

1 Alan Mendelsohn: The Boy from Mars

by Daniel Pinkwater

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Humor
Science Fiction

Leonard's life at his new junior high is just barely tolerable until he becomes friends with the unusual Alan and with him shares an extraordinary adventure.

2 The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents

by Terry Pratchett

Series: Discworld

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Humor
Fantasy
Animal

Terry Pratchett is known for his lighthearted and clever fantasies for adults, especially his lengthy Discworld series, and for his wonderful children's trilogy, "The Bromeliad." Now he has produced his first Discworld novel for children, "The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents" (HarperCollins, \$16.95).

A band of rats has gained the ability to talk and reason by eating wizards' garbage, and Maurice the cat has gained the same ability by eating, well, one of the rats, though he's heartily ashamed of that now. Cat and rats team up with a pipe-playing boy named Keith to run the Pied Piper scam -- the rats infest a town, then Keith gets rid of them by playing his pipe, and they all split the profits.

But in the town of Bad Blintz they may have taken on more than they bargained for. The town's ratcatchers are running a lethal scam of their own, and there is an evil power lurking in the tunnels and sewers under the town. Fans of the Douglas Adams style of witty fantasy will find much to amuse them here.

by Philip Pullman

Series: His Dark Materials 3

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Adventure

First was "The Golden Compass," the best fantasy novel in a generation. It introduced the street urchin Lyra Belacqua, called Lyra Silvertongue by the armored bears of the north, and her world where human souls are embodied in companion animals called daemons. It also introduced a cast of characters out of Dickens, by way of Mervyn Peake.

Next came the sequel, "The Subtle Knife" and, incredibly, it was even better. In it Lyra teamed up with Will, a boy from our world, who became the Bearer of the Subtle Knife, which could cut anything, including the boundaries between worlds. And Lyra's father, Lord Asriel, began amassing an army from all the universes, including rebel angels, for an assault on Heaven.

Then came the wait. Publication dates came and went. The author was rumored to be having trouble completing the trilogy, and his interviews became increasingly testy. Anyone who had read the first two books could understand why--it seemed that the author had set himself an impossible task.

But at last, three years and three months later, "The Amber Spyglass" by Philip Pullman (Alfred A. Knopf, \$19.95) has been released. It has been said that the series is Pullman's version of Milton's "Paradise Lost." But this third book makes it clear that it is rather a response to Milton, one that, if the book-banners tear their eyes off Harry Potter for awhile, may become the Christian "Satanic Verses."

If you haven't read the first two books, don't even think of trying to read this one first--Pullman, praise be, wastes no time bringing readers up to speed. In fact, even if you have read the previous books, you may want to reread them before tackling this one--there's a lot to keep track of. Moreover, readers who were expecting the conclusion of trilogy to make all things clear may be disappointed; Pullman has a lot to say, but he also leaves a lot for readers to figure out themselves.

Warning: It is impossible to review the book without some spoilers. I'll try to avoid giving away any big secrets, but if you prefer not to know, it's best to stop here. If you've read the first two already, it really doesn't matter what I say here--wild horses couldn't keep you from reading the third.

It begins with Will's rescue, with the help of two lesser angels, of Lyra, held a drugged captive by her evil mother, who may or may not have discovered

her maternal instinct. Once free, they make for the world of the dead, which, no matter the goodness of the soul, is Hell for everyone. There they work to free the spirits of the dead into oblivion, which is far better than the afterlife they lead.

Meanwhile the Church plots Lyra's murder, as they believe her to be a new Eve, who will bring about another Fall; Lord Asriel readies his forces for battle with Metatron, the angel who has taken over heaven from the decrepit and feeble-minded Authority; Dr. Mary Malone ends up in a world of gentle creatures who can see Dust, and begins making discoveries about the changes all the worlds are suffering, and all the worlds and all the races begin taking sides for the final climactic battle.

Pullman hasn't lost his writing touch--it's as riveting and fast-paced as ever. Though nothing much happens in the first hundred pages, for instance, he still has readers on the edge of their seats the whole way. His characterizations are even stronger; Lyra and Will become richer and more complete characters, and Pullman can move you to tears with events that are meaningless in our real world.

But his plotting is weaker here than in the first two books; there's a lot of meandering about, setups that promise more than they deliver, and plot lines that just peter out. A lot is still unclear by the end, which will frustrate some readers even as it gives others much to speculate about.

But Pullman's point, his response to Milton, seems clear enough: The only Heaven is in our own world, and the best we can hope for after life is oblivion. God is a fascist fraud, who didn't create anything. The Fall was the saving grace of humankind, freeing us from bondage and giving us free will and rational thought. The rebel angels, far from being devils, are fighting for our freedom from the brutal authoritarianism of Heaven, as exemplified by the Church. And the world of flesh is more important and more powerful than the world of spirit, and even the angels envy us our physical senses.

Wow. This is really going to tic some people off. So if you agree with the author that Paradise is what we make of it right here and now, great. If not, it's still a feverishly exciting adventure. It also completes the finest and most original fantasy series since "The Lord of the Rings."

by

Series: American Girls

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction

A series of books about the lives of fictional girls living in different periods of American history.

by Eoin Colfer

Series: Artemis Fowl 1

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Adventure

First things first. Despite what you may have heard, "Artemis Fowl" by Eoin Colfer (Hyperion, \$16.95) is NOT the next Harry Potter, though it will appeal to large segments of the boy wizard's audience, and seems destined to enjoy lots of his popularity as well. It is, in the author's particularly well-chosen phrase, "Die Hard, with fairies."

The titular protagonist (I would hesitate to call him the hero) of this first book in a planned trilogy is a 12-year-old criminal genius, the heir to a centuries-old gangster dynasty that has recently fallen afoul of the Russian mob. Having done extensive research on the internet, he has come to the conclusion that the world of fairies, goblins, dwarves, trolls, and leprechauns is real, though not what humans think it to be. He decides the best way to win back his family's fortune is to discover the secrets of the magical races, then kidnap a fairy and hold her for ransom.

All goes smoothly at first as he, with the aid of his giant thuggish butler, named Butler, obtains a copy of the *The Booke of the People* (the compendium of magic and rules by which the beings of the underworld live) and decodes it. The code is shown in the book, and the official website, www.artemisfowl.com, offers a contest for figuring it out, which most children will find all too easy. He then uses his newly acquired information to capture Captain Holly Short, a member of the Lower Elements Patrol Reconnaissance team (or LEPrecon for short, get it?). Always staying a few steps ahead he even manages at first to hold off the awesome military and technological might of the enraged magical beings. But when they realize that he knows all their rules, they decide the only way to beat him is to break a few.

Colfer's description (Die Hard, with fairies) is dead-on, in more ways than one, and that's not always a good thing. Though generally well-written and tightly constructed, the sometimes cliched dialogue and one-dimensional characters are little better than in your average testosterone-driven summer movie. And some parents will be concerned about the level of occasionally gory violence, and the muddled morality of having an arrogantly villainous and amorally twisted boy as the star.

On the other hand, the book is, like an action movie. heaps of fun -- fast-paced, exciting.

suspenseful, clever, and with plenty of James Bond-style wit, including a delightfully cantankerous Q-substitute named Foaly, a paranoid centaur in a tin-foil hat (to keep his mind from being read) who is a technological genius and produces an array of gadgets that even surpasses Spy Kids. And the advantage of having a criminal for the main character is that you genuinely don't know who will win until the end.

Young (and old) readers pining away, in this Potter-less year, for another book that will take them on a roller-coaster adventure could do worse than adding "Artemis Fowl" to their beach-reading list.

PG Gore

6 Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident

by Eoin Colfer

Series: Artemis Fowl 2

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Adventure
Folklore
Humor

Sequel to Artemis Fowl. Artemis and his fairy enemies team up to rescue his father from the Russian Mafia.

7 The Austere Academy

by Lemony Snicket

Series: A Series of Unfortunate Events 5

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Adventure
Humor
Mystery

As their outrageous misfortune continues, the Baudelaire orphans are shipped off to a miserable boarding school, where they befriended the two Quagmire triplets and find that they have been followed by the dreaded Count Olaf

by Lemony Snicket

Illus. by Brett Helquist

Series: A Series of Unfortunate 1
Events

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Adventure
Humor
Mystery

Who says they don't make them like they used to? Just in time for the new century comes a new series for middle graders that hearkens back to a staple of a previous century - the Victorian melodrama.

If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book. In this book, not only is there no happy ending, there is no happy beginning and very few happy things in the middle. So begins *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Harper Trophy, \$8.95 each) by the delightfully pseudonymous Lemony Snicket, scantily illustrated by Brett Helquist. It consists of the absurdly overripe mystery-adventures, wrapped up in the blackest of gallows humor and the purplest of prose, of the ill-fated Baudelaire children, Violet, Klaus, and Sunny, who are orphaned by a mysterious fire at the beginning of the first book.

Violet, 14, has *a real knack for inventing and building strange devices.* Klaus, 12, reads constantly, and what he doesn't already know he can find out. Sunny is *scarcely larger than a boot. What she lacked in size, however, she made up for with the size and sharpness of her four teeth.* She *speaks in a series of unintelligible shrieks* which no one but her siblings understands, but for which the helpful author always includes witty translations.

The Bad Beginning, the aptly titled start to the series, finds the children on the misty shores of Briny Beach, where they are notified of their parents' untimely demise by the ineffectual Mr. Poe, executor of their estate. He gives them over to the care, if it can be called that, of a distant relative, Count Olaf.

The dastardly Count, leader of an theatrical troupe made up of freaks and thugs, will stop at nothing to get his hands on the Baudelaire family fortune. In addition to treating the children as slaves in his filthy home, he concocts a villainous scheme to marry Violet by forcing her to act in a play with a marriage scene, while holding Sunny hostage in a cage suspended from a tower.

In book 2, *The Reptile Room,* the orphans, having barely escaped from the clutches of the odious Count, are placed with their Uncle Monty, a cheerful herpetologist who has a room filled with with rare and exotic reptiles. The children are happy there for a brief time, but as the author continually warns us, happiness is not their lot. When Uncle Monty's new assistant arrives, it is none other than

Count Olaf in disguise, though no one will believe them, even after Uncle Monty turns up dead, apparently bitten by one of his own snakes.

Having once again narrowly escaped with their lives, the children go to live with Aunt Josephine, who is afraid of everything, in **The Wide Window.** She lives in a house precariously perched on a cliff overlooking Lake Lachrymose (which is crossed by the Fickle Ferry, which lands at Damocles Dock, which . . . well, you get the idea). When shopping for cold food (Aunt Josephine is afraid of the stove) they meet Capt. Sham who charms Josephine and who is, of course, Count Olaf with an eye patch and fake peg leg.

