



Dear CLJ Readers:

I am happy to report that Nancy Hesch has been recovering well from back surgery and that she is graciously allowing me to continue with the preparation of the CLJ newsletters. The reviews in this newsletter are also posted on the CLJ blog. If you are not receiving the blog entries, please visit <http://www.christianlibraryj.org/blog/> to subscribe. By subscribing to the CLJ blog, you will receive a review every few days, most of the time in advance of its appearance in the newsletter.

This is our last issue of 2013. Below are reviews of some great fiction and non-fiction titles for all ages. We hope you will find some great reading material for enjoyment over the holidays.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!

In Him,

Angela Walsh, Editor

Books for Young Children

I have a garden / Bob Barner. (I like to read)

New York : Holiday House, 2013.

LCCN 2011041293. ISBN 9780823425273, hardcover, \$14.95.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm. Ages 1-3.

E Rating: 4

"This garden is all for me" proclaims a dog, as he presents the flowers and various garden critters in *I Have a Garden*. But frog, bird, chipmunk, bug, bee, butterfly, and snail have a different point of view! *I Have a Garden* is an adorable "I Like to Read" picture book with simple text and bright, appealing pictures. Author/illustrator Bob Barner uses a distinctive blend of paper collage, gouache, pastel, and pencil to give life to his sweet animal characters. This is a fun book for introducing preschoolers to familiar words and the concept of nature belonging to all of us.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Anything is possible / Giulia Belloni, Marco Trevisan.

Berkeley, CA : Owlkids Books, 2013.

LCCN 2013930498. ISBN 9781926973913, hardcover, \$16.95.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 cm. PS-Grade 2.

E Rating: 4

Traditional fairy tale characters play modernized roles as an irrepressible sheep with improbable dreams convinces the staid and solidly realistic wolf that *Anything Is Possible* if only you believe in yourself and

your ideas...and enlist a little help from your friends. Skeptical at first, the wolf is finally persuaded, by the sheep's undying optimism and determination, to put his brain to work with hers to create a flying machine. Things do not go smoothly in the beginning, but sheep and wolf work together to solve the multiple problems they encounter with their design. In the end, the wolf has to admit that "anything is possible," and readers are reminded that "only those who dream learn to fly."

This English translation of author Giulia Belloni's original Italian is a fast read. But through her simple prose, children learn about the importance of paying attention to the things in life that inspire them, taking the time to listen to one's friends, and working without giving up in order to make dreams come true. There is no clearly logical explanation of why the characters' final design is successful, but after all, this modern fable is more about the power of dreams than mechanical engineering.

The mixed media illustrations and paper collage art of award-winning mathematician-illustrator Marco Trevisan will especially captivate young engineers, architects, artists, and mathematicians and keep them enthralled with the pages of this book. The sheep and wolf are pictured in a two-dimensional style, but the background is filled with collages of old-world maps and Italian documents, along with whimsical patterns, complex mathematical formulas and sketches that are strongly reminiscent of Da Vinci's sketchbook on the flying machine. This book interestingly captures and combines a modern spirit with a very old-world style.

Valorie Cooper, CLJ

Listen to the silent night / by Dandi Daley Mackall ; paintings by Steve Johnson & Lou Fancher.

New York : Dutton Children's Books, 2011.

LCCN 2011005243. ISBN 9780525422761, hardcover, \$16.99.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 x 28 cm. PS-Grade 2.
E Rating: 4

Putting a different sense in play, Dandi Daley Mackall draws children into the auditory aspect of Jesus' earthly arrival. In contrast to the classic "silent night" atmosphere, she intriguingly incorporates repetitive sounds into the minute details of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, adding a new depth to the so-familiar story. Joseph's sandals flip-flap, desert sand swishes, and angels' wings flutter, carrying readers along to the climax—Jesus' birth on that miraculous Christmas night. Deep colors and larger scale images implying movement, depicted by artists Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher, give the poetic rhyming text a compelling feel. While simple, the illustrations include a plethora of animals and textures for added interest.

This book would be a favorite read-along that kids will request again and again, soon repeating the onomatopoeic sounds along with the reader. The text is scripturally accurate, though the addition of an owl in flight at the book's start is incongruous. Aside from that, this fresh take on the narrative could prompt more discussion and thought about Jesus' birth and mission on earth.

Karen Schmidt, CLJ

The kindhearted crocodile / by Lucia Panzieri ; illustrated by AntonGionata Ferrari.

New York : Holiday House, 2013.

LCCN 2012025486. ISBN 9780823427673, hardcover, \$16.95.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm. PS-Grade 1.
E Rating: 4

A fearsome-looking but gentle crocodile longs to be part of a loving home. By day he lives as a picture book character, but each night he slips off the pages to perform helpful household chores! Can he endear himself enough to become a wanted family pet?

