Outstanding
Books Reviewed
in This Issue

You nest here with me by Jane Yolen and Heidi Stemple.

Fatal fever: tracking down Typhoid Mary by Gail Jarrow.

The huntress of Thornbeck Forest by Melanie Dickerson.

Plus: Author Interview with Mesu Andrews
Dear CLJ Readers:

We hope your summer has been blessed with good times with family and friends, and with times of rest and renewal, both physical and spiritual.

In this issue, we are excited to present an author interview with Mesu Andrews, award-winning author of biblical fiction. Ms. Andrews kindly shared with us about her journey as a writer and about her latest novel, *The Pharaoh's Daughter* (reviewed in this issue). We enjoyed learning about this fascinating story set during the time of Moses and were inspired by Ms. Andrews' testimony about how God has worked in her life.

We at CLJ so enjoy reading fine books and sharing them with you. In our next issue, we will again be presenting a special section featuring reviews of select award-winning titles. These will be fine books to introduce to your students and young (and young-at-heart) readers at home. To ensure that you don’t miss anything, please visit www.ChristianLibraryJ.org to subscribe to both the CLJ journal and blog.

As always, I would love to hear from you. Please feel free to email me with suggestions or if you are interested in becoming a reviewer.

In Christ,
Angela Walsh
Publisher and Editor
editor@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.

### Table of Contents

**SPECIAL FEATURE:**

- Interview with Mesu Andrews ................................................. 4

**Key to Reviews** .................................................................. 9

**Children’s Titles** ............................................................... 10

**Teen Titles** ..................................................................... 20

**Adult Titles** ..................................................................... 29

**Index** ............................................................................. 41

---

Taken from Where Trust Lies by Janette Oke and Laurel Oke Logan. Copyright © 2015 by Janette Oke and Laurel Oke Logan. Used by permission of Bethany House Publishers.
CLJ was honored recently to talk with author Mesu Andrews about her newest novel, The Pharaoh’s Daughter, which released in March 2015. Andrews’ first published novel, Love Amid the Ashes, was selected as the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association 2012 Book of the Year for a Debut Author. (ECPA’s Christian Book Award® program recognizes the highest quality in Christian books and Bibles and is among the oldest and most prestigious awards programs in the religious publishing industry.) Following are highlights of our conversation:

Q: Good morning! Would you please tell us a bit about yourself and where you live?

A: Good morning! Yes, we live in Washington State, just across the river from Portland. My husband works in Portland at Multnomah University. He’s the dean of the seminary there.

We love it out here! It’s gorgeous! And Portland is a unique place. We love to visit but we’re happy living on the other side of the river.

Q: What is the catalyst that started your career in Christian fiction?

A: I wanted to write Bible studies, actually. The Bible is my passion. I love to study God’s word and love to kind of roll up my sleeves and get in deep. I started studying the Song of Solomon and read all eight chapters every day for a year, and the Lord gave me a story. I wanted to write a Bible study in story form. I took it to a writers’ conference and was told I should stick with speaking because I couldn’t write worth a dime. I was really discouraged. I tried to write devotionals and I sent them out to family and friends—those people who can’t unsubscribe from you. That kind of grew as I was doing a lot of speaking, and people would sign up for the devotionals, but the Song of Solomon thing wouldn’t leave. I had a best friend who said, “You really just need to write this as a story. Don’t write it as a Bible study; write it as a story, fiction.” And I said, “I don’t think it’s as effective as studying the Word.” And she said “Oh, so you think you know better than Jesus how to teach.” Oh dear, that was like a dagger to the heart!

And that’s when I started learning to write fiction. My purpose in writing biblical fiction is so that I can teach a passage of Scripture or a story from Scripture. I believe that’s why God tells us stories in Scripture, because He wants us to learn from the characters that He has maintained in His Word. They’re our teachers.

Q: I think you capture more of people’s imaginations with fiction.

A: Yes, and our memories just absorb a story so much better than a list of facts. We’re going to forget a list of facts as soon as we read it, but a story we just absorb and tell it to the next generation. And that’s what God’s word tells us to do—read this story or sing this song and tell it to the next generation. That’s what I love about storytelling.
Q: I think your story of initial rejection may be inspiring for aspiring writers too. Some of them may have been told they can’t write but may still feel they have a calling to do so.

A: Oh, absolutely.

Q: After getting that negative feedback early on, it must have been a really exciting moment when your first novel, Love Amid the Ashes, was selected as the 2012 ECPA Book of the Year for a Debut Author. How excited were you about that? Was it a surprise?

A: I didn’t even know it was a finalist. I didn’t know anything about fiction. I didn’t start reading fiction until I started writing fiction. When I got the ECPA award, everybody was congratulating me, and I called my marketing director and said “OK, I think this is a really big deal evidently, so could you explain to me what that is?” And she said, “OK Mesu, this is a big deal. You need to be really excited about this.” And I was really excited once I realized what it was, but I think I have become more excited in years after, because now I realize what it is. But when I got it I was such a newbie, I just had no idea how the Lord had blessed. Looking back on it, it was miraculous.

Q: He has blessed you with talent, that’s for sure. And you’re using that talent, which is wonderful.

A: Well, it’s all glory to Him. He is amazing to me.

Q: Yes He is, and He gives us all talents for a reason. It must make you very happy to be living your purpose.

A: Yes, it does. I should insert this in here, too. In 1997, I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia and had to tone down on speaking because physically I couldn’t keep up the pace. That’s when I started writing a little more. And in 2002 I had a complete health crash where I was in bed for six months, and that’s when I really started writing more. In 2005 I started with daily migraines and I still struggle with that. That is the reason I write now instead of speak. I still do some speaking, but it’s much more hit-or-miss now than it was in the late 90s. The thing that I love about the Lord is that I am able to write even though I struggle physically. I am able to do and to minister, and it is at a level that is even more fulfilling than when I was running my legs off and beating up my body in the late 90s. I’m doing what I love to do, even with health issues and, like you said, feeling like I’m doing really what I’m called to do. I’m just amazed at the Lord. He is so good.

Q: In the Afterward of The Pharaoh’s Daughter, you reference I Chronicles 4:17-18 where it talks about the Pharaoh’s daughter and her children and her husband. I don’t remember that particular verse ever registering with me. What caused you to focus on that particular verse?

A: I did a search in my Bible software on “Pharaoh’s daughter” because I like to write on the Bible characters that we don’t have a lot of detail on and I love to do research. Pharaoh’s daughter
was one of those characters. There were only three Pharaoh’s daughters mentioned in Scripture. One was Solomon’s wife, then the one who pulled Moses out of the Nile, and one who was very obscure. My Bible software wasn’t really sure who was being referred to in the I Chronicles passage, so I went to another commentary and it said that because of the surrounding names in that I Chronicles passage, that Pharaoh’s daughter had to be in the time of Moses.

The name Bithia also stuck out for me because I love the movie *The Ten Commandments*. Bithia was the name that Cecil B. DeMille attached to the mother in the movie. I realized Cecil B. DeMille had done some Bible research when he made that movie. That’s kind of awesome! I’m thinking how in the world have I been a Christian this long and not heard that Bithia married a slave? And that’s what got me going into research and finding out how could this fit with history AND with biblical research. My goal is always to weave the historical and biblical together. Israel was a part of history. I love to find those niches where Israel fits into the larger world history.

Q: You do such a good job of bringing the setting to life in your novels. How did you discover all the daily life details that you include in your books? Like the kind of grain they eat or the kind of clothes they wear?

A: I have books that tell me that. One that was really helpful is *Life in Ancient Egypt*. One of the authors is Adolf Erman. And another book that was really helpful was *World Eras: Ancient Egypt* (2615-332 B.C.). The editor of that one is Edward Bleiberg. Probably the most helpful book of all is *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt* by Aidan Dodson and Dyan Hilton.

Q: There’s a significant amount of brutality in this novel. Did that make this novel’s details more difficult to imagine and write?

A: This novel was not as difficult for me to write as the Jezebel novel, which is the novel I wrote just before this one. I think it was because I knew going into this one that Scripture says the Egyptians treated them ruthlessly, inhumanely. I have images in my mind from America’s own history with slaves and slavery, and I have *The Ten Commandments* movie images of how the Hebrew slaves were treated. Slavery is a terrible business in every way. So, yes, it was disturbing to write, but it was not surprising. It’s what God’s word says. If anything, I probably toned it down from what it actually was.

Q: Some of the scenes were a little disturbing for me to read. There’s a scene in the throne room toward the end that is particularly brutal and it horrified me to think that people actually were, and are, continue to be to this day, that brutal and that uncaring.

A: Yes, I am so immersed in the Middle Eastern culture when I’m researching. When God prophesied over Ishmael, he said, “You will be a wild donkey of a man and your hand will be against your brothers forever.” They are a passionate people. My editors think I’m overdramatizing. Actually, I’m not, but it
doesn’t always translate well into an American read. It’s up to my editors and me to tone that down some so that it can be palatable to readers in other parts of the world. The scene in that throne room was probably not uncommon for 1250 BCE.

Q: That’s how I read it, that that could happen any day. It didn’t seem to impact anyone except the children and the women. For the men, it was just an everyday activity.

A: The part where they buried the hands, that was historically accurate. It was a fact that they found holes full of hands on the dig site of Avaris. So I came up with a reason for that historical fact. I’m so glad I don’t live in that time!

Q: How long did it take you to research and write The Pharaoh’s Daughter?

A: Actually, I did this one a little faster than the others, in about eight months. Most of them take about a year. Usually, I do six months of research before I begin writing.

Q: It was Anippe’s fear of childbirth that stood out to me. Why did you choose to make her so afraid of childbirth, rather than just be unable to have children until later in life?

A: There are two great motivators in life: fear and love. My editor is always hammering me about having sufficient motivators. I felt like she (Anippe) needed to have both of those motivators in order to go against the king’s edict and save a Hebrew slave’s baby and take it as her own son. That was such a CRAZY thing for her to do! In that culture, for an Egyptian to take a Hebrew slave that they considered like livestock—a possession—there had to be HUGE motivation for her to go against every cultural more of the time to take that Hebrew baby to herself. I had to come up with some sort of fear that would override her senses. Fear of childbirth was it.

Q: Is this book part of a planned series? If so, tell us about other books in the series.

A: This book is part of a series. The second book is with my editor right now, waiting on her suggestions. It is about Miriam. Time has elapsed, and the book picks up when Moses is about to come back from Midian. He’s been exiled for killing the Egyptian taskmaster, and he has heard from God in the burning bush. Miriam is 86 years old. She has become the prophetess of Israel and is caring for her elderly parents who are now well over 100 years old. They are a miraculous family in the camp. Ramses II is now the Pharaoh and has more severe demands than any other Pharaoh before him.

