Outstanding Books Reviewed in This Issue

Love from a Star by Katherine Cutchin Gazzetta.

The Golden Braid by Melanie Dickerson.

Praying for your elephant: boldly approaching Jesus with radical and audacious prayer by Adam Stadtmiller.

Plus: CLJ Celebrates 20 Years: Q&A with Nancy Hesch
A Letter from the Publisher

Dear CLJ Readers:

I pray you will forgive that, due to a combination of illness and other personal exigencies, this issue is rather late, and I hope that you have experienced a joy-filled season of celebrating our Savior’s birth and the coming of the New Year. If you have been following the CLJ blog, you will have seen several reviews of Christmas fiction titles—perfect for enjoying on a cozy evening in winter. These reviews are also included in these pages.

At CLJ, we have an additional reason to celebrate—2015 marks the 20th year of CLJ’s existence. In recognition of this milestone, we thought it fitting to make this issue’s Special Feature a Q&A with Nancy Hesch, CLJ’s founder, as well as my mentor and the title selector for adult fiction and for all titles for teen and children. I am so thankful that Nancy gifted us all with this publication. I know that I have been blessed by CLJ, and pray that God continues to use this journal to His glory.

We pray God’s blessing on you this holiday season, in 2016, and always.

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*.

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Cover image taken from *Keeping Christmas* by Dan Walsh. Copyright © 2015 by Dan Walsh. Used by permission of Revell.
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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As CLJ celebrates the 20th year of its existence, we wanted to afford readers a glimpse into CLJ’s beginnings—and a look at its continuing mission—by presenting a Q&A feature with Nancy Hesch, the founder of CLJ. CLJ is thankful for Mrs. Hesch’s continued involvement as a mentor and title selector for adult fiction as well as all books for teens and children.

Q: How did CLJ come to exist? What was the catalyst for its creation?

A: About six months after my husband’s death from cancer, a friend (who was also the principal of my daughter’s Christian school) asked me to meet with her and a library volunteer about library needs. We were discussing how to determine what titles are appropriate for young Christian readers, and my friend asked if I knew of a Christian source for book reviews of titles for children and teens. I did not. After I researched and found nothing at the time, my friend suggested that it was something I could do. After prayer and further research, I committed to the project.

Q: When was the first issue of CLJ published?


Q: Who was involved in the creation of CLJ?

A: I started alone, but soon hired two friends from church to join me in the planning.

Q: How did you find reviewers and other staff?

A: Having been a teacher, teaching principal, and principal of Christian schools, I was familiar with ASCI (Association of Christian Schools International). They provide many services to schools, including curriculum, annual conferences for teachers and administrators (with seminars for librarians), and publications. I phoned them, asking to speak with someone who could advise on our project, and was connected with one of the vice presidents of the organization. He was very encouraging, and offered to send me school contact information for the Pacific Northwest, my home area.

I contacted the schools via email and recruited reviewers. Two friends, one who was briefly my secretary and the other a retired teacher, worked with me on editing. We contracted out printing and mailing assistance. As time went by, we learned of a Christian publication which listed possible writing projects for Christian writers, and they listed us in the publication, bringing in many professional writers as reviewers.

Q: How did you find subscribers?

A: I hired a Christian publicist who designed and produced a four-flap brochure about CLJ. I sent those to 40,000 Christian schools, with help from ASCI.

Q: How did you establish contacts in the publishing industry?

A: I worked with people at ECPA (Evangelical Christian Publishers Association) to develop a list of Christian publishers and their publicists, developing a contact list. Sending them a brochure, along
with requesting some of their publications for possible review in CLJ, got us started. I also went to Follett, a book distribution company working with libraries, and found similar information about secular publishers of books for children and teens, and requested books from them. My house was stuffed with hundreds of books, so we had lots to offer to our new reviewers.

Q: How has the publication evolved over the years?

A: Within about a year of the first issue, I was the only person on site, working on CLJ with our reviewers. After six years of publication of a print journal, prices became alarmingly high, and with the internet now up and working, we went to an online format. I had originally backed CLJ with funds from my husband’s insurance, and then subscriptions. But as the financial climate went down, our subscriber list dropped dramatically. Eventually I felt God was calling me into this ministry. I applied for and was accepted and commissioned as a missionary with OMS (now One Mission Society). After I became ill during training, OMS limited me to short-terms overseas, asking what other training and experience I had that would fit short-terms. I told them of my library science and administration masters, and I was assigned to be the mission librarian.

A company in Canada gave us a wonderful online union catalog, and over the years I have continued to add library catalogs as we help with new schools. Even today I train nationals in library work at various levels, catalog for many schools,

Q: Do you believe that there continues to be a need for a publication such as CLJ?

A: I do. There are many blogs online today, reviewing books from the Christian point of view. However, there are not many sources for reviews from a Christian viewpoint of non-Christian titles for children and teens, such as CLJ provides. Also, the quality among blogs varies greatly. I hope that professional librarians would prefer to rely on a professional publication. One of the things librarians do is to emphasize to students the need to find reliable information when doing research. CLJ qualifies as a reliable resource.

Q: I hear that you have been involved in missions. Please tell a bit about your work in missions.

A: Yes. In 2002 a friend visited and asked me to pray about going to Mozambique, Africa, to teach in a K-12 Christian school. After my initial negative response, she encouraged me to pray and seek direction. Eventually I felt God was calling me into this ministry. I applied for and was accepted and commissioned as a missionary with OMS (now One Mission Society). After I became ill during training, OMS limited me to short-terms overseas, asking what other training and experience I had that would fit short-terms. I told them of my library science and administration masters, and I was assigned to be the mission librarian.

A company in Canada gave us a wonderful online union catalog, and over the years I have continued to add library catalogs as we help with new schools. Even today I train nationals in library work at various levels, catalog for many schools,
and assist librarians in all fields as needed. With Angela taking over CLJ I have been able to put more time into the mission work.

Q: What is the mission of CLJ?

A: Angela and I worked together to frame this purpose statement for Christian Library Services (publisher of CLJ): "To equip the body of Christ through the Christ-centered promotion of literacy and excellence in literature and other media." I think that is a good description of CLJ’s mission.

Q: What is your vision for the future of CLJ?

A: I think there will be a continuing need for this type of reviewing from a Christian point of view. Formats may change, but I see the need for this long term.

I would like to see CLJ become financially independent, and am praying for ways we might support the journal. Possible projects might be setting up a cataloging service for our readers, or book sales where larger purchases could possibly reduce prices. And as always, we welcome advertising from publishers. Readers can also help by shopping at Amazon.com through the affiliate banner on the CLJ website.