The Kindhearted Crocodile is charmingly witty and touching, as the crocodile tidies toys, folds laundry, and makes toast in an effort to fit in. The silliness of the parents being won over by “a very good cup of coffee” and bringing the tale to a swift and happily-ever-after conclusion is an homage to bedtime storytellers everywhere. Author Lucia Panzieri cleverly includes her own book within the story and gives the crocodile a wonderful personality. The illustrations by AntonGionata Ferrari are a pleasing mix of India ink, acrylics, crayons, watercolors, colored and butcher paper, and even some small antique photographs. The crocodile does appear quite menacing in some of the larger scenes, which may frighten some younger readers.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Eric Liddell : running for a higher prize / written by Renee Taft Meloche ; illustrated by Bryan Pollard. (Heroes for young readers.)

Seattle : YWAM, 2001.

LCCN . ISBN 9781576582305, hardcover, \$6.99.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm. Grades K-3.
B Rating: 3

Eric Liddell: Running for a Higher Prize is a rhyming picture book in the Heroes for Young Readers series.

In 1924, Olympic runner Eric Liddell refuses to compete in his best event on Sunday because it is God’s day. He becomes a sports hero in Great Britain by winning the gold medal in a different race, showing the world what faith can do. Eric further honors God by serving as a missionary in China for the remainder of his short life.

Renee Taft Meloche uniquely and succinctly presents Eric Liddell’s story through spirited rhyming text that lends itself to being shared aloud. *Eric Liddell: Running for a Higher Prize* introduces young readers to a sports hero who is a Christian role model, emphasizing the important message about placing God first in all we do. Most of the book is about Eric’s Olympic experience; the last few pages rather quickly condense his mission work and early death. Bold illustrations by Bryan Pollard capture the emotion and fortitude of this remarkable Christian athlete. An activity guide, syllabus, and audio CD are available as companion material.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Books for Intermediate Readers

Andi unexpected / Amanda Flower. (An Andi Boggs novel)

Grand Rapids, Mich. : Zonderkidz, 2013.

LCCN 2013023361. ISBN 9780310737018, hardcover, \$10.99.

218 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 4-6.
Fic Rating: 4

Pre-publication copy reviewed

Agatha-nominated mystery writer Amanda Flower tries her hand at a children’s mystery. Following the deaths of both parents, twelve-year-old Andora Boggs moves to rural Killdeer, Ohio and uncovers a mystery surrounding another Andora Boggs in her family during the Great Depression.

In *Andi Unexpected*, Andora Boggs (Andi) and her older sister Bethany move in with their Aunt Amelie, a twenty-something professor living in the Boggs family home in Killdeer. When Andi introduces herself around town, some of the townsfolk react differently to her name. What is the reason behind their reactions? Why doesn’t anyone in town want to talk about the first Andora? Then Andi and her new friend Colin find the old trunk in the attic with the name “Andora” on it. Who was the owner and what

really happened to her? What about the things they find in the trunk? Are they clues to the mystery surrounding her—the one the townspeople won't talk about?

Flower writes a well-crafted mystery for children in which the central characters are children who uncover a mystery surrounding an ancestor. As they discover clues, the children find out that there are adults in their town who have a reason for stopping the investigation or who have their own reasons for using the information that the children discover.

One adult Andi and Colin trust turns out to be someone they shouldn't have trusted, putting them both in danger. In the end, all the clues are uncovered and the mystery is solved, but not without some danger and plot twists. *Andi Unexpected* is a good start to a new series for middle grader readers.

Recommended for school and church libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Escape into the night / Lois Walfrid Johnson. (Freedom seekers ; 1)

Chicago : River North, 2013, c1995.

LCCN 95018990. ISBN 9780802407160, paperback, \$8.99.

176 p. : ill., map ; 21 cm. Grades 4-7.

Fic Rating: 4

Race for freedom / Lois Walfrid Johnson. (Freedom seekers ; 2)

Chicago : River North, 2013, c1996.

LCCN 96004433. ISBN 9780802407177, paperback, \$8.99.

249 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 4-7.

Fic Rating: 4

Midnight rescue / Lois Walfrid Johnson. (Freedom seekers ; 3)

Chicago : River North, 2013, c1996.

LCCN 96045763. ISBN 9780802407184, paperback, \$8.99.

247 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 4-7.

Fic Rating: 4

The swindler's treasure / Lois Walfrid Johnson. (Freedom seekers ; 4)

Chicago : River North, 2013, 1997.

LCCN 97004670. ISBN 9780802407191, paperback, \$8.99.

247 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 4-7.

Fic Rating: 4

Mysterious signal / Lois Walfrid Johnson. (Freedom seekers ; 5)

Chicago : River North, 2013, c1998.

LCCN 503893. ISBN 9780802407207, paperback, \$8.99.

264 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 4-7.

Fic Rating: 4

The fiddler's secret / Lois Walfrid Johnson. (Freedom seekers ; 6)

Chicago : River North, 2013, c1998.