Moses comes back saying God now has a new name, Yahweh. Miriam knows nothing about this and she’s supposed to be the prophetess of Israel. So, she’s feeling a little displaced. It’s about Miriam and about how this God that she thought she knew is acting differently. She’s not understanding what He’s doing and He’s not talking to her like He used to, yet He’s working on behalf of the Hebrew nation and is revealing Himself to the Hebrews. They
are getting more and more excited about Him and Miriam is getting more and more confused about Him. She just doesn’t know what to think. The story will challenge our preconceived notions about who God is, and are we willing to trust Him even when we don’t understand Him?

Q: That will touch most readers. I think we’ve all been in those places where we think we know what to expect and something else happens.

A: I like this story! We’ll see all the plagues from a little different perspective and we get to see the crossing of the Red Sea, so the research was fun. And there are some real searching questions in this book that will stir you up on the inside. I’m really looking forward to this one!

Valorie Cooper, CLJ Special Features Writer
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

LCCN Library of Congress Cataloging Number
C Canadian Library Cataloging Number
ISBN International Standard Book Number

CDR CD-ROM
DVD Videodisc
VID Videocassette
PRIMARY FICTION

Henry Hodges needs a friend / Andy Andrews ; illustrated by Colleen Madden.  
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 cm. PS-Grade 2  
E Rating: 4  

Henry Hodges lives on a dead-end street with no children nearby. When his parents promise to find him a “one-of-a-kind” pet to be his perfect friend, Henry excitedly imagines all sorts of unusual critters. Ultimately Henry and his new pal are just right for each other. Andy Andrews’ Henry Hodges Needs a Friend is a story about companionship and the reciprocal nature of friendship.  

Henry Hodges Needs a Friend is written in lighthearted rhyming stanzas that introduce Henry as an unhappy, bored child who doesn’t like toys. His parents promise to find a unique pet for their special son, which prompts Henry to envision the possibilities: a flying hamster, a singing turtle, a goldfish with antlers, a short-necked giraffe? The perfect pet turns out to be an ordinary dog from the animal shelter who is just as forlorn as Henry. Author Andy Andrews includes the valuable message that “if we're lonely or sad, God knows just what we need.”  

Colleen Madden’s bright and detailed artwork enhances the story by humorously portraying all of Henry’s imagined pets. There are gentle scenes of Henry’s loving family and delightful illustrations of Henry and his new friend “Hap.”  

Henry Hodges Needs a Friend could be a reassuring story for a solitary child; however, a pet might not be an option for every family. Parents may need to think this through before introducing this enticing book!  

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Alone together / Suzanne Bloom. (Goose and Bear book)  
LCCN 2014931586 ISBN 9781620917367, hardcover, $16.95.  
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm. PS-Grade 1  
E Rating: 5  

Bear isn’t sad or mad or lonely; he just wants some time to himself...until Fox interrupts Bear’s quiet time by humming, twirling, and whooshing! Soon Goose can’t resist being part of Bear’s alone time too. Alone Together is Suzanne Bloom’s sixth book about Goose and Bear.  

These adorable animal friends have winsome personalities and a delightful affection. Big fluffy Bear is all heart and gentleness, patiently including his friends despite the solitude he had planned. Author/illustrator Suzanne Bloom’s humorously dry dialogue enlivens this fun and memorable read-aloud. Preschoolers will enjoy the silliness, while parents will appreciate and recognize the love behind Bear’s tolerant acquiescence.  

Bloom’s dynamic white and brown pastels are set against a rich blue background which showcases the characters and their antics, effectively capturing texture and expression. Alone Together is a warm and fuzzy story with a lesson about friendship that is timeless and true.  

Nina Ditmar, CLJ
Freedom Summer: celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Summer / written by Deborah Wiles; illustrated by Jerome Lagarrigue.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 x 26 cm. Grades 1-4
E Rating: 5

Two young boys and summertime— it seems idyllic, but one boy is black and one is white. One boy's mama works for the other's. And only one boy gets to go to the Dairy Dip and the pool. But Fiddler's Creek is a great place to cool off after chores, and Joe just buys two ice pops for himself and his friend John Henry. Then, oh, the excitement when the law changes to allow equal access! The story turns on the boys' trip to town to be the first ones at the pool, only to find it is being filled with tar. John Henry voices what both boys know, but have ignored: "White folks don't want colored folks in their pool...I want to do everything you can do" (n.p.). Joe's heart breaks, and he realizes that he can do more than make do with creeks and ice pops on the sly. Together, they make a pivotal choice: they go arm in arm into Mr. Mason's store.

The subtleties of Deborah Wiles' text and Jerome Lagarrigue's illustrations in Freedom Summer make this poignant, well-crafted text a powerful conversation opener. For example, Joe calls John Henry's mama "Annie Mae," not "Mrs. Waddell." When Joe tells John Henry that he can come swim in the pool, it's clear that Joe has been there many times. The slightly blurred, hazy paintings subtly recall the memories of summers past, filled with dusty color and motion. The images sharpen on John Henry's face, utterly still and filling the page, at the moment of realization. This reprint of the 2001 book, with a new cover, well deserves the Ezra Jack Keats Book Award and the Coretta Scott King Award for new talent.

Diane Carver Sekeres, CLJ

You nest here with me / Jane Yolen, Heidi Stemple, Illustrated by Melissa Sweet.

LCCN 2014943965 ISBN 9781590789230, hardcover, $16.95.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 22 x 28 cm. PS-Grade 2
E Rating: *5

As a mother tucks her young daughter into bed, she describes the many different places birds make their nests—from ledges to telephone poles, from low in the reeds to high in the trees. You Nest Here With Me is a rhyming picture book by Jane Yolen and Heidi E.Y. Stemple that is all about the love and safety of home.

Popular children's author Jane Yolen combines her talents with daughter Heidi E.Y. Stemple in this informative and cleverly worded tale. This artistic and wonderfully soothing book presents factual information about the nesting habits of specific birds within the framework of a gentle story about a mother's protection and care. For adult and more advanced readers there are two pages of extra bullet points about each of the 14 bird species featured in the book. An author's note identifies bird watching as a favorite hobby of the authors' family. Melissa Sweet uses water, gouache, and mixed media to create enticing scenes, some of which resemble a cut paper collage. The soft colors echo the story's peaceful sentiment.

Quietly lyrical and tenderly illustrated, You Nest Here With Me is a lullaby for the very young, an introduction to birding for the slightly older, and
sure to become a parent’s go-to book for nightly tuck-in.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

PRIMARY NONFICTION

High tide for horseshoe crabs / Lisa Kahn Schnell; illustrated by Alan Marks.

LCCN 2013049024 ISBN 9781580896047, hardcover, $16.95.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill., map ; 24 x 24 cm. Grades 1-4
595.4 Rating: 5

This picture book by Lisa Kahn Schnell chronicles the annual spawning of horseshoe crabs at Delaware Bay and is a welcome informational picture book for science collections. The detailed watercolor two-page spreads found in High Tide for Horseshoe Crabs introduce younger readers to the crabs gathering on the beach to mate and lay their eggs, migratory birds arriving to eat the eggs not buried deep enough, scientists and volunteers coming to watch, and baby crabs hatching and on their way to the sea.

Short paragraphs, each with a two-word heading at the top of the double-pages, summarize the journey: It’s starting. They’re arriving. They’re flapping. They’re laying. They’re landing. It’s happening. Mark’s watercolor and pencil illustrations make this an ideal read-aloud book. These illustrations depict the crab both above and below the water. The book is followed by a more detailed explanation for older readers, along with suggestions for more information. The endpapers outline the horseshoe crab’s anatomy with labels identifying the major parts.

High Tide for Horseshoe Crabs complements the earlier Horseshoe Crabs and Shorebirds by Victoria Crenson and provides much more detail and storyline than Crab Moon by Ruth Horowitz. Older students should look at Horseshoe Crab by Anthony Fredericks. Teachers seeking a very detailed real-life assessment of the horseshoe crab, along with trends, threats, habitat use, and egg abundance, can consult the “Delaware Bay Shorebird-Horseshoe Crab Assessment Report & Peer Review” provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

What do authors and illustrators do? / by Eileen Christelow.

78 p. : ill. (chiefly col.) ; 21 x 26 cm. Grades 1-4
808 Rating: 4

What Do authors and Illustrators Do? combines two individual titles by author/illustrator Eileen Christelow into a single volume that presents an overview of how books are created.

In Part 1 (What Do Authors Do?), two authors witness the same event (a dog chasing a cat) and each forms a plan: one for a chapter book and the other, a picture book. From their initial ideas to publication of the final product, the process of writing, revising, editing, and marketing are cleverly outlined in the style of a graphic novel. Additional text clarifies and further explores the numerous details of the writing process.

Part 2 (What Do Illustrators Do?) presents two fictional artists illustrating Jack and the Beanstalk. Each illustrator’s perspective, style, and medium come into play in the creative process. The “real”
author/illustrator offers a postscript about the growing application of electronic tablets for computer drawing.

With What Do Authors and Illustrators Do? Eileen Christelow “draws” on personal experience to both educate and entertain. Her friendly ink and watercolor cartoons are quite comprehensive in content and merit a higher reading audience than the suggested grade range of preK-3. The book concludes with “Budding Writer & Illustrator Activities” which could be adapted for any age group.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Manger / edited by Lee Bennett Hopkins ; illustrated by Helen Cann.

LCCN 2013044516 ISBN 9780802854193, hardcover, $16.00.
33 p. : col. ill. ; 28 cm. PS-and up 811 Rating: *5

According to oral tradition, God graced animals with the ability to speak at midnight on Christmas Eve so they could welcome the baby Jesus. Compiled by Lee Bennett Hopkins, Manger is a collection of 13 poems and one carol that capture what those animals might have been inclined to say.

With insight, cleverness and awe, the animals interact with Jesus, Joseph and Mary. The owl offers his “secret of wise,” the spider spins a “cobweb crown,” and the horse feels too stirred to speak at all. The contributing poets have imbued their creatures with the emotions of joy, wonder, and reverence for the Christ child. The simplicity of the titles (“Sheep’s Whisper,” “Mousesong,” “Curious Cat”) invites even the youngest readers and keeps the focus on what each gentle poem reveals.

Helen Cann’s full-page artwork of watercolor, collage, and mixed media integrates the poetry and gives each animal its moment in the spotlight. The various creatures come together in several scenes, most notably on the final pages devoted to a verse from the traditional carol, “The Friendly Beasts.” The soft illustrations of varying scale evoke the nostalgic timelessness of folk art.

Manger is a delightful call to experience and reflect on the birth of Jesus, at any time of the year. What a gentle, visually lovely, and spirited book for families to share and treasure!

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

The Easter story / Antonia Jackson ; illustrated by Giuliano Ferri.

Oxford: Lion Children’s, 2014.
1 v, (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm. Grades K-3 E Rating: *5

The Easter Story is a picture book presentation of Jesus’s final days, crucifixion, and resurrection.

