Outstanding Books Reviewed in This Issue

Nana in the City by Lauren Castillo.

Water from My Heart by Charles Martin.

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God by Timothy Keller.

Plus: Selected 2015 Award Books for Children and Teens
A Letter from the Publisher

Dear CLJ Readers:

I find autumn to be an inspiring season. From the reminder of God’s artistry in the fall colors to the excitement of anticipating another holiday season—not to mention the start of a new school year and sports season—there is much to stir up creativity and prompt new projects.

Books are among the best sources of inspiration, of course, and we want to help you to embrace the season’s changes with a stimulating reading list in hand. For younger readers (and the young at heart), we are again featuring selected 2015 award books for children and teens. From whimsy and fairy tales to science and somber historical events (such as the holocaust), these titles have something for everyone.

We pray God’s blessing upon you as you and your family embark upon new endeavors and prepare for holiday traditions.

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*.
Review Rating System

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

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

Value of the book:
With fiction, the rating includes the quality of plot development/pacing, characterization, sense of time and place, mood, and atmosphere, dialogue, depth of perception, sensitivity of writing, use of humor. Be aware that some books are character driven, so character development is extremely important. Others are plot driven, so character development isn’t as critical; plot is.
With nonfiction, the rating includes quality of the information, accuracy, up to date, stimulates further inquiry, adds to the understanding of the topic, illustrations which are informative and appropriate.
With picture books, first be aware that these are written today for various age groups, so don’t assume little children. The rating includes those above for fiction and nonfiction, and also emphasizes the illustrations.

Commonly used abbreviations in CLJ reviews

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This CLJ issue features reviews of a selection of books that won major awards for books for children and teens in 2015. Some of these awards focus on works that portray a specific type of experience. Others focus on works of literature or illustration that are outstanding or distinguished in a particular genre.

Literary merit aside, some of these books include violence, vulgar language, sexuality, and offensive (or at least uncomfortable) topics. While only you can judge what is appropriate reading for you or your child, we urge you to consider that these books may be a window into the hurts and needs of our fallen world, and that they could be read prayerfully in a manner that leads to understanding and compassion for those that need the Gospel and the ministry of Christ’s church.

Following are descriptions of the honors and medals won by the books featured in this special section:

The **Pura Belpré Award** “is presented annually to a Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth” (ALSC Pura Belpre Award home page, [http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal](http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal)).

The **Caldecott Medal** “was named in honor of nineteenth-century English illustrator Randolph Caldecott. It is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children” (ALSC Caldecott Medal home page, [http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/caldecottmedal/caldecottmedal](http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/caldecottmedal/caldecottmedal)).

The **Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal** “is awarded annually to the author (s) and illustrator (s) of the most distinguished informational book published in the United States in English during the preceding year. The award is named in honor of Robert F. Sibert, the long-time President of Bound to Stay Bound Books, Inc. of Jacksonville, Illinois. ALSC administers the award” (ALSC Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal home page, [http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/](http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/).
The Newbery Medal “was named for eighteenth-century British bookseller John Newbery. It is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children” (ALSC Newbery Medal home page, http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/newbery/)

The Geisel Award “is given annually to the author(s) and illustrator(s) of the most distinguished American book for beginning readers published in English in the United States during the preceding year” (ALSC (Theodor Seuss) Geisel Award home page, http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/geisel/)

The Batchelder Award “is given to the most outstanding children’s book originally published in a language other than English in a country other than the United States, and subsequently translated into English for publication in the United States” (ALSC (Mildred L.) Batchelder Award home page, http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/)

The Coretta Scott King Book Awards “are given annually to outstanding African American authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults that demonstrate an appreciation of African American culture and universal human values. The award commemorates the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and honors his wife, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, for her courage and determination to continue the work for peace and world brotherhood” (ALA The Coretta Scott King Book Awards home page, http://www.ala.org/emiert/csk/)

Valorie Cooper, CLJ Special Features Writer
PRIMARY FICTION

Sam & Dave dig a hole / Mac Barnett ; illustrated by Jon Klassen.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 28 cm. PS-Grade 3
E Rating: 5

Sam and Dave have a mission: to keep digging until they find something spectacular! And so they dig–straight down, diagonally, horizontally. Their wistful dog faithfully points, unnoticed, at something spectacular just beyond the tunnel walls, but each time Sam and Dave change direction a spadeful too soon. Several somethings glitter hugely just beyond the tunnel walls, but Sam and Dave are determinedly oblivious. And then, something spectacular does happen!

This book marks the second Caldecott Honor that the duo has won with their characteristic visual humor and droll text. The pooch is clearly the hero of Sam & Dave Dig a Hole although Dave is the mastermind of their adventure. Dave has a red cap; Sam’s is blue, but it is only when Dave drinks out of a canteen that the reader knows who is who. Such subtleties also call attention to their dog, who shares his dismay at Sam and Dave’s obtuseness with readers by looking directly at them, who shares a knowing look with the curious but remote cat on the front porch, and who notices the puzzling changes in their home after something spectacular occurs. Jon Klassen draws with soft, ocher colors, his flat characters appearing to balance on a cross-cut section of earth. Mac Barnett’s spare text slides down the page as the tunnels deepen and the ground level slides up. This a perfect example of the way that text and image work together to create a funny, engrossing story that deliciously teases, leaving out far more than it tells.

Diane Carver Sekeres, CLJ

Award(s): Caldecott Honor Book

Nana in the city / by Lauren Castillo.

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

A 2015 Caldecott Honor Book, Nana in the City offers a story that parents and children, and teachers and students, can easily share. Lauren Castillo tells about Nana, a grandmother who lives in the city. When her grandson arrives, he is frightened by the noise and sounds of the urban landscape. Nana crochets him a special cape to help him be brave, and soon the everyday sights and sounds are wonderful. The interesting text is paired with watercolor illustrations that make it possible to recognize concepts as well as enjoy and discuss the multiple factors that make up the busy city along with its sights, smells, and sounds. Nana’s subtle guidance fits the child perfectly, and the first-person voice of the boy is convincing as he changes in his perception and experience of the city. Castillo is a master illustrator, using brighter colors at the end of the story in contrast with the darker color tone at the start of the story.

While books such as Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood by F. Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell and The Ultimate
**Book of Life Around Town** by Anne-Sophie Baumann enable a sharing dialogue between adult and child about life in a city community, *Nana in the City* reinforces this dialogue with both warm text and inviting color.

* Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

**Award(s):** Caldecott Honor Book

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**Firebird:** ballerina Misty Copeland shows a young girl how to dance like the firebird / Misty Copeland ; illustrated by Christopher Myers.

- 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 x 29 cm.  Grades K-3
- E  Rating: 5


In a letter to the reader, Misty Copeland describes how discovering dance as a child and having the guidance of her own ballet mentor helped to transform her mindset of fear and loneliness to one of confidence and empowerment. In *Firebird*, she portrays herself helping a discouraged African-American girl who sees her own path to success as “longer than forever.”

With lyrical, free-form text, Copeland relates “sweating at the barre” and the “thousand leaps and falls” that had to happen before the polished costumed performances of her title role in “The Firebird.” Copeland’s warm counsel to the girl—and to readers—is to hold onto dreams, work hard, and use your journey to encourage others along the way.

The vivid characters and setting of *Firebird* are enhanced by the bold paint and collage illustrations of Christopher Myers (2015 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award) who captures the emotion and movement of the dancers’ world. Myers effectively uses background color to enhance and vitalize each scene.

This beautifully presented picture book may be of special interest to young dancers but certainly has far-reaching relevance and appeal. *Firebird* is a thoughtful look at making goals a reality, overcoming barriers, believing in yourself, and giving back.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ

**Award(s):** Coretta Scott King Award (Illustrator)

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**You are (not) small** / by Anna Kang ; illustrated by Christopher Weyant.

- 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm.  PS-Grade 2
- E  Rating: 5


Two sociable companions discover that size is a relative thing in *You Are (Not) Small*, a Theodor Seuss Geisel Award winner written by Anna Kang and illustrated by Christopher Weyant.

The unnamed animal-like characters are clearly not the same size, yet both object to being called “big” or “small.” Tempers flare as each tries to convince the other, until an unexpected visitor gives everyone a fresh perspective! A touch of
humor settles the score...and suggests a new impasse to keep the story going in the readers' imagination.

This sweet simple book features large text to grab a preschooler’s attention and nice sturdy pages for little hands. Anna Kang offers repartee that is rhythmic and fun to read aloud. Ink and watercolor drawings by syndicated cartoonist Christopher Weyant are packed with cleverly amusing facial expressions and gestures.

With cute fuzzy characters, a witty storyline, lively illustrations, and some meaningful wisdom to be gleaned, You Are (Not) Small should have “sizeable” appeal to a young audience!

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

**Award(s):** Geisel Medal

**Mr. Putter & Tabby turn the page /**
**Cynthia Rylant ; illustrated by Arthur Howard.**

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 cm Grades 1-4
E Rating: 4

See: review printed in the Christian Library Journal, Jan/Feb/Mar/Apr 2015.

**Award(s):** Geisel Honor Book

**The adventures of Beekle : the unimaginary friend / Dan Santat.**

LCCN 2013017700 ISBN 9780316199988,

hardcover, $17.00.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm. PS-Grade 1
E Rating: 4
Friendship--Fiction. Imaginary playmates--Fiction.

Winner of the 2015 Caldecott Award as well as a number of other awards, The Adventures of Beekle: the Unimaginary Friend by bestselling author and illustrator Dan Santat is a delight!

The Adventures of Beekle starts on “an island far away where imaginary friends were created”(pg.1). Beekle is a white gumdrop-looking creature who wears a small paper crown. He lives with other imaginary friends who are waiting for a real child to imagine and name them.

After waiting a number of nights and watching others get picked, Beekle decides to go on a journey to find his new friend. It means being courageous enough to leave the island and face the unknown. He reaches a busy, dreary city in the real world where he notices the hustle and bustle, but hardly any children. No one even notices him. Eventually he climbs to the top of a star-leaved tree, hoping his friend would find him. Then a small girl asks for his help retrieving a drawing that blew out of her hand and landed on a tree branch. Together they become friends and go on new adventures.

The Adventures of Beekle is about imagination, courage, and friendship. Santat’s mixed-media illustrations enhance the story. They flow across the page, creating two-page spreads and evoking a feeling of whimsy and wonderment. They are done in pencil, crayon, ink, and Adobe Photoshop, and the text is hand-lettered.

Recommended for school and public libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

**Award(s):** Caldecott Medal
Green is a chile pepper: a book of colors / by Roseanne Greenfield Thong; illustrated by John Parra.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 cm.    PS-Grade 2
E    Rating: 5

A boy and girl explore their colorful community, from red salsa to yellow corn cake to brown churros. *Green is a Chile Pepper* by Roseanne Greenfield Thong is a Pura Belpré Honor Book that uses color to introduce Hispanic culture and customs.

Short rhyming stanzas present a rich palette of foods, clothing, holidays, and handicrafts. The children interact with parents, grandparents, and neighbors as they prepare spicy ristra, dance a baile folklórico, carry faroles, and break piñatas. Each of nine colors is featured over two or four pages, with italicized Spanish words cross-referenced to a glossary. Traditions and festivals, including Day of the Dead, are brightly portrayed with vivid folk-art illustrations by John Parra. The artist includes many small details within each dynamic scene, encouraging readers to fully explore and revisit.