Valorie Cooper, Special Features Writer
Primary Fiction

Me, too! / written by Annika Dunklee; illustrated by Lori Joy Smith.
ISBN 9781771381048, hardcover, $16.95.
1 v. (unpaged): ill.; 29 cm. PS-Grade 2
E Rating: 3

Best friends Annie and Lillemor are similar in many ways, but suddenly Annie feels threatened when another girl at school seems to have even more in common with Lillemor.

*Me, Too!* By Annika Dunklee is a picture book story about old and new friendships. This cute, simple story combines likeable characters, whimsical drawings, and a helpful lesson for young readers. Author Annika Dunklee elevates the reading level by including Swedish and French phrases and their translations. Annie does not speak a foreign language as her friends do—so she makes one up! This part of the dialogue may be pleasantly silly for some readers but confusing to others.

Lori Joy Smith’s pencil and Photoshop-colored illustrations have a two-dimensional cartoon quality that works well with the speech-bubbled text. *Me, Too!* would be a fun read-aloud in a library or classroom setting, especially at the kindergarten level when children are meeting and learning to share new friends.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

Pups of the spirit / by Jill Gorey and Nancy Haller; illustrated by Deborah Melmon.

1 v. (unpaged): col. ill.; 24 x 28 cm. PS-Grade 3
E Rating: 4

Bred from the kennel of Galatians 5, *Pups of the Spirit* is a fun and beautifully illustrated story of nine puppies who embody the fruit of the Spirit in their daily doggy lives.

Max, Frankie, Pete, Peanut, Joy, Gigi, Kay, Squeaky, and Goose are the puppy protagonists that each exhibit an individual virtue known as a fruit of the Spirit. The brilliance of this enjoyable read is the kid-friendly language that the authors employ to demonstrate what each virtue looks like in action.

For example, Pete is the pup who is filled by God with peace. Peace is then equated with being “calm [and] mellow,” not having to fight or worry. Through the use of vibrant drawings and playfully adorable characters, the authors and illustrator help to make abstract concepts like joy, faithfulness, and gentleness become tangible actions that are appropriate and relatable to the audience.

Some descriptions of the character traits (such as kindness and self-control) are a bit superficial; however, the overall message of the story is entertaining and effective in pointing children to depend on God and His grace. The poem on the final page is alone worth the price of the entire book. *Pups of the Spirit* will be a favorite of parents and kids alike.

*Schimri Yoyo, CLJ*
Grandma’s Christmas wish / by Helen Foster James ; illustrated by Petra Brown.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm.  PS-Grade 1
E  Rating: 5
Grandmothers--Fiction. Stories in rhyme.

Celebrating the bond between child and grandmother, a baby bunny and grandmother bunny prepare the Christmas decorations and gifts in Grandma’s Christmas Wish by Helen Foster James. The full double-page illustrations convey a story just in pictures with the size of each 10” by 10” page giving a powerful view, enabling preschoolers to enjoy the story on their own. The verse with simple rhymes reinforces the value to little ones and renders it a fine read-aloud book. The inside front and back covers continue the feel of joyful anticipation by providing active illustrations.

Those who enjoyed James’s earlier Grandma Loves You, which celebrated the birth of a baby, will find Grandma’s Christmas Wish a perfect companion. Illustrator Petra Brown is known for drawing animals with human expressions and likes creating landscapes that give readers a gift to behold.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Your alien / by Tammi Sauer ; illustrated by Goro Fujita.

LCCN ISBN 9781454911296, hardcover, $14.95.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm.  K-Grade 3
E  Rating: 5
Families--Fiction. Friendship--Fiction.
Extraterrestrial beings--Fiction. Science fiction

Written in the second person, Your Alien centers on friendship and the importance of family. After a flying saucer crashes outside a boy’s house, the new arrival joins the boy through the day. The fact that the adults seem oblivious to the presence of the alien reinforces the perspective of the child and what he is experiencing. Even though the boy’s classmates are enchanted with the alien, he gets homesick as evening arrives. The lights in the house help two green parents to find their child, and signaling the parents becomes the right thing to do to help them get their child.

Goro Fujita’s illustrations have a film-magic effect, making them both inviting and complementing the heartwarming feel in the story. Parents who enjoyed E.T. as a kid will feel an affinity to the story, and the use of “you” in the story draws one into the story. Tammi Sauer offers a narrative that is funny and warm to accentuate the strong themes of familial love and caring for another.

The storyline is effective with ages 3 and up and the reading appropriate for kindergarten to grade 3. This title would be a good read-aloud story for ages 3 to 9.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ
The bestest baby / Anthea Simmons, Georgie Birkett.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm. K-Grade 3
E Rating: 4
Babies--Fiction. Newborn infants--Juvenile fiction. Brothers and sisters--Fiction

In Anthea Simmons’ The Bestest Baby! a big sister finds that a baby brother can be annoying but also a lot of fun. Baby brother can’t run, draw, or sing—and sometimes breaks toys or throws food—but also has a way of growing on her. This picture book captures the feeling of a new sibling and gives it both an endearing and humorous twist.

Those who might have Simmons’ The Best, Best Baby, International Edition from 2013, need not get this renamed title. While there are ample titles on this subject, e.g., I am a Big Sister by Caroline Jayne Church or Now I’m Growing! I’m a New Big Sister by Nora Gaydes, The Bestest Baby! focuses more on the brother than on the sister.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Primary Nonfiction

Words to dream on : bedtime Bible stories and prayers /
224 p. : col. ill. ; 21 cm. PS-Grade 3
220.95 Rating: 5
Bible stories--English.

In this delightful volume of 219 colorful pages, Diane Stortz has carefully selected stories that teach children about the Bible in chronological order. There are 52 stories—26 from the Old Testament and 26 from the New Testament.

Leading young children through the Old Testament with her simple text, Ms. Stortz begins with God’s creation of the world and continues through the story of Ezra, the priest. She tells about many famous Bible people, using stories that are taught to children in many different denominations.

The New Testament stories begin with the birth of Jesus and continue with accounts about choosing the disciples and Jesus’ work on earth. The story of the last supper prefaces the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, as well as the beginnings of the early church and the work of spreading the gospel. The last chapter, “Forever with Jesus,” tells about heaven in terms that children can understand. At the end of each chapter, Ms. Stortz inserts a “bedtime prayer,” guiding the child to thank God for something he or she heard about, thus helping the child to internalize the story.