The account begins with Jesus’s arrival in Jerusalem for Passover, where he is welcomed with praise and waving palm branches. Author Antonia Jackson’s vivid and clear retelling of Jesus’s final meal, betrayal, and trial gives a sense of connecting with Scripture. After Jesus is put to death, he rises from the tomb and reappears to his disciples, charging them with the task of sharing the news of God’s love. Scripture is quoted and adapted from the Good News Bible.

The Easter Story is beautifully illustrated by Giuliano Ferri, with soft muted images that evoke a serene fresco. The lighting in the artwork is particularly effective. Washes of sunlight and firelight throw shadows that add realism and
drama, culminating in a glowing sunset scene. There are enough compelling details to elevate the reading audience of *The Easter Story*, yet the writing is concise enough to hold the attention of preschoolers. Children new to or familiar with the Gospel will experience a memorable story unfolding with its soothing rhythm and glorious illustrations.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

### INTERMEDIATE FICTION

**Absolutely almost / Lisa Graff.**


288, 7 p.; 22 cm. Grades 4-6 Fic Rating: 5

Prolific author Lisa Graff pens a novel about Albie, a fifth grader who is “almost” fitting in—and who exemplifies the many ways most people try to fit in.

In *Absolutely Almost*, Albie is “almost” good at tetherball, and he “almost” makes his parents proud. Starting at a new school, Albie hopes to make himself more than “almost.” When the popular kids are calling him names (“dummy,” “retard”), Albie learns to take the names and to defuse the hurt attached to them.

Because his parents work long hours, Albie has a babysitter. Calista helps him recognize that “almost” is more than he thinks it is. Once he recognizes his own self-worth, he is able to move beyond the hurts he experiences. Although his dad seems clueless most of the time, towards the end he gives some valuable wisdom to Albie after his son loses an election. He says the hard thing is “not going to be getting what you want in life, but figuring out what that is” (p. 266). The central theme inspires one to accept the uniqueness of others, as one would want to be accepted.

Graff captures the narrative voice of a fifth grader with the use of short chapters and simple prose—even the font used in the text aids in its readability. Chapter titles are brief and the same illustration appears under each chapter title. There are one or two places where mild profanity is used (Albie’s grandpa says, “Why the h*ll not?”). One of the characters makes a brief mention of her “dads.”

*Absolutely Almost* is an ALA Notable Book for Children and has been nominated for several awards, including the National Council of Teachers of English Charlottle Huck Award for Outstanding Fiction. Recommended for upper elementary and middle school readers. Fans of Palacio’s *Wonder* and Graff’s earlier book, *A Tangle of Knots*, will also enjoy this book.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

**A tangle of knots / Lisa Graff.**


230 p.; 22 cm. Grades 4-6 Fic Rating: 5

Prolific author Lisa Graff presents a novel that is part magical adventure and part intricate mystery where everyone has a talent to discover.

In *A Tangle of Knots*, the opening scene is set fifty-three years ago—when eighteen-year-old Mason boards a bus with a suitcase. When he reaches his
destination, his suitcase is gone, along with a piece of paper that held his destiny. Will he ever find it again?

Cady is an eleven-year-old orphan with a Talent for cake baking. She wins competitions because Cady instinctively knows what cake to bake for the judge (by sensing their favorite flavor). She lives at an orphanage run by Miss Mallory, whose Talent is finding forever families for the children. Will Cady ever find her forever family? Meanwhile there lurks a thief who is stealing others' Talents. Will he succeed in stealing Cady's Talent? Can anyone stop him?

Graff pens a charming tale that draws the reader in and keeps the reader engaged. There are plenty of twists to hold the reader's interest—dysfunctional family relationships, thievery, and parent-child conflicts. *A Tangle of Knots* is told from multiple points of view, creating a tangled knot that is slowly unraveled as each story is told. As one is reading the book, one wonders if the different stories will be wrapped up satisfactorily—and they are!

The theme of *A Tangle of Knots* recognizes that everyone has talents. By discovering and sharing them, all people benefit because of the way that lives are often connected. Nominated for the National Book Award and the Children's Choice Award, *A Tangle of Knots* includes Cady's cake recipes scattered throughout the book.

Recommended for upper elementary and middle school readers.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

---

**The great Chicago fire, 1871 / by Lauren Tarshis; illustrated by Scott Dawson. (I survived)**


96 p. : ill. ; 19 cm. Grades 4-6

Fic Rating: 5

The "I Survived" series by Lauren Tarshis presents historical fiction geared toward nine- to twelve-year-olds. The latest book tells the story of the 1871 Great Chicago Fire through the experience of a young boy.

In *The Great Chicago Fire*, eleven-year-old Oscar Starling chases after a little girl who robbed Oscar's family with other gang members. Oscar suddenly finds himself in the heart of Chicago, separated from his mother and new stepfather when the fire begins. Oscar's clothes catch on fire as he runs to evade the fire and in pursuit of the girl.

But the fire quickly overwhelms the city and its fire department due to the wood structures everywhere. Meanwhile, his stepfather is combing the city trying to find Oscar. When his stepfather finds him, they must fight their way to safety to avoid the exploding warehouses and burning buildings. Will they survive the devastating fire?

This "I Survived" book is well-researched, filled with details about the Great Chicago Fire (which occurred over three days, leaving 300 dead and 100,000 homeless). The book covers more than just the fire—it also covers the plight of orphaned children during that era and the living conditions in the city.

Titles for further reading, as well as facts about the disaster and an author's note are incorporated in this book—including whether Mrs. O'Leary's cow was at fault. An interesting note: Tarshis'
readers selected this event as the topic of her latest book.

Highly recommended for public and school libraries for boys and girls. These books fly off the shelves and are read eagerly by boys and girls alike.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

---

**Honey / Sarah Weeks ; [edited by] David Levithan.**


152 p.; 22 cm. Grades 3-5

Fic Rating: 4

In *Honey*, author Sarah Weeks, who also penned *Pie, Oggie Cooder*, and *Oggie Cooder, Party Animal*, shares a touching story about grieving, growing up, and the yearning for maternal love.

10-year-old Melody Bishop has no mother. It is “not a particularly sensitive subject...The fact that she didn’t have a mother was simply that: a fact. She and her father were very close, and it had always been just the two of them.” (p.4) But, suddenly, when she hears her dad call someone “Honey” before hanging up the phone, everything changes.

Melody makes it her mission to discover who “Honey” is, and with the help of her best friend, Nick, and despite pesky next-door-neighbor, Teeny, she sets out to find the mystery woman. She discovers that several previously unknown women have connections with her father, but which one is “Honey”?

To find the answer to her mystery, Melody, Nick and tag-along Teeny must enter the doors of an establishment Melody has previously avoided—the beauty shop. The shop is a warmer and more interesting place than Melody imagined, and she finds more there than just clues to the identity of “Honey.” Mo, the owner’s French bulldog, lives in the back of the shop, and he has a mystery of his own to solve.

Melody comes to realize that she does miss the mother she never knew, and the floodgates of loss and yearning open wide “as the mysterious feeling that had been hiding deep down inside her finally rose up to the surface, bubbling and boiling until she couldn’t hold it back any longer and it spilled out over the edges of her heart” (p. 109). Eventually, both Melody’s and Mo’s mysteries are solved.

Eloquently written, *Honey* evokes childhood summers and presents a child’s perspective on loss and new beginnings. This book will touch the heart of any child who ever yearned for maternal love, and any child who ever loved a dog.

*Valorie Cooper, CLJ*

---

**INTERMEDIATE NONFICTION**

---

**A treasury of wisdom / written and compiled by Mary Joslin.**

Oxford: Lion Children’s, 2015.


224 p.: ill.; 16 cm. Grades 2-7

220.52 Rating: 5

Geared to grades 2 to 7, *A Treasury of Wisdom* is a collection of passages from the Bible and from the tradition of Christian faith that makes it easy to locate a thought or inspirational gem on a particular subject. Themes such as wisdom, virtue, riches, pilgrimage, a life of faith,
thankfulness, and hope provide the organizational structure for the thoughts of reflection.

A linen binding, dust jacket, and ribbon marker, along with the quality paper used, give the compendium the look and feel of a book of gems that one can go back to again and again. The 4"x6" size makes it a volume that fits well in the palm of a young person. An index of first lines is offered in the back.

Mary Joslin is an author, compiler, and editor of many children’s books, including The Tale of the Heaven Tree, The Lion Book of Day-by-Day Prayers, and Simon and the Easter Miracle. She is an expert at offering inspirational and entertaining passages and thoughts.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Body bones / Shelley Rotner and David A. White.

LCCN 2013044989 ISBN 9780823431625, hardcover, $16.95.
32 p. : col. ill. ; 29 cm. Grades 4-6
573.7 Rating: 5

Body Bones by collaborators Shelley Rotner and David A. White is a picture book overview of how bones support and protect, function, grow, and heal. The book offers a unique and striking visual presentation of how skeletons work and how they have both similar and different characteristics among animal populations.

Author/photographer Shelley Rotner provides clear and concise explanatory text along with her photos of humans and other creatures, upon which illustrator David A. White has drawn the skeletal features. On some photos, the internal organs, muscles, and tendons are also shown. The bones of a dog, horse, rabbit, snake, fish, frog, and elephant invite an interesting comparison to the human skeleton. Animals with exoskeletons, cartilage instead of bone, and teeth or horns that are made of bone, highlight the vast variety. Photos of fossils and excavated dinosaur bones, an X-ray of a broken bone, and a large illustrated cut-away of bone composition provide further information to young readers.

Body Bones concludes with a simple message about keeping bones healthy through diet and exercise. A glossary helps to review new terms. Body Bones would be an excellent tool for explaining the skeletal system to children or for stimulating curious minds and budding scientists.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Octopuses! : strange and wonderful / Laurence Pringle ; illustrated by Meryl Henderson.

LCCN 2014943964 ISBN 9781590789285, hardcover, $16.95.
32 p.; col. ill.: 24 x 27 cm. Grades 3-6
594 Rating: 5

Laurence Pringle adds a title to the many available on octopuses and does so with a writing style in Octopuses! Strange and Wonderful that uses stories to get into informational facts on this sea creature. Illustrations, rather than photographs, convey a story that reads well while also offering details about the octopuses’ body parts and their ability to change color and shape. Octopuses! opens with “The shark was hungry. As it swam, its eyes scanned the water below, searching for food. There! A brownish octopus ...” (p. 3).

Henderson’s watercolor illustrations make the narrative and story come alive. There is much included in the 32 pages, ranging from skin
texture, predators, species of octopus, and how they catch their food. A spread on pages 18-19 invites students to find six octopuses hidden on the pages.

Those seeking structured and columned information and related photos might look at *Being an Octopus* by Kevin Pearce or *Octopuses* by Colleen Kessler. Preschoolers can enjoy *Octopuses* by Carl Meister while both young and old can appreciate hearing this story by Laurence Pringle.