Much more than a book about colors, *Green is a Chile Pepper* combines pleasing and nicely-paced text with engaging and relevant artwork to deliver a visually winning and educational picture book for young readers both in and beyond a Hispanic audience.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

**Award(s):** Belpré Honor Book (Illustrator)

Waiting is not easy! / by Mo Willems.

57 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.    PS-Grade 1
E    Rating: 5

Piggie has a big surprise for Gerald...but his elephant friend will have to wait for it. Gerald discovers how hard it can be to wait in Mo Willems' *Waiting Is Not Easy!,* a Theodor Seuss Geisel Honor Book.

This simple picture book features Gerald and Piggie talking about the surprise in back-and-forth speech bubbles. The two friends are isolated against a plain background, which keeps the focus on their dialogue and emotions. Author/illustrator Mo Willems succeeds at giving the characters a wide arc of facial expression and body language that adds humor and suspense to this sweet story. When the surprise is finally revealed, it is truly unexpected!

With its universal themes of friendship, sharing, and the value of patience, *Waiting Is Not Easy! is* nicely paced as an easy reader and would be a fun read-aloud for preschoolers, as well as a welcome addition for fans of the "Elephant and Piggie" series.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

**Award(s):** Geisel Honor Book
PRIMARY NONFICTION

Viva Frida! / Yuyi Morales ; photography by Tim O’Meara.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm. PS-Grade 3
B Rating: 4
Kahlo, Frida. Painters--Mexico--Biography.

A Caldecott Honor book and the winner of the Pura Belpré Award, Viva Frida! depicts the life of Frida Kahlo, a famous Mexican painter known for her self-portraits. The book does not provide a chronological story of Frida’s life; rather, it describes her artistic spirit to young children with few words but beautiful and unusual illustrations made with stop-motion puppets. Each of the few words is given in both Spanish and English. The book is very creative and imaginative, just as Frida was herself. Each page has a rather whimsical quality about it with faces of Frida popping up time and time again.

Yuyi Morales is, of course, a huge fan of Frida Kahlo and concludes the book with information about Kahlo herself and also Morales’ interest and fascination with her. This is also told in both English and Spanish. Morales is not only an author and artist but also a puppet maker, as demonstrated in her use of puppets to illustrate the book.

Ceil Carey, CLJ

Award(s): Belpré Award (Illustrator); Caldecott Honor Book

The Noisy Paint Box: the colors and sounds of Kandinsky’s abstract art / by Barb Rosenstock ; illustrated by Mary GrandPre.

1 v. (unpaged) : ill. ; 29 cm. Grades 1-4
B Rating: 5

The Noisy Paint Box provides a glimpse into the life of Russian-born artist Vasya Kandinsky, following him from childhood into adulthood, with powerful imagery on his experience of art. The story itself does not convey—though the author’s note in the back of the book does—that Kandinsky probably experienced synesthesia, which causes sensory fields to collide, thus enabling him to hear colors, see music, or taste words.

This would be an ideal title for reading aloud, either with one’s child or in a classroom setting. There’s much that can be discussed—e.g., the rich vocabulary (“snapping cerulean points”) or what it means to be “proper.” When read aloud, this can be used well for preschoolers too. The accompanying pictures by Grandpre are dazzling illustrations that make the colors of Kandinsky’s world come alive.

What Jeanette Waters did in Henri’s Scissors for Henri-Emile Matisse, Barb Rosenstock does for Vasya Kandinsky in The Noisy Paint Box. It’s easy to understand the contribution of the artist while also recognizing that physical limitations may not be limiting at all.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Award(s): Caldecott Honor Book
Separate is never equal: the story of Sylvia Mendez and her family / by Duncan Tonatiuh.

LCCN 2013032089 ISBN 9781419710544, hardcover; $18.95.
40 p. : col. ill. ; 29 cm. PS-Grade 3
B Rating: 5
Mendez, Sylvia--1936--Childhood and youth.
Hispanic Americans--Education--Juvenile literature. School integration--United States.

A 2015 Pura Belpré Illustrator Honor Book and 2015 Robert F. Sibert Honor Book, Duncan Tonatiuh’s Separate Is Never Equal chronicles the Mendez family’s efforts to end segregated schooling in California.

When young Sylvia Mendez and her family moved to Westminster, California in the 1940’s, excitement ruled in their household as the children anticipated attending the new school in their neighborhood. The building looked beautiful with lovely trees and the playground was neat and well kept. Imagine the family’s disappointment upon discovering that Sylvia and her brothers would instead have to attend the Mexican elementary school where the grounds, supplies, and even the teachers were inferior. Thus began the Mendez family’s quest to change the rules and give Mexican children the same rights as all others. Their lawsuit eventually brought an end to segregated schools in California in 1947.

Tonatiuh’s unusual illustrations add so much to this interesting picture book demonstrating a time in our history that remains unknown to many even to this day. The author incorporates the interviews he held with Sylvia herself as well as information from other documents and includes an author’s note, photos, a glossary, and bibliography at the conclusion of the book.

Ceil Carey, CLJ

Award(s): Belpré Honor Book (Illustrator); Sibert Honor Book

Little Roja Riding Hood / Susan Middleton Elya ; illustrated by Susan Guevara.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 28 cm K-Grade 2
398.2 Rating: 4
Folklore. Fairy tales. Stories in rhyme.

Susan Middleton Elya has written a number of children’s books to help readers experience a bit of Latino culture by introducing them to Spanish words in the context of a story written in English. Here, Elya takes a familiar children’s story and adds some twists.

Little Roja Riding Hood is a bilingual twist on a favorite fairy tale involving a little girl, her grandmother, and a wolf. In this rhyming picture book, Roja is walking through the woods to her grandmother’s house. She is taking some hot soup because her grandmother is nursing a cold. On her way, a wolf distracts her by pointing out the lovely flowers she could pick for her grandmother.

While she dallies, he scampers off with the soup and Roja’s hooded cape. The wolf enters the grandmother’s house and is about to eat her. Unlike the original story, it is Roja who saves the day, not the woodsman–she tosses the hot soup on the wolf. Her grandmother then takes steps to prevent unwelcome visitors in the future.

Little Roja Riding Hood includes a Spanish glossary (with pronunciation) in the front of the book.
Spanish words are boldfaced in the text. Illustrations are modern: Roja drives an ATV, her mother watches Spanish TV, and her grandmother works on her laptop while in bed. Even the wolf is modern, wearing a skull necklace and bandana.

Little Roja Riding Hood received the Pura Belpré nomination for illustration (2015). Its watercolor, ink, and gouache artwork was done by Susan Guevara.

Recommended for school and public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Award(s): Belpré Honor Book (Illustrator)

INTERMEDIATE FICTION

Mikis and the donkey / written by Bibi Dumon Tak ; illustrated by Philip Hopman ; translated by Laura Watkinson.

LCCN 2013044666 ISBN 9780802854308, hardcover, $13.00.
93 p. : ill. ; 23 cm. Grades 2-5

Fic Rating: 5

Mikis and the Donkey is the story of Mikis, a little boy who lives on the Greek island of Corfu. One day after school, Mikis' grandparents have a huge surprise for him—a new donkey to help haul wood and with other chores. The grandparents get a surprise when the donkey, whom Mikis names Tsaki, becomes his best friend. From taking the donkey to a human doctor (not a veterinarian) to care for her wounds, to convincing grandpa that Tsaki needs better living conditions and finding a donkey friend for Tsaki, Mikis' bond with the donkey is strong. Tsaki, however, delivers the biggest surprise of all.

Bibi Dumon Tak's writing buzzes with energy. With just a few words peppered throughout the book, Tak brings the island of Corfu to life. Through excellent dialogue each character is given a voice, and the characters are endearing. While Mikis doesn't have a huge character arc, his grandfather does as he comes to the realization that Mikis is right and the donkey should be treated better. The plentiful pencil illustrations add another dimension to the story. The pace of the story clips along like a little journey to Greece where new places, new friends, and new relationships surround the reader.

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

Award(s): Batchelder Award

INTERMEDIATE NONFICTION

Neighborhood sharks : hunting with the great whites of California's Farallon Islands / Katherine Roy.

46 unnumbered pages : color illustrations, color map ; 29 cm. Grades 3-6
597.3 Rating: 5
Sharks.

Sharks are a perennial favorite subject for kids, and the fearsome great whites are particularly fascinating. Katherine Roy's Neighborhood Sharks: Hunting with the Great Whites of California's Farallon Islands offers a unique perspective on these famous predators that makes
this title stand out among the plethora of books on this popular topic.

Roy’s focus on the annual great white shark migration to the Farallon Islands—just miles from San Francisco—gives the subject immediacy to the reader. The book alternates between information-rich pages and two-page spreads with little text but filled with gorgeous, watercolor paintings depicting a shark attack on a seal. The dramatic, sequential action scenes hold the reader’s interest while the scientific explanations shed light on what is happening. Use of clever diagrams and drawings (e.g., superimposition of the image of a jet plane over a shark’s body to demonstrate how sharks are adapted to highly efficient swimming) render the scientific details accessible and memorable. In this manner, Roy covers the physiological features that make these sharks great predators, their ecological role, and how they are studied by scientists.

The use of predominantly watercolor illustrations in Neighborhood Sharks allows even a bloody attack and consumption of prey to be portrayed in a tasteful, understated manner appropriate for the intended audience. The use of color—even the red of blood flowing into the blues and grays of the ocean—is beautiful.

Back matter includes an author’s note explaining her interest in the great whites of Farallon and her on-site research for this book, as well as Selected Sources, Further Reading, and a map of the Farallon islands.

Neighborhood Sharks, a Robert F. Sibert Honor Book, is a well-researched, visually appealing book that would make a fine addition to school, home, and local libraries.

Award(s): Sibert Honor Book

Hidden: a child’s story of the Holocaust / written by Loïc Dauvillier; illustrated by Marc Lizano; color by Greg Salsedo; translated by Alexis Siege.

76 pages: chiefly color illustrations ; 24 cm.
Grades 2-5
741.5 Rating: 5


Hidden is a touching graphic story about the struggles of a young Jewish girl living in Nazi-occupied Paris, France, in 1942. It is told through the eyes of a grandmother named Dounia, who relates her personal experiences to her granddaughter, Elsa. Dounia has never forgotten the intense distress and confusion she went through when she was ostracized by her teacher and schoolmates. Life only became more difficult and heartbreaking when Dounia was forced to go into hiding, and her parents were arrested.

The cartoon-like illustrations wonderfully convey the mood and tone of the story with colors lightening or darkening depending upon the emotions being depicted. The artwork sensitively expresses every nuance of emotion experienced by each character.

Loïc Dauvillier relates the mistreatment and horrors Jewish people endured during Nazi occupation in a sensitive and honest way. Children will not only learn about a difficult period in history but also about the resilience of the human spirit when facing adversity in life. The book depicts the devastating effects of the Holocaust on families, while also illustrating the courage of people who band together to protect friends and loved ones even at the risk of putting
their own lives in danger.