The next day the children find that Aunt Josephine has apparently killed herself by leaping through the window over the lake, leaving behind a note which asks Capt. Sham to adopt the children. Mr. Poe is called, and again doesn't believe the children's story. But the note contains a code which Klaus works out. In the most thrillingly dramatic scenes in the series so far, the children are alone in the house when a hurricane hits, causing the house to collapse. Barely escaping this, the orphans steal a sailboat from one of Olaf's henchmen, then sail through the hurricane to find Josephine, who is not dead after all - yet. But beware the Lake Lachrymose leeches!

Melodrama is perfect for middle graders and preadolescents; brilliant, brave children outwitting monstrous adult villains, suspense, mystery, adventure, dark humor, wordplay, cliffhangers, and the occasional creepy touch of horror, all told by an author whose tongue is firmly planted in his cheek. These would make great winter-night-by-the-fire family read-alouds, though perhaps not too close to bedtime.

Though some parents may not appreciate the way all the adults are either ineffectual, witless, or evil, (think Roald Dahl), they will like the way the author provides painless vocabulary lessons, kindly and amusingly explaining the meaning of many of the hard words he uses. The children's eventual salvation is always provided by a combination of Klaus's reading and Violet's mechanical skill (and Sunny's biting, of course). He even manages to work a few clever grammar lessons into the plot of book 3, in which the secret code hinges on Aunt Josephine's obsession with grammar.

by Matt Groening

Series:

Type:

Genre/Subj.: Humor

by Donna Jo Napoli

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fairy Tale

Fantasy

Animal

In this young-adult retelling of *Beauty and the Beast* from the Beast's point of view, Prince Orasmyn of Persia is cursed to live as a lion until a woman loves him. A sensual and hypnotic story aimed at teens who are patient with slow pacing.

When proud Prince Orasmyn of Persia knowingly allows a flawed camel to be sacrificed to Muhammad at the Feast of Sacrifices, a spirit places a curse on him that causes him to live as a lion until a woman loves him.

Fleeing from his father's hunting party, he travels first to India and lives there, learning the ways of lions. Eventually he makes his way to France, where he takes over an abandoned castle.

There he lives alone, a beast with the mind of a man, until a traveling merchant shelters in his castle during a storm. The man tears a branch off one of the prince's rose bushes, angering the prince into confronting him.

The man is terrified, but the prince, seeing an opportunity to lift the curse, demands that the man give up his daughter in exchange for his life.

Includes author's note and glossary.

Donna Jo Napoli has made something of a specialty of reinterpreting traditional fairy tales in the form of young-adult novels (see also *Zel and Crazy Jack*, among others). Here she tackles a story that seems to fascinate YA authors--*Beauty and the Beast*.

As Napoli explains in a note, her story is based on an 1811 poem by Charles Lamb, which specifies that the Beast was originally a Persian prince. This gives her the opportunity to weave satisfying doses of Persian culture and religious practices into the story, and to contrast them with the practices he finds in France.

The slow pace will not be to the taste of all teens, especially during the prince's wanderings in the first half of the novel. Once he is in France the pace quickens a bit, but even with the inclusion of some bestial violence and sex, this is still more a thoughtful mood piece than an action-adventure, as befits the original story, which Disney had to soup up with talking tableware to make it appeal to younger viewers. But for those with patience, this is a beautifully told tale that brings new understanding to the original.

Teens who enjoy this often like other versions of this story, such as *Beauty, Rose Daughter*, and *The*

Rose and the Beast. Other excellent retold fairy tales include Briar Rose and Ella Enchanted.

PG Sex

11 Bloomability

by Sharon Creech

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Friendship

Dinnie starts her second life when her aunt and uncle take her away from her poor family, with her ne'er-do-well father always away from home, her brother in jail, and her pregnant sister, and bring her to the international boarding school in Switzerland where Uncle Max is to be headmaster, in Newbery Medalist Sharon Creech's "Bloomability" (Harper, \$14.95). Though reluctant to go, she discovers there a new world of joy and beauty, one which allows her to start to bloom as she begins to open up to the extraordinary variety and possibility revealed in this place where young people from cultures all over the world, speaking a multitude of languages and holding many different beliefs, come together to learn and grow. Creech successfully conveys the excitement and beauty of this unusual setting.

12 Blue

by James DeVita

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Family Life

"Blue" by James DeVita (HarperCollins, \$15.95) is a delightful sort of Kafka for kids. Morgan lives a boring and all-too-predictable life in a city apartment until one day he smells the sea and sees a vision of a giant fish arcing across his living room, whispering his name. From that moment he is obsessed with fish, with the sea, and especially with the giant marlin. They are all he can think about, and soon he begins to notice that his body is changing as well -- scales start appearing on his legs, he only feels comfortable in the bath, and he may be able to breathe underwater.

He also notices that some odd looking people have been noticing him on the street and hanging around his building. But when he finds out who they are, and where his transformation is taking him, he is, despite his parents' horror, overjoyed. And that's what sets this transformation tale apart -- despite his parents' fear, despite the machinations of a not-over-scrupulous doctor, even despite the discomfort, the prevailing mood of this unusual tale is giddy excitement and the joy of becoming, of finding one's true place in the world.

13 Borgel

by Daniel Pinkwater

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Science Fiction
Humor

Melvin recounts his extraordinary adventures in time and space with his 111-year-old sort of great-Uncle Borgel.

14 Boy

by Roald Dahl

Series:

Type: Chapter/Nonfiction

Genre/Subj.: Autobiography

Presents humorous anecdotes from the author's childhood, which includes summer vacations in Norway and an English boarding school.

15 Bud, not Buddy

by Christopher Paul Curtis

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction
Humor

Christopher Paul Curtis's first book, "The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1968" won him a slew of well-deserved awards, including a Newbery Honor, so the expectations have been pretty high for his second novel. But he avoids the sophomore curse with "Bud, Not Buddy" (Delacorte, \$15.95).

Bud has been living in Depression-era foster homes since his mother died four years ago, but when the most recent home becomes more unpleasant than he can tolerate, he runs away. Based on clues left behind by his mother, he sets out to find the man he believes to be his father; Herman Calloway, a well known musician and band leader of The Dusky Devastators of the Depression!!!!!! To survive, he relies on his wits, and Bud Caldwell's Rules and Things for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself, such as "If a adult tells you not to worry, and you weren't worried before, you better hurry up and start 'cause you're already running late."

Based on bits of his own family history, Curtis's story takes his plucky hero through Hooverilles, the big band era, and the landscape of the Midwest, where blacks were safer in the big cities than in the small towns in between. His forte is unsentimentally poignant comedy, combining sharp wit, snappy dialogue, and a big heart. Information about the author is available at

<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachersbdd/curt.html>.

16 The Cay

by Theodore Taylor

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Adventure
Survival

When the freighter on which they are travelling is torpedoed by a German submarine during WWII, an adolescent white boy, blinded by a blow on the head, and an old black man are stranded on a tiny Caribbean island where the boy acquires a new kind of vision, courage, and love from his old companion.

17 Circle of Magic Series

by Tamora Pierce

Series: Circle of Magic

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Consists of *Sandry's Book*, *Daja's Book*, *Tris's Book*, and *Briar's Book*. Four young misfits find themselves living in a strictly disciplined temple community where they become friends while also learning to do crafts and to use their powers, especially magic. There is also another Circle of Magic series by Debra Doyle.

18 Cutting Loose

by Michael Lewin

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Mystery
Adventure

A girl, who dresses like a boy in order to play professional baseball during the late nineteenth century, tracks the murderer of her best friend to London where she encounters the killer of her father.

19 Danger.com Series

by Jordan Cray

Series: Danger.com

Type:

Genre/Subj.:

by Diana Wynne Jones

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

Mr. Chesney may only be a human, albeit a particularly nasty one, and he has no magic, but he does have a demon in his pocket that allows him to exploit ruthlessly the inhabitants of a magical world for the benefit of his Pilgrim Party tours. Querida, Chancellor of the Wizard's University, has a plan to get rid of him and his tours which are wrecking her world. On the advice of an oracle, she picks Derk (a wizard given to gardening and breeding strange creatures), to be that year's Dark Lord hoping he'll botch it, but there's more going on than she knows; Chesney is secretly stealing magic and using it as an energy source in his own world. Before Querida is done, the disaster she has set in motion like an avalanche has involved dragons, demons, and even the gods of her world.

Jones is normally the master of taut, witty, unique fantasies, but here she has gotten carried away. There ought to be a rule that comedies are forbidden to exceed 150 pages. The ineffectual mucking about of the main characters goes on far too long of, and the humor quickly wears thin. This is a wonderful concept, and the book is filled with clever bits of business and astonishing creativity, but it needs massive editing.

21 The Dark Side of Nowhere

by Neal Shusterman

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Science Fiction
Adventure

When Jason's friend apparently dies of what he is told was appendicitis, the skein of lies which has wrapped his life in his seemingly humdrum small town begins to unravel. Jason discovers that his parents, and those of his friends, were the advance force of an alien invasion, and that neither he nor his friends are human. Now, belatedly, the invasion force is coming, and Jason and his friends are being trained as the front line, while their bodies begin to metamorphose into their true form and their parents scatter around the globe to prepare for the first strike. But while he is swept up in the awe and excitement, Jason begins to wonder if he really wants the invasion to succeed.

Shusterman (The Eyes of Kid Midas, Scorpion Shards) again delivers an edge of the seat thriller which raises larger issues, some of them echoing the Nazi Youth Brigades and The Wave. Shusterman is virtually unmatched in seamlessly combining vivid imagination, the kind of gritty, breath-stopping excitement that can grab upper elementary and middle school boys, and a wealth of complex issues which make his books a natural for classroom discussions. A surefire hit which belongs on every reluctant reader list for older boys.

22 Dealing with Dragons

by Patricia C. Wrede

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Bored with traditional palace life, a princess goes off to live with a group of dragons and soon becomes involved in fighting against some disreputable wizards who want to steal away the dragon's kingdom. First of a series.

23 Deltora Quest Series

by Emily Rodda

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

The evil Shadow Lord is planning to take over the land of Deltora and enslave all its people. In order to stop him 16-year old Lief and former palace guard Barda must find all seven stones from the magic belt of Deltora.

24 The Devil and his Boy

by Anthony Horowitz

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction
Adventure

In 1593 13 year-old Tom travels through the English countryside to London, where he falls in with a troupe of actors and finds himself in great danger from several sources.

25 Devil's Bridge

by Cynthia DeFelice

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Family Life

Twelve-year-old Ben must cope with the loss of his father, who died the year before, and his mother's overprotectiveness when he enters the annual Striped Bass Derby on Martha's Vineyard.

26 Diggers

by Terry Pratchett

Series: The Bromeliad 2

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

In last month's column I mentioned that the sequel to "Truckers" was due out soon. "Diggers" (Delacorte, \$14.95 hardcover) has just been released as the second in a projected trilogy called the Bromeliad. Terry Pratchett does not exactly qualify as a Great Name in children's literature, but his style, the humorous fantasy most widely popularized for adults by Douglas Adams, is well suited to exciting and entertaining children's stories. The British, among them P.L. Travers, Hugh Lofting, E. Nesbit, and countless others, seem to have special knack for this sort of thing, and Pratchett's cleverness, wit, and breathless pacing earn him a solid place in this pantheon.