*Leroy Hommerding, CLJ*

**Scorpions!** : strange and wonderful / Laurence Pringle ; illustrated by Meryl Henderson.

LCCN 2013931088 ISBN 9781590784730, hardcover, $16.95.
32 p. : ill. (chiefly col.), col. map ; 25 x 27 cm.
Grades 3-6
595.4 Rating: 5

*Scorpions!*, part of the Strange and Wonderful series, offers careful facts accompanied by painted illustrations that enable readers in grades 3 to 6 to explore the world of scorpions. While all scorpions kill and eat other living things, have poisonous stingers, and have the same basic body shape, author Laurence Pringle gives ample evidence that scorpions differ a lot: they vary in size, in behavior, and in the places they live. The colorful paintings are carefully coordinated to match text and depict the physical makeup of many varieties.

The narrative presents the eating habits of scorpions, their courtship, reproduction, and their role as predators. The watercolor paintings offer close-up views, with many scorpions being shown life-size; when a scorpion is enlarged, a small silhouette nearby indicates its actual size.

Libraries that have Pringle’s earlier *Scorpion Man* are encouraged to add this informative work. Those seeking a title on scorpions for preschoolers can check out *Scorpion* by Katie Marsico, which offers rhyming text for toddlers. Pringle makes a point of noting that information sources include the respected *The Biology of Scorpions* by Gary Polis, the comprehensive source of information in its 600 pages on scorpions.

*Leroy Hommerding, CLJ*

**In the new world : a family in two centuries** / Gerda Raidt and Christa Holtei ; translated by Susi Woofter.

LCCN 2013049025 ISBN 9781580896306, hardcover, $17.95.
37 p. : col. ill., maps ; 24 x 29 cm. Grades 3-7
973 Rating: 5

*In the New World* is a picture book blending both fiction and nonfiction to tell the story of Robert and Margarete Peters and their children Johannes (age 8) and Dorothea (age 6), who emigrate from Germany to the United States in 1850. They end up settling on a farm near Omaha, Nebraska. The book closes with a look at the modern day life of Robert and Margarete’s descendants living on the same farm. What gives this book particular meaning is these descendants’ decision to investigate their roots and visit Germany, reversing the trip their ancestors made. Those seeking the human face of immigration will find here an excellent resource.

The text makes for interesting reading and the detailed drawings on every page convey a depth of experiences: the severe economic conditions prompting the emigration, panoramas of their home and village, and close-ups of many details.
(e.g., what they took with them in the one trunk allowed aboard the Teutonia). The illustrations deserve second mention as they enable young readers to compare the old and new world.

While the publisher suggests that *In the New World* is suitable for ages 4-8, the title would be more appropriate for third to seventh graders as there is a lot of text and details inviting older children to appreciate this very well-done overview and narrative and related illustrations.

*Leroy Hommerding, CLJ*

**John Muir wrestles a waterfall / Julie Danneberg ; Illustrated by Jamie Hogan.**


LCCN 2013049026 ISBN 9781580895866, hardcover, $16.95.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm. Grades 1-5

J Rating: 5

Naturalist John Muir is captivated by the grandeur of Yosemite Valley, especially the powerful waterfall that he can see from his cabin. One night in the spring of 1871 he ventures close to the falls...too close. *John Muir Wrestles a Waterfall* by Julie Danneberg is a picture book account of this harrowing true event.

The personality and work of Sierra Club founder John Muir are smartly presented within the suspenseful story of a nearly fatal event in the explorer's life. The clever format provides two perspectives that extend the interest range to older readers. The larger font paragraphs use the present tense to tell what Muir is thinking, seeing, and doing. Danneberg's wonderful sensory phrases capture the environmentalist's love of his Yosemite surroundings. The smaller font paragraphs use the past tense to provide historical background and explanation. Quotations from some of Muir's letters enhance and authenticate the details.

Full-page pastel and colored pencil illustrations appear to have come straight from the environmentalist's own sketchpad. The sweeping natural beauty of Yosemite, the smaller details of Muir's cabin, and the raw power of the pounding waterfall—all are beautifully and emotionally rendered by artist Jamie Hogan.

*John Muir Wrestles a Waterfall* should have wide appeal to students who like history, geography, biographies, or adventure stories. The book concludes with two pages of additional notes including a photograph of Muir, plus a list of citations, suggested websites, and books.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*
MIDDLE SCHOOL FICTION

Absolutely truly / Heather Vogel Frederick. (A Pumpkin Falls mystery)
355 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 4-7 Fic Rating: 5

Absolutely Truly, the 1st in the Pumpkin Falls Mystery series by Heather Vogel Frederick, is a heartwarming story about family, community, and adapting to the challenges of life. It’s also a good literary mystery.

Truly Lovejoy, the towering middle child in a military family of seven, is not happy to move from what was supposed to be their forever home in Austin, Texas to her father’s hometown of Pumpkin Falls, New Hampshire following her father’s injury in Afghanistan by an improvised explosive device. Her father’s injury has derailed his post-military career plans, and so he decides instead to take over running the 100-year-old family bookstore. As a result, Truly and her siblings are the new kids in school once more.

Truly is sure her new life in “Bumpkin Falls” will be empty and boring, but adventure finds her when she discovers a letter stuck in the pages of an autographed first edition Charlotte’s Web seemingly overlooked in the bookstore storeroom. Truly meets interesting classmates who become friends, and together they work to solve the mystery presented in the letter. Along the way, she learns that her new hometown has more to offer than she originally thought.

Found throughout this touching story are references to classic literature and movies, as well as meaningful examples of responsibility, accountability, teamwork, resiliency, bravery, positive attitudes, and old-fashioned family values. Young readers will enjoy the unraveling of the mystery, and will come away wiser, smarter, and looking forward to the next book in this laudable new series. The overarching theme of Absolutely Truly is: “Books bring people together, and people bring communities together” (p.225).

Valerie Cooper, CLJ

Lost in the sun / Lisa Graff.
289 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 5-8 Fic Rating: 4

Prolific author Lisa Graff pens a middle school novel about a boy who can’t get past a tragic accident that happened in fifth grade—that is, until he meets an unusual girl.

In Lost in the Sun, Trent Zimmerman’s mind can’t let go of his part in an accident that happened seven months ago. On that fateful day, he hit a hockey puck, which accidentally struck a boy with an unknown heart condition, causing the other boy’s death. He has a panic attack whenever he thinks of playing sports again. Convinced everyone hates him, Trent’s thoughts make him feel like a horrible “screw-up.” His counselor convinces him to draw pictures in his Book of Thoughts to help him handle his anger.

Hoping for a fresh start in middle school, Trent meets sixth grader Fallon Little, the girl with a mysterious scar on her face, and things start to change. Fallon likes spending time with him and becomes his friend, though never telling him (or anyone) the truth behind her scar. Trent gradually
comes to terms with his thoughts. He still is impulsive and makes bad choices, but he finds a good friend in Fallon. Encouraged by her, Trent decides to speak the truth, even if it is filled with pain, anger, and loss.

Graff writes vulnerable characters in her novels that speak about our human pain. The friendship between Fallon and Trent changes them both in a positive way. Trent's pictures in his Book of Thoughts grow more positive as his friendship with Fallon grows.

Recommended for upper elementary and middle school readers. Fans of Graff’s earlier books, A Tangle of Knots and Absolutely Almost, will also enjoy this book.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

My friend the enemy / Dan Smith.

279 p.; 22 cm. Grades 6-8 Fic Rating: 5

In the summer of 1941, it seems no one can escape the clutches of World War II, not even those living in a small country village of Northumberland, England. For twelve-year-old Peter Dixon, the war is personal; his father is off fighting and the normalcy of everyday life is gone, as he and his "mam" struggle to survive on their meager rations and avoid getting blown to pieces by German bombers. One evening, a German plane crashes in the fields near Peter's home, nearly hitting him on his mad dash towards the safety of the bomb shelter. Later that night while exploring the wreckage site with his new friend Kim, the children stumble upon the lone survivor of the plane’s crew. Torn between guilt and compassion, Peter and Kim hide the injured soldier, thinking that perhaps their act of mercy might be returned to their own loved ones off fighting. As they struggle to help the soldier, Peter and Kim worry about their decision and what will happen if they are caught aiding the enemy.

Dan Smith's My Friend the Enemy is an excellent novel of adventure and friendship, and a powerful example of how in times of war “[e]verything’s upside down and topsy-turvy” (p. 218). Written in the first-person narrative style, readers experience war from the viewpoint of a preteen boy. Peter’s character is easily admired and loved, with his courage, sense of honor and duty, and personal inward struggles with resentment. Kim is a fun, loving tomboy with a kind heart underneath her rough and tumble exterior, and young girls are sure to be inspired by her daring pluckiness. Erik's character and the friendship that develops between him and the children are a perfect example of how coming face to face with a nameless, demonized enemy can forever alter one’s perspective of humanity and war. There are insinuations by some that Peter’s mother may be involved in an extramarital affair (although she asserts her innocence), as well as a few occurrences of minor profanity. Overall, the Christian principle of loving one’s enemy rings beautifully clear in this poignant tale.

Justina McBride, CLJ

Catie Conrad : faith, friendship and fashion disasters / Angie Spady. (The (desperate) diva diaries; 1)

304 p.; 20 cm. Grades 5-7 Fic Rating: 3

Catie Conrad : how to become the most
UNpopular girl in middle school / Angie Spady with illustrations by Channing Everidge. (The (desperate) diva diaries; 2)


297 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 5-7

Fic Rating: 3

Sound the trumpets! Roll the drums! Introducing...the next internationally famous fashionista...Miss Catie Conrad! That is, if her 8-year-old brother’s pet skunk doesn’t eat her designs again. In Catie Conrad: Faith, Friendship, and Fashion Disasters!, Catie grumbles, panics, prays, repents, designs, and writes her way through the last weeks of 6th grade. Her journalist Dad brings home blank diaries that Catie uses to make prayer lists and record disasters, small and large, in her life—like, accidentally spraying Josh Henderson’s shirt with mustard when she was hoping he’d ask her to the Spring Dance. Or, when her nemesis, Miranda Maroni, sneakily topples Catie’s half-completed, but unglued, mosaic. Thank the Lord for her BFF Sophie, a voice of reason and encouragement. And thank Him, too for the mission trip to an Apache reservation in Arizona. Here she realizes that maybe going to the Spring Dance and even winning the Art Contest are not the most important events in life.

In the second diary, Catie Conrad: How to Become the Most UNPopular Girl in Middle School, Catie’s nemesis, Miranda, is still up to her mean ways, and Catie’s crush, Josh, is nicer and cuter than ever! The Germ (aka her brother, Jeremy) is babysitting his friend’s bearded dragon, yet another critter that drives Catie crazy! The Academic Team at school is about to commit a fashion disaster with totally uncool uniforms. Through it all, Catie gains confidence in herself, her family, and her friendships. She relies on Scripture and prayer and her BFF to keep her cool, recover from disasters, and be the Christian she wants to be.