An afterword is included in the book. It provides the inspiration for the story and gives additional details about the persecution of Jewish people and the vital role civil resistance movements played in saving the lives of Jewish children living in France during the Nazi regime.

*Dianne Woodman, CLJ*

**Award(s):** Batchelder Honor Book

*Portraits of Hispanic American heroes / by Juan Felipe Herrera ; paintings by Raul Colon.*

96 p. : col. ill. ; 27 cm. Grades 3-8
920 Rating: *5
Hispanic Americans--Biography.

Juan Felipe Herrera spotlights 20 influential men and women in *Portraits of Hispanic American Heroes*, a Pura Belpré Author Honor Book.

The author introduces his book by defining “hero” and challenging readers to learn more about the often-overlooked contributions of Latino and Hispanic Americans from the inception of the United States to the present. Examples of bravery, determination, social activism, and achievement permeate the short biographies that span two centuries: from the leadership of Spanish-born Bernardo de Gálvez during the American Revolution to the modern-day space missions of first Latina astronaut Dr. Ellen Ochoa. Presented chronologically, the 20 individuals represent success in the fields of art, entertainment, science, sports, and government (one “hero” is actually a street honoring eight Mexican-American soldiers).

Highlighting *Portraits of Hispanic American Heroes* are just that: beautifully rendered full-page watercolor and pencil drawings of each subject by Raúl Colón, softly hued and with interesting textural details. Some of Colón’s engaging illustrations even seem to make eye contact with the reader, adding extra feeling and depth to their stories. Cover art features current Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor and farm labor leader César Chávez. The book concludes with a moving tribute to teacher Victoria Leigh Soto, killed protecting her students against the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooter.

Featured quotes, source notes, and recommended readings are included in this outstanding biographical collection. Though much of the historical and political context suggests a higher grade level for comprehension, *Portraits of Hispanic American Heroes* has much to offer younger readers, particularly in a classroom or home school setting.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

**Award(s):** Belpré Honor Book (Author)

*Josephine : the dazzling life of Josephine Baker / words by Patricia Hruby Powell ; pictures by Christian Robinson.*

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm. Grades 4-7
B Rating: 5

The biography of Josephine Baker is told in the format of a captivating narrative poem and accompanied by marvelous folk-style paintings
done in vibrant colors. The book spans the years of Josephine’s life from her birth in 1906 until her death in 1975. Josephine is split into sections highlighting the pivotal periods in her life.

Josephine is born into a life of poverty in St. Louis, Missouri. She leaves home at the age of 13 to pursue her dream of performing on stage as a professional dancer. It takes perseverance for Josephine, who is African-American, to attain her goal, especially with the racial discrimination that is deeply embedded in the fabric of American society during her lifetime. Josephine loves dancing and is upset that black performers in America are treated as second-class citizens. She is thrilled when she is welcomed without prejudice by Parisians. However, the bias in America towards African-Americans is the catalyst for Josephine’s becoming an influential advocate for civil rights and racial equality.

Patricia Hruby Powell has written an inspirational story about a woman who not only was a staunch believer in the full equality of all people but also was strong and courageous in the face of adversity. The easy-to-understand text and dynamic portrayal of Josephine’s life, along with Christian Robinson’s animated artwork, make this book a superb choice for young readers to learn about race relations and the importance of an indomitable spirit.

Short notes from the author and the artist provide additional fascinating details about Josephine’s life and highlight the research that went into capturing the vibrancy of Josephine in the enchanting illustrations. Further reading references and quotation sources are also listed.

*Dianne Woodman, CLJ*

**Award(s):** Coretta Scott King Honor Book (Illustrator) ; Sibert Honor Book

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**El Deafo / Cece Bell.**

233 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm. Grades 3-7

Bell, Cece--Childhood and youth--Comic books, strips, etc.  Deaf children--Comic books, strips, etc.  Hearing aids for children--Comic books, strips, etc.  Friendship--Comic books, strips, etc.  Cartoonists--Biography--Comic books, strips, etc.  Comic books, strips, etc.--United States.

Author and illustrator Cece Bell pens a graphic novel about growing up hearing-impaired, filled with humor, warmth, and embarrassing moments.

In *El Deafo*, Cece Bell loses hearing as a child after having spinal meningitis. Cece leaves her school where every student is deaf. At her new school, Cece is different than her classmates, and “feeling different is a lot like being alone” (p. 46). She tries to learn sign language but is concerned about what others will think of her. Cece makes friends with other girls–Laura who bosses her around, and Ginny who speaks loudly and slowly, making it difficult for Cece to understand her.

Cece wears a powerful hearing aid, the Phonic Ear. Given the technology available in the 1970s, it is no surprise that the hearing aid is large and bulky, worn on the chest of the user. Certain that it will keep her from making friends, Cece is surprised to discover that she can hear her teacher in the classroom, in the hallway, even in the teacher’s lounge. Cece finds her new superpower, courtesy of the Phonic Ear, and is on her way to becoming “El Deafo, Listener for All.” Will she be able to channel this into finding a true friend?

*El Deafo* is a humorous, full-color illustrated graphic novel set in the 1970s. Even non-fans of graphic novels will enjoy the humor and message found in *El Deafo*, a 2015 Newbery Honor
nominee. The author includes a note about how people respond differently to being deaf and how she felt as a child experiencing hearing loss.

Recommended for school and public libraries. A welcome addition to one’s diversity collection.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ
Award(s): Newbery Honor Book

**The right word**: Roget and his thesaurus / by Jen Bryant ; illustrated by Melissa Sweet.

LCCN 2013044348 ISBN 9780802853851, hardcover, $17.5.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm. Grades 2-5
B Rating: 5

*The Right Word* is a picture book and children’s biography that tells the story of Peter Mark Roget’s life and how he came to create his famous thesaurus. Written by Jen Bryant and illustrated by Melissa Sweet, it has won multiple awards, including the Caldecott Honor Award and The Robert F. Sibert Medal.

Peter is a shy boy who finds solace and comfort in books. At the age of 8, in 1787, he begins to write his own book, but “instead of writing stories, he wrote lists.” Peter writes lists of important events, lists of Latin and English words he learns from his tutor, and lists of all manner of things such as shapes, plants, and insects. Peter believes “words...[are] powerful” and when he organizes and categorizes them he feels as if his lists give order to his world. Shy Peter grows up to become a tutor to wealthy teenagers, a doctor to impoverished factory workers, a lecturer among scientists, husband to Mary Hobson, father of Kate and John, and of course the author of the most comprehensive and famous thesaurus.

The task of trying to authentically capture and communicate a person’s life, while always complex, is augmented when the medium is a brief children’s picture book, yet Bryant deftly telescopes Peter Mark Roget’s life and passion for words, beginning with a sensitive treatment of the death of Peter’s father. The story also presents a mild conflict between Peter and his mother, who worries about his shyness, his “scribbling,” and his wandering alone. Bryant ultimately shows that Peter’s shyness is not detrimental to his vocational or social success.

Sweet’s illustrations were created with watercolors, collage, and mixed media. Her illustrations are captivating and her use of collage is genius. Sweet’s artwork communicates the riot of words and images contained in Peter’s imagination juxtaposed with the orderliness his lists imposed upon them.

Included are a list of sources quoted, a selected bibliography, and a list for further reading. In addition, the book contains notes from both the author and illustrator. *The Right Word* is an exemplary children’s biography with exceptional illustrations.

Maureen Farrell Garcia, CLJ
Award(s): Sibert Medal ; Caldecott Honor Book
MIDDLE SCHOOL FICTION

The crossover / by Kwame Alexander.
   237 p.; 22 cm. Grades 6-8
   Fic Rating: 5

On the court, eighth-grade basketball superstar Josh Bell, also known as Filthy McNasty, is as smooth as butter with his quick feet and slam dunk shots, inherited from his almost-professional baller dad. However, off the court, Josh begins to lose some of his cool when Jordan, his twin brother and fellow basketball star, falls for Miss Sweet Tea, the new girl at school and the very one that has captured Josh’s interest. For the first time in their lives, Josh and Jordan are not joined at the hip, which leads to jealousy, resentment, and hurt that begin to negatively affect Josh’s game on the court as well. As things come to a head and a family crisis strikes, will Josh have the moves it takes to make things right before time runs out?

Kwame Alexander’s The Crossover is a unique masterpiece of literature, well deserving of its receipt of the John Newberry Award for 2015, as well as its selection as a Coretta Scott King Honor book. Through the rough and tough exterior of the rhythm and rhyme of hip-hop free verse, Josh’s heart and inner struggles are revealed in a powerfully moving fashion without endangering his tough baller image, making this a book that many middle school boys will appreciate.

The novel is divided into quarters with additional warmup and overtime sections, cleverly mirroring the progression of a high school basketball game. Interjected throughout the pages are their father’s ten basketball rules, which are full of life lessons and wisdom and provide excellent writing and discussion prompts for literature circles. This book is so much more than just another sports novel; it is a coming of age journey (including some references to physical attraction to girls) and a story of the bonds of brotherhood. The overarching theme of this book is summed up adequately by basketball rule number ten: “A loss is inevitable, like snow in winter. True champions learn to dance through the storm” (p. 230). Whether on the court or in life, the real victor is the one who keeps on playing, who keeps on fighting amidst the adversity.

Justina McBride, CLJ

Award(s): Newbery Medal; Coretta Scott King Honor Book (Author)

I lived on Butterfly Hill / Marjorie Agosin ; translated by E.M. O'Connor ; illustrated by Lee White.
   454 p. : ill. ; 22 cm. Grades 5-8
   Fic Rating: *5
   Separation (Psychology)--Fiction. Refugees--Fiction. Valparaiso (Chile)--Fiction.

For eleven-year-old Celeste Marconi, life on Butterfly Hill is idyllic, full of laughter, and replete with the gift of words and the beauty of friendship. However, her peaceful existence is soon shattered when strange ships appear in the harbor and a new military dictatorship takes over the leadership of Chile. It seems that almost overnight the vibrant city of Valparaiso is draped in a heavy fog of despair, fear, and hate. New
orders are in place everywhere: colorful murals on school walls must be painted white, girls must wear skirts to school with their hair pulled back in buns, and boys must have short hair. People seen as a threat to the new leadership start to disappear; friends become suspicious of each other, unsure where true loyalties lie. Soon Celeste’s parents go into hiding, and Celeste is sent away to live with her aunt in Maine. Surrounded by strangers and learning to speak a new language, Celeste struggles to find her place in this part of the world so far from her own beloved home, all the while fearfully wondering if she will ever return home or see her parents again.

Marjorie Agosín’s I Lived on Butterfly Hill is an emotionally and verbally rich novel, rightfully worthy of receiving the Pura Belpré author award of 2015. Like the main character in the story, Agosín is clearly a lover of words, bringing to life the colorful sights and vibrant sounds of Valparaíso and depicting the grays of Juliette Cove with fresh metaphors and poetic prose. The author paints both an enchanting and horrific story, simultaneously orchestrating a symphony of beauty and destruction, of love and hate, of life and death. Readers will find Celeste’s character charmingly irresistible, full of emotional depth and maturity that far exceeds her young years.

The powerful theme of this story is learning to survive “earthquakes of the soul” and how to rebuild and continue on in their aftermaths. Like Celeste’s own journey, this novel is not a fast-paced read but rather a slow, life-changing journey, each chapter meant to be savored, experienced, and reflected upon.