In "Diggers," the tiny Nomes, having in the first book escaped from the department store under whose floors they had lived for generations, have taken up residence in an abandoned quarry. No sooner are they settled than they learn the quarry is to be reopened, and they face another journey to escape from the slow-moving humans who never seem to leave them in peace. While they try to figure out how to handle this latest danger, their leader, Masklin, has disappeared, possibly to attempt to stow away in a communications satellite. In one of the many references to Exodus, while he is gone a religious fanatic begins to control the Nomes and to turn them from the path Masklin had planned for them. The story ends with a cliffhanger, drat the man, and we'll have to wait for the next book to find out what happens.

27 Discovery of Dragons

by Graeme Base

Series:

Type:

Genre/Subj.:

28 Doll People

by Ann M. Martin

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

A family of porcelain dolls that has lived in the same house for one hundred years is taken aback when a new family of plastic dolls arrives and doesn't follow The Doll Code of Honor.

29 The Dreadful Future of Blossom Culp

by Richard Peck

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

Blossom, not the most popular member of her freshman class in 1914, travels ahead seventy years, and returns in time to make Halloween a memorable night for her classmates and teachers.

30 Ella Enchanted

by Gail Carson Levine

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

When Ella is born, the fairy Lucinda gives her a gift which proves to be a curse: obedience. Condemned to obey every order she is given she learns, as she grows up, to use her obedience to spite those who would command her. Sent away to finishing school after the death of her mother, she runs away after a hateful girl, Hattie, there learns her secret and uses it to turn her into a slave. When her father marries Hattie's mother she becomes a drudge in her own home. But when she and the prince fall in love, her obedience becomes more than an annoyance; she fears it will endanger her love and her country.

This clever, witty, novelized retelling of the Cinderella story makes sense of aspects of the story that were always puzzling, such as Cinderella's slavish obedience to her wicked stepmother and stepsisters. It adds to the story the enchanting voice of Ella herself, courageous, smart, and willfully determined not to let others control her life or ruin the prince's. Her personality, and that of the prince, are so well drawn and charming that it is easy to understand how they fall in love. A magical delight.

31 Ender's Game

by Orson Scott Card

Series: Ender Series

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Science Fiction
Adventure

A boy is being trained to be the military genius the Earth needs to fight off an anticipated alien invasion, and all other concerns about his psychological well-being are subservient to the goal of making him the perfect general by the time the war begins. Originally written for adults, winner of several awards and, to my mind, the best science fiction novel ever written, it has been discovered in a big way by upper elementary and middle school students, who can't put it down. It has three sequels, both of which are slower and more philosophical; while these two are fascinating to adults, most kids are bored by them. But Card does have several other books which will appeal to this group, most notably "Treason," though it is considerably more gruesome than "Ender's Game." Also check out the Shadow series, in which Card retells Ender's Game from the point of view of another character, then follows that character's life afterwards.

32 Eric

by Terry Pratchett

Series: Discworld

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

Thirteen-year-old Eric and Rincewind the wizard have many adventures trying to escape from the equally horrifying and ludicrous beings and places of the magical Dungeon Dimension. One of the Discworld series.

33 Fire Bringer

by David Clement-Davies

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Animal
Fantasy

Rannoch, a young deer chased from the totalitarian herd where his father was murdered, must fulfill a prophecy and his own destiny.

34 First Horse I See

by Sally Keehn

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Family Life
Animal

Left in the care of her beloved Granddad following the death of her mother, Willojean tries to prove to her alcoholic father that she is able to train a special horse which had been abused.

35 Five Novels

by Daniel Pinkwater

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Humor

Consists of:

Alan Mendelsohn, the Boy from Mars

Slaves of Spiegel

The Snarkout Boys and the Avocado of Death

The Last Guru

Young Adult Novel.

36 Flipped

by Wendelin Van Draanen

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

In alternating chapters, two teenagers describe how their feelings about themselves, each other, and their families have changed over the years.

37 Garfield's Fat Pouch

by Jim Davis

Series:

Type:

Genre/Subj.: Humor

38 Ghosts I Have Been

by Richard Peck

Series: Blossom Culp

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

Blossom Culp's gift of second sight, which she discovers gradually, leads her into some unusual adventures.

39 Ginger Pye

by Eleanor Estes

Illus. by Eleanor Estes

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Family Life

The disappearance of a new puppy named Ginger and the appearance of a mysterious man in a mustard yellow hat bring excitement into the lives of the Pye children.

by Janet S. Anderson

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

Becky and her four classmates are about to graduate from sixth grade in the last one-room schoolhouse in the county. But there is something mysterious, possibly dangerous, about their upcoming ritual, and no one will talk about it, though everyone in town has been though it and been changed forever. As the children, and the reader, gradually come to realize that the ritual involves transformation into an animal and joining the animal world for a time, wonder and terror seem to go hand in hand. Twenty-five years ago something went terribly wrong, and their teacher, Miss Clough, may be too old and sick to prevent a repeat and bring them all back safely.

Strongly reminiscent of the short stories of Zenna Henderson, Anderson builds the magic and the suspense slowly and together in this brilliant tale of a magical teacher's last lesson. But she is not omnipotent, and the children face the twin dangers of an unpredictable animal world, and the equally unpredictable combination of magic with their own emotional baggage. Power and poetry, mystery and magic, compelling suspense and soaring wonder move the children through the gate and into a new world, graduation in so many different ways. A stunner.

by Philip Pullman

Series: His Dark Materials 1

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Adventure

Enter a parallel world, dark and cold, with daemons, boat-dwelling gypsies, armored bears, and a street child with a strange destiny. As this feisty little heroine battles the Gobblers, who separate children from their souls, and follows a mystical device to a universe-altering confrontation in the Arctic, your teens will be gripping this book with white knuckles long past lights-out.

When first released, this book, the first of a trilogy, created a sensation. There has literally never been anything like it. A genre-bending fantasy, with elements of mystery and Dickensian melodrama, it was sold in both adult and young adult categories, and brought an edgy sensibility which updated the moribund fantasy genre for the new millennium.

Nail-biting suspense grabs readers until they can't shake themselves loose from this strange world--familiar, but definitely not the Earth we know. It has many of the same places, such as Oxford and London, but with some strange differences. The magical quality of Lyra's world sets readers' imaginations soaring.

This place is so convincingly portrayed that the experiments performed on the children seem as gruesome to the reader as to Lyra. Readers soon accept her world, and they especially love this smart, rowdy heroine. Forget about sweet, honest girls--this scrappy street fighter uses all her wits to outfox the villains, and discovers mystical talents that she never knew she had.

Fantasy competes with roaring adventure as Lyra escapes from the menacing Mrs. Coulter, gets caught, and escapes again. She battles attacking Tartars, Gobblers, and cliff-ghasts, befriends one tribe of witches, and fights another. She also learns the unpleasant, true nature of her parents.

For avid readers, fantasy buffs, and kids who are outgrowing children's fantasies, this is a great treasure. Even reluctant readers may get hooked if you begin by reading it aloud. Since it ends in a true cliff-hanger, the next stop is *The Subtle Knife*. Another exciting fantasy trilogy for young adults begins with *A Wizard of Earthsea*.

The Gospel According to Larry

by Janet Tashjian

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Contemporary Fiction
Humor

There are many ways to judge a children's book; some obvious (will kids actually like it? is it good literature?), some less so. As a reviewer I keep a database of all the children's novels I have ever read that I liked. Among the many bits of information I include is a categorization scheme that includes thousands of topics, which allows me to search through thousands of books by theme. I'm not proud of this particular demonstration of my obsessive tendencies, you understand, but it does make recommending books for my students easier, and it gives me a few more interesting ways to judge a book. A novel that brings to mind many different topics is at least interesting and thought provoking. One that makes me think of a new topic to add to the list is a special pleasure, as it makes me think about other books in new ways.

"The Gospel According to Larry" by Janet Tashjian (Henry Holt, \$16.95) gave me four new topics, a rare feat for any new book these days. This humorous YA novel follows the travails of Josh, a quirky loner in high school who wants to make a difference. He creates a website, thegospelaccordingtolarry.com, to display his rants about commercialism and modern culture. But when the site catches on, it becomes a pop-culture phenomenon, and spawns a media frenzy that threatens to destroy Josh's life.

The author gets all the notes just right; the wired adolescent passions, the destructive effects of the media spotlight, and the technology. Unlike so many authors dealing with computers and the internet, Tashjian doesn't write like she's trying to convince the reader of her expertise. She just tells her story, in Josh's convincing voice, and doesn't shy away from following her premises to their logical conclusion.

Gypsy Game

by Zilpha Keatley Snyder

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Friendship
City Life

Six imaginative schoolmates embark on a game in which they pretend to be gypsies, but when one of the boys runs away and takes up with a group of homeless people, the game threatens to become all too real.

44 **Half Magic**

by Edward Eager

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

4 children looking forward to an ordinary summer enjoy a series of fantastic adventures by double wishing on an ancient coin.

45 **Harriet the Spy**

by Louise Fitzhugh

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Humor
Contemporary Fiction

Eleven-year-old Harriet keeps notes on her classmates and neighbors in a secret notebook, but when some of the students read the notebook, they seek revenge.

by J. K. Rowling

Illus. by Mary Grandpré

Series: Harry Potter 2

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

It's the kind of story that makes a great headline - Single Welfare Mom Becomes Internationally Celebrated Author. In J. K. Rowling's case, it's a fairytale come true.

Writing in longhand on scraps of paper in an Edinburgh cafe during her infant daughter's naps Rowling, divorced, unemployed, and on public assistance, produced the international best selling and award winning novel "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone." Published in more than a dozen countries. spending time on adult best-seller lists (including the New York Times), optioned for a movie and merchandising, this children's fantasy phenomenon has caught the fancy of a world starved for good fantasy adventure and catapulted its author to fame and fortune.

"I would have been crazy to have expected what has happened to Harry," she says, but readers of the books were not surprised. Early reviews in England, where it was first published, immediately began comparing it to Roald Dahl's books. Other than belonging to the same genre, the humorous fantasy-adventure, at which the British excel, it's hard to see much similarity, but its fate may well be the same - a lasting place on the shelf of beloved children's books.

Just released is the second book about Harry (in a planned series of seven, one for every year of Harry's education at Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry), "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" (Scholastic, \$17.95). For those who haven't read the first book, the author makes an effort to bring them up to speed, but you'd be missing out on a lot of fun if you don't read the first book first.

