Outstanding Books Reviewed in This Issue

Becoming Ben Franklin: how a candle-maker's son helped light the flame of liberty / Russell Freedman.

This is how I find her / Sara Polsky.
Dear Readers,

What joy it is to be able to tell you that Angela Walsh, our editor, has agreed to be co-publisher of the *Christian Library Journal*. I will continue as co-publisher for the time I can still work, mentoring and assisting as needed, and gradually working myself out of a job. With my being 73, and not in the best of health, this is a wonderful step for us.

Angela has been editing for us for some time, and has made up the newsletters starting with the August/September issue in 2013. She is doing a great job of interacting with our reviewers and mentoring those who are learning to review. That has left me with more time to work on other tasks for the journal.

With this issue of CLJ, we are returning to a journal format, electronic, but in printable form for those who prefer to hold the journal in their hands while reading. We will continue the newsletter, using it for announcing new issues of CLJ, and also for other matters of interest to librarians and book lovers.

Watch for future developments as CLJ moves forward with a new leadership team!

In Christ’s love,

Nancy L. Hesch

Nancy L. Hesch
Co-Publisher & Mentor

www.christianlibraryj.org

The purpose of the *Christian Library Journal* is to provide reviews from a Christian point of view, of both Christian and secular titles for the Christian reader. Materials reviewed may reflect a broad range of Christian doctrinal positions and do not necessarily reflect the views of *Christian Library Journal*.

The Core Collection, under construction, is a help for parents, teachers, librarians, and others in choosing the best books for the children and teens in their care.

**Co-Publisher & Editor**
Angela Walsh

**Co-Publisher & Mentor**
Nancy Hesch

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Shawn Estes

Cover: This Is How I Find Her, by Sara Polsky. Published by Albert Whitman, 2013. Used with permission.

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Review Rating System

*5 Outstanding — a book which impacts someone’s life or thinking
  5 Excellent — well written, among the best
  4 Very good — definitely worth reading
  3 Good — may be a good source for relaxation or to meet needs for information
  2 Fair — poor writing or editing; read only if very interested
  1 Poor — not much going for this title.

Recommended with caution (may be used with any of the above ratings) – Note reservations within the review.
Not recommended (may be used with any of the above ratings) – Note problems within the review.

Value of the book:
With fiction, the rating includes the quality of plot development/pacing, characterization, sense of time and place, mood, and atmosphere, dialogue, depth of perception, sensitivity of writing, use of humor. Be aware that some books are character driven, so character development is extremely important. Others are plot driven, so character development isn’t as critical; plot is.

With nonfiction, the rating includes quality of the information, accuracy, up to date, stimulates further inquiry, adds to the understanding of the topic, illustrations which are informative and appropriate.

With picture books, first be aware that these are written today for various age groups, so don’t assume little children. The rating includes those above for fiction and nonfiction, and also emphasizes the illustrations.

Commonly used abbreviations in CLJ reviews

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Primary Fiction


1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 x 29 cm.          PS-Grade 2.
E   Rating: 4

In Chloe, a middle rabbit loves evening time with her parents and twenty brother and sisters. When Dad surprises them with a new television, the whole family gathers to watch. However, Chloe thinks playing with the box and bubble wrap is more fun, and eventually so do all the bunny children. Dad sends them off to bed, where Chloe snuggles contentedly with her sisters and dreams of popping bubbles.

Chloe was first introduced in author/illustrator Peter McCarthy’s Henry in Love. The feisty little rabbit is clever and independent, and above all she cherishes being with her large family.

The soft ink and watercolor drawings are sweetly evocative of a warm and busy home. The two-page spreads especially capture the gleeeful pandemonium of a busy household, and the heavy pages are inviting to little hands. Each rabbit sibling wears something distinctive (a football jersey, a baseball cap, eyeglasses, etc.) which young readers may have fun spotting throughout the book.

Chloe would appeal to preschool and primary readers and would be a quick lighthearted read at bedtime. Dad sending the kids to bed because they would rather play imaginatively than watch TV may raise eyebrows; readers must look carefully at the final humorous scene to fully appreciate where the author is taking this story.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ


LCCN 2012947753. ISBN 9780763661038, hardcover, $14.00.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 20 x 22 cm.
PS-Grade 2   Rating: 4

Young Roland sprints downstairs on Christmas morning, only to be disenchanted by his one tiny present. His wishes and demands for an increasingly bigger package bring him far from home, where he gains a new perspective on the size and meaning of the perfect gift. The Smallest Gift of Christmas is the work of New York Times best-selling illustrator Peter H. Reynolds.

Initially no gift is big enough for Roland, who has hopefully hung an enormous Christmas stocking and gone to bed with high expectations. Peter H. Reynolds’s bright and delightful digital artwork jovially captures the little boy’s drama: his over-the-cat leap on Christmas morning, his scowl, tantrum, and trudge through the snow in pajamas. The book’s small size, hand-lettered text, and simple drawings are kid-friendly, with a heavy use of red and green that evokes Christmas. The Smallest Gift of Christmas is an amusing but poignant story about the immeasurable size of the perfect gift—which turns out to be home and family.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ


1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 31 cm.          PS-Grade 2.
E   Rating: 4
In the opening scene of *Me and Momma and Big John*, a single African-American mother trudges up the stairs to her struggling family’s urban apartment covered in gray dust. She is returning from her first day of work as one of the stonecutters building a New York City cathedral, St. John the Divine, affectionately known as “Big John.” Several days later her son John wants to know how many stones she has worked on and is astonished when she holds up one finger. How can she work so long and hard on just one stone? His mother explains, “Building a cathedral isn’t a job. It’s an art.” When at last the stone is complete, John, his mother, and his brother and sister board a bus to see the stone and the cathedral. At their destination they meet the other stonecutters, see Momma’s stone, and enter the cavernous cathedral where they raise their voices in song along with other visitors. Young John is a thoughtful boy. He thinks about all the hands that work on every stone and of all the people who will visit the cathedral. He is disappointed that no one will know which stone is Momma’s stone. However, as he and his family experience the cathedral’s beauty and grandeur, and share a sense of belonging with the other visitors, he decides that it will be alright if Momma’s work is not widely known because he and his family will know and that is enough.