LCCN 97033958. ISBN 9780802407214, paperback, \$8.99.

247 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 4-7.

Fic Rating: 4

Prolific author Lois Walfrid Johnson releases her Freedom Seekers series, a historical fiction series for young readers about three children who face the danger of the Underground Railroad while living on a steamboat in 1857.

Escape Into the Night (book 1) introduces the captain's daughter (Libby), the runaway slave (Jordan), and the cabin boy (Caleb). Libby comes to live on her father's steamboat where she makes friends with the cabin boy. Caleb has a secret that involves her father. When she discovers Jordan, she uncovers Caleb's tie with the Underground Railroad. As slave catchers pursue Jordan, Libby must make a decision where she stands.

In *Race for Freedom* (book 2), Libby spots the cruel slave trader Riggs in the crowd getting ready to board the *Christina*, her father's boat. She wonders if they will be able to keep Jordan safe and whether their actions will put them in jeopardy. Riggs vows that no slave will escape him alive—will his threat come true?

In *Midnight Rescue* (book 3), Libby makes a mistake that puts Jordan's safety in jeopardy. She endangers the plan to rescue Jordan's family when someone overhears her talking about it. Will she be able to regain their trust? Will they be able to rescue Jordan's family?

Libby's father, Captain Norstad, stands up to a swindler in *The Swindler's Treasure* (book 4), but it may cost him his steamboat. Will they be able to recover the money stolen from her father before the payment is due on the steamboat? When they hear of another runaway heading their direction, can they find him before the slave catchers arrive?

In *Mysterious Signal* (book 5), Jordan travels to Chicago to deliver a financial gift to support other fugitive slaves. When a dangerous man escapes, the children are in danger if he recognizes them. Libby is asked to make a sacrifice for her disguise, one that she isn't sure she is willing to make. Will her willingness to forgive her aunt be the key?

The sound of an approaching steamboat is heard in the fog, deep in the night. The music of a fiddler calms the passengers after their close call with the oncoming steamboat in *The Fiddler's Secret* (book 6). Still pursued by the cruel slave trader Riggs, the children face their toughest adventure yet. What is the fiddler's secret and how does it affect them?

Johnson's Freedom Seekers series is the republished version of The Riverboat Adventures, originally published by Bethany House. It is a 6-book series that will appeal to boys and girls ages 10 and up. Each book tells an independent story but builds on the earlier books. Each book also comes with a study guide with discussion questions.

An excellent example of Christian historical fiction for younger readers, this series helps the reader put himself in the same situation and ask, "What would I do?" and "What would God want me to do?"—without preaching to the reader. The faith element is clearly strong, making each volume a welcome read for any family. The storylines engage the reader and draw them into the adventures on the riverboat.

Recommended for school and church libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

The matchbox diary /

Somerville, MA : Candlewick Press, 2013.

LCCN 2012942613. ISBN 9780763646011, hardcover, \$16.99.

1 v. (unpaged) : (some col.) ; 28 cm. Grades 1-6.

Fic Rating: *5

A kindergartener meets her great grandfather for the first time and together they explore the contents of his unusual diary. *The Matchbox Diary* is the story of an Italian immigrant's journey to America, told through keepsakes of the memories he treasures.

This captivating book is wonderful on so many levels! Yearning to keep a diary but unable to read or write, the old man as a child collected tokens to record his experiences: an olive pit to remember not

having enough food, a hairpin dropped by a first class passenger on the steamship to America, a Saint Christopher medal said to protect travelers. *The Matchbox Diary* is written entirely in dialogue between the gentleman and his great granddaughter. Within the compelling story of the man's immigration is the secondary theme of his warming relationship with the curious young girl. Author Paul Fleischman imbues the immigrant with many honorable qualities. He is resilient, patient, hardworking, and devoted to family. The detailed acrylic gouache artwork by Bagram Ibatoulline is magnificent! Sepia toned pages depict the historical events and give the reader the feeling of perusing an old photo album, while the modern-day scenes are colorized and show the tender connection between the characters. This book is recommended for ages 6-11 but would certainly pique the interest of older readers as well.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

The Boston Tea Party / by Russell Freeman ; illustrated by Peter Malone.

New York : Holiday House, 2012.

LCCN 2010028726. ISBN 9780823422661, hardcover, \$17.95.

39 p. : col. ill. ; 30 cm. Grades 3-6.

When three English ships filled with tea enter Boston Harbor in 1773, the American colonists challenge King George and refuse to unload the cargo in protest of Parliament's unfair tea tax. With British warships blocking the harbor, the Sons of Liberty gather to devise a plan. *The Boston Tea Party* is an account of the famous and revolutionary events that follow.