It's summer vacation, and Harry is back at home with his awful Aunt and Uncle Dursley and their repulsive son Dudley, muggles (non-magic people) all, who are so determined to keep him from magic and Hogwarts that they have locked him in his room with bars on the windows. Before he is rescued by his friend Ron and Ron's brothers in a flying car, he is visited by a strange house-elf named Dobby, who says that Harry must not return to Hogwarts or he "will be in mortal danger . . .there is a plot to make most terrible things happen."

Harry, of course, returns anyway, despite Dobby's efforts to prevent him, and discovers that terrible things are indeed afoot. The legendary Chamber of

Secrets has been opened by the mysterious Heir of Slytherin (an evil wizard who was involved in founding the school a thousand years previous and who wanted to get rid of all but those of pure wizard blood), releasing a malevolent monster who begins prowling the halls of the school turning mudbloods (those who come from muggle families) to stone.

Suspicion soon falls on Harry, who bears more than a passing similarity to Slytherin, including being a Parseltongue, one with the ability to converse with snakes. But Harry and his friends Ron and Hermione have even more reasons to try to track down the real Heir and stop the monster; Ron's little sister has disappeared, Lucius Malfoy, the father of Harry's chief rival Draco, is intent on ridding the school of its beloved headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, and Harry's friend, the groundskeeper Hagrid, who may be more involved than he's letting on.

A brief synopsis, especially one whose author is trying desperately not to give away too much, can't begin to capture the marvelous complexity of the plot and characters. But one of the great pleasures of this series is the rich background and fascinating detours the author explores. Much of the novel is taken up with life at Hogwarts, including classes in all types of magic, Quidditch matches (a sport somewhat like basketball or soccer, but played on broomsticks with balls which can attack the players), ghosts who have deathday parties, flying cars, magical dueling, living diaries, teleportation, invisibility cloaks, malfunctioning wands, and a cast of teachers who are, to put it mildly, eccentric.

The plot itself, though, is a riveting thrillride, involving not only the monster, but giant man-eating spiders, a ghost who lurks in the girl's bathroom, secret underground vaults, a basilisk, time-travel, a phoenix, magical transformation potions, the near death of several major and minor characters (about the series the author warns that "I'm afraid there will be casualties!") and a climactic confrontation with the greatest evil wizard of them all, Voldemort. Rowling excels at twists, turns, and surprises, and I at least found the identity of the person who opened the Chamber a complete surprise.

Combining classic elements of fantasy (magic intruding into the normal world in a battle between good vs. evil), adventure (children in mortal danger saving the day when the adults can't), and mystery (a

by J. K. Rowling

Illus. by Mary Grandpré

Series: Harry Potter 4

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Adventure

After attending the Quidditch World Cup as the Weasley's guest, Harry heads to Hogwarts School for his fourth year of Wizard study. There Headmaster Dumbledore announces that instead of the usual inter-house Quidditch competition, Hogwarts will be hosting the Triwizard Tournament. This competition between the great wizard schools of Europe has not been held for hundreds of years because of the high death toll among competitors.

One champion is picked to represent each school, but somehow Harry is also chosen, even though he is underage and Hogwarts already has a champion -- Cedric Diggory. Sirius Black, Harry's godfather who is still in hiding, is worried that this is another plot against Harry's life. But schemes are in motion, more complex and deadly than even Sirius can imagine, few people are who they seem to be, and even Dumbledore's protection may not be enough to keep Harry safe this time.

The question on everyone's mind is -can even J. K. Rowling, who has turned the publishing world upside down by creating the biggest publishing phenomenon in history, pull off a 734 page book for children? The answer is -- yes.

This author is one of the great masters of plotting. Throughout the incredible length of this novel (the contents alone takes five pages!) the pace only flags once, during the Yule Ball. Otherwise this is a page turner from beginning to end, filled with Rowling's customary plot twists and vast quantities of imaginative play.

Once again the story seems to go in a dozen different directions at first, with huge numbers of seemingly unrelated characters and events, but hardly a word is wasted. All come together in an edge-of-the-seat, heart-pounding series of climaxes which are exciting and, at times, moving. Only Hermione's House-Elf Liberation Front seems to have come to nothing by the end of the book, but it seems a certainty with this clever author that she is setting up a thematic element for a later book. Meanwhile she is making some powerful statements about fairness and diversity, the nature of courage, and of true friendship.

Children in the 8-10 age range who loved the first three books will find this one tougher going -- not just for its length, but for the complexity, quantities of untranslated British vocabulary, and some

powerfully horrific and deadly scenes which may give parents of younger children cause for concern (see Parental Advisory).

by J. K. Rowling

Illus. by Mary Grandpré

Series: Harry Potter 3

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

With books 1 and 2 of the planned seven-book Harry Potter series firmly ensconced at the top of the New York Times Bestseller List (that's the ADULT list), the imminent arrival of book 3, "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" by J. K. Rowling (Scholastic, \$19.95), is the most eagerly awaited book in recent memory. Indeed, many in this digital age have chosen not to wait and have ordered the British edition (which came out in July with a different cover and slightly different language) direct from England. But the American edition is due on September 8, and it is well worth the wait.

For those of you who have been vacationing on a desert island for the past two years, Harry Potter is the children's publishing phenomenon of the decade. A mania for Harry among both children and adults has swept around the globe since the first book, "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," burst on the scene two years ago, and has intensified ever since. The furor has been aided by parents, teachers, and librarians because, unlike the Goosebumps fad of a nearly decade ago, these books are well written, richly complex literature with strong moral underpinnings, as well as being wildly exciting stories. Debates have erupted all over the Internet about the metaphorical meanings, characters, and finer plot points, and Potter sites proliferate.

At the heart of the hurricane is an old-fashioned good-vs.-evil fantasy-adventure-mystery series updated with an edgy sensibility perfectly matched to the digital generation at the turn of the millennium. Each book chronicles one school year in the life of Harry Potter, wizard-in-training, at the magical Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and another round of his battle with the minions of the evil wizard Voldemort, who killed Harry's parents when Harry was an infant, but was weakened as a result.

Now 13 and entering his third year at Hogwarts, Harry is as miserable as ever during his summer break with his nasty aunt, uncle, and cousin Dursley. When their awful treatment of him becomes more than he can stand, he inflates his aunt like a balloon and runs away. Terrified that he will be expelled for breaking the rule against using magic during vacations among the muggles (nonmagic people), he is surprised when instead of punishment he is put up in a nice room at the Leaky Cauldron inn to await

the start of the new school year. He soon learns why; Sirius Black, who betrayed Harry's parents to Voldemort, has escaped from the supposedly inescapable Azkaban Prison for wizards, which is guarded by the soul-sucking Dementors, and is coming to kill him.

Back at school with his friends Ron, Hermione and Hagrid (who is now the teacher of Care of Magical Creatures), and his enemies Draco and Professor Snape, Harry is restive under the restrictions placed on him for his own safety. The school is now being guarded by Dementors against the expected attack of Black, but Harry has an unusually averse reaction to their presence; whenever one appears he starts hearing the death screams of his mother, and he passes out. As he attends magical classes and prepares for the new season of Quidditch, the marvelous aerial sport invented by author Rowling, it soon becomes clear that Black is getting past the guards.

Meanwhile there is an abundance of other problems, from Draco's father demanding that Hagrid's hippogriff be destroyed after Draco goads it into attacking him, to Hermione's new cat constantly attacking Ron and his pet rat Scabbers, and from the destruction of Harry's broomstick and the mysterious appearance of an even better replacement, to Snape's harassment of Harry and his grudge against the new teacher of Defense Against the Dark Arts. But Rowling once again brings all of these exciting but apparently unconnected side trips together in a climax wherein she works a series of surprising plot twists.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about this new entry, aside from the riveting plot, is that as Harry is getting older and approaching adolescence, both he and the mood of the story are changing. Many authors make the mistake of aging their characters chronologically, but having them stay the same emotionally. But though she doesn't make it too obvious, Harry's emotions are becoming increasingly erratic and he is starting for the first time to wrestle with his parents' death. Meanwhile, the mood of the series is changing from the humor of the first two books to something darker and scarier, especially where the Dementors are concerned.

This amazing series and its stupendous success has had two beneficial effects; it has awakened thousands of children all over the world to both the

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

by J.K. Rowling

Illus. by Mary Grandpré

Series: Harry Potter 1

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

After his parents are killed when he is just a baby, Harry Potter is sent to live with his awful uncle and aunt and their horrible son, Dudley. Ten miserable years later, despite the uncle's frantic efforts to prevent it, a genial giant named Hagrid invites Harry to join Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Thus is opened before Harry a magical world that secretly exists side-by-side with our ordinary one. Among the wizards, witches, and other magical beings inhabiting this world Harry is already famous as the child who somehow survived the attack, by the evil sorcerer Voldemort, which killed his parents. At Hogwarts Harry discovers he has an aptitude for magic and for the school sport, Quidditch, a cross between soccer and war played high in the sky on broomsticks.

Of all the author's fantastic creations Quidditch is the most marvelous. In fact, Harry's life and education in this unforgettable boarding school could easily have carried the whole novel, but there is much more: Voldemort is trying to regain power, one of the teachers may be helping him, and only Harry and his friends can stop him.

Among the many pleasures of this humorous and exciting novel is Harry's competence. For once the hero is not a clumsy oaf who only redeems himself at the end. Instead, Harry, though modest, shines right from the day he enters Hogwarts and, though not loved by all, is neither an outcast nor inept. Not only does this make a better story, but it also provides a terrific resource for the fantasy lives of young readers.

Hatchet

by Gary Paulsen

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Adventure
Survival

Newbery Honor 1988. After a plane crash, 13-year-old Brian spends 54 days in the wilderness, learning to survive with only the aid of a hatchet given him by his mother, and learning also to survive his parent's divorce. Sequel: *The River*. Alternative Sequel: *Brian's Winter*

51 **Heaven Eyes**

by David Almond

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

Having escaped from their orphanage on a raft, Erin, January, and Mouse float down into another world of abandoned warehouses and factories, meeting a strange old man and an even stranger girl with webbed fingers and little memory of her past

52 **Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy**

by Douglas Adams

Series: Hitchhiker 1

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Science Fiction
Humor

First of the Hitchhiker's Series. Ordinary human Arthur Dent tours the galaxy with an eccentric alien, Ford Prefect, after the Earth is demolished to make room for a hyperspace bypass.

53 **Hobbit**

by J. R. R. Tolkien

Series: Lord of the Rings 0

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Adventure

Prequel to The Lord of the Rings. Bilbo Baggins, a respectable, well-to-do hobbit, lives comfortably in his hobbit-hole until the day the wandering wizard Gandalf chooses him to take part in an adventure from which he may never return.

54 **Hoboken Chicken Emergency**

by Daniel Pinkwater

Illus. by Jill Pinkwater

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Humor

Arthur goes to pick up the turkey for Thanksgiving dinner but comes back with a 260-pound chicken.