*Me and Momma and Big John* is a gorgeous picture book, and the story of John and his family is beautifully interwoven with that of the cathedral. William Low’s incandescent illustrations of the cathedral are complemented by the warm tones that depict the close-knit family’s home life. Author Mara Rockliff concludes with a note that explains the history of the cathedral, including a former apprenticeship program and the apprentice upon whose experiences this book was based.

*Peggy Morgan, CLJ*

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**Desmond and the very mean word : a story of forgiveness / Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams ; illustrated by A. G. Ford. Somerville, MA : Candlewick Press, 2013.**


1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 30 cm. Grades 2-5.

B Rating: 5, recommended w/caution

In *Desmond and the Very Mean Word*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton relate a story based on an incident from the archbishop’s boyhood. While proudly riding his new bicycle through the dusty streets of his South African village, young Desmond is taunted by a gang of white boys who yell a terrible word at him. When his friend, Father Trevor, counsels forgiveness, the boy rejects the advice, choosing instead to hold onto his hurt and anger. When he encounters the boys again, Desmond responds with a very mean word of his own. He expects that it will make him feel better. Instead, he feels ashamed. Once again Father Trevor advises forgiveness. Desmond is incredulous. “How can I forgive them? They haven’t said they are sorry.” Father Trevor replies, “Let me tell you a secret, Desmond. When you forgive someone, you free yourself from what they have said or done.”

Later, when the boy sees the gang’s red-haired ringleader being bullied, Desmond is surprised that he feels sorry for him. When he sees the ringleader at the market Desmond apologizes, and, when the stunned recipient tries to stammer out an apology, Desmond compassionately whispers, “I forgive you.” The change in young Desmond is dramatic. “At last Desmond knew what it felt like to be free.”

Father Trevor says that forgiveness works “like magic.” Archbishop Tutu’s story provides a powerful lesson and should provide ample points
for discussion either in the classroom or at home. Ford’s double-page spread oil illustrations are sometimes vibrant and sometimes somber, realistically portraying life in a South African village and effectively expressing the range of the protagonist’s emotions. A brief introduction explains apartheid in child-friendly terms. The book concludes with a note from the author that provides further information about Father Trevor.

*Peggy Morgan, CLJ*


LCCN 2011943509. ISBN 9781926973456, hardcover, $16.95.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm. Grades K-2. E Rating: 4


LCCN 2013930983. ISBN 9781926973906, hardcover, $16.95.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm. Grades K-2. E Rating: 4

In his recent *Oddrey* series, Blue Spruce Award-winning author-illustrator Dave Whamond delivers fun and fanciful stories about a spirited and independent misfit who overcomes disappointment and discouragement by maintaining a cheerful and optimistic attitude—no matter what.

*Oddrey*, the first in this series, is a fast-paced, inspiring tale about a one-of-a-kind girl who overcomes obstacles by believing in herself and helping others believe in themselves, too. Her positive attitude and quick thinking save the day when her class play grinds to a halt as her schoolmates are overtaken by fear and clumsiness. Oddrey shows the value of boldly expressing a can-do attitude even when you don’t feel so upbeat, and how the whole world just seems brighter when you help others achieve their purposes. Children of all ages will relate to the idea of sometimes feeling lonely and different, and the theme of cheerfully making the best of any situation is sure to inspire. Whamond’s bold and busy black line-enhanced watercolor illustrations, featuring bright hues and vividly expressive faces, will pique imaginations and ensure this book will be a favorite.

In *Oddrey and the New Kid*, the adventures continue. Oddrey is beloved of her classmates for her kindness and encouragement, and everything seems to be going her way—until a mysterious and most interesting new girl arrives and takes on the role of leader and teller of tall tales. When Oddrey questions the truthfulness of one of her tales, Maybelline goes to extremes to prove her bravery. A hair-raising adventure begins as Oddrey jumps in to save the day once more.

Whamond’s engaging and imaginative watercolor illustrations once again steal the show in this story about the ups and downs of friendship, and the importance of loving your friends for exactly who they are.

*Valorie Cooper, CLJ*

**Primary Nonfiction 220**


ISBN 9780310732228, hardcover w/3 CDs, $24.99.

287 p. : col. ill. ; 29 cm. + 3 sound discs (digital; 4 3/4 in.). Grades K-4. 220 Rating: 5

*The Story for Children: A Storybook Bible*
introduces events of the Old and New Testaments in illustrated story format arranged into 31 short chapters. The boxed Deluxe Edition includes the complete audio book read by noted author and pastor Max Lucado. This edition is part of The Story line, which also includes versions for Little Ones, Kids, Teens, and Adults.

This beautifully presented hardcover book begins with the message that "God is the main character at the center of our entire story" and proceeds to offer a wonderful blend of narrative, scripture, and imagery. Max Lucado and co-authors Randy Frazee and Karen Davis Hill offer a straightforward telling of 48 Bible stories, accompanied by brief passages entitled “God’s Message” that school-age readers can begin to absorb. Fausto Bianci’s dramatic and glorious watercolors enhance the experience of reading God’s Word or hearing it read aloud.

The Story for Children: A Storybook Bible would be a wonderful tool for introducing young children to the Bible or reinforcing what they already know. Referenced scripture is in the NIRV format.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Intermediate Nonfiction

912


LCCN 2013592699. ISBN 9780763668969, hardcover, $35.00.


Maps is a pictorial view of world geography, culture, and regional information, presented with an expanded look at 42 countries arranged by continent.

The front inside cover of this large inviting book identifies the individual countries to be discovered within its heavy parchment-like pages. There are basic maps of the world and each region, which show typical elements (borders, mountains, population, and size). But the fun for readers of Maps will be in the two-page spreads on the featured countries: a virtual smorgasbord of information about the people, history, language, clothing, arts, sports, agriculture, government, geography, and more.