The author emphasizes God’s plan throughout history and focuses on God’s love and care, His protection and trustworthiness. The purpose of this book, as stated in the “Letter to Parents,” is to introduce children to God and His wonderful Word.

The brightly-colored illustrations greatly enhance the stories, enabling young children to remain engrossed and enthralled as an adult reads. The illustrator has carried ethnic similarity throughout, yet varied expressions on the faces of the characters add to the meaning of each story. Children can see happiness, sadness, surprise, doubt, and even haughtiness—whatever emotion is depicted in the story, making it easy to identify with the characters.

Helpful tips for reading with young children are inserted on the last few pages. This delightfully written and illustrated bedtime Bible storybook
would be an excellent addition for any home or church library.

*Juanita Nobles, CLJ*

**ABC universe / American Museum of Natural History.**


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

523 Rating: 4


*ABC Universe* is a photographic board book from the American Museum of Natural History that presents 26 space-related facts.

Defining the familiar (Astronaut, Earth, Moon) and introducing the unfamiliar (Io, Nebula, Quasar), *ABC Universe* covers each concept alphabetically in one or two straightforward sentences that can be easily absorbed by preschoolers. Large colorful letters introduce each new word against a backdrop of space photos from multiple sources.

With its generous size, shiny embossed cover, and interesting content, *ABC Universe* is an inviting and educational board book that will introduce young children to the exploration of outer space.

A blurb on the back cover describes the American Museum of Natural History and invites readers to visit the museum in NYC or online.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

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**On the wing / David Elliott, Rebecca Stadtlander.**


1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 28 cm. Grades 1-4

811.45 Rating: 4


Poems about birds are accompanied by realistic gouache illustrations of the birds in outdoor settings. Birds covered in this volume include the hummingbird, flamingo, crow, oriole, woodpecker, crane, owl, pelican, macaw, albatross, cardinal, condor, puffin, bowerbird, blue jay, sparrow, and eagle. Some poems are short and straightforward; others require more pondering to work out the meaning.

Some poems contain factual information about the birds, some raise questions, and others are a little more playful. The open-ended nature of this book offers a lot of possibilities for discussion, curriculum, or personal enjoyment. Careful attention to the poems and illustrations can yield a lot of questions for both scientific and historical research. It can also provide a platform for studies in art, creative writing, or nature journaling. As a result, this book could be a helpful addition to a homeschool or classroom library.

*On the Wing* will appeal to readers across a wide age range. Short poems allow quick page turns for younger listeners; the vocabulary, imagery, poetic form, and gorgeous artwork offer plenty of challenge for a more mature audience.

*Rachelle Dawson, CLJ*
**CHILDREN’S BOOKS**

**Love from a star / Katherine Cutchin Gazzetta.**

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 20 x 27 cm. PS-K
E Rating: 5

The heartwarming tale for preschoolers found in *Love from a Star* by Katherine Cutchin Gazzetta has earned the Benjamin Franklin Award and is the recipient of the Mom’s Choice Award Honoring Excellence. The lyrical verses complemented by watercolor illustrations make the tale soothing and appealing.

A little bear catches a glimpse of the twinkling star, and even when he is snuggled up in bed with little bunny by his side, that twinkling star is watching over him. A final thought notes: “I’m the light in God’s eyes at the end of the day.”

Not only would this make a welcome bedtime story but the artwork enables a child to view the book alone and have a good feel for what is being said. The stowaway frog hidden throughout the pages adds a perfect whimsical touch.

The mood in many of the stories in *921 Bedtime Stories & Rhymes* by Parragon Books or *If Only I Wasn’t Lonely* by S. Adler is alive and well in *Love from a Star.*

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

**INTERMEDIATE FICTION**

**Bash and the pirate pig / story by Burton W. Cole ; illustrations by Tom Bancroft.** *(Bash; 1)*

ix, 210 p. : ill. ; 24 cm. Grades 3-7
Fic Rating: 4

**Bash and the chicken coop caper / story by Burton W. Cole ; illustrations by Tom Bancroft.** *(Bash; 2)*

viii, 211 p. : ill. ; 24 cm. Grades 3-7
Fic Rating: 4

**Bash and the chocolate milk cows / story by Burton W. Cole ; illustrations by Buddy Lewis.** *(Bash; 3)*

213 p. : ill. ; 23 cm. Grades 3-7
Fic Rating: 4

Eleven-year-old Raymond “Beamer” Boxby would rather lie on the couch eating potato chips and reading comic books than engage in any physical activity. However, his life is turned upside down when his parents decide it is time for Beamer to say goodbye to the couch potato life.

In *Bash and the Pirate Pig*, Beamer is sent to his...
aunt and uncle’s farm in Ohio to spend the summer with his cousin, Sebastian “Bash” Hinglehobb. Beamer becomes a reluctant participant in some madcap adventures such as riding cows to get ice cream and river rafting with farm animals. Amidst all of the fun, Bash reads and quotes verses from the Bible, and the cousins have many conversations about God.

In *Bash and the Chicken Coop Caper*, Beamer is stranded at his cousin’s farm in a blizzard. Beamer and Bash embark on a number of crazy adventures such as underwear catapults, hay castles, and flying off chicken coops. The boys get caught up in a mystery, and a lighthearted search and rescue takes a serious turn. During all of the silliness, the boys learn an important lesson about how God works in people’s lives.

In *Bash and the Chocolate Milk Cows*, twelve-year-old Beamer is visiting Bash on spring break. Bash has big plans for practical jokes he wants to play on April Fools’ Day. Some of the antics include shaving cream in bedroom slippers, a chicken coop shuttle launch, and a painted goat. Add in a robber on the loose, and it makes for one wild week. The boys have fun, but they learn that some of their decisions can produce unintended consequences.

Although Bash is the one with the wild imagination who plans all the capers, he and Beamer are not alone in their adventures. Friends from surrounding farms join in on the frivolity, which makes this an appealing series for both girls and boys. The series is told from Beamer’s perspective with humorous illustrations and Bible verses tying in beautifully with the children’s escapades. There are a number of both laugh-out-loud and heart-touching moments in the stories.

Burton W. Cole captures the attention of young readers with all of the humorous shenanigans the cousins embark on each day after they are finished with their chores. Mr. Cole has cleverly worked valuable messages into the children’s fun-filled games. The children learn about salvation, the importance of accepting responsibility for one’s behaviors, the value of friendship, the power of prayer, the benefits of trusting God, and baptism. Children will also gain a clear understanding of not only how God is available to all who want to invite Jesus into their lives but also how to build a personal relationship with God.