55 Holes

by Louis Sachar

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Adventure
Mystery

Louis Sachar is best known for his weirdly goofy “Wayside School” series. But he also writes semi-serious novels with a sense of humor and inventive plotting, the best of which is “There’s a Boy in the Girl’s Bathroom” which, despite the title is an insightful and compassionate look at an emotional troubled boy working with a gifted school counselor. His latest, “Holes” (FSG, \$16) follows Stanley Yelnats, falsely convicted of stealing a celebrity’s sneakers, to Camp Green Lake, a juvenile detention center in the middle of the desert, where the inmates are required to dig a large hole every day. Getting to know the other inmates, and getting used to the grueling routine, is only part of the story, though. There’s a mystery behind this strange punishment, related to the supposed curse on Stanley’s family dating back to his “dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-grandfather.” Sachar pulls together this complicated story with unusual characters, dark humor, surprising plot twists, and some Dickensian coincidences.

56 The Horse and His Boy

by C.S. Lewis

Series: Chronicles of Narnia 5

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Book 5 of The Chronicles of Narnia. Bree, a talking horse, and Shasta, a young boy, are joined by the four English children and Aslan to help save Narnia from invasion.

57 If There Would Be No Light

by Sahara Sunday Spain

Series:

Type: Picture/Poetry

Genre/Subj.: Poetry

A collection of poetry and drawings by a Nueva student.

58 In the Hand of the Goddess

by Tamora Pierce

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Pursuing her desire to be a knight, Alanna learns many things in her role as squire to Prince Jonathan, but fears Duke Roger, an ambitious sorcerer with whom she knows she will one day have to deal.

59 **Island Far From Home**

by John Donahue

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction

The twelve-year-old son of a Union army doctor killed during the fighting in Fredericksburg comes to understand the meaning of war and the fine line between friends and enemies when he begins corresponding with a young Confederate prisoner of war.

60 **Journey to the River Sea**

by Eva Ibbottson

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction
Adventure

Sent with her governess to live with the dreadful Carter family in exotic Brazil in 1910, Maia endures many hardships before fulfilling her dream of exploring the Amazon River.

61 **King of Dragons**

by Carol Fenner

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: City Life
Contemporary Fiction

Having lost access to the old railroad station where they had been staying, homeless Ian and his father move into an unused city courthouse and try to avoid being discovered by the authorities.

62 **The Last Battle**

by C.S. Lewis

Series: Chronicles of Narnia 7

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Book 7 of The Chronicles of Narnia. Jill and Eustace join all their old friends in the last battle of Narnia and Aslan leads his people to a new paradise.

63 **Last of the Really Great Whangdoodles**

by Julie Andrews Edwards

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

With help from an eccentric professor who gives their imaginations special intensive training, three children succeed in locating the last of the great Whangdoodles and granting his heart's desire.

64 Lemony Snicket: The Unauthorized Autobiography

by Lemony Snickett

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Autobiography
Humor

The elusive author provides a glimpse into his mysterious and sometimes confusing life, using fanciful letters, diary entries, and other miscellaneous documents as well as photographs and illustrations.

65 Letters from Camp

by Kate Klise

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Humor
Friendship

Sent to Camp Happy Harmony to learn how to get along with each other, pairs of brothers and sisters chronicle in letters home how they come to suspect the intentions of the singing family running the camp.

66 The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe

by C.S. Lewis

Series: Chronicles of Narnia 1

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Book 1 of The Chronicles of Narnia. Four English school children find their way into a magical land where they help Aslan, the noble lion, free Narnia from the spell of the White Witch.

67 The Little House on the Prairie

by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Series: Little House

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction
Family Life

A family travels from the big woods of Wisconsin to a new home on the prairie, where they build a home, meet neighboring Indians, build a well, and fight a prairie fire.

68 The Lorax

by Dr. Seuss

Series:

Type: Picture/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

The Once-ler describes the results of the local pollution problem.

69 Lord of the Nutcracker Men

by Iain Lawrence

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

"Lord of the Nutcracker Men" by Iain Lawrence (Delacorte, \$15.95) has only the slightest touch of fantasy, but its power is very real.

During WWI, Johnny has been sent to stay with his aunt in a small British town while his mother works in a munitions factory and his father is sent to the front. He takes with him the wooden soldiers his father made for him, and enacts battles in his aunt's backyard.

His father sends frequent letters to him from the front, and with each a new toy soldier that he has carved while huddling in the trenches. For awhile he tells more than he should to a ten-year-old boy, and his letters become increasingly disturbing. Even more disturbing are the toy soldiers he sends, which become increasingly twisted and horrifying, even after he realizes that his letters are too strong, and begins lying in a vain attempt to convince Johnny that everything is all right.

Meanwhile Johnny notices a series of strange coincidences: his play battles in the backyard seem to prefigure events in the real war, and since he has already given one of the toys the role of his father, he begins to wonder if he can control events on the front. But the backyard battles at times seem out of his control.

Though set firmly on the home front, and though it ends with the hope of the Christmas Truce of 1914, this story vividly and powerfully conveys the horror of war, and its effects on those who must fight, and on those left behind. It's one of the few really unforgettable books I've seen this year.

70 Lord of the Rings

by J.R.R. Tolkien

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Adventure

Consists of The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers, and The Return of the King. Frodo Baggins must save Middle Earth from the power of the Dark Lord Sauron by carrying the One Ring of Power to Mount Doom to destroy it.

71 Lost in Cyberspace

by Richard Peck

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Science Fiction
Humor

Peck's newest novel is "Lost in Cyberspace" (Dial, \$14.99), and it combines his trademark rapier wit with time travel (which he touched on previously in "Voices After Midnight) and computers ("The Dreadful Future of Blossom Culp").

Josh thought he already had enough to deal with; his parents have recently separated, his mother has gone back to work, his sister Heather is busy clawing her way up the social ladder at her tony Manhattan girls' school, and the au pairs his mother gets from a British exchange program are, to say the least, not as advertised. But when his best friend Aaron invents a way to use the school's computers to travel in time, Josh's problems multiply, especially when Aaron accidentally whisks an unflappable young nursery maid out of the past, then can't figure out how to send her back.

Peck has no peer in lampooning America's youth culture, and his dialogue fairly crackles with the hysterical energy and frantic jargon of the just-pubescent. Along the way he tosses off riffs like sparks, on everything from education (reading class has been renamed "Linear Decoding) to British food ("like trying to digest a giant hockey puck"). The pseudo-scientific explanations of how the time travel works are delightfully nonsensical; "It's a question of dialing into the cosmic internet. The past isn't necessarily over. It's just piping in on a parallel plane." Peck wields technobabble like a man who has heard a lot of it and understands none of it, just like the writers of Star Trek, but with a much better sense of humor. In this satisfyingly hilarious romp Josh and Aaron barely get started on their adventures, but not to worry; fortunately Peck says he is already working on the sequel.

72 Lost Years of Merlin series

by T. A. Baron

Series: Lost Years of Merlin

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Folklore

A young boy who has no identity nor memory of his past washes ashore on the coast of Wales and finds his true name after a series of fantastic adventures.

73 Love That Dog

by Sharon Creech

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Poetry

A young student, who comes to love poetry through a personal understanding of what different famous poems mean to him, surprises himself by writing his own inspired poem.

74 Magic Tree House Series

by Mary Pope Osbourne

Series: Magic Tree House

Type: Transitional/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction
Fantasy

Eight-year-old Jack and his younger sister Annie find a magic treehouse, which whisks them back to an ancient times. Research guides are available for many of the places and times they visit.

75 The Magician's Nephew

by C.S. Lewis

Series: Chronicles of Narnia 6

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Book 6 of The Chronicles of Narnia. Digory and Polly, two English children, are sent away by a magician to a place where they witness how Aslan creates Narnia and gives the gift of speech to its animals.

76 The Maltese Falcon

by Dashiell Hammett

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Mystery

A San Francisco private eye gets involved with murder, a mysterious woman, and a stolen statue.

by Jerry Spinelli

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Folklore
Contemporary Fiction

This year's medal winner, "Maniac Magee" by Jerry Spinelli (Little, Brown, \$13.95 hardcover), is truly outstanding, one of the best in years. It is a riveting and engrossing story which swings back and forth from moments of great joy and pleasure to incidents filled with tension, suspense, and sorrow. It works on several different levels; as a realistic novel, as the recounting of a legend, and as a no-easy-answers statement on race relations.

"Maniac Magee" is written as if it were an attempt to tell the story behind an existing folk-legend, which permeates the town of Two Mills, about a boy who is the subject of rumor, myth, tall tales, speculation, and even jump-rope rhymes. The author warns us at the beginning that "the history of a kid is one part fact, two parts legend, and three parts snowball. And if you want to know what it was like back when Maniac Magee roamed these parts . . . be very, very careful not to let the facts get mixed up with the truth."

After his parents are killed in an accident, Jeffrey Lionel Magee is sent to live with his aunt and uncle, who don't speak to each other and have two of everything so that they won't have to share anything. By the time he is 11, Jeffrey cannot stand his life with them anymore, and he runs away. He disappears for a year, *The Lost Year*, and then resurfaces in Two Mills, a town across the river from his birthplace. It is a town rigidly divided into the East End where the blacks live, and the West End for the whites. Hector Street is the boundary which even the toughest gangs will not cross. Jeffrey, not knowing any of this, runs from one side of town to the other, performing along the way feats of courage and athletic prowess which make him the subject of rumor and earn him the nickname 'Maniac.'

Eventually he is taken in by a black family, the Beales, but his joyous stay with them is marred by the increasing tension his presence there causes among others in the East End. Eventually, deciding that he is causing too many problems for his adopted family, he leaves. But he finds himself pursued by both white and black gangs from whom he escapes, in a chilling scene, by walking down the center of Hector Street with one gang harassing him from either side, but neither daring to cross in the presence of the other. He finally takes up residence in the buffalo pen at the zoo, where he is found and

befriended by Grayson, an elderly groundskeeper. By now, Jeffrey is getting wary of forming a family with anyone, but his time with Grayson is again both exhilarating and tragic. In the end, on his own again, he ends up staying with a vicious and slovenly family of racists, whose hatred of blacks is so extreme that Jeffrey is driven to attempt an ill-considered face-off between the races, with predictably unfortunate results.

The ending, although showing the possibility of some personal happiness for Jeffrey, offers no pat answers to the racial problems of the town. There are heroes and monsters on both sides, and Jeffrey is able to find, even in the most hate-filled among them, redeeming qualities and humanity. But while he makes a difference in the lives of many, we finally come to realize that the idea that he can somehow bring about a reconciliation is naive.

The characters in "Maniac Magee," particularly Jeffrey, Grayson, and the Beales, are well-drawn and appealing, the story is exciting, the ideas are thought-provoking, and the book offers a series of little moments which, though understated, are sometimes uplifting, sometimes heart-rending, but always involving. It should not be missed.