Angie Spady writes The Desperate Diva Diaries with a light touch. Catie is refreshingly normal. She has a great relationship with her Mom and Dad, a solid foundation of Scripture, and a heart for practicing what she learns about life from home and church. The diary format is repetitive, as Catie’s 6th grade woes revolve around her fashion designs, clashes with the popular girls, and admiration for Josh. Every page sports believable drawings of clothes, people in Catie’s life, and doodles, all drawn by Spady’s daughter, Channing Everidge. The Desperate Diva Diaries series is a light-hearted look at family and school life.

Diane Carver Sekeres, CLJ

The boy on Cinnamon Street / by Phoebe Stone.

234 p. ; 19 cm. Grades 7-9

Fic Rating: 5

Phoebe Stone’s The Boy on Cinnamon Street centers on thirteen-year-old Louise Terrace, who is living with her grandparents while trying to fit in at a new school. She is self-consciously small for her age, has been bullied into quitting her beloved gymnastics, and grieving for the happier life she used to have in her old neighborhood. A possible crush on the pizza delivery boy sets in motion a series of events that reveals a true alliance, a buried past trauma, and ultimately a newfound confidence that allows Louise to move forward.

The Boy on Cinnamon Street is a suspenseful and bittersweet story, superbly written, and filled
with relatable characters. Loyal best friend Reni and her clever older brother Henderson are at the heart of Louise’s journey to rediscover herself and come to terms with a painful suppressed memory. Sensitive Louise and her hip grandparents have endearing qualities and exuberant personalities.

The book’s dramatic conclusion reveals Louise’s tragic past. The subject matter (suicide of a parent) is delicately treated but may nevertheless be startling for younger readers, especially in view of the author’s endnote that shares a personal connection to the story. Thus The Boy on Cinnamon Street is suggested for a slightly older audience than most of Phoebe Stone’s other works.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

A less than perfect peace / written by Jacqueline Levering Sullivan.

LCCN 2013030889 ISBN 9780802854315, paperback, $8.50.
209 p.; 20 cm. Grades 6-8
Fic Rating: 4

The year is 1950, and though World War II has been over for several years, fourteen-year-old Annie Leigh Howard is still learning to cope with life in its wake. Far from feeling the peace that the end of war should bring, Annie is full of worry. She worries about her father, as he seems to be withdrawing further from the world he can no longer see. She is concerned and angry about her mother’s strange behavior towards Larry, the florist. Then there are the new students at her school, Johannes and Elisabeth VanderVelde, refugees from Holland struggling with their own leftover demons of war. While determined to help her father return to life and keep her family together, Annie also tries to save her new friends from their own pain and loss, but she has no idea how to do this. Will Annie learn to put down the weight of everyone’s problems and to accept that sometimes life is less than perfect?

In A Less Than Perfect Peace, Jacqueline Levering Sullivan tells the story of a young girl’s personal war of finding peace and acceptance amidst the post-World War II era. The main character learns some valuable lessons—namely, that life is full of imperfections and that perception is often different from reality. There is an equal balance between plot and character development, evoking both suspense and reflection, making the book an enjoyable read. While the plot seems disjointed at times, this mirrors the experience that the protagonist undergoes as her mountain of troubles, built upon misconceptions, is slowly reduced to a hill. There are a few instances of minor profanity, and the story briefly touches upon some mature topics, including young romance, marital affairs, intoxication, and killing to survive.

Justina McBride, CLJ

MIDDLE SCHOOL NONFICTION

Fatal fever : tracking down Typhoid Mary / Gail Jarrow.

Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek, 2015.
LCCN 2014948476 ISBN 9781620915974, hardcover, $16.95.
175 p.; ill. (some col.); 27 cm. Grades 5-9
614.5 Rating: 5

Fatal Fever is a fascinating narrative about the outbreak of typhoid fever in New York in the early 1900s before a vaccine or antibiotics existed to treat this terrible disease. When typhoid fever ravages the townspeople in Ithaca and the
students at Cornell University, health officials scramble to figure out how to stop the outbreak. Dr. George Soper not only plays a pivotal role in the typhoid epidemic but also plays detective in trying to figure out a medical mystery surrounding an unexplained typhoid outbreak. There are a number of individuals who make valuable contributions in the fight against this dreaded disease, and the book showcases them with photographs and snippets of text to accompany the images.

Fatal Fever contains a wealth of information about typhoid fever and is formatted in a style that will appeal to middle school students. Instead of a dry, factual presentation, the book reads like a novel and includes wonderful historic photographs, insightful cartoons and articles, enlightening illustrations, and informative sidebars. Middle school readers will learn the causes and symptoms of typhoid fever, the pathways of transmission, measures taken to try and stop the spread of the disease, and the ethical issues that arise between trying to protect individual rights versus public safety. They will also learn the identity of Typhoid Mary and the story behind her nickname.

Gail Jarrow has written an excellent book for middle school-age children who are interested in medical mysteries and in gaining an overview of the social and political impact of an infectious disease epidemic. The resources in the back of the book include a list of famous victims, a glossary, a timeline, an extensive bibliography, an author’s note depicting her thorough research, and source notes. This factual story is an invaluable reference source for school libraries.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

First flight around the world: the adventures of the American fliers who won the race / by Tim Grove.

88 p. : maps, photos ; 26 x 23 cm. Grades 6-8.
910.4 Rating: 5

Young aviation buffs will find an exciting journey in First Flight Around the World as Tim Grove documents the trip of four American planes in 1924—the Chicago, the Boston, the New Orleans and the Seattle—and their crews. Based on the journals of the crew members and commentary, newspaper reports, and archival images, the tale is one likely to hold the attention of fifth to eighth graders. There was plenty of competition as airmen from Great Britain, France, Portugal, Italy, and Argentina had the same goal of being the first to circumnavigate the globe by flight.

The page layout complements the fine writing as colors, graphics, and photos throughout the narrative make it easy to follow the journey. The assortment of maps and historical photographs enables the reader to follow the challenges the crews encountered: harsh weather, mechanical breakdowns, and fragile planes. This true action tale includes positive developments in the form of rescues, international support, and cooperation, as well as negative twists such as crashing into mountains, being stranded, and uncertainty.

The assortment of photos adds to full coverage of this historic flight. An Epilogue provides additional records, quick facts, and location information. A Glossary, Itinerary, and Endnotes add further depth. Grove, as Chief of Museum Learning at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, knows how to bring together components to make this a learning experience.
for youth. This title deserves a place in most library collections. Those seeking another entry on the same subject can look at First Flight Around the World, April 6-Sept 28, 1924: A Pictorial History by Carroll V. Glines and Stan Cohen.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

**Capital days : Michael Shiner's journal and the growth of our nation's capital / by Tonya Bolden.**

90 p. : col. ill., col. map ; 26 cm. Grades 5 and up
975.3 Rating: 5

Readers of all ages can enjoy *Capital Days* by Tonya Bolden. Written with a middle-grade audience in mind, the fresh insights and background information are likely to also appeal to adults and teens seeking to understand Washington, D.C. and the development of our nation’s capital.

The period of change in our country is told through the story of Michael Shiner (1805-1880), a child born into slavery and later leased by his owner to the Navy Ship Yard. Shiner eventually purchased his freedom, started a family, learned to read and write, and wrote many of his thoughts in a journal. By tracking Shiner’s life, Bolden gives readers a unique view into our country and capital. The time period covers the burning of the city during the War of 1812, the rebuilding of the Capital and White House, the building of the Washington Monument, and through the Civil War and the end of slavery.

The primary sources, archival images, and a timeline in each of the four chapters make it easy for the reader to follow the intricacies of American history via the lens of Shiner’s life. Author’s notes pages at the end of the narrative adds to appreciation of the context and the amazing developments during these years. A glossary and index provide further reference. The footnotes give evidence of Bolden’s extensive research.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

**Always inventing : a photobiography of Alexander Graham Bell / by Tom L. Matthews.**

63 p. : ill. ; 29 cm. Grades 5-8
B Rating: 5

National Geographic offers this photobiography of Alexander Graham Bell. *Always Inventing* is a profile that will draw students into the work of this inventor, especially via the direct quotes that give a glimpse into the life of Bell. The foreword is written by Gilbert Grosvenor, Bell’s great-grandson, and this resource includes over 70 photographs from the time period and drawings from Bell’s notebooks.

The photographs blend in and out of the narrative, encouraging students to grasp the content as well as appreciate more the significance of his inventions, from his first invention at age 11 to his patent 64 years later. Bell was also one of the original founders of the National Geographic Society, which has used its resources to make this detailed and outstanding work readily available.

While works such as *Who Was Alexander Graham Bell* by Bonnie Bader or *Legendary Scientists: The Life and Legacy of Alexander Graham Bell* by
Charles River Editors offer helpful stories and overviews, *Always Inventing* is a must for students getting into research.

*Leroy Hommerding, CLJ*

**HIGH SCHOOL FICTION**

*Storm siren / Mary Weber. (Storm siren trilogy; 1)*

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

*Siren’s fury / Mary Weber. (Storm siren trilogy; 2)*

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

Mary Weber debuts her fantasy series about a teen girl with special powers in a world at war.

In *Storm Siren*, seventeen-year-old Nym is a slave whose snowy-white hair and sea-blue eyes identify her as an Elemental (one who is able to summon storms). Each time she gets a new owner, her right arm is marked with another owner’s circle. She marks her left arm, in memory of the deaths she caused by not controlling her powers.

Her new owner gives her the choice: be killed or trained as Faelen’s weapon, harnessing her Elemental powers. Choosing life, Nym enters a world she is unprepared for—politics, dark secrets, evil plots, and more.

In *Siren’s Fury*, others use Nym for their agenda.

She risks her life to save her homeland, only to discover the shapeshifter Draewulf has stolen everything she holds dear. When she decides to pursue new powers to defeat Draewulf, she realizes a terrible truth and discovers she has an unexpected role in the final prophecy.

Mary Weber does an excellent job in building a credible and intricate world where a young woman rises to power due to her abilities. Weber’s storytelling and memorable characters will capture the reader’s attention and hold it until the final plot twist—making readers eager for the final book (coming in Spring 2016).

The faith element is very light but compassion and emotional strength are valued, and the battle of good vs. evil is clear. For example, Nym’s Elemental power—the one she was born with—is considered good, but the unnatural (dark) power is considered evil. Fans of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, with strong heroines battling for high stakes, as well as fantasy fans of Jill Williamson and Morgan Busse, will want to read this series.

Recommended for teen collections in public libraries and school libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com*

*Like a river : a Civil War novel / Kathy Cannon Wiechman.*

Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek, 2015.
LCCN 2014945289 ISBN 9781629792095, hardcover, $17.95.
336 p. ; photos ; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5

Teenagers Leander and Paul are two union soldiers, each with an important secret they have carefully concealed. Leander has lied about his age in order to enlist in the union army and prove to those closest to him that he is a man worthy of
respect. Paul (or Polly) is pretending to be someone he—or rather, she—is not, so she can fight alongside her Pap instead of being separated from the only family she has left. When the circumstances of war throw them together, they form a special bond that challenges one and threatens to reveal the carefully kept secret of the other. Will Leander and Polly survive the war? One thing is certain: their lives will never be the same again.