*Dianne Woodman, CLJ*

**The red bicycle : the extraordinary story of one ordinary bicycle / written by Jude Isabella ; illustrated by Simone Shin. (CitizenKid)**

ISBN 9781771380232, hardcover, $18.95.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 32 cm. Grades 4-6
Fic Rating: 4

Leo saves his earnings for months to buy Big Red. His beautiful bicycle takes him to school and to work until he grows too tall to ride it. He hears of a program that sends bicycles to Africa, and lovingly prepares Big Red for its next adventure. Alisetta, a young girl whose family farms in a small village in Burkina Faso, proudly takes ownership. She rides to the fields early in the day to tend crops and takes produce to market. With the bicycle, the family makes enough money for the children to go to school. When Big Red needs repairs, the family gives the bike to Boukary, who refurbishes it and bolts a small trailer to the bike, which then becomes an ambulance for a local health clinic. Haridata takes medicines to villages as far away as a three-hour ride, and brings
people who need medical care to the clinic.

Big Red is rightly the focus of this charming tale. Without preaching, Jude Isabella invites the reader to see the value of bicycles for people who have no paved roads, livestock, or cars. Simone Shin’s digital images shimmer with movement against muted backgrounds, highlighting the colorful people and, of course, the bicycle. Caption-like, short excerpts of the full text draw the eye to the edges of each opening. Endnotes list organizations that deliver bicycles, include photographs of people with their bikes and wares, and suggest activities for children to understand the importance of bicycles. The Red Bicycle shares a real need and the ways to meet it.

_Diane Carver Sekeres, CLJ_

_Shiloh_ / by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. (Shiloh quartet; 1)

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

_Saving Shiloh_ / by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. (Shiloh quartet; 2)

137 p.; 21 cm. Grades 4-7
Fic Rating: 4

_Shilo season_ / by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. (Shiloh quartet; 3)

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

_A Shilo Christmas_ / by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. (Shiloh quartet; 4)

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

Eleven-year-old Marty Preston is roaming the land around his rural West Virginia home when a beagle follows him. Marty quickly concludes the dog has been mistreated. Marty and his dad return the beagle to their neighbor Judd, but soon the dog appears at their house again. When Marty decides he can’t return the dog a second time, he hides Shiloh in a makeshift pen in the woods. Then another dog attacks Shiloh in the pen, and Judd hears that his missing beagle is with the Prestons. As Marty struggles to decide what is right and wrong, he tries to think of a way to rescue Shiloh without stealing him.

As _Shilo Season_ opens, Marty has found a way to keep Shiloh. However, Judd has been drinking heavily and causing trouble. Through a series of incidents, the relationship between Judd and the Preston family grows tenser. Marty is afraid Judd
will hurt Shiloh or even one of the Prestons. Then an accident happens that could change everything. In Saving Shiloh, the neighbors that helped Judd after his accident have gone back to gossiping. Every time something goes wrong, rumors circulate about Judd’s responsibility for the problem. But Marty sees Judd treating his dogs better, acting friendlier, and plowing snow for the neighbors. While Marty doesn’t exactly like the man who mistreated Shiloh, he thinks the community is being unfair to Judd. Marty must decide what it means to give someone “a second chance.”

In A Shiloh Christmas (published 18 years after the third installment), a fire burns down several homes, including Judd’s trailer. At a time when the community ought to be pulling together to help one another, a new preacher seems to be dividing the community and terrorizing his own children. The preacher makes unflattering references to Judd, and Judd criticizes the church. The Prestons accidentally invite Judd and the preacher to Christmas dinner. This will be a Christmas to remember, but for what reasons?

These books discuss some heavy subjects, including alcoholism, child abuse, and animal abuse. While violent scenes aren’t overly graphic, they do contain some details. Particularly in the first book, Judd uses a handful of curses and euphemistic swear words. In the final book, we see Marty and his dad often choosing to stay home or work on Sundays while the mother and sisters go to church. Marty also questions God’s love, hell, and right and wrong. He doesn’t necessarily see the Bible as a way to answer those questions. As a result, adult guidance may be helpful to children reading this series.

Each of these books contains a dose of sobering reality. But each also contains a message of hope: Our acts of kindness matter. Kindness has a redeeming power. The Preston family doesn’t talk about loving their neighbors as themselves, but that’s what they learn to do. And by the end of the series, their neighborhood is better for it.

Rachelle Dawson, CLJ

INTERMEDIATE NONFICTION

LCCN 2015452324 ISBN 9781454912415, hardcover, $12.95.
30 p. : col. ill., map ; 21 x 26 cm. Grades 3-6.
324.62 Rating: 5

One finds in Why Couldn’t Susan B. Anthony Vote? a biography of the woman—what she stood for, why she was arrested, and how she fought—and also the context and environment in which she lived and worked. Children gain an understanding of why voting is important, what women’s suffrage is, and factors of influence such as the temperance movement and the fifteenth and nineteenth amendments.

Illustrations and paintings enable youth to concentrate on some points. The narrative, along with carefully designed placement of highlights and color variations, make it easier to linger in the text.

While works such as Susan B. Anthony by
Alexandra Wallner or Susan B. Anthony by Deborah Hopkinson offer helpful biographical details, Carson’s work places her life in wider context and encourages youth to see her as a person and advocate.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

**Wild tracks! : a guide to nature's footprints / Jim Arnosky.**

591.47 Rating: 5
Animal tracks—Juvenile literature.

*Wild Tracks!: A Guide to Nature’s Footprints* by Jim Arnosky is the 100th book that he has written and illustrated. His contribution to children’s literature is affirmed in the lifetime achievement award for Excellence in Science Illustration from the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Washington Post/Children’s Book Guild Award for nonfiction. *Wild Tracks!* is an ALA Notable Book.

Arnosky shows animals making tracks in their natural habitats and dozens of wild animal footprints, including fold-outs that illustrate the life-size tracks of the deer, other hoofed animals, felines, and canines. Through intricately drawn prints from creatures both wild and domestic, children learn to recognize and read animal tracks via shapes and patterns, gaining an appreciation of the natural world. Some of the art labels in his own handwriting create the impression of coming out of his personal notebooks. The gatefolds offer a painting of the animal right next to their prints. It is easy for children to identify the footprints and the wide variety of animals, including bighorn sheep and goats, grizzlies and brown bears, chipmunks and rabbits, horses and burros, domestic cats and dogs, and reptiles.