78 **Matilda**

by Roald Dahl

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

Matilda applies her untapped mental powers to rid the school of the evil, child-hating headmistress, Miss Trunchbull, and restore her nice teacher, Miss Honey, to financial security.

79 **The Maze**

by Will Hobbs

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Adventure

Rick, a fourteen-year-old foster child, escapes from a juvenile detention facility near Las Vegas and travels to Canyonlands National Park in Utah where he meets a bird biologist working on a project to reintroduce condors to the wild.

80 **The Miserable Mill**

by Lemony Snicket
Illus. by Brett Helquist
Series: A Series of 4
Unfortunate Events

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

Accidents, evil plots, and general misfortune abound when, in their continuing search for a home, the Baudelaire orphans are sent to live and work in a sinister lumbermill.

81 **Moorchild**

by Eloise McGraw
Series:
Type: Chapter/Fiction
Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Fairytale

Feeling that she is neither fully human nor "Folk," a changeling learns her true identity and attempts to find the human child whose place she had been given.

by Anne Holm

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Adventure
Survival

“North to Freedom” by Anne Holm (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, \$3.95) is certainly one of the best novels ever written for children fourth grade and older. It has all the elements of the ideal children's book; a riveting plot, a wonderfully sympathetic main character, an intriguing point of view, and tremendous philosophical depth.

It is the story of David, a 12-year-old who has spent all of his life in a prison camp in some unspecified eastern European country (children enjoy trying to track down the location of the camp from the clues given), apparently sometime in the fifties. For reasons he does not know, he is allowed to escape by the head guard, who, he is certain, hates him. He is told, without knowing why, to make his way to Denmark. He has no family that he knows of; indeed he knows nothing about himself or the world outside the camp. He is bright and reasoning, but has little useful experience, and thus he misunderstands almost everything he sees. Yet some things he understands all too well, and more clearly than many of the people he encounters on his travels.

And so he travels across peacetime Europe, seeing all of the things we take for granted with a fresh eye. Many things he cannot understand at all; other children he finds especially difficult, and the idea of imaginative play is completely beyond him. His first encounters with such things as bright colors, a house, a bath, and good, well-intentioned people are touching and, amazingly, exciting.

If he is unclear about everyday objects, he is exceptionally clear and firm when it comes to morality. He has spent his life resisting the brutality and evil which are displayed by the prison guards, and he has firm, unshakable, black-and-white ideas about how one should live and act. This mystifies those he meets, who tend to agree in general, but are never so firm and definite. Yet his convictions are well-reasoned, and often cause young readers to evaluate their own ideas about suiting their actions to their beliefs. “North to Freedom” is hard to put down, and harder to forget.

83 Notes from a Liar and her Dog

by Gennifer Choldenko

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Family Life
Humor

In "Notes from a Liar and Her Dog" by Gennifer Choldenko (Penguin Putnam, \$18.99) Ant (short for Antonia, much to her mother's dismay) doesn't feel a part of her family. Her sisters are just like her mom, but she is so different that she dreams of being rescued by her "real" family. She has only two friends -- her dog Pistachio, and the warm-hearted Harrison, both disliked by her mother, who doesn't seem to like Ant much better. To cope Ant has taken lying to her parents when she can't avoid them. But a caring teacher is determined to get her to tell them the truth -- about everything.

By turns funny and poignant, Ant tells her story in a voice rich with strength and longing. It's obvious to the reader, if not to Ant, that she just wants to be accepted by her family but her desperate fantasies and lies only succeed in pushing them further away. Author Choldenko leads readers inside the head and heart of a misunderstood child, and finds there a desire for everything she pretends to despise.

84 Number the Stars

by Lois Lowry

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction

Newbery Medal 1990. In 1943, during the German occupation of Denmark, 10-year-old Annemarie learns how to be brave and courageous when she helps shelter her Jewish friend from the Nazis.

85 Pegeen

by Hilda Van Stockum

Illus. by Hilda Van Stockum

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

When her grandmother dies, orphaned Pegeen finds a temporary home with the O'Sullivan family and dreads the inevitable day when she must go to live with her uncle in America.

86 The Phantom Tollbooth

by Norton Juster

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

A journey through a land where Milo learns the importance of words and numbers provides a cure for his boredom.

87 Poppy

by Avi

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Animal
Fantasy

Poppy the deer mouse urges her family to move next to a field of corn big enough to feed them all forever, but Mr. Ocax, a terrifying owl, has other ideas.

88 Prince Caspian

by C.S. Lewis

Series: Chronicles of Narnia 2

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Book 2 of The Chronicles of Narnia. Peter, Edmund, Susan, and Lucy help Prince Caspian organize his army of Talking Beasts to fight against an evil king who has taken control of Narnia.

89 The Princess Diaries

by Meg Cabot

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Humor
Family Life

14-year-old Mia, who is trying to lead a normal life as a teenage girl in New York City, is shocked to learn that her father is the prince of Genovia, a small European principality, and that she is a princess and the heir to the throne. Sequel: Princess in the Spotlight.

90 Ragweed

by Avi

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Animal

Ragweed, a young country mouse, leaves his family and travels to the big city, where he finds excitement and danger and sees cats for the first time.

91 A Rat's Tale

by Tor Seidler

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Animal

Montague, an artistic young rat living beneath the streets of New York City, thinks he can do nothing to save his friends from extermination until he finds a better understanding of both himself and his ne'er-do-well uncle.

92 Redwall Series

by Brian Jacques

Series: Redwall

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Animal

When the peaceful life of ancient Redwall Abbey is shattered by the arrival of the evil rat Cluny and his villainous hordes, Matthias, a young mouse, determines to find the legendary sword of Martin the Warrior which, he is convinced, will help Redwall's inhabitants destroy the enemy.

93 Regarding the Fountain

by Kate Klise

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Humor

When the principal asks a fifth-grader to write a letter regarding the purchase of a new drinking fountain for their school, he finds that all sorts of chaos results.

94 The Reptile Room

by Lemony Snicket

Illus. by Brett Helquist

Series: A Series of Unfortunate 2
Events

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

In book 2, *The Reptile Room,* the orphans, having barely escaped from the clutches of the odious Count, are placed with their Uncle Monty, a cheerful herpetologist who has a room filled with rare and exotic reptiles. The children are happy there for a brief time, but as the author continually warns us, happiness is not their lot. When Uncle Monty's new assistant arrives, it is none other than Count Olaf in disguise, though no one will believe them, even after Uncle Monty turns up dead, apparently bitten by one of his own snakes.

95 The Ropemaker

by Peter Dickinson

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

"The Ropemaker" by Peter Dickinson (Random House, \$15.95) is an old-fashioned fantasy -- a journey by innocents across an amazing and treacherous landscape towards a magical goal to protect their people: a quest.

For twenty generations the Valley has been protected from the evil Empire on one side and marauding tribes on the other by powerful magic. The original spells were cast by a wizard named Faheel, and are maintained by two families, one on the mountain and one near the forest, who practice the secret rituals handed down from Faheel through the generations. But now the magic is fading, the protective barriers falling, and it is decided to send four people, a child and an elder from each family, into the Empire to find Faheel and renew the protective magic.

The story is told from the point of view of Tilja. Though a member of the forest family, she has no magic; she cannot sing to the cedars, nor hear them speak. But in the Empire, where even to speak Faheel's name brings destruction, her lack of magic may prove more powerful than the greatest wizards of the empire.

96 Rowan and the Travelers

by Emily Rodda

Series: Rowan 2

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

When an ancient evil threatens to devastate Rin, overcoming its people with a fatal sleeping sickness, young Rowan, with help from a tribe called the Travelers, must decipher a rhyming riddle in order to save the land and its inhabitants.

97 Rowan of Rin

by Emily Rodda

Series: Rowan 1

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Because only he can read the magical map, young, weak, and timid Rowan joins six other villagers to climb a mountain and try to restore their water supply, as fears of a dragon and other horrors threaten to drive them back.

98 Sabriel

by Garth Nix

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Sabriel, daughter of the necromancer Abhorsen, must journey into the mysterious and magical Old Kingdom to rescue her father from the Land of the Dead

99 Scared Stiff

by Willo Davis Roberts

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

When their mother disappears, two brothers go to stay with a great uncle in a mobile home park next to an abandoned amusement park and begin a search which puts them in danger.

100 Search for Delicious

by Natalie Babbitt

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Folklore

The Prime Minister is compiling a dictionary and when no one at court can agree on the meaning of delicious, the King sends his twelve-year-old messenger to poll the country.

101 Secret Letters from 0 to 10

by Susie Morgenstern

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Family Life
Friendship

Ernest, whose father disappeared the day after his mother died in childbirth, has lived all of his 10 years with his frail, silent grandmother. They have no TV or telephone, no friends or family, no joy or sorrow, and Ernest has become a perfect little automaton. Enter Victoria, a vivacious girl with 13 brothers and an endless joy for life, and Ernest's ordered little world is shaken to its foundation. He begins to experience ordinary life for the first time and drags his grandmother with him as he discovers food with flavor, talking to other people, holding a baby, and feeling and showing love. He even searches for his father.

What an absolute, unalloyed joy this book is! How perfect in its way of taking a fresh look at the pleasure of ordinary life. It makes even shopping at the supermarket seem new and exciting. Ernest's rapid journey from drab cipher to full human, guided by the bossy, loving hands of Victoria and her wild family, is as exciting as an adventure, as funny as a comedy, and as poignant as a love story, yet it is none of those; it's just life, boisterous, messy, wonderful life coming all at once to someone who never knew he hungered for it. What a marvelous concept for a children's book. A treasure.

103 Seventh Tower Series

by Garth Nix

Series: Seventh Tower

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

104 Shade's Children

by Garth Nix

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Adventure

In a savage postnuclear world, four young fugitives attempt to overthrow the bloodthirsty rule of the Overlords with the help of Shade, their mysterious mentor.

105 The Shakespeare Stealer

by Gary Blackwood

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction

When orphaned Widge is apprenticed to Dr. Bright, he learns the doctor's method of shorthand and is bought by Simon Bass, who wants Widge to transcribe Shakespeare's newest play, Hamlet. Once inside the Globe Theater, Widge is enthralled by the play and taken in by the company as an apprentice. Soon Widge is torn by his fear of his master, his loyalty to the people who have treated him as a friend, and his growing desire to continue as an actor.

What more could you want in an adventure: a plucky orphan finally finding a home, some swashbuckling swordplay, Elizabethan theater, a girl posing as a boy, and a dastardly villain who is not what he seems? As a nice bonus, Blackwood's book also illuminates an interesting problem: the stealing of plays in Elizabethan England. With its fast pace, unusual setting and even more unusual crime, this should find a ready audience among the upper elementary and middle school set.

106 Shakespeare's Scribe

by Gary Blackwood

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction
Literary Fiction

Sequel to *The Shakespeare Stealer*. In plague-ridden 1602 England, a fifteen-year-old orphan boy, who has become an apprentice actor, goes on the road with Shakespeare's troupe, and finds out more about his parents along the way.