The “stories” of each country are told entirely through the maps and labeled drawings of the author/illustrator team, Aleksandra and Daniel Mizielinski. Tiny detailed sketches fill the countries’ borders, with even more crammed into the margins. The notations, in type resembling handwriting, offer clarification of unfamiliar foods, animals, musical instruments, places of worship, and all manner of interesting things. Even the Arctic looks busy!

With so much to discover between its covers, Maps has an interactive appeal for a broad audience; indeed, readers young and old will feel more like explorers. The entire presentation is alluring, from the precision and soft colors of the illustrations throughout to the hand-drawn collection of world flags at the book’s conclusion.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

973.3

In 1775, a patriotic bookseller named Henry Knox comes to the aid of General George Washington by transporting 59 cannons over 300 miles of rough winter terrain. *Henry and the Cannons: an Extraordinary True Story of the American Revolution* is a picture book telling of an “impossible” feat and its place in American History.

Don Brown’s *Henry and the Cannons* is a suspenseful account of a little-known but pivotal historical event. Henry Knox and his men are humble and heroic, enduring many obstacles: ice, snow, cold, and mud. At one point they are sheltered and fed by Native Americans. The determined and resourceful team uses boats, oxen, horses, sleds, poles, ropes, and chains, portrayed in a series of watercolor illustrations that will engage young readers all the way through to the book’s uplifting conclusion. The book’s bold cover art is an invitation to adventure. Inside, the sketches appear almost rough-hewn, the otherwise muted colors punctuated by cannon fire and the red coats of the British Army. Several multi-panel drawings add visual interest and cleverly convey the passage of time.

A map of the area (Fort Ticonderoga, New York to Boston, Massachusetts) depicts the scope of Henry’s travels and helps readers conceptualize each phase of the 50-day journey. A bibliography is also provided. This would be an excellent story for students beginning to learn about the American Revolution and the courage and role of ordinary citizens.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

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**B**


LCCN 2012002971. ISBN 0, hardcover, $24.95.

86 p. : col. ill. ; 24 x 28 cm. Grades 6-10.

B Rating: *5*

Ben Franklin arrives in Philadelphia aspiring to make it on his own after abandoning an unhappy apprenticeship in Boston. *Becoming Ben Franklin: How a Candle-Maker’s Son Helped Light the Flame of Liberty* is the story of how a determined young man with little formal education grows into a beloved writer, inventor, founding father, and international statesman.

Along with its compelling subject matter, *Becoming Ben Franklin* is distinguished by its unique voice and presentation. Russell Freedman uses extensive primary material to infuse the story with a sense of presence. The author’s narrative is seamlessly blended with quotes from Franklin’s own writings, and student readers will relish the feeling that they are hearing history from Franklin himself! While this may appear to be a picture book, the content and reading level are quite complex and challenging. The entire account is brilliantly illustrated with paintings, engravings, sketches, and newspapers of the era, making this biography a handsome addition to the family library. Source notes, a selected bibliography, and timeline invite further reading and thought.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*
Middle School Fiction


LCCN 2012025468. ISBN 9780802854049, paperback, $8.00.

Fic Rating: 5

A Girl Called Problem by Katie Quirk tells the story of Shida and her people’s move to a new village. Shida, which means “problem” in Swahili, dreams of being a healer and has had some practice in her Litongo village. When the elders decide to move their village over the hills to a new location, Njia Panda, Shida is excited because the new village has a school and a nursing station. However, not all of the villagers share her excitement—some are scared that they will anger their ancestors by moving. When Shida and her cousins eagerly attend school in the new village, they are met with prejudice by those that don’t believe girls should attend school, but Shida doesn’t allow this to dampen her spirits about learning. When several mishaps occur, Shida is afraid that the elders will decide to move back to Litongo, as many believe that they are cursed. It is surprising to all when they discover the culprit actually causing these problems.

This fictional story presents a good mystery for children while also educating them about historical Tanzania. Readers will be amazed at how different their lives are compared to the lives of Shida and the other villagers, many of whom are poor, superstitious and plagued by malaria. A Girl Called Problem provides a fascinating look at a different time and culture, and insight into the everyday struggles of Tanzanian villagers as they work hard to feed their families and live with the few possessions they have. The glossary and photographs illustrate life in Tanzania during the late sixties.

Trina Chase, CLJ

Middle School Nonfiction


96 p. : col. ill. ; 27 cm. Grades 5-8.
B Rating: 4, with caution

Facts, back stories, and anecdotes about twenty scientists are presented in Lives of the Scientists: Experiments, Explosions (and What the Neighbors Thought), the latest addition to the “Lives of” series by the writer/illustrator team, Kathleen Krull and Kathryn Hewitt.

While these men and women distinguished themselves in many areas of science (including biology, chemistry, physiology, botany, physics, astronomy, and ethology), Lives of the Scientists brings focus to other aspects of their work, hobbies, and personalities. For example, Isaac Newton was involved in the capture and hanging of counterfeiters, Louis Pasteur was a portrait-painter, and Albert Einstein could not drive a car.

Representing many races, nationalities, and religions, the selection includes both famed (Marie Curie) and lesser-known (Zhang Heng) scientists, arranged chronologically from the first century to the present. The final two (James D.
Watson and Jane Goodall) are still living. Author Kathleen Krull provides middle grade readers with a fresh and enjoyable presentation of biographic material, some of which may open a more advanced discussion. There is mention of Darwin’s evolution theory, Galileo’s out-of-wedlock children, and George Washington Carver’s rumored homosexuality.

Illustrator Kathryn Hewitt’s whimsical bobble-head style depictions perfectly fit the spirit of the book in capturing each character’s unique quirks and qualities. “Extra Credit” sections pose additional points to ponder, and a bibliography provides options for further reading.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

High School Fiction

A draw of kings / Patrick W. Carr. (The staff & the sword ; 3) Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2014.


459 p. ; 22 cm. HS (Adult )

Fic Rating: 5

Patrick Carr follows A Cast of Stones, and its sequel, The Hero’s Lot, with another engaging fantasy in the Staff and the Sword series, A Draw of Kings.