Justina McBride, CLJ

Award(s): Belpré Award (Author)

Nine open arms / Benny Lindelauf ; translated from the Dutch by John Nieuwenhuizen ; jacket and interior art by Dasha Tolstikova.

LCCN 2014014977 ISBN 9781592701469, hardcover, $16.95.
256 p. : map ; 22 cm. Grades 7-12
Fic Rating: 4

Translated from the Dutch by John Nieuwenhuizen, Nine Open Arms is a historical novel with dry humor and a family story interwoven into one book.

Nine Open Arms features a motherless family, headed by a father who is a dreamer. He takes risks that cause them to move frequently, until they come to live in this house at the edge of civilization. Narrated by the oldest daughter Fing (the responsible one), Nine Open Arms introduces us to the other family members: the feisty grandmother Oma Mei, Fing’s sister Muulke who talks of life as a “tragical tragedy,” another daughter, and the four sons.

Their most recent move takes them to a house with a mystery: Why is the front door at the back? Why is the house as long as nine open arms? Why is there a bed that looks like a tombstone?

Lindelauf writes a character-driven story, while Nieuwenhuizen provides a glossary of slang words maintained in the English text, and translator’s note. Divided into three parts, the book takes place in 1930s, then transports the reader back to 1860s where another story begins.
about earlier occupants, and concludes with how that ties into the lives of the present.

Intermingled with dreary family circumstances is a dry sense of humor that finds the reader sympathetically smiling as the story unfolds. The illustrations on the front and back covers, as well as the end pages, help the reader visualize this peculiar house. At the heart of the mystery is a romance involving an extra-marital relationship.

Recommended for public and school libraries. Winner of the 2015 Mildred L. Batchelder Award (given to an excellent foreign children’s book translated into English), this book is suitable for middle and high school students.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Award(s): Batchelder Honor Book

MIDDLE SCHOOL NONFICTION

Brown girl dreaming / Jacqueline Woodson.

336 p. : ill., genealogical tables ; 22 cm. Grades 5-12
B Rating: 5


Award-winning author Jacqueline Woodson presents a poetic memoir in Brown Girl Dreaming, a 2015 Newbery Honor Book. It also won the National Book Award and Coretta Scott King Award, and was nominated for the Sibert Honor Award.

Woodson shares her experience of growing up as an African American during the 1960s and 1970s in both the North and the South. Brown Girl Dreaming covers her childhood during the Civil Rights movement. Her love of stories comes from her family—several aunts who were storytellers and helped her recall memories, both good and bad. She writes “that what is bad won’t be bad forever, and what is good can sometimes last a long, long time” (p.130).

Woodson tells her story in free verse. Her experiences paint vivid pictures for the reader. More than just a book of poetry, Woodson’s poems tell the stories of her memories of her family and her childhood. They are accessible and easy to understand.

The book opens with a family tree for both parents’ families and a poem by Langston Hughes (“Hold fast to dreams / For if dreams die / Life is a broken-winged bird / That cannot fly.”). There are five sections, followed by the author’s note, “thankfuls” (acknowledgements) and family photos. Woodson shares that this book is about “my past, my people, my memories, my story.” She writes about Columbus, Ohio even though she was only a baby when she lived there, as well as Greenville, South Carolina.

Recommended for the classroom, public libraries and school libraries. Woodson’s Brown Girl Dreaming is a biographical narrative that will inspire students as well as teach them history.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Award(s): Coretta Scott King Award (Author) ; Newbery Honor Book ; Sibert Honor Book
HIGH SCHOOL NONFICTION

The family Romanov : murder, rebellion & the fall of Imperial Russia / Candace Fleming.

292 pages : illustrations, genealogical table, map ; 25 cm Grades 9-12
947.08 Rating: 5

The end of the absolute rule of the Romanovs of the Russian Empire was inevitable, based on the incompetence, isolation, and arrogance of the royal family. They lived in opulence, separated from reality, confusing their right to rule with ability. They had no effectual knowledge of the issues their country faced, and those who did were consistently banned for perceived challenges to the royal family’s power. In The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion & the Fall of Imperial Russia, winner of the Orbus Pictus Award, Candace Fleming lays bare the ingrained blindness of the royal family, the desperation of the peasantry, and the opportunism of charismatic men such as Alexander Kerensky and Vladimir Lenin.

The reader learns about the last tsar, Nicolas II, and his German bride, Alexandra, their story written in counterpoint to the stories of the starving people who live “outside the palace.” Nicolas came to the throne as a young man, with a wife far more suited to absolute rule. She had the education and strength that Nicolas never had, and she used it to maintain her family’s way of life. The major events of the months before Nicolas II abdicated become real with all the horror of war, rebellion, and the collapse of government. The story culminates with the murders of the family—the tsar and tsarina and their five children. It was only in 2007 that the missing skeletons of the last two members of the royal family were found.

This complex history is riveting, a highly readable account full of the stuff of fiction, yet devastatingly real. At the back of the book are endnotes detailing Fleming’s most important sources, an attribution of quotes, and an index.

Diane Carver Sekeres, CLJ

Award(s): Sibert Honor Book
PRIMARY FICTION

The very worried sparrow / Meryl Doney; illustrated by Gaby Hansen.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 25 cm. Grades K-3
E Rating: 5

The Very Worried Sparrow tells the tale of a sparrow. Who worries. A lot. From fear of starvation to fear of attack by sparrowhawk, the Very Worried Sparrow has a lot to learn about “the Great Father.”

Meryl Doney and Gaby Hansen team up to create a lovely book that perfectly illustrates that God cares even for the needs of sparrows. Wonderful illustrations and relatable concepts make this a wonderful book to read aloud. Most pages have only a short paragraph or brief, easy-to-read dialogue, with the rest of the page filled with the soft colors of watercolor illustrations. These sweet illustrations aptly show a little bird family—cheerfully cheeping through each birdie life step—while the Very Worried Sparrow meeps out his worries. As the Very Worried Sparrow meeps his way to maturity, a wise dove reminds him of his need to trust the Great Father. This book reminds all, old and young, of the many ways God meets our needs.

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

Such a little mouse / [text] Alice Schertle; [illustrations] Stephanie Yue.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 cm. Age 3-Grade K
E Rating: 4
Seasons--Fiction. Mice--Fiction.

Such a Little Mouse by Alice Schertle follows an adventurous and resourceful mouse through each season as he explores the wide world, finding lots to see and do.

Throughout the year, the busy mouse collects seeds, watercress, and acorns, tucking everything away in the cozy hole where he lives. When winter comes, he has everything he needs for a warm meal and long nap!

The little gray mouse is winsomely portrayed in colorful illustrations by Stephanie Yue. Above ground, the mouse interacts with the natural world—other critters, a beaver’s dam, a puddle, fall leaves, snow. Below ground are imaginative scenes of his three-room home, complete with a bedroom, kitchen, and storeroom! The artist does justice to the little mouse’s personality and charm, his “pink as petals” ears, and his “three twitchety whiskers.”

Within the pure fun of this bright picture book is the lesson that even small efforts are important. Alice Schertle’s brief text, repetitive phrases, and lively sound words contribute to the overall appeal for young children. With the author’s gentle tone and soothing rhythm, Such a Little Mouse has all the qualities of a calming bedtime read-aloud.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ
**Ally-saurus & the First Day of School**  
*Richard Torrey.*

1 v. (unpaged) ; ill. ; 19 cm.  
E Rating: 5  
School children--Fiction.  
First day of school--Fiction.

Ally loves dinosaurs but when she arrives for her first day of kindergarten, she finds that most of the other girls are more interested in princesses. Just as she is beginning to feel a bit lonely, she is joined in the lunchroom by a few new friends who share and then broaden her imaginative world. *Ally-saurus & the First Day of School* by Richard Torrey is a picture book tale about being yourself while also being open to new ideas.

*Ally-saurus & the First Day of School* is a lighthearted story with a helpful message. Dinosaurs can have tea with princesses, soar with a dragon, fly in a spaceship, and chase pirates! Our different passions enrich our lives (and kindergarten) if we share what we love and receive friendship in kind.

Author/illustrator Richard Torrey sketches the pigtailed Ally and her multi-ethnic classmates in black and white pencil. The imaginative reality of the children is cleverly highlighted as colored overlays of dinosaur tails, a lion's mane, space suit, pirate gear, and princess crowns. Don't miss the “class photo” on the back cover. The importance of Ally’s stuffed dinosaurs and Walter’s prized lunch box are also whimsically validated by color. A soft watercolor background throughout adds contrast and visual appeal.

*Ally-saurus & the First Day of School* would be fun reading for young children getting ready for school or any new situation. Adult readers will admire the patient and gentle way Ally’s parents and teacher accommodate her all-things-dinosaur phase, and all will enjoy the surprising twist on the final page of the story.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

**PRIMARY NONFICTION**

**Raindrops Roll**  
*April Pulley Sayre.*

New York: Beach Lane Books, 2015.  
1 v.: col. ill.; 29 cm.  
PS Grade 4  
551.48 Rating: 5  
Water.  
Rain and rainfall--Juvenile literature.  
Hydrologic cycle--Juvenile literature.

A storm approaches and rain begins to fall. It patters and spatters, slips and drips, fills and spills. *Raindrops Roll* by April Pulley Sayre is a descriptive and photographic presentation of rain. This beautiful non-fiction picture book broadly touches on the earth’s water cycle, but its main focus is an up-close look at individual raindrops and their unique characteristics. Using her own photography (shot in a neighbor’s garden), author April Pulley Sayre shows how raindrops cling to blades of grass, wash and weigh down plants, make mud, reflect light, send insects for cover, magnify, and ultimately dry up.

*Raindrops Roll* inspires a new appreciation for rainy days. The poetic text is just as enticing as the dazzling, artfully-arranged photographs. Short phrases are eloquent and explanatory, with occasional rhyming and a mix of simple and more complex vocabulary. The book concludes with “A Splash of Science” for older readers, which defines the three forms of water and offers expanded information along with suggested additional
resources.

*Nina Ditmar, *CLJ*

**Tiny creatures : the world of microbes / Nicola Davies, illustrated by Emily Sutton.**

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 30 cm.  K-Grade 3  
576 Rating: 5  
Microorganisms. Microbiology. Bacteria.

*Tiny Creatures* makes science fun. The clear-to-understand text encourages children to learn about microbes—organisms that can eat plants, animals, and even rocks. Davies presents the minute sizes of microbes and their numbers, diverse forms, and varied roles in shaping our world. Sutton’s large-scale illustrations help children visualize microorganisms and the processes too small to see.

The narrative and watercolor illustrations reach the intended audience as they include both repetition and active storytelling to convey the content of microbial life and their work. The use of generous white space on some pages with illustrations and paintings filling a page or two-page spread invites readers to linger. *Tiny Creatures* serves well to be read aloud and in this regard can easily be used productively with older students. Practical points such as the importance of washing our hands add to the overall scope of the story.

Older students can utilize *Microbes: Discover an Unseen World* by Christine Burillo-Kirch, though *Tiny Creatures* will reach these students too, most particularly if read out loud.