The quality of Arnosky’s work makes it wise to note that his other works include *Slither and Crawl: Eye to Eye with Reptiles, Thunder Birds: Nature’s Flying Predators, Creep and Flutter: The Secret World of Insects and Spiders, and Shimmer & Splash: The Sparkling World of Sea Life.*

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

**Dear Wandering Wildebeest : and other poems from the Water Hole / Irene Latham ; Illustrated by Anna Wadham.**

LCCN 2013030195 ISBN 9781467712323, library binding, $17.95.
33 p.: col. ill.; 26 cm. Grades 3-6
811.6 Rating: 5

*Dear Wandering Wildebeest* by Irene Latham introduces children to the wonders of African nature and to the wonders of poetry at the same time in a folksy way. The poetic experience begins with a cover that establishes a meditative mood. The title of each poem reinforces this experience, e.g., “To All Beasts Who Enter Here” or “Lifestyles of the Sleek and Sinuous.”

The illustrations enable children to appreciate the moment where even the water hole is yours as hinted at in the subtitle. A child readily will sense the emotion from the poems, which are varied from one- to two-word lines to longer. The rhythmic flow of the verses lets the words of the poem become part of the page or picture. Latham blends in humor as she overlaps the animal world with man’s world. Illustrator Anna Wadham provides a changing kaleidoscope of animals as the day moves forward. Each of Wadham’s
paintings has a box of “nature facts” which provide a stimulating journey as children will learn that meerkats watch, snakes can “sizzle,” and that a giraffe’s long legs and neck aid in their getting leaves but also pose a challenge when it’s time for a drink.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Bug detective : amazing facts, myths, and quirks of nature / Maggie Li.

27 p.: col. ill.; 25 cm. + 1 magnifying glass Grades 3-6
595 Rating: 5
Insects--Juvenile literature. Invertebrates--Juvenile literature.

Using a playful approach, Bug Detective by Maggie Li explores the habitat, feeding ritual, and predators of ladybugs, centipedes, works, snails, stick insects, beetles, flies, spiders, bees, ants, and butterflies, all in no particular order. The picture-packed pages provide so much information that one can return to the narrative again and again. There are many fantastical mini-illustrations making it easy to keep finding facts or headings on the 11 creatures not seen on the previous reading.

The closing pages suggest bug detective activities and include a glossary. The book comes with a magnifying glass embedded in the front cover, but it is more for play rather than of lasting quality. Young entomologists will find much to keep discovering. Because of the detail, Bug Detective lends itself to individual reading or one-on-one sharing.

Those seeking a comparable title for preschoolers might look at Some Bugs by Angela DiTerlizzi or The Bug Book by Sue Fliess. The latter offers a rhyming story and the former a story with illustrations but less detail.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Chasing freedom : the life journeys of Harriet Tubman and Susan B. Anthony, inspired by historical facts / by Nikki Grimes ; illustrated by Michele Wood.

53 p.: col. ill.; 29 cm. Grades 3-6
B Rating: 5

Michele Wood, winner of the 1999 Coretta Scott King Illustrator award, brings emotion and imagination to the illustrations found in Chasing Freedom. Nikki Grimes, winner of the 6458 Coretta Scott King Honor and 2003 Coretta Scott King award, offers a text that enables children to appreciate the lives of Harriet Tubman and Susan B. Anthony. Discussion includes their main goals and how they met those goals through their life activities.

Wood’s illustrations include a colorful drawing on one page, often inviting questioning or wonder before the imaginative text by Grimes explores how Tubman and Anthony would discuss the issues that were an integral part of their lives and times, such as the underground railroad, suffrage, and the rights of women. The amount of text and detail invite children in grades 3 to 6 to grasp the
overview and related narrative and illustrations.

The closing pages include short biographies of everyone mentioned in the text, which in addition to Tubman and Anthony, include Frederick Douglass, John Brown, Thomas Garrett, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, Horace Greeley, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. An Additional Notes section offers details about events that are included in the Tubman and Anthony interaction such as the Dred Scott decision, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Harpers Ferry raid and the temperance movement.

One can find individual titles on each woman, e.g., Harriet Tubman by Robin S. Doak or What’s Your Story, Susan B. Anthony? by Krystyna Poray Goddu, but Chasing Freedom blends both into one title with illustration and imaginative text.

_Leroy Hommerding, CLJ_
MIDDLE SCHOOL FICTION

**Mystery rider / Miralee Ferrell. (Horses and friends; 3)**

188 p.; 19 cm. Grades 3-7
Fic Rating: 4

Miralee Ferrell, adult historical fiction author, presents the third book in her series especially for horse-loving preteens.

In *Mystery Rider*, Kate is cautious and suspicious when Melissa, a former mean classmate, suddenly starts acting nice to Kate and her friends, Tori and Colt. Why is she changing how she acts towards them? How long will it last? Can they trust her?

Then Kate observes a mysterious rider on a beautiful black horse. Could it be her classmate? Is she playing a trick on them? Why does the rider wear a hooded cloak and ride at dusk? It will take detective work by Kate and her friends to discover who is behind the mystery and faith to uncover the truth.

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, parents will welcome Kate as a role model. Her friends include a homeschooled boy who is just a friend and a Latina girl who is her best friend. Ferrell’s book has discussion questions for reflection by the reader, which challenge them to deepen their friendships and learn from Kate’s experiences about judging and misunderstanding others.

Recommended for school and public libraries, especially for fans of Dandi Daley Mackall. *Blue Ribbon Trail Ride* (Book 8) is expected in Spring 2016.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

**Fish in a tree / Lynda Mullaly Hunt.**

276 p.; 22 cm. Grades 5-8
Fic Rating: 3

Lynda Mullaly Hunt follows her successful novel, *One for the Murphys*, with this contemporary novel about a sixth-grade student who thinks something is wrong with her because she doesn’t fit in.

In *Fish in a Tree*, Ally successfully hides the fact that she cannot read, but she thinks she is dumb. She tries to cover her learning difference by distracting the teacher with her actions, causing her to frequently spend time in the principal’s office. When Mr. Daniels, a new teacher, begins to help her with recognizing and overcoming her dyslexia, life begins to change. Ally makes allies with blunt-spoken Keisha and fact-obsessed Albert, as they stand together against classmates who bully them for being different.

When someone has confidence in you, it is easier to pick yourself up and try again after you fall. *Fish in a Tree’s* theme is “Everybody is smart in different ways. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its life believing it is
stupid."