In A Draw of Kings, Errol and his companions are sent on a dangerous mission to Merakh to recover the Book of Magis. They are pursued and imprisoned by Duke Weir, Illustra’s interim ruler following the king’s death. Weir intends to avenge his son’s death and marry Adora, daughter of the former king and Errol’s beloved.

Meanwhile, Illustra is on the verge of civil war as the true identity of the king’s heir is still unknown. Will the true heir be revealed in time as enemies within and without draw closer? The prophecy predicts that Errol or Liam will die, but which one is the heir apparent? What will the final cast of stones reveal? Will they ask the right question to get the right answer?

A Draw of Kings is a fitting conclusion to this trilogy. Like the earlier volumes, the characters (both main and secondary) are delightful and well-developed. Errol has grown from the village drunk to hero and into his final destiny. Tension builds as the plot continues to unfold. Who is the new king? A new voice in Christian fantasy, Patrick Carr is an author to watch as readers eagerly wait for his next series.

Recommended for public libraries and fantasy fans.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com


302 pages ; 22 cm. Grades 9-12.

Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning author Melanie Dickerson presents a young adult novel loosely based on the story of Cinderella.

In The Captive Maiden, seven-year-old Gisela meets Duke Wilhelm and his fourteen-year-old son Valten when they purchase a horse from Gisela’s father, a wealthy landowner. Observing Valten’s kindness to his new horse, Gisela remembers him with fondness, though she does not know him personally. Then her father dies and her life changes; she becomes a servant to her selfish stepmother Evfemia and to her stepsisters. Her memories of Valten dim over the years.
More than nine years later, she meets him again. Valten returns after a two-year absence, as a tournament champion, though weary of his fame and accomplishments. He does not recognize her when he rescues her from the unwanted advances of a tournament opponent, Ruexner. However, when his mother decides to host a ball after the tournament, Valten invites the pretty maiden.

As they begin to fall in love, others are bent on keeping the two apart. Ruexner tries to sabotage the tournament. Evfemia and her daughters help Ruexner to carry out his evil plans for Gisela. Will Valten be able to keep Gisela safe? Will true love overcome these obstacles? Will they live happily ever after?

As in her earlier books, the faith element is clearly evident but not preachy. Gisela prays to God regularly, even when her stepmother abuses her and aids her enemy. The medieval setting, rich narrative, and excellent character development make this a book worth reading by teens and adults alike.

Recommended for public and school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ


212 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12.

Fic Rating: 3

It's May 1944, and Josiah Wedgewood is one of thousands of young men making their way across Europe toward Normandy. Invasion is written from Josiah's viewpoint, so readers get an up-close and personal look at the horrors of war. He is from a small town, and each day is a test of Josiah's mettle as he faces death, destruction, and despair. He also sees life's unfairness when his best friend from back home, Marcus Perry, is treated as less than human due to the color of his skin.

Other than taking liberty with one point in the Normandy timeline, the book provides accurate, in-depth information about the battles and skirmishes fought during the spring and summer of 1944. Both Allied and Axis soldiers knew the war was waning, but Hitler had given orders for his men to "fight to the last bullet," so the brutalities continued till the very end.

Indicative of the situation, there is strong profanity and vulgarity throughout. Despite the language, Invasion has value as a fictionalized yet true account of war, but might be best read with discussion in mind.

Linda Matchett, CLJ

This is how I find her / Sara Polsky. Chicago : A. Whitman, 2013.


260 pages ; 22 cm. Grades 9-12.

Fic Rating:*5

This is How I Find Her by Sara Polsky is a contemporary high school fiction novel about a 16-year-old girl, Sophie, who takes care of her manic-depressive mother. Sophie makes sure the bills get paid, fixes meals, and secretly monitors her mother's medication. Since Aunt Cynthia mysteriously abandoned them five years ago, Sophie has been her bipolar mom's sole caretaker. When she arrives home from school to find her mother sprawled across the bed, unconscious, pills spilled onto the floor, she blames herself for her mother's attempted suicide. While Mom recovers in the hospital, Sophie must stay with Aunt Cynthia and her family. Their normal lifestyle is alien to her and, at first, makes her feel
isolated. Freedom from the heavy responsibility of keeping her mom balanced fills Sophie with both exhilaration and guilt. Although she misses her mother, Sophie cannot bear the loss of new friends and extended family that would result from returning to life with her mentally ill mother.

Polsky’s first-person narrative style provides an intimate look into the life of an emotionally overburdened teen, who simultaneously loves her mother and longs for the supportive environment every child deserves. The reader is invited to the front lines of this teen’s battle for survival for herself and her small family. In her first novel for young adults, Polsky uses bold yet tender strokes to develop three-dimensional characters that are both messy and wonderful. Topics covered that invite group discussion include bipolar disorder, family issues, and mother-daughter dynamics. Mild swearing does not detract from this authentic, edgy, yet heartwarming novel.

Kim Harris, CLJ


327 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12. Fic Rating: 4

Katherine Reay makes her debut with Dear Mr. Knightley, a contemporary novel of letters. Samantha Moore receives a private scholarship to Northwestern University; the only catch–she must write letters to the donor.

In Dear Mr. Knightley, Samantha endures her foster care childhood by hiding in the pages of literature, even quoting them or choosing to behave the way a particular character would act. Then a mysterious benefactor offers her a scholarship to graduate school. The donor–known to her as Mr. Knightley–asks Sam to write letters to him on a regular basis without his responding.

The letters start out conversationally and move on to a confessional tone, as Samantha learns more about life and reveals it in her letters. She breaks out of her shell and begins to live in the moment. Slowly her frozen heart begins to warm up to others, including a young teen boy, others at the foster care home, and her classmates. One day she meets an author she admires, Alex Powell, and life really begins to change for her.

Reay does a good job of letting us get to know Sam and Mr. Knightley through Sam’s letters. We see excellent character development as Sam embraces who she was meant to be. Dear Mr. Knightley is a delightful read, one that will leave the reader pondering questions about how they hide from others, even those closest to them.

In the beginning, Sam states she does not forgive–but in the end, she does because of who she becomes through the entire process. The revelation of Mr. Knightley’s identity nearly shatters her, but she emerges stronger than before. The novel includes discussion questions, Q&A with the author, and Sam’s reading list.