The Boston Tea Party is a dynamic picture book appropriate for older readers. Russell Freedman's expressive narrative vividly sets the scene with flickering candlelight, spilling crowds, and "a thin young moon", while Peter Malone's muted watercolors effectively capture a sense of covertness and danger. Schoolboys and apprentices are featured in much of the rebellion, keeping the story fresh and relevant to students. The colonists break the law and wear Indian disguises to commit destruction of property, but an introduction and afterword provide a historical framework to help explain the context and consequences of these actions. *The Boston Tea Party* would be a useful companion to the study of the American Revolution. The author also discusses the important role of oral history and includes a time line and source notes.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Becoming Babe Ruth / Matt Tavares.

Somerville, MA : Candlewick Press, 2013.

LCCN 2012942357. ISBN 9780763656461, hardcover, \$16.99.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm. Grades 1-5.

B RUT Rating: 4

George Herman Ruth is a truant and mischievous child growing up in Baltimore in the early 1900s. At age seven he is sent to the Saint Mary's Industrial School for Boys, where he must work hard and follow strict rules. The boys play baseball for recreation, and with enthusiastic coaching from Brother Matthias, George excels. In 1914 he leaves Saint Mary's to join the Baltimore Orioles and, as the "new kid", earns the nickname "Babe". Babe eventually becomes one of the best players of all time, but he never forgets his old school. *Becoming Babe Ruth* introduces young readers to a sports legend who overcame adversity and found a way to give back.

This large picture book is an inviting look at Babe Ruth's journey from aimless boy to baseball icon. Author/illustrator Matt Tavares includes Babe's early misbehavior (stealing) and briefly notes his later lifestyle excesses (fast cars and wild parties), but largely tells Babe's story with a focus on the values of discipline, perseverance and gratitude. The watercolor, gouache, and pencil drawings nostalgically evoke the time period and give life to the characters and events. The author's end note further reflects on

Babe's impact both in the sport and in the lives of the many children he inspired. A bibliography and a chart of Babe Ruth's pitching and hitting statistics add depth to this enjoyable Junior Library Guild selection.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

The guardian team : on the job with Rena and Roo / Cat Urbigit.

Honesdale, PA : Boyds Mills Press, 2011.

LCCN 2011920697. ISBN 9781590787700, hardcover, \$16.95.

32 p. : col. ill. ; 29 cm. Grades 3-7.
636.737 Rating: 4

Unusual animal pairs have become a fascinating topic of science and nature shows for adults. Cat Urbigit showcases one of these delightful partnerships in *The Guardian Team: On the Job with Rena and Roo*, featuring a burro and a puppy who join forces to guard orphaned lambs on a Wyoming ranch. Roo, the burro, gradually accepts Rena, even though each displays differing guarding behaviors. The book documents how Rena and Roo grow in their roles through the seasons, successfully guarding their charges.

This title is considered a companion to the author's "Brave Dogs, Gentle Dogs." Urbigit's multiple awards for her animal books are well founded in light of her authentic, strong photography and careful text that teach about animal habits and husbandry while entertaining readers. The author's note in the back further elaborates on the guarding tendencies of burros and dogs; a bibliography points experienced readers to other sources of similar content. Readers of many ages will learn and be entranced by both the visual and textual content of this book.

Karen Schmidt, CLJ

Science : facts at your fingertips. (DK pocket genius)

New York : DK Publishing, 2013.

LCCN 2012286096. ISBN 9781465408839, hardcover, \$7.99.

156 p. : col. ill. ; 18 cm. Grades 3-8.
500 Rating: 4

Mammals : facts at your fingertips. (DK pocket genius)

New York : DK Publishing, 2013.

LCCN 2012286092. ISBN 9781465408846, hardcover, \$7.99.

156 p. : col. ill. ; 18 cm. Grades 3-8.
599 Rating: 4

Science and *Mammals* are two of the newest in DK's Pocket Genius series. Suggested for ages 8-14, these small books promise "Facts at Your Fingertips" and cover each subject with descriptions, definitions, graphs, photos, and a glossary. The books support state common core standards.

Science organizes many smaller topics under the broad headings of "Matter and Materials", "Energy and Forces", and "The Living World". Aspects of chemistry, physics, and biology are introduced. Timelines use "Common Era" terminology and date back to 9000 BCE. There is a scientific view of the origins of life and Earth, and a brief section on human evolution.

The contents of *Mammals* are organized into "Egg Laying Mammals", "Pouched Mammals", and "Placental Mammals". Close to 200 mammals are presented. There is a small section on mammal evolution that dates the first mammals to 220 million years ago and dinosaur extinction to 65 million years ago.

Science and *Mammals* are packed with concise information, interesting facts, wonderful photographs, and a helpful glossary. There are intriguing sections to challenge children's imagination and understanding of the natural world. With unique topics such as "mammals in space" and "the world's strongest magnet", the series will appeal to a wide range of readers. Their small size and layout make *Science* and *Mammals* great take-along books.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Books for Middle and High Schoolers

Starring Arabelle / written by Hillary Hall De Baun.

Grand Rapids, Mich. : Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2012.

LCCN 2011042739. ISBN 9780802853981, paperback, \$9.