Hunt creates a heartwarming, character-driven novel that students and teachers will enjoy. Ally’s experiences will resonate with readers as they get pulled into the story early on. Ally is endearing—some characters are likeable while others are not. Some border on being stereotypical (mean-girl bully, nerdy guy). Life doesn’t end “happily ever after” at the end of the book, but things have changed for Ally and progress is made in small steps. The confidence that Ally has discovered enables her to help another family member.

Recommended for public libraries and school libraries. Fans of Wonder, and Absolutely Almost will enjoy this book. This would make a good read-aloud and discussion book.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

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**Blood oath / Dan Scott. (Gladiator school; 1)**

ISBN 9781908177483, paperback, $6.95.
208 p. : ill. ; 20 cm. Grades 6-9
Fic Rating: 5

Leaking information from the Roman Senate is a traitor’s crime—punishable by death. So when Lucius’s father is accused as an informant, he leaves his family behind. His family loses its wealth and is cast into lower society, with only their father to blame. Despite his family giving up on his father, Lucius can’t stop holding to the hope of his father’s innocence.

Anger and hate consume Quintus, Lucius’s older brother, and lead him to become a gladiator to make money. As his brother trains, Lucius works in his gladiator school to provide an interim pay for his family before the real fights start. Lucius begins finding messages that he believes could be from his father, but every answer seems to add new questions. In his hunt to find his father, a plan to fix the gladiator matches is discovered, and Lucius’s knowledge could place Quintus in danger. How can he prove his father’s innocence if his brother’s life is on the line?

Family drama and suspense will engage any reader in Blood Oath; however, there is little resolution by the end of the book as it is the first in a series. The story immerses the reader in details regarding Roman family life and customs and the gladiator school. The action is slow to start but builds up as the story progresses. Lucius and his family believe in “household gods,” and some scenes contain moderately graphic detail regarding gladiator fights (including deaths in the arena). Originally written for a British-English audience, the dialogue and some of the word choices may be unfamiliar to American readers, but overall it is an easy and fun read.

Dan Scott does a great job using Roman terminology and explaining each term in detailed footnotes. His character Lucius, despite little development throughout this book, creates a hope for justice, so the reader will want him to succeed. With the first book in the series ending in a cliff hanger that leads the story toward its first plot twist, this series has potential for greatness.

Rebecca A. Schriner, CLJ
HIGH SCHOOL FICTION

Summer by summer / Heather Burch.

Grand Rapids, MI: Blink, 2015.
282 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 3

Summer, the guileless heroine, takes a summer job with the Garrison family in Belize to get away from home after suffering a heartbreaking tragedy. While in Belize she meets the Garrison's son, Bray, who has just finished his first year of college.

Initially, they are like fire and ice. Bray is the too-cool-for-school partier, while Summer is cautious and modest. Predictably, a change of setting and circumstances will effect a change in their relationship.

After an angry encounter while on a forced date, Bray tries to win Summer over by taking her diving. A storm hits and they get stranded on an island. Coincidentally, a plane goes down about the same time, ensuring that rescue efforts will be diverted to and focused on that disaster and preventing a search for Summer and Bray just long enough for the embers of romance to begin to kindle.

The story, though inevitable, is endearing and likeable for an early teen audience. The plot is a bit thin and takes place at a breakneck pace (the entire romance takes place within a few weeks of Summer and Bray having met each other). Despite the novel's insistence on abstinence, readers should be aware that there is a fair amount of physical contact between the two main characters, along with descriptions of sexual temptation. Also, the correlation between the change in Summer's physical appearance and fashion and the genesis of her and Bray's romance could suggest a message that upping one's style is the only way to win over a guy. Despite these shortcomings, Summer By Summer is an easy read with a likely, yet satisfying payoff.

Schimri Yoyo, CLJ

Double date / Melody Carlson. (The dating games; 3)

220 p.; 22 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic Rating: 4

Prom date / Melody Carlson. (The dating games; 4)

209 p.; 22 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic Rating: 4

Teen fiction author Melody Carlson continues her contemporary series featuring five very different girls who form a club to help them get dates for major high school events.

In Double Date, the girls have made it through the first date and the blind date, building friendships along the way. Now the Christmas ball is coming up, an unpopular event that some want to cancel. Can they organize double dates, especially when
the possibility of new club members threatens to divide the group? Can they revamp the Christmas ball to make it more appealing and serve a bigger purpose?

In Prom Date, the girls have their sights set now on their biggest date night—the prom. There are lots of expectations and pressure as the girls finish off their school year. When one of them needs their support for a family situation, can they support their friend and make it the prom a night to remember?

In Carlson’s books, not all of the girls are Christian. They all have realistic fears, drama, faith issues, and problems of their own. This helps the teen reader to identify with the girls as they navigate the high school dating scene. While each book could be read as a standalone (there is enough backstory), it flows together nicely as a series, giving the reader a chance to see the characters and friendships develop over the course of the school year.

Melody Carlson is the author of more than two hundred books aimed at teen girls. Double Date and Prom Date are light, entertaining reads, which Carlson fans have come to expect in her recent works.

Recommended for public libraries and school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

The golden braid / Melanie Dickerson. (Hagenheim fairy tales; 6)

308 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5
Mothers and daughters--Fiction. Rapunzel (Tale).

Award-winning author Melanie Dickerson continues her medieval retelling of fairy tales, this time using the story of Rapunzel.

In The Golden Braid, 17-year-old Rapunzel lives with her mother Gothel in medieval Hagenheim. Rapunzel dreams of learning to read and marrying one day—dreams Gothel continues to prevent from happening. Every time Gothel sees a young man interested in Rapunzel, Gothel packs up their belongings and they move to another place.

Gothel works as a midwife while Rapunzel stays at home, painting floral scenes on the wall and practicing her knife-throwing. In her effort to “protect” her daughter, Gothel isolates her from the real world. When they are attacked on their way to another village, a knight—Sir Gerek—rescues them. In turn, Rapunzel rescues him with her knife-throwing skills down the road. Gerek rewards her by agreeing to teach her secretly to read.

As she studies the Scriptures, Rapunzel begins to question things in her life, like why Gothel wants her to be suspicious of men. Rapunzel uncovers a family secret that will change the direction of her life. Unlike other versions of this story, there are no magic or evil powers, merely a woman twisted by the past who twists the future of a young woman.