Recommended for public libraries and church libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

High School Nonfiction

302.235


143 p. : ill., maps, ports. ; 23 cm. Grades 6-Adult.

305.235 Rating: 4

*Kids of Kabul Living Bravely Through a Never-Ending War* by Deborah Ellis is a collection of translated interviews with children currently living in Kabul, Afghanistan. Ellis has written three prior juvenile fiction books about children living under Taliban rule.

Those interviewed are participants in projects funded by Women for Women. Many consider themselves blessed to have an opportunity to attend school. They know from firsthand experience that at least half the children in Afghanistan still have no access to schools.

The book is engaging. Encountering the children one by one creates a sense of immediacy and intimacy. Each child has seen and experienced that which no child should. They tell their stories without bitterness, rancor or self-pity. They do not see themselves as victims. Amazingly, they have hope for a better future. Even more striking is the depth of their gratitude for now having what most elsewhere take for granted—a relatively safe environment in which to live, study, and play.

Younger readers might benefit from adult guidance in dealing with some of the realities presented in this book suggested for middle school and up. That being said, *Kids of Kabul* presents a harsh reality that might help some children gain a better perspective on their own lives and inspire an attitude of gratitude for the blessings they have in abundance.

*Gail, CLJ*
Return to me: a novel / Lynn Austin. (Restoration chronicles ; 1) Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2013.
459 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.
Fic Rating: 5

Return to Me is the first book in Lynn Austin's The Restoration Chronicles. King Cyrus sends out a proclamation that the Jews may return to Jerusalem from their elongated exile in Babylon. However, it is not the wholly joyous occasion anticipated; families are separated as loved ones choose to stay in Babylon, hardships assail the travelers during their journey, and the leadership can’t agree on their course of action upon their arrival in the Holy City.

Iddo, a priest who doesn’t understand his sons’ desire to remain in Babylon, seeks to strengthen the Jews' faith while his wife, Dinah, questions the sacrifices associated with God’s leading. Iddo’s oldest grandson, Zechariah, is torn between his grandfather’s beliefs and his love for Yael, who is drawn to the teaching of the Babylonians’ false gods.

Information about the culture and social mores of the time is woven throughout the narrative, effectively immersing the reader into the era. Told from multiple points of view, the story quickly draws the reader into the daily activities of the characters. Brought to life with vivid descriptions and realistic dialogue, the characters struggle with each other, their faith, and their very belief system. Although set in biblical times, the issues addressed in Return to Me—doubt, forgiveness, and love—are still relevant today. The book is a clean read and could be enjoyed on multiple levels.

Lindy Matchett, CLJ

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

Lynette Easton kicks off a new contemporary romantic suspense series with No One to Trust, where a wife finds out that her husband is not the man she thought he was—not his name, not his background, and definitely not his relationships.

In No One to Trust, family lawyer Summer Abernathy wakes up to find a gun pointed at her as three men demand to know the location of her husband, Kyle Abernathy, although they ask for him by another name, David Hackett. She is unaware that he is in the Witness Protection Program and a key witness at a crime boss’s trial in three weeks, if he lives that long. While she discovers the truth, others are trying to find him and will use any means to prevent him from testifying.

The crime boss kidnaps Summer’s client and children as pawns to get back at Summer’s husband. At least one of her husband’s protective detail is on the payroll of the crime boss. Summer is betrayed by someone close to her. Summer doesn’t know whom to trust now. Picking the wrong person to trust could cost her everything: her husband, even her life. Will she discover the truth in time?

Eason is an excellent storyteller, weaving plot twists and character development. Just when the reader thinks the story is done, there is another plot twist, a knot in the story line. Violence in the story is appropriate but not graphic, and the faith
element is light and not overpowering. Eason’s book will be of interest to fans of Dee Henderson, DiAnn Mills, and Irene Hannon.

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

**Widow of Gettysburg / Jocelyn Green.**
*(Heroes behind the lines : Civil War ; 2)*

_Chicago : River North, 2013._


381 p. : map ; 22 cm. Adult.

_Fic  Rating: 5*

_Widow of Gettysburg_ by Jocelyn Green is the second book in the series _Heroines Behind the Lines: Civil War_. Liberty Holloway is a widow after losing her Union husband in the Civil War. To support herself, she turns her home into an inn; however, the war intervenes. Confederate soldiers confiscate her home and turn it into a hospital. Even though the enemy now resides in her home, she assists the doctors any way she can. Her hired help, Bella, is a former slave and is fighting inner turmoil about helping the Confederate soldiers. She has seen a lifetime of pain and suffering at the hands of southern slaveholders and has a secret of her own. Even with the odds against them, Liberty and Bella hold onto their faith and show tremendous strength. Silas Ford, a patient in Liberty’s makeshift hospital, falls in love with Liberty but is burdened by the sins of his father and feels he doesn’t deserve happiness. Silas has to find his way back to God after losing faith in himself. He has to come to terms with his family’s role in slavery and his feelings towards it.

_Widow of Gettysburg_ is full of vivid historical detail, and the story keeps readers interested in each of the characters’ lives, even those of secondary characters. While a work of fiction, it is inspired by actual accounts from Gettysburg civilians. The war affected the families and residents of the war-torn towns as citizens lost their homes and were left to clean up the aftermath. Many put aside their prejudices against the “enemy” and volunteered their time to help in the hospitals. There are passages in the book that could be difficult for some readers. These include descriptions of the war and of an instance of attempted rape. There are also some graphic descriptions of surgical procedures performed. _Widow of Gettysburg_ also depicts how overseers and plantation owners treated their slaves and how African American soldiers were not treated as equals because of their race. These and other details paint an accurate portrait of the times and give readers an idea of what the citizens endured.

Trina Chase, CLJ

**Critical reaction : a novel / Todd M. Johnson.**

_Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2013._


379 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.