*Leroy Hommerding, *CLJ*

**Firefly July : a year of very short poems / selected by Paul B. Janeczko ; illustrated by Melissa Sweet.**

47 p. : col. ill. ; 30 cm.  PS-Grade 5  
811 Rating: 5  

*Firefly July: A Year of Very Short Poems* is an assortment of 36 seasonal poems collected by Paul B. Janeczko and notable for their brevity.

Beginning with a spring morning (“Daybreak reminds us- the hills have arrived just in time to celebrate”) and ending on a cozy winter night (“A welcome mat of moonlight on the floor. Wipe your feet before getting into bed”), each poem in this anthology celebrates something special about the world around us. The imagery is both familiar (a September breeze, crisp fall leaves, a dusting of snow) and surprising (a subway at rush hour, a truck heading to the junkyard) as readers travel through the year one little poem at a time.

Watercolor, gouache, and mixed media illustrations by Melissa Sweet give these little poems a big canvas. Each busy page is colorful and eye-catching, from the low perspective of muddy boots, to a dandelion that looks like the sun, to close-ups of a young boy’s pocket trinkets.

While *Firefly July: A Year of Very Short Poems* is a wonderful introduction to poetry for children, adult readers would undoubtedly enjoy the content and presentation. Ranging from just three to ten lines, these worthy selections (including a few from well-known poets) would be easy to memorize, savor, and share.

*Nina Ditmar, *CLJ*
INTERMEDIATE FICTION

A million ways home / Dianna Dorisi Winget.

242 p.; 22 cm. Grades 4-6
Fic Rating: 4
Dogs--Fiction. German shepherd dog--Fiction.
Witnesses--Protection--Fiction. Witnesses--Fiction.
Spokane County (Wash.)--Fiction.

An “uncertain future”—not words an orphaned 12-year-old wants to hear. Poppy Parker has been raised by her Grandma Beth since her parents were killed in a bizarre bombing when she was a baby. Poppy is taken temporarily to a children’s center when Grandma Beth has a stroke. In her desperation to make sure her Grandma is OK, Poppy impulsively leaves the center but gets lost on the way to the hospital. She stops in a neighborhood store to get something to eat and, shockingly, hears gunshots, sees a murderer fleeing the store, and tells the murderer her name when he threatens her. As the only witness, her life is in jeopardy, but luckily, the detective on the case takes her to stay with his mom, a generous and loving woman who anchors Poppy. Only, her Grandma isn’t getting better, and then the murderer tracks her down.

Dianna Dorisi Winget writes about trust and redemption in A Million Ways Home. Poppy earns the trust of a German shepherd slated for euthanasia and redeems his life as a K-9 core member. Detective Trey Brannigan sees his care of Poppy as redemption for his mistake that cost a girl her life, early in his career. Poppy meets and bonds with Lily over their shared penchant for making decisions that Grandma calls impulsive and that the Detective calls stupid. But Poppy keeps her head in the end and redeems herself with quick thinking. This is a complex story with endearing characters and believable relationships between adults and tweens. Poppy lands on her feet, trusting the adults who have become part of her life for her future.

Diane Carver Sekeres, CLJ

A horse for Kate / Miralee Ferrell. (Horses and friends ; 1)

208 p.; 14 cm. Grades 3-7
Fic Rating: 5
Girls--Fiction.

In A Horse for Kate, Kate Ferris and her family move across their state to her late grandfather’s farm. She dreams of owning a horse. At her new school, she becomes friends with Tori, a girl who lives nearby. When Kate and Tori discover a malnourished mare wandering alone, they try to find its owner. Could this mystery horse be an answer to Kate’s prayers?

In Silver Spurs, Kate has the idea to start a riding
stable, but it isn’t as easy as she thinks. A bad storm threatens the show, but they manage to get things ready. Then another rider from their stable—spoiled teen Melissa—is eliminated from the competition when her horse is injured. Can Kate overcome her dislike for Melissa to do the right thing?

Miralee Ferrell’s love for horses is evident in her stories. More character-driven than plot-driven, Ferrell’s books focus on Kate and the challenges she faces. Kate is a normal teen who struggles with her attitude, but realizes when she is in the wrong. She prays for God to help her, but the tone isn’t preachy.

Told from Kate’s perspective but mostly in a third-person narrative, parents will welcome Kate as a role model. There is also a homeschooled boy who is a good friend, but not a “boyfriend.” Melissa actually befriends Kate’s autistic brother and is amazingly kind to him. Her brother is handled with sensitivity in the books, giving the reader a rare glimpse into family life with an autistic child.

Ferrell’s books include three discussion questions for reflection. Mystery Rider (Book 3) and Blue Ribbon Trail Ride (Book 4) are expected in Fall 2015 and Spring 2016, respectively.

Recommended for school and public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

I survived the Joplin Tornado, 2011 / by Lauren Tarshis ; illustrated by Scott Dawson. (I survived; 12)

New York: Scholastic, 2015.

89 p. : ill. ; 20 cm. Grades 3-6
Fic Rating: 5
Tornadoes--Fiction Survival--Fiction

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 2011 tornado that swept through Joplin, Missouri.

In The Joplin Tornado, eleven-year-old Dexter James is fascinated by tornados and regularly watched Dr. Gage’s TV show Tornado Mysteries with his older brother, Jeremy, until Jeremy joined the US Navy SEALS. His brother writes Dex about his experiences on various missions. Wanting his own adventure, Dex leaps at the chance to chase a nearby storm with Dr. Gage, unaware that the storm has deadly plans of its own.

When the tornado shifts direction and heads toward Dex’s hometown, his bravery in the face of danger is put to the test. Will he be able to survive? What will happen to his family and friends as this destructive tornado hits Joplin?

As with the other “I Survived” books, The Joplin Tornado, 2011 is well-researched. It is filled with details about tornados, the timeline of the Joplin tornado, titles for further reading, as well as an author’s note. Readers will enjoy reading about Dex’s experience which was inspired by stories told to the author by survivors of the Joplin tornado.

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
INTERMEDIATE NONFICTION

Wangari Maathai: the woman who planted millions of trees / Franck Prevot; illustrated by Aurelia Fronty.

LCCN 2013049030 ISBN 9781580896269, hardcover, $17.95.
45 p. : ill. (some col.), col. map ; 27 cm. Grades 2-7
B Rating: 5

Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees is a picture book biography that is formatted for older students with lots of biographical information on Kenyan environmentalist and political activist Wangari Maathai. The narrative reflects an appreciation of her native Swahili language and the cultural cares and aims that were an integral part of her life. It acknowledges the political turmoil of a corrupt Kenyan government, which fell in 2002, and enables children to understand how she earned the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004.

Those having earlier picture books, such as Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai by Claire A. Nivola, Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace by Jen Cullerton Johnson, or Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya by Donna Jo Napoli, will gain by adding Wangari Maathai to their library. The wider focus on her life in Wangari Maathai gives much for students doing research, and the vocabulary encourages students to think critically. While there is much to digest, the text is manageable for upper elementary students.

Aurelia Fronty’s bright illustrations are reminiscent of Henri Matisse’s and John Peter Russell’s work and aid in conveying the color and diversity of Kenya. The bold use of color lends a spirit that seems to expand the text in helping the reader to focus more on the meaning of the information. The beauty of the colors aids in bringing about a mindset about nature and ecology that honors the woman who helped her people and her country.

The notes at the end of the book, which include a timeline, a map of Africa, and sidebars on Kenya Today and The Forest: A Treasure in Danger, add to the overall information.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ
**MIDDLE SCHOOL FICTION**

**The honest truth / Dan Gemeinhart.**
New York: Scholastic, 2015.
229 p.; 22 cm. Grades 7-9
Fic Rating: 5

In this debut novel by Dan Gemeinhart, the reader meets thirteen-year-old Mark who dreams of climbing a mountain one day. Like any normal kid, he has a dog and best friend; he also likes to write haiku and take photos. But Mark is not a normal kid; he has cancer--again.

*The Honest Truth* is about a young teen’s decision to pursue his dream after receiving a diagnosis that the cancer has returned and the outlook is not favorable. So Mark runs away, taking his faithful dog Beau, a camera, his notebook, and a plan. Careful planning on Mark’s part allows him to throw the police and others off his trail and to actually reach Mount Rainier.

Unfortunately, a winter storm develops, complicating things as he and Beau attempt the climb up the mountain. Will they make it to the top of the mountain alive, or will they fail in their attempt as they battle the weather, fatigue, side effects of the cancer, and the dangerous terrain of the mountain?

Gemeinhart pens an excellent first novel, told mostly in Mark’s voice (alternating with his best friend Jessie’s thoughts about whether she should keep Mark’s secret, once she figures out where he is headed). More than a novel about a teen facing death, *The Honest Truth* is about friendship and making every day count. It is about going on the adventure of a lifetime. However, due to its subject matter, it can be a little intense for younger readers. It is suggested *The Honest Truth* be read and discussed between adults and teens.

Recommended for school and public libraries. Would make a good book for discussion in families about making choices as young teens.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

**Rory’s promise / Michaela MacColl, Rosemary Nichols. (Hidden histories)**
Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek, 2014.
LCCN 2014935295 ISBN 9781620916230, hardcover, $16.95.
288 p.; 22 cm. Grades 5-7
Fic Rating: 4

Twelve-year-old Rory is always making promises, and if she has anything to do with it, she is a girl of her word. Of all the promises that Rory has made in her young life, the greatest was her promise to her dying mother that Rory would always stay with her little sister Violet. For the past three years while living at the Sisters of Charity Foundling Hospital, Rory has kept her promise, keeping Violet close to her side. However, Rory’s world is shattered when Sister Anna announces that they have found a home for Violet in Arizona, a home far away from New York and Rory. Despite Sister Anna’s refusal to allow Rory to accompany Violet west, Rory hatches her own plan and steals away on the westbound train, determined to keep her only family together. Will Rory be able to keep her promise, or will the circumstances out west be more than she can...
handle?

In Rory’s Promise, Michaela MacColl and Rosemary Nichols combine historical accounts, places, and people with a suspenseful fictional plot and inspiring leading heroine, creating a dynamite story full of authentic detail about the era and the experience of orphans who journeyed west on the Orphan Trains. This is validated in the end note to readers. Rory’s tenacious and courageous character is full of enough grit, street smarts, and natural intuition to keep everyone on their toes, as well as warm hearts with her unwavering loyalty and loving spirit. She is sure to inspire young girls. Underneath her wily tactics and gumptious nature is a struggle to let go and trust in another’s help and love—a struggle that is representative of the real battle that many children who have been abandoned have probably experienced.

Themes of family, sisterly devotion, and learning to trust are all woven throughout, adding depth and emotion to the adventure plot. Some weightier topics touched upon include unwed mothers, ill treatment of orphans, and racial and religious bigotry. Overall, this book will most likely appeal to elementary and early middle school girls who enjoy adventure and historical fiction.

Justina McBride, CLJ

MIDDLE SCHOOL NONFICTION

The case for grace for kids / Lee Strobel, with Jesse Florea.

Grand Rapids, Mi: ZonderKidz, 2015.
170 p.: ill.; 22 cm. Grades 5-9
234 Rating: 5


The newest addition to bestselling author Lee Stobel’s youth collection is Case for Grace for Kids, a presentation of true stories that introduce and explore the concept of God’s forgiving love.