In Like a River, Kathy Cannon Wiechman brings to life the Civil War using rich imagery, historical details, and captivating characters, creating a poignant tale that will resonate long after the final page. The book is divided into two parts, the first half written from Leander’s viewpoint and the second, from Polly’s. This shift allows readers to become intimately acquainted with both main characters, while also providing a male and female perspective concerning war, love, life, and death. The author does an excellent job portraying the harsh conditions and experiences of the Civil War, rather than romanticizing its glories; the author’s note at the end validates this. A hint of young love is woven throughout the plot, and there are a couple of references to or descriptions of physical attraction to the female form.

The underlying theme of this novel is that “folks is like rivers, ever a-changin’ and ever a-changin’ others” (p. 129). As such, life is not a question of whether one will change or if that change will impact others; rather, it is a question of whether or not that change will be for good. Polly’s character embodies self-sacrifice and loyalty, while Leander’s often reflects the opposite. However, their experience of war and bond of friendship beautifully portray how life is always changing, always flowing.

Justina McBride, CLJ

HIGH SCHOOL NONFICTION

The handy Islam answer book / John Renard, Ph.D.

xii, 435 p. : ill. ; 24 cm. Grades 9-Adult
297 Rating: 4

The Handy Islam Answer Book is part of The Handy Answer Book Series® published by Visible Ink that addresses a wide range of subjects such as nutrition, astronomy, mythology, the Supreme Court, personal finance and weather. Written by Dr. John Renard, a scholar of Islam with over forty years’ research and teaching experience, this particular volume is divided into twelve sections. Topics include an overview of Islam, essential beliefs, politics, symbols, and culture.

There are sections that compare and contrast Islam and Christianity. Dr. Renard addresses these questions from a Muslim perspective and emphasizes the similarity in values—for instance, opining that Muslims similarly exhibit good works and experience and manifest the Christian “Fruits of the Spirit” (p. 295) and that “…Muslims know Christianity better than Christians, for Christians have suffered an alienation from their truest religious selves” (p. 301).

As with other books in the series, The Handy Islam Answer Book is written in a question and answer format, enabling readers to select a specific question or area of interest rather than study the volume from start to finish. Answered in simple-to-understand language, each question is addressed independently, as the author does not assume the reader has perused other sections of the book. As a result, the information is
periodically repetitive. Maps, charts, and photographs are interspersed within the text, and supplemental materials are provided in several appendices, a glossary, timeline, and reading list.

Recommended for public and school libraries.

_Linda Matchett, CLJ_
**ADULT FICTION**

The Pharaoh's daughter: a treasures of the Nile novel / Mesu Andrews.

ix, 182 p.; 22 cm. Adult Fic Rating: 5

*The Pharaoh’s Daughter* is the fictionalized story of the woman who found Moses in the Nile River. At the age of five, Annipe’s mother dies in childbirth, leaving Annipe terrified of childbirth. When she is 14, her adoptive father, General Horemheb, arranges a marriage for Annipe with his best soldier, Sebak, effectively securing Annipe’s future. After her marriage, Annipe secretly seeks help from the Hebrew midwives to prevent pregnancy, but feels that she must present Sebak with an heir. When she finds a Hebrew baby in a basket floating upon the Nile River, Annipe finds a solution to her dilemma. However, her deception endangers herself and the lives of those she loves most.

Mesu Andrews opens a window into the world of ancient Egypt. Through expertly developed characters and settings, she depicts life in that time period, from the privileges and constraints of Pharaoh’s household to the daily challenges of a Hebrew slave. Annipe’s character is thoroughly developed as she grows and changes throughout the story. The antagonists are strong and occasionally unexpected, creating additional suspense. Nearly 30 years are covered, so the story line moves quickly but gracefully through the years, and the relationships between Annipe, her siblings, her adoptive parents, and her other loved ones provide the foundation on which the story builds. The tension tightens as more people learn the secret of Moses’ birth and the consequences for Annipe’s deception grow. Through her trials, Annipe comes to see the Hebrews as more than slaves—and is introduced to their God, El-Shaddai.

*The Pharaoh’s Daughter* is a well-written novel that immerses the reader in a time when El-Shaddai has seemed silent for generations—but is about to reveal His mighty hand working for His people. The Hebrew characters display their faith in a beautiful manner that reflects God’s continuing care for His people and that impacts those around them. In her Author’s Note, Andrews explains the biblical and historical basis for her suppositions regarding the identity of Pharaoh’s daughter and her connections with the other characters. Highly recommended.

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

The Patmos deception : a novel / Davis Bunn.

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

Carey Mathers arrives in Greece to start her dream job as a forensic archeologist for the Athens Institute for Antiquities and discovers that the Institute has closed its doors. Left jobless, Carey teams up with Nick Hennessy, an investigative journalist and childhood friend, to expose the guilty party responsible for the theft of priceless ancient Grecian artifacts.

Nick and Carey wind up crossing paths with Dimitri Rubinos during their investigation. Dimitri is a tourist boat operator on the island of
Patmos and is facing financial ruin. When a wealthy English man offers Dimitri a job to transport cargo along the Greek and Turkish coast, he sees it as a way to solve his money problems. Will he regret his decision? How far outside the law will he go in order to turn his life around financially?

The Patmos Deception hooks readers from the very first page. It is an exciting thriller full of mystery, adventure, suspense, treachery, scoundrels, perilous moments, hair-raising pursuits, riots, romance, and biblical history. Readers will be on the edge of their seats wondering if the criminals can be outsmarted in a deadly game of cat and mouse.

Davis Bunn’s skillful portrayal of multifaceted characters, valuable insights into the political and economic struggles of Greece, and vivid descriptions of cherished relics and historical sites are invaluable in adding to the overall appeal of the story. An added fascination for readers is the story’s setting, with key events taking place on the island of Patmos where John the Apostle was exiled because of his faith in God. The ending of the book leaves it wide open for a sequel.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

Heir of hope / Morgan L. Busse (Follower of the word; 3)

427 p. : map ; 22 cm. Adult (HS)
Fic Rating: 4

Morgan L. Busse concludes the Follower of the Word series with Heir of Hope, as the Eldarans head toward the final battle with their enemies. The earlier books were Daughter of Light and Son of Truth (see: Christian Library Journal, November/December 2014).

In Heir of Hope, Rowen Mar—the last Truthsayer—is captured and taken before the Shadonae. Imprisoned and tortured, she discovers the truth about the Shadonae—they are not who she thinks they are. Is she so different from them at the core? Will she be able to rely on the Word for the final battle?

Meanwhile, Caleb Tala—former assassin, now Guardian of Mankind—wanders in the desert looking for clues to answer his questions. Exiled from his family, Caleb is joined by Nierne and Lore. Each step brings them closer to a final battle and the consequences of their choices. Will mankind survive?

Busse excels at world-building in this character-driven adult fantasy. Her flawed but relatable characters continue to face obstacles. Heir of Hope addresses themes of love, forgiveness, and sacrifice. One finds it especially appropriate that the author's personal blog is titled "In Darkness there is Light," for that is the theme of this series: no matter how dark it is, God’s light is there.

The quality of Busse’ plot and character development is evident in the nomination of her works for several awards. Daughter of Light was a finalist for the 2013 Grace Awards, the Christy Awards, and the Carol Awards; Son of Truth was a finalist for the 2014 Clive Staples Award.

Recommended for fantasy fans and for adult collections in public libraries. Fans of epic fantasy series like those by Jill Williamson, Patrick Carr, and Tolkien, to name a few, will enjoy this series.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com
**The huntress of Thornbeck Forest / Melanie Dickerson. (A medieval fairy tale romance; 1)**

310 p.; 22 cm. Adult Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning author Melanie Dickerson kicks off a new series of medieval fairy tales for adults. Loosely based on Swan Lake and Robin Hood, *The Huntress of Thornbeck Forest* is a story about “a beautiful maiden who poaches to feed the poor” and “a handsome forester on a mission to catch her” (back cover)—but it is much more than just the story of Odette and Jorgen.

By day, Odette Menkels teaches children to read—and by night, she poaches deer to feed the hungry orphans of Thornbeck. Jorgen Hartmann, the margrave’s forester, is duty-bound to capture the poacher for two reasons: he wants to do his job well, and he inherited his post from a man who was murdered by a poacher.

When they meet (during the day), Odette and Jorgen are attracted to each other, completely unaware of the danger they pose to one another. Odette thinks she is providing meat to the orphans, completely unaware that someone is actually selling it on the black market—and the children aren’t getting it at all. Jorgen discovers the black market activity and increases his search for the poacher. Will they uncover the truth about each other and the person behind the black market? Will justice be served?

Melanie Dickerson, known for her medieval young adult stories, branches out with a tale more suited to adults. She brings her meticulous research in the details to capture the nuances of medieval Germany. Characters are well-developed and the plot is both interesting and plausible. Do not think that this is merely a story with mistaken identity and where true love wins—there are a few plot twists that will surprise the reader.

Recommended for public libraries and church libraries. Adult fans of Dickerson’s young adult novels will be thrilled with this new series, as will fans of the TV show *Once Upon a Time*, where nothing is as it seems in storyland.

*Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com*

**Buried secrets : a novel / Irene Hannon. (Men of valor; 1)**

378 p.; 22 cm. Adult (HS) Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning author Irene Hannon pens a new romantic suspense series featuring the McGregor brothers settling into civilian life after their stint in the military.

In *Buried Secrets*, Mac McGregor—a former Navy SEAL—is a county detective sent to assist a small-town police chief, Lisa Grant, who honed her investigative skills as a Chicago homicide detective. They meet when a construction crew finds human skeleton remains outside town. Though attracted to one another, their first priority is to solve the mystery and find the killer.

As Mac and Lisa begin to uncover the truth, the killer has too much at stake to risk exposure and starts eliminating the other suspects with deadly accidents. Will the killer be desperate enough to create another deadly accident to end their investigation?

Hannon writes edge-of-your-seat suspense that will keep the reader engaged until the final page.
Unexpected plot twists will keep the reader on their toes as the truth surrounding the fifteen-year-old crime is revealed. Mac’s brothers, Finn and Lance, are introduced when they visit Mac, and the ground is laid for the remaining books (book 2 is expected in Spring 2016). One of the main characters has a medical condition that plays into the killer’s plans— it is refreshing to encounter characters who aren’t perfect. The faith element is light, not heavy-handed.

Hannon’s books are filled with suspense, sigh-worthy romance, appropriate violence, and clean language. Although written for adults, the books would be acceptable for high school students as well. Fans of Dee Henderson, Dani Pettrey, and DiAnn Mills will clamor for this new series!

Recommended for public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

**Taken / Dee Henderson.**

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

Award-winning author Dee Henderson pens another contemporary romantic suspense featuring a woman who was abducted as a teen and finds a way home, with the help of a private investigator.