_Fic  Rating: 5*

_In Critical Reaction_, Kieran Mullaney is testing for radiation leakage at the shuttered Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington State when deafening explosions rock the building, propelling Kieran through the air and slamming him to the floor. Just before losing consciousness, he sees radiation detectors change from green to red. However, Covington Nuclear, the contract company for Hanford, insists Kieran was not exposed to any radiation and refuses to take responsibility for the accident. Kieran decides to file a lawsuit.
When his lawyer withdraws before trial, Kieran enlists the aid of fledging-lawyer Emily Hart. Emily asks for help from her estranged father, Ryan, an experienced civil litigation attorney. Even though Ryan does not believe the case is winnable, he reluctantly offers his assistance, hoping to rebuild a relationship with Emily. While preparing for trial, Ryan and Emily begin suspecting that some kind of clandestine activity is going on at Hanford.

Todd Johnson has written a thought-provoking and gripping legal thriller. He tells the story from multiple points of view without ever confusing the reader.

Critical Reaction not only offers some important insights into the safety of nuclear power, but also illustrates the importance of perseverance in the face of overwhelming odds.

_Dianne Woodman, CLJ_


x, 470 pages ; 24 cm. Adult.

_Fic_ Rating: 5

_Damascus Countdown_ is jam-packed with spectacular action scenes occurring over the course of three days.

David Shirazi, a CIA non-official cover operative, is meeting with the top aide of the Twelfth Imam at the Jamkaran Mosque in Iran when Israel bombs Iran’s nuclear facilities in an effort to repel a perceived nuclear threat. All but two of Iran’s nuclear warheads are destroyed. This attack is considered an act of war and leads to retaliatory strikes by Iran.

The United States is suspicious of clandestine plans of the Twelfth Imam, a self-proclaimed Messiah, who is uniting Muslim nations under his leadership and has threatened to annihilate any state that attacks Muslims. Unable to pinpoint the warheads’ location, the CIA tasks David and his team to find the warheads and destroy them before the Imam triggers a cataclysmic crisis.

Joel Rosenberg has written a fast-paced, engrossing political thriller in which Muslim and Christian eschatology and faith in God are key plot elements. A cast of characters is included, which is helpful for keeping straight the roles played by the characters.

Recommended for anyone who enjoys a thought-provoking story about events in the Middle East and how they tie into Old Testament prophecy.

_Dianne Woodman, CLJ_

Take a chance on me / Susan May Warren. (Christiansen family) Carol Stream, IL : Tyndale House, 2013.


xvi, 393 p. ; 21 cm. Adult.

_Fic_ Rating: 4

Susan May Warren starts a new contemporary romance series set in Deep Haven, Minnesota, featuring six adult children in the Christiansen family and their relationships.

In _Take a Chance on Me_, Ivy Madison moves to Deep Haven to be the new assistant county attorney. On her first day, Ivy walks into a charity auction and bids on an eligible bachelor, Darek Christiansen, thinking he can show her around town. Jensen Atwood, Darek’s former best friend, accidentally killed Darek’s wife in a car accident, leaving Darek a bitter, single father. Ivy's instrumental role in getting community service for Jensen (instead of jail time) affects her...
potential relationship with Darek. Will they be able to take a chance on a future of their dreams?

In *It Had to Be You*, Eden Christiansen, a writer in the newspaper’s obituary department, is the family nurturer, putting others’ needs ahead of her own. She wants to be a reporter, but is constantly being pulled into helping her brother Owen, a hockey player. When he is injured, she blames the team captain Jace for not mentoring him adequately, but Jace has his own demons to fight. An aging hockey player, Jace doesn’t know what else he could do as his playing days draw to a close. Eden has always been there to pick up the pieces for Owen. Will Eden and Jace discover they have worth on their own?

Warren writes a contemporary series that can be read in any order. Each is a stand-alone novel but focuses on a different Christiansen sibling, and opens with a letter from their mother. More than just contemporary romances, they are stories of people who are estranged from God and how He woos them back into relationship. *It Had to Be You* talks of grace and redemption, while *Take a Chance on Me* speaks of forgiveness. Warren’s titles evoke a tender romance in the mind of readers, but the real romance is between God and the Christiansen sibling.

Recommended for public libraries and church libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

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**Forest, AR : Master Books, 2013.**


103 p. : col. ill. ; 21 x 26 cm.  Adult (HS).

508.8665  Rating: 5

*Galapagos Island: A Different View* sets out to disprove Darwin’s worldview and to establish that the biblical worldview is correct by using the beauty and diversity of the Galapagos Islands as a common reference point. These islands were visited by Darwin nearly one hundred years ago and provided much of the data from which he formed his theories set forth in his *Origin of the Species*.

Gorgeous photographs are interspersed between Scriptures, charts, and essays by various creation scientists, speakers, and writers, including the editor, Georgia Purdom. Although scientific in nature, the book is not difficult to understand and includes definitions, diagrams, and timelines to clarify many of the technical aspects.

The contributors are from a variety of disciplines, including geophysics, astronomy, cell and developmental biology, geology, veterinary medicine, molecular genetics and theology. Dr. Purdom herself is a molecular geneticist. As a result, *Galapagos Islands: A Different View* contains a plethora of information about science, nature, and creation and lends itself to extensive consideration and discussion.

*Linda Matchett, CLJ*
CORE COLLECTION
FOR CHRISTIAN READERS

What? (You say.)
I’ve looked it over.
Are these the only titles you can recommend on the listed topics?
What about pet rabbits?
What about resources for volunteer librarians?
What about...

Maybe, maybe not!
More to come!
And you can suggest great titles.
We’d love to hear from you.

Well, this is pretty good. But I wish you had included a summary of each book or ...
(you fill this in).
Primary Fiction

Ingram, Jason

I couldn't love you more / by Jason Ingram & Matt Hammitt ; illustrated by Polona Lovsin.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm.. PS (all ages).
E Rating: 5
God--Love--Juvenile literature.

Krauss, Ruth

A hole is to dig / Ruth Krauss ; pictures by Maurice Sendak.
1 v. (unpaged) : ill. ; 18 cm.. PS-Grade 4.
E Rating: *5 Definitions.