Lee Strobel and Jesse Florea write about seven real people ("The Orphan," "The Prodigal," "The Professor," "The Evangelist," "The Executioner," "The Hero," and "The Thief") who have experienced and recognized God’s grace in their lives. Their situations include abandonment, drug abuse, isolation, discrimination, stealing, endangerment, childhood illness, and genocide. Each has overcome adversity through God’s mercy and compassionate care. Though intended for a juvenile audience, some realities described in the book are particularly harsh, such as the actions of the Khmer Rouge.

With Case for Grace for Kids, primary author Lee Strobel aims to share the good news of God’s munificence and love. He writes of his personal encounter with discovering and accepting God’s grace, and incorporates many of his own thoughts and realizations throughout the book. A final chapter provides numerous biblical citations to help readers find references to grace in scripture.

With conversational chapters, easy readability, and compelling situations, Case for Grace for Kids offers a means for young readers to discover and
explore the certainty of God’s grace. At the end of each “case,” a shaded box (“Face-to-Face with Grace”) poses questions for discussion or introspection. Cartoon drawings by Terry Colon and sidebar trivia (the name “Grace,” saying grace before meals) add a light touch.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

HIGH SCHOOL FICTION

All fall down / Ally Carter ; [edited by] David Levithan. (Embassy row ; 1)

310 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 7-10
Fic Rating: 4

All Fall Down is a compelling young adult novel written by Ally Carter, a New York Times bestselling author. It is the first of Carter’s new Embassy Row series.

Grace Blakely is on a mission. She is determined to find and bring to justice the man she believes murdered her mother. Unfortunately there are a few obstacles in her way. No one else believes Grace’s mother was murdered, not even her grandfather the American ambassador of Adria. Plus, those around her question her sanity. Meanwhile, teenage Grace is expected to learn to behave with diplomatic skill in order to help maintain complex and potentially dangerous international relationships. Grace may be pressured to behave like Mia Thermopolis from The Princess Diaries, but instead she is driven by inner forces to break rules and take risks.

Will Grace be able to convince everyone that she isn’t crazy? Will she be able to obtain justice for her mother’s murder? If typical teenage shenanigans have the potential to cause havoc, Grace, as the American Ambassador’s grandchild, has the potential to spark an international incident.

Carter’s presentation of Grace’s trauma is brilliant and realistic. From the intrusive thoughts that haunt Grace, to her emotional meltdowns and flashbacks, Carter has crafted a tale that evokes in readers a sense of the confusing, ambiivalent emotional reality of trauma victims. Carter’s storytelling skill is evident in her pacing that creates suspense yet is touched with enough lightness–humor, teen antics, and implicit romantic tension–to keep the danger and mystery of Grace’s dilemma from weighing down the plot.

All Fall Down contains themes concerning the desire to search for truth and justice, and the difficulties of discerning and believing truth once it is found. Plus, All Fall Down has secret underground passageways, a scary scarred man, and an excellent plot twist!

Maureen Garcia, CLJ

The testing / by Joelle Charbonneau. (The testing ; 1)

344 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5
Independent study / by Joelle Charbonneau. (The testing ; 2)

310 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5

Graduation day / by Joelle Charbonneau. (The testing ; 3)

291 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5

In The Testing, sixteen-year-old Malencia Vale, or Cia as her friends and family call her, is chosen along with three other classmates to participate in The Testing, the process through which the United Commonwealth government selects the brightest graduates throughout the colonies to continue their education at the University. Cia’s thrilled that her lifelong dream to follow in her father’s footsteps and play her role in the revitalization of the country has come true. However, on the eve of her departure, Cia’s father reveals untold secrets about his Testing experience, such as his erased memories that do battle with haunting nightmares of death and classmates that never returned. Whether these are dreams or glimpses of a reality forgotten, Cia’s father warns her to trust no one and to question everything. As Cia and her fellow classmates begin The Testing process, she soon realizes that her father’s nightmares are becoming her reality.

In Independent Study, Cia’s initial Testing is over and she is now a first-year Government student at the University; however, the real testing is only beginning. As danger and forgotten memories plague her at every corner, Cia is determined to survive and reveal the brutal truth about The Testing.

In Graduation Day, the stakes are higher than ever, as Cia must deal with the dangerous secret she has uncovered about the rebel organization. Now she is even less certain who is a friend or foe, or if she has what it takes to stand and fight. Will the unknown faces of future Testing candidates keep her from running?

In “The Testing” series, Joelle Charbonneau brings to life a post-apocalyptic world of chilling proportions and nail-biting suspense that will keep the pages turning long into the early morning hours. Cia is a three-dimensional character whose strength, determination, and brilliant mind are balanced by conflicting emotions of fear, uncertainty, and desire for revenge. Her personal growth and struggle throughout the series are well summed up by her thoughts in the final book: “Where my beliefs were once black and white, I now see shades of gray” (p. 65). Her fight for life and truth make her a courageous role model.

This series is not a lighthearted read, as it is full of many intense and tragic, often disturbing, situations, including suicide, the encouragement of teen violence and murder, and descriptions of inhuman treatment and forced killings. There are also instances of minor profanity. The teen romance involves frequent kissing but is kept to a PG-level. Powerful themes of this series include sacrifice, forgiveness, personal atonement, and the triumph of good against seemingly
insurmountable evil. This moving series will appeal to fans of “The Hunger Games” series and other dystopian adventure novels.

*Justina McBride, CLJ*

**Diary of a waitress: the not-so-glamorous life of a Harvey girl / Carolyn Meyer.**

Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek, 2015.
LCCN 2014948477 ISBN 9781620916520, hardcover, $17.95.
348 p. : maps ; 22 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic Rating: 5
Waitresses--Juvenile fiction. New Mexico--Fiction.

Seventeen year-old Kansas native Kitty Evans receives a shock when her father announces she will be unable to attend college to obtain her journalism degree as planned. Instead, he has arranged for her to work in the local shoe store. Distraught at the idea of selling footwear, Kitty stumbles on a newspaper advertisement for a job as a Harvey Girl, a waitress serving customers in the Harvey House restaurants operated along the rail lines. Hired and stationed in Belen, New Mexico, she chronicles her experiences in her diary. Long hours and hard work mingle with the joys of making friends and finding romance. A chance meeting culminates with an opportunity to work as a freelance reporter, and a whole new world opens up to Kitty when she meets the Native Americans and Mexican and Chinese immigrants who work for the railroad.

Written in the first-person, *Diary of a Waitress* effectively captures the emotions of a young woman struggling to reconcile her goals and dreams with acceptable social mores of the 1920s.

The characters are well-developed, and vivid descriptions draw the reader into the era and the exotic locale of the American Southwest. Photographs of actual Fred Harvey restaurants and staff are interspersed throughout the book. Author Carolyn Meyer provides a well-researched, highly readable, fictionalized account of the life of a Harvey Girl. Adults may also enjoy *Diary of a Waitress.*

*Linda Matchett, CLJ*
ADULT FICTION

The wood's edge : a novel / Lori Benton. (The Path Finders ; 1)

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

One dark day, with chaos surrounding and death’s touch still lingering, Major Reginald Aubrey makes a desperate, grief-blinded decision that will have consequences affecting his life and all those involved from that moment forward. On the same day, a captured Oneida mother gives birth to two twin boys—one white, like her, and one brown, like his father. When her white son is replaced with a dead baby while she is recovering from the birth, the mother has only two clues surrounding her son’s abduction: a redcoat officer and the name Aw-bree. As the years pass, neither the officer nor the Oneida mother can forget that horrifying day nor its effects on those involved, as one family is torn apart by a father’s secret guilt and the other haunted by sorrow and the bitter drive for revenge. Then one day, an unlikely bond is forged between a young girl and a brave. Will this friendship pave the way for long sought retribution or restoration?

In The Wood's Edge, Lori Benton contrives a tangled web of deception, guilt, and sorrow set amidst the backdrop of a Colonial America on the brink of revolution. The symbolism of the title reflects the separation and coming together of two different worlds so sensitively portrayed in the plot. Rich with historical accuracy and powerful themes of forgiveness, grace, redemption, and love, this novel is sure to grip readers with its well-developed plot and intensity of emotion. The characters in this book are tragically yet beautifully flawed, earning them credibility, charm, and sympathy. Major Aubrey is a powerful example of God the Father’s unending grace and love for His children, which do not alter regardless of the choices or decisions those children make. The two love stories that develop throughout the plot are perfect examples of beauty and goodness that can arise from the ashes of destruction. The author does a superb job of concluding with a resolution that is satisfying, while also leaving enough undone to make way for a much anticipated continuation of the story.

Justina McBride, CLJ

Gone without a trace : a novel / Patricia Bradley. (Logan Point ; 3)

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

Homicide detective Livy Reynolds’s cousin disappeared from Logan Point over two years ago. When a senator’s granddaughter goes missing, Livy sees disturbing similarities in the two cases. On a leave of absence after a shooting gone awry, she swallows her dislike of the rich and self-important private investigator Alex Jennings and joins him to find the two women. When a third woman disappears, Livy and Alex realize that time is running out. They must put aside their differences and solve the case before someone else falls victim to the kidnapper.

Author Patricia Bradley’s third title in her Logan
Point series, *Gone Without a Trace*, is a fast-paced, romantic suspense novel. Readers may readily relate to her characters, likeable despite the flaws and problems that cause them to stumble and second-guess themselves. Livy’s and Alex’s growth as Christians is effectively woven throughout the story. The message of God’s forgiveness and the importance of forgiving ourselves is presented without being preachy. There are periodic episodes involving violence and use of the date-rape drug GHB. Recommended for public and church libraries.

*Linda Matchett, CLJ*

**The butterfly and the violin: a hidden masterpiece novel / Kristy Cambron. (A hidden masterpiece novel ; 1)**

330 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5
Auschwitz (Concentration camp)--Fiction.
Women violinists--Austria--Fiction. Art dealers--Fiction. Christian fiction

**A sparrow in Terezin / Kristy Cambron. (A hidden masterpiece novel ; 2)**

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

Kristy Cambron presents two World War II historical novels with alternating points of view. In *The Butterfly and the Violin*, a contemporary woman and high-ranking Nazi officer’s daughter are connected to a painting. In *A Sparrow in Terezin*, the art dealer shares a connection with an imprisoned Polish reporter in Terezin.

In *The Butterfly and the Violin*, art dealer Sera James searches for a Holocaust-era portrait she remembers seeing in her youth. She meets wealthy businessman William Hanover who is also looking for the painting. Together they unravel the story behind the painting of violinist Adele von Bron, who trades her privileged life for Auschwitz after being caught smuggling Jews out of Vienna. Forced to play the violin, Adele maintains her faith and finds hope in her art, even in the worst of circumstances.

*The Butterfly and the Violin* is a juxtaposition of Adele’s life in Auschwitz and Sera’s contemporary life. Although Adele and Sera are separated by decades, both suffer from heartbreak and broken dreams until they find God’s peace. William and Sera also find a second chance at love at the end of their search.

In *A Sparrow in Terezin*, William is unjustly accused of a crime and Sera tries to help prove his innocence by reaching out to an estranged member of William’s family. In doing so, she uncovers the story of Kaje Makovsky, a Polish reporter who lived in London during the Blitz.