In *Taken*, sixteen-year-old Shannon Bliss was abducted and forced to participate in the activities of the Jacoby crime family for more than ten years. She wants to resume a normal life but also wants to see them pay for their crimes against her and others. She calls Matthew Dane, a former cop turned private investigator, to help her uncover the evidence, coordinate the arrests, and navigate her reentry into society—before the Jacoby family tries to silence her. But in doing so, will he stir up a hornet’s nest that endangers them both?

Like her earlier work, *Unspoken*, this novel also deals with a female crime victim who wants to reclaim a normal life after having it taken from her. Matthew Dane is a close friend of characters introduced in earlier books; they now appear as minor characters in *Taken*. He has to use his contacts—including those friends—to untangle her life during captivity. Dee Henderson fans will enjoy the continuation of the Chicago-based ensemble introduced in *Unspoken* and *Full Disclosure*.

Henderson is an excellent storyteller, weaving intricate plot twists with complex character development. Violence in the story is appropriate but not graphic, and the faith element is light and not overpowering. *Taken* is lighter on the romance and relationships than her other novels, with slightly more emphasis on the suspense, which will keep the reader guessing who is responsible for Shannon’s abduction.


Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

**The beekeeper’s son / Kelly Irvin. (The Amish of Bee County; 1)**

342 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

The first book in The Amish of Bee County series, *The Beekeeper’s Son* by Kelly Irvin offers light
reading while dealing with issues that invite deliberation, among them grief, loneliness, unmet needs, and physical disfigurement.

Deborah plans to return to Tennessee once her mother, Abigail, is settled in Bee County, Texas, where Abigail decided to move at the invitation of her family—and an old suitor—two years after Abigail’s husband died. But Deborah finds those plans thwarted by the severing of a relationship which makes the return to Tennessee less desirable. Also, Deborah meets Phineas, a man with many doubts, who was terribly scarred on his face and head from a wreck that claimed his mother’s life. He and his father find solace and make a living tending bees. Phineas thinks no one could ever love him, but Deborah finds herself drawn to him.

The relationship between Deborah and Phineas revolves around the journey they take and how God has a plan for them, even if not according to their expectations. Can they both put aside their fears and disappointments to find the joy God is offering in their future? Can they both put aside their fears and disappointments to find the joy God is offering in their future? There’s also another storyline revolving around Abigail and the question of whether her old suitor is an answer for her or not. Each of the characters is well-developed and displays growth in their understanding of faith and love.

The book is well-written and provides enjoyable and interesting details about bees and beekeeping. Most readers will look forward to the sequel, and there will be one as this is the first of three titles in this series. Irvin has also penned the Bliss Creek Amish series and the New Hope Amish series.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Firewall : a novel / DiAnn Mills. (FBI: Houston; 1)
Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014.
xi, 403 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Double cross / DiAnn Mills. (FBI: Houston; 2)
Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015.
387 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning author DiAnn Mills presents a contemporary romantic suspense series featuring FBI agents in the Houston area.

In Firewall, software developer Taryn Young wakes up in the hospital after a bomb blast at the Houston airport, only to find that her husband is missing. Although evidence appears to connect Taryn to this incident, FBI Agent Grayson Hall thinks she is innocent and being targeted by the culprit. Was her whirlwind courtship and marriage part of a larger terrorist plot?

On the run, Taryn and Grayson learn that Taryn’s latest project could disastrously affect national security if it falls into the wrong hands. A double FBI agent is suspected when their every move is communicated to their pursuers. Can Grayson and Taryn outrun them and unravel the mystery before the software’s firewall is breached?

In Double Cross, when felon Morton Wilmington turns out to be the best lead in her investigation of a scam targeting the elderly, FBI Agent Lauren Everston is forced to face him and the choices she made as an undercover agent.

Working with Houston police officer Daniel Hilton—who's grandparents are also victims of the scam
Lauren uncovers evidence suggesting more than just a financial scam. As the case becomes more deadly, Daniel and Lauren must ask if they can trust Wilmington’s claim of becoming a Christian, or is he leading them into a double cross?

Mills does a superb job of character and plot development in this faith-filled series. Multiple plot twists abound as these unpredictable stories unfold. The characters are realistic, the scenarios are believable, and the tension builds until the last page is read.

Firewall and Double Cross will appeal to readers who like romantic suspense filled with carefully researched details. Fans of Dee Henderson and Irene Hannon will enjoy this new series. Firewall won the 2014 Genre Fiction award from Library Journal. Both books include author notes and discussion questions. Highly recommended for public and high school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Wonderful lonesome / Olivia Newport. (Amish turns of time; 1)
310 p. ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Meek and mild / by Olivia Newport. (Amish turns of time; 2)
303 p. ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

The Amish Turns of Time series tells the stories of struggling Amish communities facing the difficult decision to separate from their conservative communities.

In Wonderful Lonesome, Abbie Weaver is worried about the mounting problems for her settlement. The weather and coyotes are wreaking havoc on the crops. Families are struggling and some have decided to move. New families are not interested in joining the community because there’s no minister. Abbie tries to reassure her friends that times will get better, but nothing seems to work in their favor. Abbie is in love with Willem and can’t wait him to propose, but it seems that his farm is more important to him than anything else. The new Mennonite church in the area—and the attentions of another young man—add to the uncertainties complicating Abbie’s future.

In Meek and Mild, Clara Kuhn doesn’t understand why the bishop disapproves of contact between the Old Order Amish and the Marylanders, even encouraging members of the church to shun those that do not follow tradition. Clara has family and friends among the Marylanders whom she wants to be able to visit without worries of being shunned. Clara also wants to accept Andrew’s marriage proposal, but her fears are preventing her from doing so. Andrew has become the owner of a Model T, despite its being against the rules of the church, and Clara is worried that this could give the bishop reason to shun Andrew. Clara is also worried about her cousin Fannie, who is depressed because she can’t seem to get pregnant. Will Clara and Fannie be able to overcome their personal challenges, and will the rift between their communities sever ties between families and friends?

Olivia Newport introduces us to the Amish way of living and their daily struggles. The principal characters are strong in their faith and seek God’s will. This thought-provoking series focuses on different aspects of Amish history in various regions. In each case, the Old Order Amish are depicted as very strict and disapproving of association with those outside of their order, while many individual members seek to remain
strong in their faith and traditions yet do not want this divide. This presents a dilemma for those who want to remain Old Order while living in peace with their families and friends. While part of a series, the books can be read as stand-alone stories.

Trina Chase, CLJ

Where trust lies / Janette Oke and Laurel Oke Logan. (Return to the Canadian West; 2)

333 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Where Trust Lies is the sequel to When Courage Calls (see: Christian Library Journal, September/October 2014). Beth Thatcher loved the year she spent teaching in the Canadian West and hopes that she will be called to return and continue teaching. In particular, she has grown close to Jarrick, a Canadian Mountie who has stolen her heart. Family obligations call her home, so as a dutiful daughter, she returns only to find her mother has planned an extended steamship tour for the women of the family to take place almost immediately. Beth is tired, emotionally and physically, and would like nothing more than a long rest, but, of course, she agrees to this trip her formidable mother has planned.

Set in the 1930’s, there are so many facets to this book by Janette Oke and Laurel Oke Logan. While they are traveling, Beth grows to love and understand her mother in a way that she had never experienced. The reader gets a glimpse of the many cultural changes happening at this time and the difficulty for Christians to respond to these changes in a mature and godly way. Some examples would be the change in dress and hair styles for women as well as the new independence females were being offered.

Although the novel begins as a simple story depicting family, travel, and a little romance, the reader will find real substance—even excitement in the form of danger and challenges—in the latter part of the book. A Christ-like life is demonstrated by Beth, her mother, and Jarrick, each acting out their Christianity in different ways. Where Trust Lies is highly recommended for any library.

Ceil Carey, CLJ


263 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Set in 19th century Appalachia, Mercy’s Rain is an historical novel that grows on the reader as the story unfolds. Sproles does such a masterful job of describing life in the mountains that one can easily grasp the setting and the sense of community among the people of Wadalow Mountain.

The abuse Mercy experiences at the hands of her father—who calls himself the “Pastor”—will be difficult for some to read. Mercy’s journey, after being sent away by her angry mother, initially finds her becoming his judge, jury, and executioner. She comes to see that true righteousness has nothing evil about it as she gradually sees the light of God when she encounters a young preacher on his way to counsel a pregnant couple. Eventually, she is able
to react to her Pastor father differently.

The challenges of survival provide a message and lessons as the actions of Samuel, Isabella, and Terrance, in their care for Melody Mercy, make the story gradually become less dark. It’s scary how the Pastor, coming out of his own generational abuse, sends shadows into many relationships that he encounters. Redemption is made possible as hope is revealed, while making clear that God’s story can be other than pretty and simple. Sproles transforms the complexities of the story’s characters into insights that become emancipating. This enables the reader to feel the suffering and betrayal and loss but also recognize the ways God’s faithfulness comes alive. This is a story within a story that records the poverty of the Appalachians but also the value of love that can be found.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

**Magnificent malevolence : memoirs of a career in Hell / Derek Wilson.**

239 p.; 20 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis introduced many readers to Screwtape, a senior devil, and to the idea that evil is powerful and personal. *Magnificent Malevolence* is about a lower-level demon trying to move up in the ranks. Derek Wilson presents his fictional account as a primary-source manuscript recovered by demon Crumblewit from the archives of the “Low Command's Ministry of Misinformation.” It covers the period from 1942 (when Screwtape was introduced to the world) to the present.

Wilson has an active imagination and it adds to the breadth of this book. He also has a sense of humor evident in such things as the names assigned to the demons: Blagender, Snagwort and Squimblebag, for starters.

The book gives readers much to think about: Soap operas are described as a way to convince humans that killing, stealing and adultery are okay. Demons use the decline in churches and the Internet as ways in getting people away from their central or family activities. Discussion also gets into tactics considered useful by the demons, such as blurring the distinction between wants, needs, and rights.

This fresh “exposé” has the same objective as C.S. Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters* and uses the same humor to help Christians recognize our enemy and penetrate to the core of his numerous, subtle strategies. Readers familiar with *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States* by Sean McCloud will appreciate the stories of contemporary exorcisms but recognize that *Magnificent Malevolence* gets into the evaluation and recognition of a very real effort to bring us away from The Lord Jesus. *Truly Free: Breaking the Snares That So Easily Entangle* by Robert Morris gives a contemporary face to *The Screwtape Letters* to enable people to break strongholds and bondages that are caused by issues like price, greed, lust, and bitterness. Wilson’s *Magnificent Malevolence*, as a work of fiction, provides a wider—and more entertaining—context to make the words by McCloud and Morris make sense and applicable.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ
**Under the Silk Hibiscus / Alice J. Wisler.**

223 p.; 23 cm. Adult

Alice J. Wisler pens an historical novel about a Japanese-American family interned at Heart Mountain, Wyoming during World War II.