Lobel, Arnold

Frog and Toad are friends / by Arnold Lobel. (An I can read book.)
64 p. : col. ill. ; 22 cm.. PS- Grade 3.
E Rating: *5 Frogs--Fiction.
Toads--Fiction.

Lucado, Max

The crippled lamb / by Max Lucado with Jenna, Andrea, & Sara Lucado ; illustrated by Liz Bonham.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm. + 1 sound disc (digital ; 4 3/3 in.). PS- Grade 3.

Primary Nonfiction

398.2

Aesop

Aesop's fables for children / illustrated by Milo Winter.
112 p. : col. ill. ; 28 cm. + 1 sound disc (digital ; 4 3/4 in.).

503

First science encyclopedia. / [senior editors, Currie Love, Caroline Stamps and Ben Morgan].
503 Rating: 5 Science--Encyclopedias.
508.2
Branley, Franklyn Mansfield
Sunshine makes the seasons / by Franklyn M. Branley ; illustrated by Michael Rex. (Let's-read-and-find-out science. Stage 2)
LCCN 2003025457. ISBN 9780060592042, hardcover, OP; buy used.
508.2 Rating: *5
Sunshine.

Intermediate Fiction

Coble, Colleen
Rock Harbor lost and found / by Colleen Coble ; with Robin Caroll. (Rock Harbor Search and Rescue series ; 2)
241 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 4-6.
Fic Rating: 5
Missing persons--Fiction.
Search dogs--Fiction.

King-Smith, Dick
Babe : the gallant pig / Dick King-Smith ; illustrated by Maggie Kneen.
LCCN 2004006832. ISBN 9780375829703, hardcover, OP; buy used.
130 p. ; ill. ; 24 cm. Grades 3-5.
Fic Rating: *5
Pigs--Fiction.
Sheepherding--Fiction.

MacLachlan, Patricia
Sarah, plain and tall / Patricia MacLachlan.

Intermediate Nonfiction

398.2
Andersen, Hans Christian
Fairy tales from Hans Christian Andersen / compiled by Russell Ash and Bernard Higton.
398.2 Rating: *5
Fairy tales.
Short stories.

398.2
Hodges, Margaret
Saint George and the dragon : a golden legend / adapted by Margaret Hodges from Edmund Spenser's Faerie Queene ; illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman.
32 p. : col. ill. ; 24 x 27 cm. Grades 4-6.
398.2 Rating: *5
Folklore--England.
398.2
Andersen, Hans Christian
The complete fairy tales and stories / Hans Christian Andersen ; translated from the Danish by Erik Christian Haugaard ; foreword by Virginia Haviland ; cover art by Maurice Sendak. (The Anchor folktale library)
xxiv, 1101 p. ; 23 cm. Grades 3-Adult.
398.2 Rating: *5
Fairy tales.

507.8
Becker, Helaine
Science on the loose : amazing activities and science facts you'll never believe / Helaine Becker ; illustrated by Claudia Dávila.
LCCN 2007939081. ISBN 9781897349182, hardcover, $22.95.
64 p. : col. ill. ; 21 x 25 cm. Grades 3-6.
507.8 Rating: 5
Science--Experiments.

598
Cate, Annette LeBlanc
Look up! : bird-watching in your own backyard / Annette LeBlanc Cate.
598 Rating: 5
Birds.
Bird watching.

623.19
Platt, Richard
Castle / illustrated by Stephen Biesty ; written by Richard Platt.
52 p. : ill. ; 31 cm. Grades 4-7.
623.19 Rating: 5
Castles.
Knights and knighthood.

625.2
Mott, Evelyn Clarke
Steam train ride / Evelyn Clarke Mott.
LCCN 90049223. ISBN 0, paperback, OP; buy used.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 19 x 23 cm. Grades PS-1.
625.2 Rating: 5
Railroads--Juvenile literature.
Railroad trains.
Middle School Fiction

Angus, Sam
Soldier dog / Sam Angus.
249 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 7-9.  
Fic Rating: 5  
World War, 1914-1918--Campaigns--Western Front--Juvenile fiction.  
Dogs--War use--Juvenile fiction.

Byars, Betsy
The summer of the swans / Betsy Byars ; illustrated by Ted CoConis. 
142 p. ; ill. ; 22 cm. Grades 5-8.  
Fic Rating: *5  
People with mental disabilities--Fiction.

Dallas, Sandra
The quilt walk / by Sandra Dallas.  
213 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 4-7.  
Fic Rating: 5  
Wagon trains--Fiction.  
Quilting--Fiction.

Dickens, Charles
A Christmas carol / Charles Dickens ; illustrated by P.J. Lynch.  
156 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm. Grades 6-8.  
Fic Rating: *5  
Christmas--Fiction.  
Ghost stories--Fiction.

Speare, Elizabeth George
Calico captive / Elizabeth George Speare ; illustrated by W. T. Mars.  
LCCN 57009017. ISBN 9780618150755, hardcover, OP; buy used.  
274 p. ; ill. ; 22 cm. Grades 5-8.  
Fic Rating: *5  
United States--History--French and Indian War, 1755-1763--Fiction.  
Montreal--Fiction.

Speare, Elizabeth George
The sign of the beaver / by Elizabeth George Speare.  
135 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 5-8.  
Fic Rating: *5  
Frontier and pioneer life--Fiction.  
Survival--Fiction.

Middle School Nonfiction

Ham, Ken
The true account of Adam and Eve / Ken Ham.  
56 p. ; col. ill. ; 21 x 26 cm. Grades 5-10 (HS, Adult).  
222 Rating: 5  
Adam (Biblical figure)  
Eve (Biblical figure)

Aesop
Aesop's fables ; a classic illustrated edition / compiled by Russell Ash and Bernard Higton.

398.24

CHRISTIAN LIBRARY JOURNAL 23 MARCH/APRIL 2014
95 p. : ill. (some col.) ; 29 cm. All ages.
398.24 Rating: *5
Fables.
Folklore.

509.2
McCutcheon, Marc
The kid who named Pluto : and the stories of other extraordinary young people in science / by Marc McCutcheon ; illustrated by Jon Cannell.
LCCN 2003003662. ISBN 9780811837705, hardcover, $15.95.
85 p. : ill. ; 22 cm. Grades 5-8.
509.2 Rating: 5
Scientists.
Creative ability.