When Kaje hears of the Jews being killed, she returns to Prague to help her family escape, only to be imprisoned in Terezin. Kaje saves some children from Terezin on their way to Auschwitz—including a little girl who will play a role in William’s family history. Both women fight to protect all they hold dear, even at personal cost. They discover that God provides strength to weather the fiercest storms.

Cambron weaves the multiple plot lines and characters expertly. Both character and plot development are intricate and complex. Both books include a reading group guide, as well as an author’s note.
Recommended for adult collections in public libraries. Fans of historical fiction will be delighted to discover this new author. *The Butterfly and the Violin* is a nominee for the 2015 *Inspy Debut Novel.*

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

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**No place to hide : a novel / Lynette Eason. (Hidden identity ; 3)**


332 p. ; 22 cm.     Adult

Fic     Rating: 5


Award-winning author Lynette Eason concludes her contemporary suspense series with a woman who wants to help a childhood friend prove his innocence in connection with a terrorist plot. (The first two titles in this series were reviewed in the March/April 2014 and September/October 2014 issues of the *Christian Library Journal.*)

In *No Place to Hide*, Jackie Sellers hasn’t seen her childhood friend Ian Lockwood for almost fifteen years when he suddenly appears on national TV as a person of interest to the FBI. Convinced he is innocent, Jackie tries to persuade him to go to the police. Afraid he will be killed before they clear his name, they run from the FBI and the bad guys who framed him. Who is framing him and why?

Jackie and Ian find themselves in the middle of a manhunt as they try to unravel—and prevent—the catastrophe planned by the real terrorists. Who is the true mastermind behind it all? Just how far will one friend go to help another?

As always, Eason is an excellent storyteller, weaving plot twists with character development in her books. *No Place to Hide* is filled with edge-of-your-seat action with chase scenes, light romance, and a realistic, plausible terrorist plot that might keep the reader up at night. The opening chapter grabs the reader’s attention and holds it through the twists and turns until the final page is read. The romance and faith are not overpowering. Ian is a believer, while Jackie struggles in her faith. Violence in the story is appropriate and not graphic.

Eason’s books will be of interest to fans of DiAnn Mills, Dee Henderson, and Irene Hannon. Recommended for adult collections in public libraries.

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

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**Becoming Bea / Leslie Gould. (The courtships of Lancaster County ; 4)**


348 p. ; 22 cm.     Adult

Fic     Rating: 5


In *Becoming Bea*, Beatrice Zook doesn’t understand why her sister Molly and her mother won’t let her make her own decisions. Molly tries to live Bea’s life for her. Bea also doesn’t understand why Ben Rupp likes to tease and antagonize her. When Mamm and Molly announce they’re going to be moving, Bea doesn’t want to move and instead finds a job with a local family helping to care for their triplets. Little does she know that Ben is employed by the same family. She can’t get him out of her head no matter how hard she tries and it doesn’t help that their friends are trying to push them into a
Just as they realize they do have feelings for each other, a serious misunderstanding comes between them. Both Bea and Ben have important lessons to learn about trust.

Leslie Gould has created an interesting character in Bea Zook. Bea remains strong in her faith despite her conflicting feelings about her sister, Molly, and Ben. She seeks God’s guidance to help her make the right decisions and relies on her faith to help choose the right path. Bea learns that even though she doesn’t always agree with her mom and sister, she’s not necessarily being disobedient. Some people have different goals in life and she sets out to find her own. While part of a series, the book can be read as a stand-alone.

Recommended for public and school libraries.

Trina Chase, CLJ

Love unexpected / Jody Hedlund. (Beacons of hope ; 1)

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

Hearts made whole / Jody Hedlund. (Beacons of hope ; 2)

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

Jody Hedlund pens a new historical fiction series set in the 1860s and featuring life in the isolated lighthouses on the shoreline of Michigan’s Great Lakes.

In Love Unexpected, Emma Chambers and her brother Ryan are left destitute following a shipwreck. Ryan is able to find work. The only solution for Emma is a marriage of convenience to Patrick Garraty, a widowed lighthouse keeper with a young toddler—but Patrick has a secret he is hiding from others. Did Patrick cause his first wife’s death? Will Emma be able to overcome the mystery surrounding Patrick’s past to build a future together?

In Hearts Made Whole, Ryan Chambers is now an injured veteran of the Civil War, assigned to the Windmill Point Lighthouse. Caroline Taylor has been acting as the lighthouse keeper since the death of her father—a role not usually permitted to women—but she may lose her means of providing financially for her ailing sister and other siblings. Ryan struggles to overcome his addiction to alcohol and pain medications. Who is trying to scare Caroline away with escalating violent pranks? Will they be able to overcome their past and embrace a hope for the future?

Hedlund creates believable characters—Ryan struggles with his addiction and doesn’t overcome it miraculously. He tries, stumbles, and tries again. The characters deal with prejudices and challenges. Caroline is a strong heroine who isn’t rescued by a male character, but her godly strength encourages Ryan to make changes in his life.

These books are a blend of romance, suspense, and mystery. The historical detail is well-researched, and the author has done an excellent job of incorporating fact into her fiction. There
were a few women lighthouse keepers and they served as inspiration for this series. There is an author’s note and a discussion guide in each book. Recommended for public and church libraries.

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

**Water from my heart : a novel / Charles Martin.**

New York: Center Street, 2015.  
363 p.; 24 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 5  

Deeply intelligent and deeply flawed, Charlie Finn is living high. He makes what proves to be his last drug-running drop in Miami, because unbeknownst to Charlie, his partner’s son Zaul tries to steal the drugs to pay a debt. When Zaul disappears after his plan goes tragically wrong, Charlie goes after the boy because he knows that it is all his fault. In alternating chapters, Charlie retells the story of his erratic life and lives his present story. Charlie follows Zaul’s trail to Nicaragua, the very place where he previously destroyed a family’s coffee business. Here he is forced to confront the consequences of his earlier actions.

From the very beginning of *Water From My Heart*, Charles Martin suspends the reader in rich, conflicting feelings: the horror of drug-running, the contempt of the clever man for the foolish rich, the pain of an abandoned child struggling to make his way in the world, his rage against a cruel employer, and finally the hopelessness of living with entirely selfish, and inevitably destructive, choices. Such is the complexity of Charlie Finn, a character who builds a vast indifference to the pain he brings others in order to mask his own unrealized belief that he deserves every abandonment in his life. Charlie is a surprisingly sympathetic character, one whose innate honesty surfaces in unlikely ways, ultimately responding to the love and hope of redemption he is offered by the people he most injured. The redeeming power of love to bring about repentance and restitution is clearly at work in Charlie’s life.

In a poignant afterword giving the genesis of the story, Martin brings readers face to face with our own indifference and the need to examine ourselves in the light of Christ’s love.

*Diane Carver Sekeres, CLJ*

**Playing by heart / Anne Mateer.**

Minneapolis, MN: River North, 2014.  
316 p.; 22 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 4  

In *Playing by Heart*, Lula Bowman is pursuing her dream. She has accepted a teaching position and received a scholarship for college in mathematics. But when her sister’s husband dies, Lula must go home to Oklahoma to help take care of her sister and nieces and nephews, leaving behind her college dreams. She has to find a job, and the only one available is a position teaching music and coaching the girls’ basketball team at the local school. She enlists Chet, the boys’ basketball coach, to help her learn the game. Chet finds himself falling for Lula, but he questions his self-worth because his mother does not understand his decision to stay home instead of enlisting to
fight in the war along with his brother. In any event, Lula doesn’t want to become serious with anyone because she plans to return to college as soon as her sister, Jewel, is able to take care of herself. But she finds herself enjoying the time she spends with Chet and Jewel’s family and also grows to love teaching music and basketball. Lula begins to wonder if she there’s more to life than college and mathematics.

Anne Mateer takes readers back in time to when men and women were expected to conform to traditional roles. Thus Lula is ridiculed for being in college and has to prove that she has worked very hard and deserves the scholarship. Chet experiences inner turmoil over his choice to not enlist in the war. Ms. Mateer brings these characters together despite their differences and shows them working with each other. This story is very well-told and gives the reader a clear picture of the characters’ hearts and difficulties with some of their decisions.

Recommended for public and school libraries.

_Trina Chase, CLJ_

**Blind trust : a novel / Sandra Orchard.**  
*(Port Aster secrets ; 2)*  
380 p. ; 22 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 4  

**Desperate measures : a novel / Sandra Orchard.** *(Port Aster secrets ; 3)*  
361 p. ; 22 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 4  

Award-winning Canadian author Sandra Orchard continues her contemporary mystery series featuring a researcher uncovering the deadly mysteries in a small town. Unlike other series, Port Aster Secrets features the same main characters, revealing more layers of secrets in each of her books. The first in the series was _Deadly Devotion_ (see: Christian Library Journal, January/February 2014).

In _Blind Trust_, Kate Adams’ elderly neighbor is caught using counterfeit cash, but where did she get it? Amateur sleuth Kate uncovers a sinister plot and a family secret. While Detective Tom Parker investigates, his feelings for Kate grow, as does his urge to protect her. Her relationship with Tom is affected when she tries to solve the mystery on her own. Will the counterfeiter end their investigation permanently? Will her family’s past endanger her future?

In _Desperate Measures_, Kate Adams has finally located the herbal plant responsible for the ultimate family secret—the reason her father
disappeared. Willing to risk everything to find out the truth, she discovers others are searching for the plant and want to use it for nefarious purposes. They will destroy anyone in their path between them and the plant. Will she be able to uncover the last secret standing between her and safety? Will she have a future with Tom?

Award-winning author Sandra Orchard presents an edge-of-your-seat series filled with plot twists and mysteries. Unlike some romantic suspense series, Port Aster Secrets focuses more on the mysteries and less on the relationship between Tom and Kate. It is a mystery series with a light romance on the side. The faith element is present but light. Like in any good mystery, red herrings and suspects abound. As evidence of Orchard’s writing excellence, Blind Trust is a finalist in the 2014 Selah Awards and The Word Awards.

Recommended for church libraries and adult collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

The crimson cord : Rahab’s story / Jill Eileen Smith. (Daughters of the promised land; 1)

Grand Rapids, Mi: Revell, 2015.
362 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

While there are not many verses in the Bible about Rahab, the prostitute in Jericho who was saved by the Hebrew spies, Jill Eileen Smith has managed to craft a fine story that stays close to Scripture.

While the Bible does not tell why Rahab entered prostitution, Smith provides a fictional explanation that fits the times of Canaan and gives a good background to the story. The tales being brought to Rahab about the Israelites and their awesome God open her mind so that she realizes that her gods could not compare to the God of the Israelites. She chooses to hide the Israelite spies despite danger to her and her family, and they are saved when the Israelites take Jericho.

Smith depicts the experiences that Rahab goes through in order to become an Israelite: shaving her head, burning her hair, trimming her nails, getting rid of the old and starting anew. Her cultural differences make it hard for her to understand her new reality, especially the battle of Ai and the sin of Aachan. The people’s sacrifices to their God and Jewish customs are all alien to Rahab, but they are explained in detail as she internalizes these new ideas.