In *Under the Silk Hibiscus*, fifteen-year-old Nathan and his family are sent from California to Wyoming—shortly after his father is imprisoned. His family includes his older brother Ken, his mother, his younger brother, his grandmother, and his aunt. His mother asks Nathan to safeguard their grandfather’s watch, safely hidden in her suitcase.

Nathan likes Lucy, a Japanese-American girl, but Ken is also interested in her. When their mother gives birth to a baby sister and dies of pneumonia, it is up to Nathan to take care of the family—Ken is too involved elsewhere. The watch is stolen and Nathan is distraught. Lucy eventually leaves to pursue her dream of becoming a professional singer, and the story continues as Nathan’s family returns to San Jose after the war is ended.

*Under the Silk Hibiscus* differs from Wisler’s earlier novels—contemporary romances taking place in the South. Wisler knows the Japanese culture, having grown up in Japan. She also knows how to write a romance, but the romance in this book is so understated that one may be caught by surprise at how it turns out.

Told in the first-person, *Under the Silk Hibiscus* is one family’s story of faith and hope enduring in the midst of trial. The author conveys the poor treatment of the Japanese Americans, both in their internment and their efforts to make a life afterwards. Nathan learns about bitterness and forgiveness as the family continues to experience discrimination when rebuilding their life.

Recommended for public libraries and World War II historical fictions fans.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

---

**ADULT NONFICTION**

**Growing up social: raising relational kids in a screen-driven world / Gary D Chapman, Arlene Pellicane.**

233 p.; 23 cm. Adult
004.67 Rating: 5

Parents and grandparents wondering how to handle electronic entertainment and devices can find sound advice in *Growing Up Social* by Arlene Pellicane and Dr. Gary Chapman. This book equips parents to confidently set boundaries and create an atmosphere that approaches technology in a healthy way.

The book discusses how no app or video game can replace in-person interactions with others. It notes clearly and persuasively that the more a child is involved in screen time, the less time there is for interaction with parents, siblings, and friends. This is a helpful resource for parents looking to evaluate the place of electronic activity in their family and how their own use also carries over to the kids.

Chapman and Pellicane note that technology works best when it is a tool in one’s life, but it can be destructive when it becomes the main hub
where most of a child’s life is lived. One of the strong pluses is their focus on a method they call “A+,” which includes five key relational skills: affection, appreciation, anger management, apology, and attention.

Many tips are practical and easy to make a part of one’s life. The authors offer many helpful situations and how they might be handled, though some topics could benefit from development at greater length.

A Year Unplugged: A Family’s Year Without Technology by Sharael Kolberg offers an overview with further expansive possibilities that easily complements Growing Up Social. Those seeking more real-life stories might consult The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age by Catherine Steiner-Adair and Teresa H. Barker. The Big Disconnect looks at the different stages of child development and the technological challenges that children are often confronted with, and gets deeper into texting, sexting, online bullying, addiction, the world of social media, and the easy access to porn or other inappropriate materials on the web—topics covered more generally in Growing Up Social.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

371 p.: photos, maps; 24 cm. Adult/HS
225 Rating: 5

Frameworks: How to Navigate the New Testament addresses two issues faced by individuals desiring to study the Bible: navigation and context. The book is divided into two parts. The first discusses the New Testament and Jesus’ ministry as a whole, and includes discussions about the locations of Jesus’ ministry and that of the New Testament writers, a synopsis of Jesus’ life on earth, how and why the books are organized the way they are, and how the New Testament came to be compiled and canonized. The second section reviews the individual books and answers the who, what, where, when and why of each one.

Author Eric Larson writes in a casual, conversational style and supplements his text with photographs, charts, illustrations, maps, and contemporary stories to provide context with which to study the Bible. Wide margins create an appealing, easy-to-read format and give readers plenty of room to make notes. As a survey of the New Testament (rather than an in-depth examination), Frameworks is a good resource for adults and teenagers looking for a solid foundation to understanding the Bible. A companion workbook is available for additional individual or group study.

Linda Matchett, CLJ

Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014.
viii, 326 p.; 21 cm. Adult
233.5 Rating: 5

The Family Project is a companion book to the 56-session small group curriculum created by Focus on the Family. With the disarray and attack the family has come under in the press and society at large, this book brings clarity and meaning to what a family is and how it plays an irrereplaceable
role in God’s plan and in the success of our relationships and culture.

The book is divided into four sections that lay a biblical framework for family and marriage. It bridges the gap between the theoretical vocabulary heard in theology classes and the tips and techniques of self-help books and talks. Each chapter concludes with a reflection statement summing up the main chapter idea and affording an opportunity to delve into the chapter discussion. The Family Project presents a heartening view of family life. It looks at family as a center for the formation of human relationships, a perpetual enabler of truth, a museum of memories, and much, much more.

Some of the points can be challenging for an individual reader to digest, but as a resource for a small group to tackle together, it will likely be an excellent tool. It would be especially helpful when used with the 4 companion DVDs, with topics ranging from marriage and sexuality, family relationships, and how a family can grow and serve God. Parents not able at present to participate in a small group but desirous of their family growing in God might utilize Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God by Marty Machowski.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Divine applause: secrets and rewards of walking with an invisible God / Jeff Anderson.

205 p.; 21 cm. Adult
248.4 Rating: 5

Anderson grew up a hearing-impaired child with a 60% hearing loss, separated from sound until at age five his parents got him “special ears” that helped him to better identify with the world around him. Comparing this condition to our separation from God until we obtain the right “ears” with which to hear Him, he teaches that since God is invisible, we need to learn how to sense His presence.

In Divine Applause, the author teaches that we can seek and sense God’s attention—and that He is pleased to notice us and our efforts to draw near to Him. Anderson relates several experiences he had with God as he tried to “listen” with his heart. For example, he relates his experience with Ms. Whyte, a woman in need. As he tried to help her, he learned that giving from the heart is a gateway to connecting with God.

Anderson also focuses on parts of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew—mainly, Jesus’ teachings about prayer, fasting, and giving, and the blessings that come to the one who follows them. Again using personal experiences, Anderson quietly leads the reader into a deeper prayer experience as he teaches on the principles set out in Matthew 6. He also encourages the Christian to engage in prayer as another doorway to God’s presence and to go deeper by fasting, and gives examples of obedience in these areas from his own life.

Anderson’s down-to-earth descriptions and stories draw the reader into this very readable book. He also utilizes stories from the Bible to illustrate how God loves to watch His children and to reward those who seek His presence. Divine Applause is a personal book that should be read more than once by the person who wants to gain intimacy with God.

Juanita Nobles, CLJ
In *Gospel Formed*, pastor J.A. Medders encourages Christians to live lives that are completely gospel-centered. The book begins with an introduction entitled “Gospel Primer” and then continues with 28 chapters that are short and to the point. Medders urges readers to read one chapter a day, focusing on the Bible verses at the beginning and end of each, as well as the verses in the notes.

Since Medders writes that he hopes *Gospel Formed* will push readers toward the Word of God and help Christians draw nearer to God, the book is saturated with Scripture, which Medders says is more helpful than anything he has written. The devotions are encouraging, thought-provoking, and convicting. Repeatedly, Medders reminds readers that they must not forget the gospel. The book begins with a reminder to remember the gospel daily and from there, builds on themes revolving around living gospel-centered lives: gospel worship, gospel identity, gospel community, and gospel mission. Medders provides sound biblical wisdom pertaining to each theme.

Medders’ friendly, inviting writing style makes the devotions a joy to read. Drawing readers in, Medders tells real-life stories to illustrate his points and draws everything back to the gospel. Because of the easy-to-understand, devotional-like format, this book is ideal for new Christians who are learning to live their lives centered around Christ and the gospel. At the same time, *Gospel Formed* is also a wonderful read for more mature Christians because all can benefit from reminder to live in the center of the gospel.

*Dani Seilhamer, CLJ*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely almost</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely truly</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone together</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always inventing: a photobiography of Alexander Graham Bell</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Amish of Bee County; 1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amish turns of time; 1-2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, Jeff</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Andy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Mesu</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beekeeper’s son</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloom, Suzanne</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body bones</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolden, Tonya</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The boy on Cinnamon Street</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunn, Davis</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buried secrets: a novel</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busse, Morgan L.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital days: Michael Shiner’s journal and the growth of our nation’s school</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catie Conrad: faith, friendship and fashion disasters</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catie Conrad: how to become the most UNpopular girl in middle school</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapman, Gary</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christelow, Eileen</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danneberg, Julie</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The desperate diva diaries; 1-2</td>
<td>21-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickerson, Melanie</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine applause: secrets and rewards of walking with an invisible God</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double cross</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Easter story</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The family project: how God’s design reveals his best for you</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatal fever: tracking down Typhoid Mary</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBI: Houston; 1-2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firewall: a novel</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First flight around the world: the adventures of the American fliers who won the race</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOLLOWER OF THE WORLD; 3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frameworks: how to navigate the New Testament</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick, Heather Vogal</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Summer: celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Freedom Summer</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goose and Bear book</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel formed: living a grace-addicted, truth-filled, Jesus-exalting life</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graff, Lisa</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graff, Lisa</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graff, Lisa</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grove, Tim</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing up social: raising relational kids in a screen-driven world</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The handy Islam answer book</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannon, Irene</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heir of hope</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson, Dee</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Hodges needs a friend</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The huntress of Thornbeck Forest</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I survived</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The great Chicago fire, 1871</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the new world: a family in two centuries</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvin, Kelly</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson, Antonia</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarrow, Gail</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Muir wrestles a waterfall</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joslin, Mary</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larson, Eric</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A less than perfect peace</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like a river: a Civil War novel</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost in the sun</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnificent malevolence: memoirs of a career in Hell</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manger</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthews, Tom L.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medders, J. A.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A medieval fairy tale romance; 1</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meek and mild</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men of valor; 1</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercy’s rain: an Appalachian novel</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mills, DiAnn</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mills, DiAnn</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friend the enemy</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport, Olivia</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octopuses! : strange and wonderful</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oke, Janette &amp; Oke Logan, Laurel</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Patmos deception: a novel</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pharaoh’s daughter: a treasures of the Nile novel</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pringle, Laurence</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pringle, Laurence</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Pumpkin Falls mystery</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raidt, Gerda</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renard, John</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to the Canadian West; 2</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotner, Shelley</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schnell, Lisa Kahn</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scorpions! : strange and wonderful</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siren’s fury</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Dan</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spady, Angie</td>
<td>21-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sproles, Cindy</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanton, Glenn T.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, Phoebe</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storm siren</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storm siren trilogy; 1-2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sullivan, Jacqueline Levering</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A tangle of knots</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarshis, Lauren</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A treasury of wisdom</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under the silk hibiscus</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weber, Mary</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks, Sarah</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do authors and illustrators do?</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where trust lies</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiechman, Kathy Cannon</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiles, Deborah</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Derek</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisler, Alice</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonderful lonesome</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolen, Jane</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You nest here with me</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>