234 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 5-8.

Fic Rating: 4

Starring Arabelle by Hillary Hall De Baun is a story about Arabelle Archer, who is now a freshman in high school. She wants to make a good impression on her first day. However, as soon as she gets to school, things do not happen as she has imagined. Her dream is to become an actress, so she decides to try out for the school play. The only thing standing in her way is a senior, Bonnie, who doesn't like freshmen. Luckily, Arabelle's drama teacher, Mr. Zee assigns her the job of teleprompter. With hard work and the help of her friends, she is determined to make Mr. Zee notice her. Since she needs to start thinking about college, she decides to volunteer at the Heavenly Rest Nursing Home. She is not excited about this, but after she gets to know the residents, she actually starts enjoying herself.

Arabelle faces the perils of being a teenager. She's so determined to become a famous actress that she becomes self-involved. Arabelle's character is a normal teenager with big dreams. She has to learn that sometimes she might have to take baby steps in pursuing her dreams. The main characters have different personalities, but they complement each other. Throughout the story, Arabelle begins to understand the importance of friendship. Her friends are not there to stand in her way. They are there to offer guidance, support, and sometimes, criticism. She soon realizes that there's more to life than being a famous star.

Trina Chase, CLJ

Spirit fighter / Jerel Law. (Son of angels: Jonah Stone ; 1)

Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 2011.

LCCN 2011023191. ISBN 9781400318438, paperback, \$9.99.

243 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 4-8.

Fic Rating: 5 (with caution)

Jerel Law makes his debut in *Spirit Fighter*, the first book in the Jonah Stone: Son of Angels series, a spiritual fantasy aimed at younger readers ages 8-14 years old.

In *Spirit Fighter*, Jonah Stone is an average 7th grader, or so he thinks. Failing miserably at basketball tryouts, he kicks a stray soccer ball on his way home, sending it out of sight. When he tells his parents, Jonah discovers a family secret that turns his ordinary world upside down.

Jonah's mom is a nephilim, the daughter of a human and a fallen angel, making Jonah one-quarter angel. It also gives him the tools to rescue his mom when fallen angels kidnap her. Who is behind the plot to kidnap all the nephilim and for what purpose? A guardian angel trains Jonah and his sister Eliza as they begin this adventure where good and evil forces collide in ways they never could have imagined. Can they rescue her in time?

Law spins an epic fantasy to delight younger readers. Fans of *Percy Jackson* (by Rick Riordan) and other fantasy series will be delighted in this epic adventure where spiritual warfare takes on a new meaning. His story, both plot-and-character-driven, is inspired by Genesis 6:4 and a good imagination. Readers will be engaged at the offering of spiritual gifts (shield of faith, sword of truth, etc.) in this battle of good vs. evil. Even reluctant readers will be caught up in this action-adventure taking place on the streets of New York and in the hidden realm.

Highly recommended for school libraries and public libraries, and for gift giving to younger readers.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Chasing Jupiter / Rachel Coker.

Grand Rapids, Mich. : Zondervan, 2013.

LCCN 2012051600. ISBN 9780310732938, hardcover, \$15.99.

221 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 9-12.
Fic Rating: 5

Chasing Jupiter by Rachel Coker tells the story of Scarlett Blaine in 1960s Georgia. Scarlett is the glue that keeps the Blaine family together. Her parents are always working to make ends meet financially. Her sister, Juli, is always busy with her boyfriend. Grandpop Barley, who only wants to eat peanut butter, needs supervision. Her little brother, Cliff, is her sidekick. Cliff is not your ordinary 10-year old. The Blaine family realizes there's something different about Cliff but does not want to admit it. For his birthday, Cliff wants to build a rocket and travel to Jupiter. In order to make Cliff happy, Scarlett agrees to this plan.

Since money is tight in the family, Scarlett and Cliff have to raise the money for their rocket project. Scarlett is a really good cook, so she makes peach pies to sell. The peach farmer's son, Frank, agrees to help them if Scarlett gets Juli to talk to him. The more time Scarlett and Frank spend together, the more she wishes he liked her instead of Juli. All of a sudden, the family is struck with one tragedy after another: Juli runs away and Grandpop Barley suffers a major mental breakdown. Scarlett's parents decide to move Grandpop Barley to an assisted living facility. Before this happens, Cliff has a horrible accident which brings about more change for this family.

In the 1960s, there was not much available information about autism. Scarlett feels a responsibility to take care of Cliff, and when he has his accident, she begins to question God. She has to realize that there are things outside of her control. With the help of her pastor's wife, she begins to accept this and work on her relationship with God. Scarlett is so involved in taking care of her family that she forgets to take care of herself. She learns the power of forgiveness towards God and her family, and gains a sense of peace.

This is an impressive story written by a 17-year old student.

Trina Chase, CLJ

Eric Liddell : something greater than gold / by Janet and Geoff Benge. (Christian heroes, then & now)

Seattle : YWAM, 1998.