107 The Silver Chair

by C.S. Lewis

Series: Chronicles of Narnia 4

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Book 4 of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Eustace and Jill follow Aslan's clues to find the captive Prince Rilian and help him escape from the Emerald Witch's underground kingdom.

108 Skellig

by David Almond

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

“Skellig” would be a strong candidate for a Newbery if it weren’t British. In this strange, soaringly lyrical, powerfully moving first children’s novel by David Almond (Delacorte, \$15.95) Michael’s family has just moved to a dilapidated old house which they intended to fix up themselves. But his new baby sister is in the hospital with a heart problem, and Michael is devastated and utterly helpless. When he sneaks into the crumbling garage, he finds a stranger living (or apparently dying) there, a man immobilized with arthritis, subsisting on dead insects and spiders, and surrounded by owl pellets. His name, he says, is Skellig.

Michael brings him food and aspirin, but in helping him Michael discovers that he is oddly light and has strange growths on his back that may be wings. As Skellig begins to inhabit Michael’s dreams, he and his new friend Mina, a home-schooled girl, help Skellig out of the garage before it is torn down, and into a nearby abandoned house, where Skellig seems to have an odd relationship with the owls, who bring him food. And as Michael’s mother keeps vigil by the baby’s hospital bed, Michael begins to feel his sister’s heart beating within his own, and Skellig appears in his mother’s dreams as well.

Among the many pleasures of this atmospheric and stunningly beautiful novel are Michael, a deeply empathetic boy; Mina, who studies birds and William Blake, and who should be the poster child for home schooling; and the tender and touching relationship they develop in caring for Skellig and worrying about the baby. Another is that it is never really clear just what Skellig is; human, bird, angel, or part of all three? Michael and Mina are comfortable with ambiguity, and the reader of this haunting novel will have to be as well.

109 Sourcery

by Terry Pratchett

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

Book 5 in the Discworld series.

110 Stargirl

by Jerry Spinelli

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

Jerry Spinelli's latest, "Stargirl" (Alfred A. Knopf, \$15.95), is a bittersweet paean to eccentricity and nonconformity. 11th-grader Leo has never met anyone like Stargirl, and neither has anyone else at Mica High. She dances around the cafeteria playing a ukulele, and never misses a chance to sing "Happy Birthday." She doesn't act right, she dresses weird, and she is always blazingly herself. At first the students are puzzled, then entranced, and Stargirl becomes the most popular girl at school. And Leo is in love.

But just as quickly Stargirl becomes the most despised student, shunned by the others, and Leo, now her boyfriend, is shunned with her. Though she has opened him up to new ways of experiencing life, when forced to choose between Stargirl and everyone else, Leo does what any teenager would do, and that choice reverberates down the rest of the years of his life. This gently mystical, thought-provoking, and enchanting rumination on conformity is, in some ways, a YA version of "The Little Prince" (see sidebar).

111 A Step from Heaven

by An Na

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Contemporary Fiction
Family Life

A young Korean girl and her family find it difficult to learn English and adjust to life in America.

112 Stormbreaker

by Anthony Horowitz

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Adventure
Mystery

After the death of the uncle who had been his guardian, fourteen-year-old Alex Rider is coerced to continue his uncle's dangerous work for Britain's intelligence agency, MI6.

by Philip Pullman

Series: His Dark Materials 2

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

When “The Golden Compass”, the first book of a proposed trilogy called “His Dark Materials”, was published two years ago it created, to put it mildly, a sensation. First because it was unquestionably the best fantasy novel of the last decade at least, and was totally unlike anything else, defying categorization or simple description. No dungeons and dragons, or sword and sorcery, or elves and dwarves, not even any scantily clad, big breasted women to be rescued. Instead a parallel world, dark and cold and with a Dickensian air, daemons, boat dwelling gypsies, beautiful witch clans, armored bears, and a street child with a strange destiny. Second, because Knopf, the publisher, realizing they had their hands on something special, sent out thousands of specially printed reader’s copies all over the country, and marketed it simultaneously through their adult and children’s divisions. It won a bunch of major awards, like the Carnegie Medal and the Guardian Fiction Prize, and made many best of the year lists. And since it ended in a cliffhanger it left an eager audience panting for the second book in the trilogy.

Now “The Subtle Knife” by Philip Pullman (Knopf, \$20) has finally been released, and I’ll come right out and state it baldly up front; incredibly, it’s even better than the first book.

I suppose a bit of a plot summary is in order, though really it’s almost impossible. You will need to read “The Golden Compass” first; “The Subtle Knife” doesn’t stand well on its own. In the first book, we are introduced to an alternative earth, in which, among numerous other differences, everyone has a daemon, an animal who in some ways embodies the soul of its human. The two are tied together, share senses and thoughts, and when one dies so does the other. Lyra, a tough, spunky street child, falls in with a group of gyptians seeking after stolen children. During the course of the book she acquires an alethiometer, a truth teller and the golden compass of the title, which she learns eventually to read. She discovers that her mother, Mrs. Coulter, is an evil woman who is conducting the most horrible experiments imaginable; separating kidnapped children from their daemons. Her father, Lord Asriel, is doing more; he is about to blast a bridge into another world.

In “The Subtle Knife,” Lyra and her daemon, Pantalaimon, have crossed into another world, called

Cittàgazze, across the bridge made by her father's vicious experiments. There she meets Will, who is from our Earth and has found his way accidentally through a window into Cittàgazze while on the run from mysterious men seeking information about his long missing father. Together they find the Subtle Knife which can cut through anything, including the boundaries between worlds, and Will becomes the Bearer of the knife, losing two fingers in the process. Meanwhile Mrs. Coulter is out to stop Lyra from fulfilling her destiny, everyone is after the knife, and Lord Asriel is amassing the greatest army ever gathered, drawn from a multitude of worlds, for an assault on The Authority who is, well, God. And as happened once before, the angels are lining up on both sides.

Both the knife and the alethiometer are certain to be vital in the coming Armageddon, but good and evil have been considerably muddied in this second installment, and it is by no means certain whose side Lyra and Will join. This, of course, doesn't begin to capture the incredible complexity, the multitude of sub-plots and plotlines which are already beginning to converge, and the feverish excitement you'll feel while reading.

Two elements make "The Subtle Knife" better than its predecessor. The first is pacing. The first book had what you might call rolling rock pacing; it started slowly and gradually gathered momentum, occasionally bouncing up into the air and crashing back down again, but all the while gaining speed and power until the final breathless finale. This second has chain reaction pacing; it starts with a bang and never lets up, moving from one explosion to the next with hardly a pause for the reader to catch his breath. It's the kind of book you're tempted to sit up all night to finish. Don't give in. I'm proud to say that I managed to stretch it out for an entire week, though I had to hide it at times and keep it away from my bed table, which was just as well since I found I couldn't sleep after reading it. It just left me too wired.

The second element I'd have to call breadth of lyric imagination. This quality is a combination of surpassingly poetic writing with a scope of vision that simply goes far beyond that of us ordinary mortals and which is, at times, astonishingly reckless and even bizarre. The first had that in spades, but this one goes even farther. My touchstones for this

PG Gore

114 There's a Hair in my Dirt: a Worm's Story

by Gary Larson

Series:

Type:

Genre/Subj.: Humor

115 Thief of Time

by Terry Pratchett

One of the Discworld series.

Series: Discworld

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

116 Time Cat

by Lloyd Alexander

Gareth, a cat with miraculous powers takes his human friend, Jason, with him when he travels through time to visit countries all over the world during different periods of history.

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Historical Fiction

117 Time Stops for No Mouse

by Michael Hoeye

When Linka Perflinger, a jaunty mouse, brings a watch into his shop to be repaired and then disappears, Hermux Tantamoq is caught up in a world of dangerous search for eternal youth as he tries to find out what happened to her.

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Animal

118 Timothy of the Cay

by Theodore Taylor

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Survival

“The Cay” is a true classic, a timeless and moving story of Philip, a young white boy, and Timothy, old black man. They are cast up together on a tiny island after their ship is torpedoed and Philip is blinded in the wreck. Theodore Taylor was reluctant to write a sequel so he chose to write a “prequel/sequel,” “Timothy of the Cay” (Avon, \$3.99 paper). The results prove that he was right; the prequel parts, about Timothy’s life before the events of “The Cay” are fascinating. The sequel parts, mostly about Philip’s operation to restore his sight, are less interesting. The chapters about Timothy and Philip are alternated, Philip’s beginning with his rescue from the island, and Timothy’s going all the way back to 1884 when he was 12, the same age as Philip is now.

Timothy is living with Hannah Gumbs, his foster mother, in the part of town called Back o’ all, looking for work as a cabin boy on a ship, and dreaming of being a captain one day. In the succeeding chapters he has his first heart-breaking encounters with white prejudice, grows to a strong and capable man, sees much of the world, finally gets his own ship, and begins to gain the wisdom which is to be so crucial to Philip’s survival in “The Cay.” The chapters about Philip are more technical, dealing in detail with the medical procedures used to restore his sight. But he is also haunted by Timothy, much to the puzzlement of his father and the frustration of his racist mother. And it is that haunting that is the truest and most moving part of the book.

119 Treasure at the Heart of Tanglewood

by Meredith Ann Pierce

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Hannah, a healer with unusual powers, leaves the wizard she has always served and, along with her animal companions, begins a journey which uncovers the truth about her real nature.

121 Trial By Journal

by Kate Klise

Illus. by Sarah Klise

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

In this illustrated novel told through journal entries, news clippings, and letters, 12- year old Lily finds herself on the jury of a murder trial while conducting her own undercover investigation of the case.

122 Truckers

by Terry Pratchett

Series: The Bromeliad 1

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

The most recent book in this sub-genre is the fantastically clever “Truckers” by Terry Pratchett (Delacorte, \$14.95). This one is similar to “The Borrowers” series in that it deals with a race of tiny people, called Nomes, who inhabit our world, rather than with toys come to life. These beings, we gradually find out, actually came from another planet 15,000 years ago, but over time their history and knowledge has been lost. Now they live in the walls and under the floors of a giant department store which, as the story gets going, is slated for demolition.

What gives this book its special fascination, however, is the elaborate theology which the Nomes have developed, centered around the mystifying signs and events which take place in the store. Each chapter is introduced with successive verses from their Bible, the Book of Nome, and many of their beliefs stem from their misunderstanding of English which causes them, for instance, to think the Bargains Galore is a minor deity and Prices Slashed a demon. Finally, as the story builds to a breath-taking and hilarious climax, the Nomes decide they must leave the store and venture into the Outside, which many of them don't even believe exists. This involves learning how to operate a human truck by working in teams, and then hijacking one. We are eagerly awaiting the sequel, which is due out soon.

