I definitely recommend this book to anyone and everyone.

- Christina Fang

What is YAAC?



Join other teens at the Dobson Ranch Library who love reading! Share your thoughts and ideas on what you have read by presenting book reviews at our monthly meetings and writing reviews for *Branches*, our bimonthly publication written and edited by teenagers. Members are considered official library volunteers. Group meets once a month. Applications are available in the Teen area. For ages 12-18 or grades 7-12.

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Teens

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Great People, Quality Service!