LCCN 98030892. ISBN 9781576581377, paperback, \$8.99.

203 p. : 1 map ; 21 cm. Grades 5-8 (all ages).
B Rating: 4

Eric Liddell: Something Greater than Gold is a biography for youth in the "Christian Heroes: Then & Now" series. Authors Janet and Geoff Benge recount the life of this extraordinary Scottish athlete whose trust in God leads to remarkable achievement.

Eric has an unusual childhood, living in China until age five with his missionary parents and then attending a London boarding school. At Edinburgh University he excels at track and qualifies for the 1924 Paris Olympics, stunning the world first by refusing to run in his best event on a Sunday, and then by an improbable win in a later race. Eric then returns to China where he teaches, shares his love of running, and strives to spread God's word until his unexpected death at age 43.

Eric Liddell: Something Greater than Gold combines biographic, historic, and political details in a compelling story that will appeal to middle grades and above. Janet and Geoff Benge take readers through Liddell's extraordinary athletic feats and then expand on areas of his mission work, painting a touching portrait of a true Christian hero. The authors provide just the right amount of background information to help young readers understand the complex issues and setting. A bibliography and small map encourage further study.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Books for Adults

Harvest of rubies / Tessa Afshar.

Chicago : River North, 2012.

LCCN 2011045869. ISBN 9780802405586, paperback, \$14.99.

372 p. ; 22 cm. Adult (Grades 10-12).

Fic Rating: 4

Harvest of gold / Tessa Afshar.

Chicago : River North, 2013.

LCCN 2013002306. ISBN 9780802405593, paperback, \$14.99.

356 p. ; 22 cm. Adult (Grades 10-12).

Fic Rating: 4

Like Tessa Afshar's first novel *Pearl in the Sand*, *Harvest of Rubies* and its sequel *Harvest of Gold* are biblical historical novels. They are well written and easy to read. The blend of romance, humor, and spiritual insights comes together in a way that is unique to the author. Her books are informative and entertaining. As such, they deserve a place in most general collections.

The *Harvest* books are set in the court of Babylon, during Nehemiah's service as the wine taster for the King of Persia. The first book sets the stage and develops the storyline in which Nehemiah's niece Sarah is raised and brought to the court as the Queen's chief scribe. Sarah is a delightful, well-developed character. Spiritual insights are woven throughout the book.

Where *Harvest of Rubies* ends, leaving the future open to speculation, the sequel *Harvest of Gold* picks up. It further develops Sarah's story and goes on to bring alive the rest of the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. The main characters deal with spiritual issues in ways that show godly principles at work. For those who are unfamiliar with the times and the pressures faced by the Jews during the Babylonian exile, it offers a background in which to understand the Old Testament books of Esther, Nehemiah, and Ezra.

Recommended for both teen and adult collections.

Gail W., CLJ

Love in a broken vessel : a novel / Mesu Andrews.

Grand Rapids, Mich. : Revell, 2013.

LCCN 2012041175. ISBN 9780800721695, paperback, \$14.99.

442 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.

Fic Rating: 4

“Marry a prostitute, and have children with that prostitute....The children of Israel have acted like prostitutes and abandoned Yahweh.”

In *Love in a Broken Vessel*, the prophet Hosea’s calling to exemplify the love of a reconciling God to a rebellious nation begins when these words of divine instruction are whispered on the wind. Steady and plain Hosea determines to be obedient to God, though he doesn’t understand the “why” of his instructions, or how, exactly, he is to accomplish marrying a prostitute. His heart becomes fully engaged, though, when he runs into Gomer, who in this work of Christian fiction was his childhood sweetheart that was sold into prostitution. The beautiful Gomer has suffered many deep wounds since she last saw Hosea, and she allows distrust, fear, and pride to rule her heart and determine her actions.

Mesu Andrews weaves together Scriptural truths and historical supposition with the skill of a polished romance writer as she unfolds the love story of Hosea and Gomer. She eloquently captures both the wounded heart of a woman who “wrap[s] herself in the shroud of indifference that keeps] her sane,” and the strength of a man who obeys God with singular devotion, as reflected in his words to Gomer, “...Yahweh sent me to Samaria to love you.”

Throughout this captivating love story, Andrews’ details stay true to biblical history and tradition, keeping the narrative interesting on several levels. The characters are sensitively and deeply drawn, and readers are pulled into the landscape, customs, and events of the time.

This is a tale of truly biblical proportions, with characters who hold on—with the help of friends—through fear and uncertainty to find their way to God’s promises for their lives.

Valorie Cooper, CLJ

Rare earth / Davis Bunn. (A Marc Royce thriller ; 2)

Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2012.

LCCN 2012004411. ISBN 9780764209062, paperback, \$14.99.

363 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.