As in her earlier books, the faith element is clearly evident yet not preachy. Dickerson’s tales feature wholesome relationships while still building a strong attraction between the main characters, making this a good choice for teen readers. Dickerson is a masterful storyteller with a carefully crafted plot, richly-drawn characters, and detailed setting. The reader is easily pulled into the story.
Recommended for young adults and adults who are young at heart.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Never said / by Carol Lynch Williams.

Grand Rapids, Mi: Blink, 2015.
256 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 3

For as long as she can remember, 16-year-old Sarah has lived in the shadow of her twin sister Annie, the beautiful and outgoing beauty pageant queen. On the outside, Sarah seems content to remain unseen, struggling with severe social anxiety, while inside, harboring resentment towards her perfect sister. However, everything changed last year, when Annie gained weight, stopped doing pageants, and fell from her popular social status, tilting the entire family out of balance.

Now, their mother is constantly badgering Annie about her weight, while Sarah feels she is the object of her mother’s blame. Additionally, Sarah is dealing with her own relationship disappointments and feelings of worth. Meanwhile, their father has distanced himself with work. No one, not even Sarah, knows what happened to bring about Annie’s new self-image. Will Sarah discover Annie’s secret? Will things never said finally come to the surface and bring freedom and healing—or further hurt?

In Never Said, Carol Lynch Williams weaves a tangled web of brokenness, shame, pain, and sisterly love. Throughout the story, the author alternates between the viewpoints of the two sisters. Annie’s perspective is presented through free verse poetry, allowing one to see into her emotions without revealing her secret tragedy.

The plot moves along through Sarah’s short, first-person narratives. The writing is vivid and emotionally moving. Though the plot is intriguing, the suspense is mainly built on discovering Annie’s secret, leaving only a few pages to wrap up the resolution that is somewhat lacking in light of the preceding circumstances.

This book addresses many weighty topics including sexual abuse, bullying, depression, negative body image, and social anxiety. All are handled in a tasteful, age-appropriate way; however, the gravity of the novel may overwhelm its intended audience. The book also contains kissing but descriptions are kept to an appropriate level. Overall, this book is a tragic tale that does end on a note of hope for personal and family restoration, while it also provides insight into the emotions and thoughts of teens who have been abused or struggle with anxiety disorders.

Justina McBride, CLJ

HIGH SCHOOL NONFICTION

10 ultimate truths girls should know / Kari Kampakis.

xvi, 204 p.; 22 cm. Grades 8-12
248.833 Rating: 5
Teenage girls--Conduct of life--Juvenile literature.
Teenage girls--Religious life--Juvenile literature.

Kari Kampakis, newspaper columnist, blogger, and former children’s photographer, struck a chord with parents in a blog post in July 2013 titled “10 Truths Girls Should Know.” The post
was shared more than 65,000 times on Facebook. The result of that viral post is Kampakis’ first book, *10 Ultimate Truths Girls Should Know*.

Kampakis’ ten ultimate truths are: #10 “Kindness is more important than popularity”; #9 “You were born to fly”; #8 “Today’s choices set the stage for your reputation”; #7 “Chasing boys doesn’t make you cool. It makes you a nuisance”; #6 “You weren’t made to worship yourself”; #5 “People peak at different times in life. Trust God’s plan for you”; #4 “Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Otherwise you’ll never stick to your guns”; #3 “Boys are visual creatures. The clothing choices you make affect the way they see you”; #2 “Pretty girls are a dime a dozen. Outer beauty attracts attention, but inner beauty is what holds it”; and #1 “The source of all peace and happiness lives inside you. Learn to listen to the whispers of God over the voice of public opinion.”

Kampakis writes with a straightforward voice and her book reads like a deeply honest and very personal talk with a kind mentor. This wise guide is comprised of ten chapters, titled: Popularity, Confidence, Reputation, Interacting with Boys, Self-Worship, Perseverance, Patience, Image, Inner Beauty, and Self-Talk. Each chapter is filled with everyday examples, practical advice, and loving support, along with text boxes containing key Bible verses and points to remember. Every chapter ends with discussion questions that stimulate thought and reinforce important points.

A conclusion reminds girls: “Your greatest power lies in the small choices you make each day. Whether you choose the world’s way or God’s way makes all the difference in the kind of life you’ll have.” (p.193) *10 Ultimate Truths Girls Should Know* is an invaluable guide for both girls and parents.

*Valorie Cooper, CLJ*

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**Bonhoeffer: pastor, martyr, prophet, spy (student edition) / Eric Metaxas.**


vii, 245 p. : ill., maps ; 22 cm. Grades 7-11

B Rating: 4


*Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* is a wonderful and compelling biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a complex man with undaunted courage and an unwavering faith in God. The book is split into time frames that coincide with Bonhoeffer’s childhood, education, Christian ministry, teaching of seminary students, Hitler’s rise to power, Bonhoeffer’s role in the conspiracy against the Hitler regime, imprisonment, and execution.

The map of Europe during World War II and the Bonhoeffer family tree prior to chapter one in the book are helpful references for readers. The majority of the chapters begin with a timeline of significant events that are pertinent to the time frame depicted in the chapters. Key terms and names are bolded in the text with definitions listed in a glossary. Reference sources for material used in the biography are included in a notes section. Boxed paragraphs, black and white photographs, and end-of-chapter questions are added features that contribute to the overall appeal of the book.

Eric Metaxas’ student edition of *Bonhoeffer* is an excellent book for young readers to learn about a
man who was a strategic figure in the resistance to Nazism and a beacon of light and hope during one of the most horrifying times in history. Readers will gain valuable insight into not only Hitler and the Nazi government's viewpoint on Christianity and racial ideology but also the impact faith in God can have on personal life choices. The book is also a useful tool for students to use in school projects and will appeal to those who are interested in Nazism and Bonhoeffer’s inspirational life.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ
ADULT FICTION

Truth stained lies / Terri Blackstock. (Moonlighters; 1)
305 p. ; 23 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Distortion / Terri Blackstock. (Moonlighters; 2)
362 p. ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Twisted innocence / Terri Blackstock. (Moonlighters; 3)
313 p. ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

The Moonlighters series follows the lives of the three Cramer sisters as they navigate the many challenges their lives bring. Together, the Cramers moonlight as private investigators with their friend Michael, working to clear up the many problems that surround their family.