509.22
Jackson, Donna M.
Extreme scientists : exploring nature’s mysteries from perilous places / by Donna M. Jackson. (Scientists in the field)
LCCN 2008036796. ISBN 9780618777068, hardcover, $18.00.
509.22 Rating: *5
Explorers.
Science.

600
Macaulay, David
The new way things work / David Macaulay, with Neil Ardley.
LCCN 98014224. ISBN 9780395938478, hardcover, $35.00.
400 p. : ill. ; 29 cm. Grades 5-8.
600 Rating: *5
Technology.

608
St. George, Judigh
So you want to be an inventor? / by Judith St. George ; illustrated by David Small.
53 p. : col. ill. ; 30 cm. Grades 5-8.
608 Rating: *5
Inventions.
Inventors.

High School Fiction

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de
Don Quixote / Miguel de Cervantes ; translated, with a critical text based on the first editions of 1605 and 1615, and with variant readings, variorum notes, and an introduction by Samuel Putnam.
xi, 1239 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 11-Adult.
Fic Rating: *5
Spain--Social life and customs--16th century--Fiction.
Knights and knighthood--Fiction.

Costain, Thomas
The silver chalice / Thomas B. Costain ; introduction by Peggy Noonan. (Loyola classics series)
xi, 823 p. ; 18 cm. Grades 9-Adult.
Fic Rating: *5
Jesus Christ--Fiction.
Last Supper--Fiction.
Williamson, Jill
Outcasts / Jill Williamson. (The safe lands ; 2)
407 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 9-12.
Fic Rating: 5
Government, Resistance to--Fiction
Science fiction.

High School Nonfiction

220.3
528 p. : ill. (chiefly color) ; 24 cm.. Grades 9-12 (MS, Adult).
220.3 Rating: 5
Bible--Dictionaries.

220.3
The essential Bible dictionary / Moisés Silva, general editor. (Essential Bible companion series)
239 pl : col. ill., col. maps ; 24 cm.. Grades 9-Adult.
220.3 Rating: 5
Bible--Dictionaries.

220.7
NIV Bible study commentary / John H. Sailhamer ; abridged by David A. Frees.
464 p. : ill. ; 21 cm.. Grades 9-Adult.
220.7 Rating: 5
Bible--Commentaries.

277.66
Elliot, Elizabeth
Through gates of splendor / Elisabeth Elliot.
Wheaton, IL : Tyndale House, 1996.
vi, 269 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 9-Adult.
277.66 Rating: *5
Indians of South America--Missions--Ecuador.
Christian martyrs--Ecuador--Biography.

609
Harrison, Ian
The book of inventions / Ian Harrison.
LCCN 2004049922. ISBN 9780792282969, hardcover, $30.00.
288 p. : ill. (some col.) ; 28 cm. Grades 8-12.
609 Rating: 5
Inventions--History.
Inventors--Biography.

609.3
The seventy great inventions of the ancient world / edited by Brian M. Fagan.
LCCN 2004100250. ISBN 9780500051306, hardcover, $40.00.
609.3 Rating: 5
Inventions.
Technology--History.

600.089
Herriot, James
All creatures great and small / James Herriot.
442 p.; 22 cm. Grades 10-Adult.
630.089 Rating: *5
Fiction

Gerlach, Rita

Before the scarlet dawn / Rita Gerlach. (The daughters of the Potomac ; 1)
327 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.
Fic Rating: 5
Upper class--Fiction.
Great Britain--History--18th century--Fiction.

Gerlach, Rita

Beside two rivers / Rita Gerlach. (The daughters of the Potomac ; 2)
335 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.
Fic Rating: 5
Family secrets--Fiction.
Horse breeders--Fiction.

Gerlach, Rita

Beyond the valley / Rita Gerlach. (The daughters of the Potomac ; 3)
330 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.
Fic Rating: 5
Young women--Fiction.
Indentured servants--Fiction.

Robertson, Paul

An elegant solution / Paul Robertson.
Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2013.
427 p. ; 22 cm. Adult.
Fic Rating: 5
Mathematicians--Fiction.
Jealousy--Fiction.

Adult Nonfiction

220.3

xii, 1571 p. : col. ill., maps ; 24 cm. Adult (HS).
220.3 Rating: *5
Bible--Dictionaries.

220.5

NIV Bible concordance / John R. Kohlenberger III, editor.
xii, 596 p. ; 22 cm. Adult (HS).
220.5 Rating: 5
Bible--Concordances, English--New International.

220.7

The new Matthew Henry Commentary : the classic work with updated language ; abridged ed. / Matthew Henry ; edited and updated by Martin H. Manser.
vi, 2278 p. ; 24 cm. Adult (HS).
220.7 Rating: 5
Bible--Commentaries.

220.77

The Moody Bible commentary / Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, general editors.
2175 p. : charts, maps ; 24 cm. Adult (HS).
220.77 Rating: *5
220.9
Crossway ESV Bible atlas / John D. Currid, David P. Barrett.
LCCN 2009036660. ISBN 9781433501920, hardcover, $55.00.
1 atlas (349 p.) : col. ill., col. maps ; 31 cm.. Adult (HS).
220.9 Rating: *5
Bible--Geography--Maps.
Bible--History of Biblical events--Maps.

220.9
Zondervan atlas of the Bible / Carl G. Rasmussen.
303 p. : col. ill., col. maps ; 29 cm. + 1 map (79 x 61 cm., folded to 27 x 21 cm.). Adult (HS).
220.9 Rating: 5
Bible--Geography--Maps.
Bible--History of Biblical events--Maps.

220.92
Who's who in the Bible : unforgettable people and timeless stories from Genesis to Revelation / Jean-Pierre Isbouts.
LCCN 2013028051. ISBN 9781426211591, hardcover, $54.00.
392 p. : ill. ; 29 cm.. Adult (HS).
220.92 Rating: *5
Bible--History of biblical events.
Bible--Biography.
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