Fic Rating: *5

Move over 007 and Indiana Jones! Special Agent Marc Royce is the hero the world has been waiting for! Equipped with great physical strength and agility, spot-on instincts, genuine heart, and a razor-sharp intellect, his true strength lies in his deep faith and his knowledge that his abilities and purpose come from a source greater than himself—The Source, Jesus Christ.

Author Davis Bunn’s newest hero hits the ground running and doesn’t stop in *Rare Earth*, the second in the multiple Christy Award-winner’s latest series. Royce is abruptly called to action to investigate rumors of international smuggling in the increasingly violent and hopelessly squalid Horn of Africa. While waiting and listening for God’s guidance in his personal life, Royce goes full-throttle to solve the mystery at the heart of his professional assignment, search for an abducted man, and conceive a plan to restore justice to misplaced tribes.

In this stellar thriller, Davis Bunn unfolds the tale of a global battle to own and control the world’s largest source of rare earth elements. Told with lightning-fast pacing and descriptions so precise the reader wilts with the African heat, Bunn perfectly weaves together action, mystery, intrigue, romance, and factual information about current crises. Throughout it all runs a solid core of sustaining faith, and the assurance that those who are called to a purpose will find that purpose as they remain steadfastly with God—no matter the circumstances—and move in the direction that makes them feel most alive.

(This book contains requisite descriptions of violence, but no graphic violence.)

Valorie Cooper, CLJ

A plain disappearance / Amanda Flower. (An Appleseed Creek mystery ; 3)

Nashville : B & H Publishing Group, 2013.

LCCN . ISBN 9781433676994, paperback, \$14.99.

vii, 326 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.

Fic Rating: 5

Amanda Flowers returns with her third novel in the Appleseed Creek Mystery series, featuring Chloe Humphrey, a young single computer professional living in Amish country where life is not as simple as it seems.

In *A Plain Disappearance*, life is settling down as Chloe's new relationship with Timothy develops. When an Amish teenager's body is discovered on their first date, they are faced with evidence that Timothy's friend Billy is involved. As they work to find Billy who is now missing, they also discover that he is not who he said he was. Billy has been living under a false identity for years.

Chloe's best friend Tanisha visits from Italy as a Christmas surprise and joins her in the search for the killer. Is it Billy or someone else? Will the truth cost Chloe her budding romance with Timothy—and what will happen to Becky's relationship with Aaron? Who is trying to stop Chloe from discovering the truth? As Chloe discovers the truth about the murder, she also discovers the truth about the estrangement with her father.

Flower's cozy mystery is filled with a well-crafted plot and interesting (and likeable) characters (Grandfather Zook is a favorite). Amish culture is interwoven with the text. As always, the plot twists and turns as favorite characters appear, and the mystery deepens. The faith element is light, making it a good choice for mystery and clean romance lovers everywhere. There is a subtle theme of forgiveness in *A Plain Disappearance*, and it will be interesting to see how it affects the characters in future novels in this series. Recommended for public and church libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, Worthy2Read.wordpress.com

No safe harbor : a novel / Elizabeth Ludwig. (Edge of freedom ; 1)

Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2012.

LCCN 2012013183. ISBN 9780764210396, paperback, \$14.99.

331 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.

Fic Rating: 5

No Safe Harbor by Elizabeth Ludwig is the first book in the Edge of Freedom series. In 1897, Cara Hamilton leaves Ireland for America after receiving a letter from her brother, Eoghan, who she thought was dead. Her brother warns her not to trust anyone. When she arrives in New York City, she has no idea where to go and whom to talk to. She meets a fellow traveler, Rourke Walsh. Unbeknownst to Cara, Rourke is looking for her brother to avenge his father's death. He hopes that Cara leads him to Eoghan. After a few threats and attempts on her life, Cara realizes that Eoghan's life is in danger. Even though Rourke wants to avenge his father, he develops feelings for Cara.

This book is well-written, and the historical setting is very detailed. The characters display strength, family loyalty and faith. Even though Cara is essentially alone, she is a strong-willed, determined woman. Family is very important to both Cara and Rourke. They're devoted and loyal to their families, yet they can't deny their feelings for each other. Cara lives with women of different faiths, but it doesn't change her faith in God. She believes that God will protect her and her brother from any dangers they face. There are political revolutionaries from Ireland out for revenge, so the book does depict some revenge-

motivated murders and people constantly trying to do harm to others. However, the book is not too graphic in these situations.

Trina Chase, CLJ

Submerged / Dani Pettrey. (Alaskan courage ; 1)

Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2012.

LCCN 2012000967. ISBN 9780764209826, paperback, \$14.99.

313 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.

Fic Rating: 5

Dani Pettrey makes her debut with the romantic suspense novel, *Submerged*, set in Alaska, and introducing the McKenna clan.

In *Submerged*, Bailey Craig returns to Yancey, Alaska, after vowing never to return. But the death of her beloved Aunt Agnes in a plane accident calls her back. Before she left Yancey, Bailey lived a very different life, trying to find meaning through shallow relationships and drinking her troubles away. Leaving her bad reputation behind, Bailey becomes a Christian and changes her life. Returning to Yancey means facing those who knew her back then and won't let her forget who she was. Can she put the past behind her?