Smith presents Rahab as one who wants very much to believe in God. A sweet romantic story with Salmon, one of the spies, is woven into the story as Rahab’s life drastically changes. In addition, the author delves into the life of Salmon and how he might have questioned taking Rahab to be his wife. By personalizing the characters and giving them pertinent thoughts and feelings, Smith makes them real to the reader.

Smith has woven a riveting, plausible story that keeps the reader turning the pages. In her epilogue, she brings it into the future, when her child Boaz, one of the forerunners of Jesus, comes on the scene in a touching narrative.

Juanita Nobles, CLJ
The traitor's heir / Anna Thayer. (The knight of Eldaran ; 1)
541 p. : maps ; 20 cm.  Adult
Fic  Rating: 5
Good and evil--Fiction.  Loyalty--Fiction.
Fantasy--Fiction.
The king's hand / Anna Thayer. (The knight of Eldaran ; 2)
523 p. : ill. ; 20 cm.  Adult
Fic  Rating: 5
Good and evil--Fiction.  Loyalty--Fiction.
Fantasy fiction.
The broken blade / Anna Thayer. (The knight of Eldaran ; 3)
588 p. : ill., maps ; 20 cm.  Adult
Fic  Rating: 5
Good and evil--Fiction.  Loyalty--Fiction.
Fantasy fiction.

In The Traitor's Heir, Eamon Goodman takes an oath and mark to serve in the Master's Gauntlet. Assigned to duty in Dunthruik, capitol of River Realm, Eamon's job is to protect River Realm from a usurper known as "the Serpent" and his followers. But upon meeting "the Serpent" and realizing he is the true King of River Realm, Eamon pledges his allegiance to him. The King sends Eamon on to Dunthruik to act as a spy. Unfortunately, Eamon finds the Master--also called "the throned"--invasive and demanding, and that living in his service presents distractions and temptations that threaten to turn Eamon away from the King.

In The King's Hand, Eamon continues his efforts to serve the King while working as one of the throned's elite Hands. Upon completion of a nearly impossible task, Eamon saves the lives of several men, earning their respect and loyalty, as well as greater power. This newfound power not only gives Eamon greater opportunities to build relationships with the people of Dunthruik and prepare them for the arrival of the King, but also puts his loyalties in greater danger of discovery.

The Broken Blade finds Eamon holding the position of the Right Hand, the second highest position in River Realm. As the Master's Right Hand, Eamon is responsible for preparing Dunthruik for the coming attack of the true King. As the closest to the throned, Eamon is subjected to his whims. Torn between two rulers, Eamon's climactic decision puts him and all of River Realm in a precarious position.

Anna Thayer's Knight of Eldaran series is a work of Christian fantasy. Thayer creates a world where good is not always as it appears, since some of the characters with good intentions do evil in their effort to do good. This intensifies the battle between good and evil. Thayer's River Realm feels like a medieval setting, complete with horses and wagons or river boat for conveyance, and swords, bows and arrows for fighting. Violence peppered throughout the series includes battle, murder, and beatings. Eamon is a well-developed character who grows, fails, and grows again--struggling to keep faith in what he knows is true. In The Traitor's Heir, there is an illicit, intimate relationship, and the ramifications of that relationship are shown throughout the next two books. Thayer develops a plot that keeps the pages turning--with intensity that draws the reader straight through the series. Many themes could be drawn from the pages of these books, but the main theme is best summarized by Eamon in The Broken Blade: "...only [the King] brings sense and reason to what I have done...My name and
doings should be as a banner, showing his.” (p. 444)

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

After a fashion / Jen Turano.

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

For the last six years, since she turned sixteen, Harriet Peabody has lifted up a special birthday prayer that God would send her something wonderful, and this year, she requests that something be of His choosing. However, on the day of her birthday Harriet’s boss sends her on an errand to deliver an order of hats to Miss Birmingham, a lady known for being difficult and the fiancée of Mr. Oliver Addleshaw, one of America’s wealthiest gentlemen. When her delivery ends in disaster, though due to no fault of her own, Harriet finds herself unemployed. Meanwhile, Oliver is in the middle of sealing an important business endeavor and is now without a female companion to help entertain his potential business partner. Impressed with Miss Peabody’s refined speech and deportment and feeling somewhat responsible for her current position, Oliver proposes a business deal that will benefit them both. Is Oliver’s proposal Harriet’s “something wonderful,” or will it only lead to further disaster?

In After a Fashion, Jen Turano concocts a theatrical performance of sophisticated proportions, full of humor, drama, intrigue, and love set in the era of Industrial America. All the characters are well-developed with unique and loveable traits that bring them to life and make them memorable. The two key players are a charming duo of oil and water, with a good dose of hopeless attraction, making for lively dialogue, a battle of wills, and irresistible love. This novel is mainly plot driven, as the leading lady seems to find herself in one pickle after another; however, character growth is also seen as hearts are changed and compassion learned. Though mostly a lighthearted tale, there is an underlying element of suspense and an unexpected twist gradually developed throughout the plot that may take readers by surprise. Overall, this is a fun read that will delight and entertain those who enjoy historical Christian romance novels.

Justina McBride, CLJ

To see the moon again / Jamie Langston Turner.

LCCN 2014002711 ISBN 9780425253021, paperback, $16.
v, 392 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

At the start of To See the Moon Again, Julia Rich is a rather sad figure, living with the guilt from a long-ago accident that had tragic consequences. Widowed now and ready to begin a year-long sabbatical from her teaching job, Julia is wondering just exactly how she will spend her time. Enter her long-lost niece Carmen, the daughter of Julia’s much-loved brother who has been deceased for some time. Of course, Julia does not welcome Carmen with open arms, but rather tries everything she can think of to send her on her way. But her niece in her complexity is hard to get rid of. She is a high school dropout who knows something about almost everything. She is
ADULTS’ BOOKS

a happy and sunny soul who has a contemplative side to her. She loves people but craves solitude, too. And Carmen is also holding a secret from the past that plagues her.

These two unlikely comrades set off on a journey to visit the homes of well-known authors. But the journey becomes so much more than that as they tentatively begin to share their hearts with each other, discovering hope in each of their lives. Carmen, whose faith has sustained her through many difficulties, shares her convictions with her aunt. By the end of the story, readers glimpse the hope that may be in the future.

Jamie Langston Turner’s prose is beautifully written. As with her other books, To See the Moon Again has emotional and spiritual depth and will spark contemplation and discussion. This book is a treat and is highly recommended.

Ceil Carey

ADULT NONFICTION

Screens and teens : connecting with our kids in a wireless world / Kathy Koch.

249 p.; 19 cm. Adult
004.67 Rating: 5

Screens and Teens is an enlightening book about digital technology and its relationship to how teenagers view themselves, their role in society, and their relationships with family, friends, and God.

Dr. Kathy Koch offers valuable insight into the effects technology has on young people’s beliefs, motives, and behaviors. She discusses the false messages technology can send to teens, and how the messages can contribute to inflated egos, an expectation of constant happiness, an insistence on choices in everything, the lack of respect for authority, and reliance on the Internet instead of teachers. She quotes Scriptures that counteract each falsehood and also shares a number of valuable tips for parents to use in helping their children find a healthy balance between an online and offline lifestyle.

Screens and Teens is an excellent resource for parents who are looking for practical advice on how to set boundaries on media use in their homes and for ways to strengthen face-to-face communication within the family. Each chapter includes Scripture passages that stress the importance of teenagers’ learning to rely on God for guidance in their lives, instead of social media. Real-life feedback from parents about technology’s impact on family interactions is included in the book.

At the end of the book is a guide with questions pertaining to each chapter for parents to use in discussing with their adolescents the benefits and dangers of technology. There is a Notes section with sources used by Dr. Kathy Koch to support not only her findings about technology and the adolescent brain but also to provide more in-depth information for parents on how to help their children make wise choices about technology in positive and effective ways. A downloadable video series correlating with the nine chapters is available free of charge to purchasers of the book. Parents can exchange ideas with other parents and get some additional suggestions about limiting technology use by
accessing a website created by the author for parents of teens.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

**Jesus, continued...: why the Spirit inside you is better than Jesus beside you / J. D. Greear.**


237 p.; 22 cm. Adult

231.3 Rating: 5


*Jesus, Continued* is an informative, helpful, and inspiring book on the person of the Holy Spirit. It is divided into three sections. The first section discusses how believers in Jesus Christ can only experience an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit by treasuring the Word of God. The second section provides invaluable advice on how to experience the fullness of God’s love through the Holy Spirit. The third section offers important guidance on what to do when God feels silent in a believer’s life and also gives insight into how the Holy Spirit empowers and energizes those who seek Him.

J.D. Greear is the pastor of a church in North Carolina and has based this book on personal experiences from questioning the Holy Spirit’s role in his own life. He utilizes a very readable and down-to-earth approach in explaining the vital role the Holy Spirit plays in the church and God’s people. Each chapter poses questions that believers can apply to their own lives. The book is written in an appealing style to everyday readers and includes both quoted and paraphrased passages of Scripture, humor, real-life vignettes, and words of well-known scholars.

*Jesus, Continued* is a useful resource for anyone who is looking for a comprehensive book that helps in understanding the breadth and depth of the Holy Spirit. Readers will gain an in-depth knowledge into the symbiotic relationship between the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. They will have a clearer grasp not only of how the Holy Spirit communicates but also of how to recognize when He is at work in their lives.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

**Prayer : experiencing awe and intimacy with God / Timothy Keller.**


viii, 321 p.; 24 cm. Adult

248.32 Rating: 5

Prayer--Christianity.

Timothy Keller's *Prayer* is divided into five sections: Desiring Prayer, Understanding Prayer, Learning Prayer, Deepening Prayer, and Doing Prayer.

Early he defines prayer as an encounter with God, explaining that Christians may pray for years without knowing this, wondering why they feel their prayers seemingly are not reaching God. Keller leads readers through the Psalms, encouraging them to realize that prayer is the key to everything one needs to do and be in life.

In Part Two Keller explains the mechanics of prayer, citing examples from people in all walks of life. He defines prayer as a personal communicative response to the knowledge of God. Prayer is a gift, a conversation, and an encounter with God.

In Part Three he emphasizes that man learns to speak to God in response to His Word and His power. Prayer happens because of the Holy Spirit.
Quoting Augustine, Luther, Calvin and others, he uses the Lord’s Prayer as a guide, focusing on praise, petition, confession, and thanks. He urges the reader to avoid familiarity and realize God’s holiness.

Part Four, Deepening Prayer, draws the reader into meditating upon God’s Word. Using many passages, he directs the reader to read slowly, to find key words to dwell upon, to read a biblical text for meditation and application to one’s life, and to internalize the Word by memorizing Scripture.

The last section, Doing Prayer, urges the reader to first give awe to God, then to search for intimacy by finding His grace, and lastly, to practice prayer daily. He notes that many Christians neglect the importance of prayer and make no effort to experience God, which leads to nominal Christianity. Prayer should be: upward, focusing intently on God; inward, with self-examination and confession; and outward, using supplication and intercession to focus on needs of self and others.

This inspiring volume tells what prayer is and includes tips for the mechanics of prayer. It is an excellent guide for one who wants a deeper prayer life. The appendix includes guides for daily prayer. The notes comprise 56 pages of references. Prayer is a guidebook deserving of study.

Juanita Nobles, CLJ
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