123 Twisted Summer

by Willo Davis Roberts

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Mystery

Fourteen-year-old Cici hopes for a romantic summer at the beach but instead finds herself trying to solve a murder which had occurred there the previous year.

124 Two Princesses of Bamarre

by Gail Carson Levine

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Folklore

With her adventurous sister, Meryl, suffering from the the Grey death, meek and timid Princess Addie sets out to find a cure.

125 Unicorns of Balinor Series

by Mary Stanton

Series: Unicorns of Balinor

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

126 Up from Jericho Tel

by E.L. Konigsburg

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

The spirit of a dead actress turns two children invisible and sends them out among a group of colorful street performers to search for a missing necklace.

127 The View from Saturday

by E. L. Konigsburg

Series:

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Friendship
Contemporary Fiction

This year's medalist, E. L. Konigsburg's "The View from Saturday" (Atheneum, \$16), is a complex, multi-layered, utterly delightful, and stylish confection. Its format, jumping around in time and point of view, will make it difficult to follow for most elementary school readers, but the author's trademark wit and unique way with character development should make it a hit with older readers. It is a difficult book to describe; not precisely a story, or a slice-of-life, or a series of vignettes. It is perhaps more like a gumbo, with strands and pieces of stories swirling together, interacting in tasty and surprising ways with each other, and sometimes appearing more than once in different guises.

What story can be picked out concerns Mrs. Olinski, who is returning to teaching for the first time since a car accident left her a paraplegic. For reasons she herself doesn't understand at the time, she chooses for her sixth grade Academic Bowl team four children who have connections both real and spiritual which are unknown to her. They call themselves The Souls, and each gets a chance to tell the story of his or her coming together with one or more of the other members of the group. When they start blowing away older teams at the local and regional levels and move on towards the state championships, everyone except the children wonders how she came to pick such a perfectly matched group. The competition is as tense and exciting as a sports book, and the whole thing is immensely satisfying as Konigsburg hits all the right notes with a deft touch, a charming sense of humor, just a touch of obliqueness and magic, and endearing characters. But what makes this lighthearted book moving and unforgettable is the love these eccentrically gifted, warm, wise, and understanding children have for each other and for their teacher.

128 The Voyage of the Dawn Treader

by C.S. Lewis

Series: Chronicles of Narnia 3

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Book 3 of The Chronicles of Narnia. Lucy and Edmond, accompanied by their peevish cousin Eustace, sail to the magic land of Narnia, where Eustace is temporarily transformed into a green dragon because of his selfish behavior and skepticism.

by Sharon Creech

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Adventure

Thirteen-year-old Sophie and her cousin Cody record their transatlantic crossing aboard the Wanderer, a forty-five foot sailboat, which, along with uncles and another cousin, is en route to visit their grandfather in England.

by Christopher Paul Curtis

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Historical Fiction
Humor
Family Life

There are two things I love in a great book; one is sheer, raw emotional power, the other is when an author can cleverly mess with his readers a bit. “The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963” (Delacorte, \$14.95) has both. And this more than promising first novel, by a Michigan auto assembly line worker, has just been chosen as a Newbery Honor Book.

For most of the book, it is simply a funny, enjoyable family story, told by Kenny, the middle child sandwiched between Byron, 14-year-old delinquent wannabe, and Joetta. But since this family is black, and since the title mentions Birmingham 1963, there is a certain foreboding that hangs over the comedic pleasures of the story. These are considerable, the best being the scene in which Byron, who tries to hard to be cool and tough, is sent to clear the ice off the car and, when he kisses his reflection in the sideview mirror, gets his lips stuck.

Through all of these event we get to know the family, especially Byron, pretty well, and to become fond of them. There is a kindness in all of them, even in Byron, who tries to hide it, which induces in the reader a growing affection, though it’s not really noticeable yet. When Byron’s antics escalate, though they are mild by today’s standards, the parents decide he needs a dose of the iron hand of Grandma Sands. So they load up the car and head off to Birmingham for the summer, and the foreboding ratchets up a notch.

What turns this novel from a good one into a great one happens near the end of the book, so I will have to reveal a few things about the ending. Though the book is not a mystery, you may not want to hear what happens yet. If so, skip ahead to the last paragraph.

The author’s cleverness is revealed in two ways. The first is that we’re still not aware of just how much we have come to like this family, and the second is that we think we know where he’s going, and are prepared for it. And when Joetta heads off to Sunday School one day, dressed in her best white dress and shiny patent leathers, we’re sure of it, and brace ourselves. But (this is where I have to reveal the ending) she isn’t killed in the church bombing, though the family at first believes that she is.

So we heave a sigh of relief, and the family heads back to Michigan for the last chapter of what now seems like a pretty lightweight book, and all of our

defenses are lowered, and then, from out of left field, the author wallops us with an emotional fastball, one that comes in the simple, earthy, completely unpoetic language of Kenny and Byron, and that pulls the whole thing together and makes us realize just what the author has been up to. For Kenny went into the church looking for his sister, and he saw what the results of the bombing, and he is no longer whole. And no one knows what is wrong or what to do about it, as he drifts further and further away, disappearing day after day, hidden behind the couch where he believes magical powers will somehow heal him. But, in one of the most emotionally wrenching scenes in recent literature, it is tough, badass, kindhearted Byron who figures out what is going on and, in his casual, undemonstrative way, knows just what to do about it.

It's rare that any novelist, much less a first timer, can construct a story so carefully and cleverly that it can sneak up on you the way this one does. For the past couple of years I have wondered just what the Newbery committee has been up to, but not with this one. This is surely a classic, and the author deserves every bit of the attention and success which are about to come his way.

131 The Westing Game

by Ellen Raskin

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Mystery

Newbery Medal. The mysterious death of an eccentric millionaire brings together an unlikely assortment of heirs who must uncover the circumstances of his death before they can claim their inheritance.

132 When I was Older

by Garret Freymann-Weyr

Series:

Type:

Genre/Subj.:

A new friendship with a boy who is both attractive and intelligent helps fifteen-year-old Sophie sort out her feelings about her younger brother Erhard, who died three years earlier, her self-centered older sister, and her distant father.

by Lemony Snicket

Illus. by Brett Helquist

Series: A Series of Unfortunate 2
Events

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.:

Having once again narrowly escaped with their lives, the children go to live with Aunt Josephine, who is afraid of everything, in *The Wide Window.* She lives in a house precariously perched on a cliff overlooking Lake Lachrymose (which is crossed by the Fickle Ferry, which lands at Damocles Dock, which . . . well, you get the idea). When shopping for cold food (Aunt Josephine is afraid of the stove) they meet Capt. Sham who charms Josephine and who is, of course, Count Olaf with an eye patch and fake peg leg.

The next day the children find that Aunt Josephine has apparently killed herself by leaping through the window over the lake, leaving behind a note which asks Capt. Sham to adopt the children. Mr. Poe is called, and again doesn't believe the children's story. But the note contains a code which Klaus works out. In the most thrillingly dramatic scenes in the series so far, the children are alone in the house when a hurricane hits, causing the house to collapse. Barely escaping this, the orphans steal a sailboat from one of Olaf's henchmen, then sail through the hurricane to find Josephine, who is not dead after all - yet. But beware the Lake Lachrymose leeches!

Melodrama is perfect for middle graders and preadolescents; brilliant, brave children outwitting monstrous adult villains, suspense, mystery, adventure, dark humor, wordplay, cliffhangers, and the occasional creepy touch of horror, all told by an author whose tongue is firmly planted in his cheek. These would make great winter-night-by-the-fire family read-alouds, though perhaps not too close to bedtime.

Though some parents may not appreciate the way all the adults are either ineffectual, witless, or evil, (think Roald Dahl), they will like the way the author provides painless vocabulary lessons, kindly and amusingly explaining the meaning of many of the hard words he uses. The children's eventual salvation is always provided by a combination of Klaus's reading and Violet's mechanical skill (and Sunny's biting, of course). He even manages to work a few clever grammar lessons into the plot of book 3, in which the secret code hinges on Aunt Josephine's obsession with grammar.

The books themselves have been thoughtfully designed. Though only \$8.95 each, they are

hardcovers, with endpaper prints resembling Victorian wallpaper, and an Ex Libris bookplate, with a picture of the orphans and the Count in his current disguise, where children can write their names. The paper is good quality stock which has been roughcut to resemble old-fashioned books whose pages had to be cut apart. Each contains a letter from the author to the editor, giving a preview of the next installment, and a letter to the reader on the back cover, warning them not to read this book, as it is too miserable and tragic.

If your children like these, while waiting for the next installment have them try some of the books by John Bellairs. And don't forget to read Snicket's books yourself; one woebegone adult I know said reading *The Bad Beginning* cheered her up for almost a whole day.

134 Wings

by Terry Pratchett
Series: The Bromeliad 3
Type: Chapter/Fiction
Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

3rd book of The Bromeliad. Masklin, one of a race of beings four inches high who live secretly among humans, tries to use the portable computer known as Thing to summon back the spaceship in which his ancestors came to earth.

135 The Witches

by Roald Dahl
Series:
Type: Chapter/Fiction
Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

A young boy and his Norwegian grandmother, who is an expert on witches, together foil a witches' plot to destroy the world's children by turning them into mice.

136 Wizard's Dilemma

by Diane Duane
Series: Wizard 5
Type: Chapter/Fiction
Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Teenage wizard Nita travels to other universes to find a cure for her mother who has brain cancer.

137 Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar and Six More

by Roald Dahl
Series:
Type: Chapter/Fiction
Genre/Subj.: Short Stories

A collection of bizarre short stories.

138 Wyrdsisters : starring three witches, also kings, daggers, crowns ...

by Terry Pratchett

One of the Discworld series.

Series: Discworld

Type: YA/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy
Humor

139 Year of the Griffin

by Diana Wynn Jones

When Elda, the griffin daughter of the great Wizard Derk, arrives for schooling at the Wizards' University, she encounters new friends, pirates, assassins, worry, sabotage, bloodshed, and magic misused.

Series:

Type: Chapter/Fiction

Genre/Subj.: Fantasy

Main Alan Mendelsohn-Boy from Mars. Alan Mendelsohn-Boy from Mars. Pinkwater Daniel. Year: 2013. Language: english. File: EPUB, 188 KB. Send-to-Kindle or Email. Please login to your account first. Save for later. The file will be sent to selected email address. Alan Mendelsohn is no longer in print as a separate work, but can be found in Pinkwater's omnibus 5 Novels (1997). Reviews. Ann Haskell, in The New York Times Book Review - "The writing is adequate, no more, no less. But for imaginative plot and decorative detail, Mr. Pinkwater's scores go off the charts." [1]. Orson Scott Card, in The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction - Highly recommends Alan Mendelsohn, the Boy from Mars. [2]. References. Suggestions. Are you sure you want to remove Alan Mendelsohn, the Boy from Mars from your list? Alan Mendelsohn, the Boy from Mars. by Daniel Manus Pinkwater.