When Cole McKenna and his team of rescue divers pull her aunt's body from the underwater plane wreckage, it starts an investigation that will involve both Bailey and Cole. Bailey inherits her aunt's shop, the Russian-American Trading Post. Someone wants to stop the investigation before it uncovers a sinister plot involving an interesting part of Russian history (the heirs of the Romanov family and their crown jewels)—a plot that Agnes began to uncover and that cost Agnes her life.

Although this is Pettrey's first novel, *Submerged* has both likeable characters and an intriguing plot. Alaska's Russian heritage is the key and proves to be fascinating. Themes of mercy, forgiveness, and second chances are interwoven in the story. The romance element is clean and appropriate for readers, high school through adult. The suspense is intriguing and will keep the reader up late, turning the pages to the story's conclusion.

Recommended for public libraries and teen collections.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

The governess of Highland Hall : a novel / Carrie Turansky. (Edwardian brides)

Colorado Springs : Multnomah Books, 2013.

LCCN 2013024721. ISBN 9781601424969, paperback, \$14.99.

324 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.

Fic Rating: 4

Award-winning author Carrie Turansky writes historical fiction set on a 1911 English grand estate. It tells the story of former missionary who accepts work as a governess to support her family.

Julia Foster, missionary to India, is forced to return with her family due to her father's recent illness. In *The Governess of Highland Hall*, she takes on the responsibility of supporting her family financially by accepting work as governess to two young children and two teenage girls at Sir Ramsey's estate. Though not trained as a governess, she has experience in ministering to young girls in India. However, teaching her charges proves to be more challenging than she expected, yet she is determined to be kind-hearted and faithful in her duties.

She deals with Sir William Ramsey, a widowed master who appears more preoccupied with saving his estate from ruin, than spending time with the children. Both are determined to do what it takes to save

their families. As they get to know one another, their feelings grow, while others try to thwart their sweet romance.

The reader enters the world of Edwardian England where a governess is neither a family member nor a servant, where family estates hang in the balance, where friendship and betrayal lurk. Turansky does an excellent job of providing rich narratives and likeable characters in this work. The reader will easily be transported back in time and enjoy this story, as well as the others coming in this series.

Recommended for public collections and school libraries. It will appeal especially to fans of the PBS television series, *Downton Abbey*, especially in the description of the Highland Hall and its various characters.

Carol R. Gehringer, Worthy2Read.wordpress.com

My stubborn heart : a novel / Becky Wade.

Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2012.

LCCN 2012000972. ISBN 9780764209741, paperback, \$13.99.

342 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.
Fic Rating: 4

My Stubborn Heart by Becky Wade is a story about falling in love and having faith. Kate Donovan knows she needs a change, even if it's temporary. She's excited about helping her grandmother restore her childhood home. When Kate meets Matt Jarreau, the man hired to remodel the house, she feels an instant attraction. Matt feels this too; however, he doesn't want to admit it. After experiencing a family tragedy, Matt gave up on happiness and God. Kate is determined to help Matt accept and trust in God again even when she doesn't agree with what God is telling her to do. Matt can't believe that he might be getting a second chance.

The author illustrates Kate's good-heartedness and faith in God. Kate's main goal is to show Matt that he needs to trust in God again. She realizes that it could mean that she's not involved in Matt's life, but she sees how Matt's lack of faith has hurt him. The author does such a good job of describing each character's inner turmoil that the reader can readily identify with the characters' feelings. Even though the secondary characters play minor roles in the story, they are well-drawn and have a big impact on the main characters. There are some instances in the book where God's doing is questioned. Also, the characters participate in weekly poker games.

Trina Chase, CLJ

The prayer box : a novel / Lisa Wingate.

Carol Stream, IL : Tyndale House, 2013.

LCCN 2013013769. ISBN 9781414386881, paperback, \$15.99.

xi, 386 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.
Fic Rating: 4

Tandi Jo Reese is a down-on-her-luck single mom with two kids and a dangerous past. When her elderly landlady Lola Anne Poole, passes away, Tandi is asked to clean out the woman's home. She stumbles on eighty one hand decorated prayer boxes. Intrigued, she reads through one of them and is quickly drawn into Lola's story. In between working in the house and struggling to repair her relationship with her kids, Tandi makes her way through the boxes, learning lessons about faith, love and choices.

The book is a clean read with a strong cast of characters. Tandi makes foolish and often selfish choices, and some readers may get frustrated with her, but she is worth staying with until the end. Her kids are believable and challenging without being precocious or unlikeable.

The transitions from past to present and back are smooth and well timed. Tandi's growth as a parent and a Christian is gradual without being predictable as the book deals with hope and emotional healing.

Linda Matchett, CLJ