In Truth Stained Lies, the sisters get their first taste of private investigation. Cathy, a former attorney who now writes a blog about criminals, gets a warning that something bad is going to happen. Then her brother Jay’s ex-wife turns up dead amid a bitter custody battle over the couple’s five-year-old son. All signs point to Jay being the killer, but the sisters refuse to believe that their brother could murder someone. Was he just in the wrong place at the wrong time, or is he really guilty? While trying to clear their brother’s name, the sisters and Michael also have to deal with someone evil from their past—Lynyrd Miller—the man who killed Michael’s brother and was also Cathy’s fiancé. Due to a technicality, Miller avoided prison. Will all of this prove to be too much for these novice investigators to handle?

In Distortion, the Cramers and Michael again find themselves investigating a crime close to the Cramer family—Juliet’s husband has been murdered. When Miller’s name comes up in the investigation, Michael is hopeful he may finally catch the man. The danger surrounding Miller means the entire Cramer family is at risk. When a kidnapping occurs, the sisters’ investigative skills are put to the ultimate test. Can they help the police find their loved ones? How does Juliet’s husband’s death relate to Miller?

Twisted Innocence focuses on the life of Holly, who works as a taxi driver when she’s not moonlighting as a private investigator. Now that she has a baby girl, she is trying hard to clean up her life. She’s perfectly content raising her daughter without the help of the baby’s father. When the girl’s father suddenly intrudes in their lives and brings tremendous danger with him, Holly is at a loss on how to protect her baby. When she finds out that Miller is the source of the danger, she feels compelled to help the baby’s father so that Miller can finally be caught. A kidnapping complicates everything, and the private investigators face their biggest trouble yet.
Terri Blackstock does a fantastic job of creating suspense within the pages of the Moonlighters series. She does this while keeping everything clean, and even integrating Christian themes. Blackstock creates characters that struggle with believing in God in order to demonstrate God’s love and mercy. The Moonlighters series is a great series for readers that want to enjoy clean thrillers.

_Dani Seilhamer, CLJ_

**Lady Maybe / Julie Klassen.**
LCCN 2014045907 ISBN 9780425282076, paperback, $16.
389 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Award-winning author Julie Klassen is well-known for her inspirational Regency novels filled with entertaining dialogue, historical detail, and sweet romance. Klassen’s latest book, _Lady Maybe_, is no exception, though published by a different publisher.

_Lady Maybe_ finds Miss Hannah Rogers, Lady Mayfield’s former companion, returning to secure the wages owed to her. Sir John Mayfield is taking his wife to an undisclosed location after releasing all their servants. Lady Mayfield persuades Miss Rogers to accompany them on the journey, even though she is clearly reluctant to do so.

Almost to their destination, their carriage has a most unfortunate accident, resulting in serious injury for all passengers. One person is killed, while others suffer from head injuries, and amnesia. The accident results in danger, romance, and complicated family secrets.

Klassen is known for her excellent plot and character development. Before the end of the first chapter, the reader is grabbed by the first of several plot twists, which keep the reader engaged until the final page. The faith elements are well-integrated, not heavy-handed. The spiritual references are light, until the Gospel message of forgiveness is presented. Discussion questions are also included.

Readers expecting a light read might be disappointed. This book is more weighty and dark than her earlier books (extramarital affairs, deception, etc.)--more like Charlotte Bronte’s _Jane Eyre_ and Daphne du Maurier’s _Rebecca_. It is a fascinating read, with lots of plot twists, mystery, and historical details that one comes to expect from Ms. Klassen.

Her most recent work, _The Painter’s Daughter_, was published in November by Bethany House. Recommended for public libraries as well as school libraries, especially for fans of historical fiction, and _Jane Eyre_!

_Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com_

**Emissary / Thomas Locke. (Legends of the realm; 1)**
394 p.: map ; 23 cm. Adult (HS)
Fic Rating: 3
Magic--Fiction. Fantasy--Fiction.

Thomas Locke—a pseudonym for Christian author Davis Bunn—pens a fantasy series for adults featuring a reluctant hero on a journey to discover
his destiny and use his special abilities in the fight against evil.

In *Emissary*, twenty-one-year-old Hyam has a gift for mastering languages, even ones not spoken in recent history. As his mother lies dying, she begs him to return to Long Hall where he studied as a child. A revelation from the Mistress of Long Hall reveals the truth about his parentage and starts him off on his journey, earning him an appointment as emissary to the Ashanta people. Hyam discovers his powers are feared and misunderstood by others, yet they are vital to the outcome of the upcoming war.

Locke creates the Realm—a fantasy world for Hyam’s story—where good and evil face off while unusual creatures fill adventures along the way. Like most epic fantasies, the story features an orphaned (and reluctant) hero who must face inner demons to undertake a dangerous quest. In Hyam’s case, he discovers that he has magical powers he must learn to control.

Although *Emissary* excels in its plot development and world-building, the book starts out slowly. The reader’s interest isn’t fully engaged until about halfway into the book. There is no evidence of a Christian theme in the book, except in the eternal fight between good and evil. Elves, wizards, magic, and strange creatures abound in *Emissary*, making it more fantasy than inspirational fantasy or Christian allegory.

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries, and for fantasy fans of Patrick Carr and Jill Williamson. Look for the sequel, *Merchant of Alyss* coming in Spring 2016.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

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**Sabotaged / Dani Pettrey. (Alaskan courage; 5)**

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

Dani Pettrey concludes the contemporary suspense Alaskan Courage series, set in Alaska. Although each McKenna sibling is the main focus of a different book, they frequently appear in the other books.

In *Sabotaged*, Reef McKenna is paired with Kirra Reed in a search-and-rescue party during the Iditarod race when Kirra’s Uncle Frank goes missing. They meet up with Kirra’s uncle and discover he is being blackmailed while his daughter is being held captive. The two race to find Kirra’s cousin Meg before her uncle is forced to complete the job the kidnappers want—a job that endangers the people and environment of their state.

Pettrey takes readers on roller-coaster ride through the backwoods of Alaska, as Kirra and Reef try to unravel the reason why Frank is being forced to do something against his will and exactly what that job entails. All they know is that Frank worked on the Alaskan pipeline as an engineer. Meanwhile, Kirra and Reef discover their true feelings about one another. Will they discover the truth about Frank’s “job” in time to rescue Meg and avoid an environmental disaster? Or will the pipeline—and Reef and Kirra’s developing relationship—be sabotaged?

Edge-of-your seat suspense, light romance, and faith elements contribute to make Pettrey’s Alaskan Courage a worthy read—a top-notch inspirational romantic suspense series. Readers will enjoy the descriptive narrative and the
imperfect but realistic characters. Fans of Dee Henderson, Irene Hanson, and Lynette Eason will line up to read this series. Pettrey is currently working on a new series for 2016, Chesapeake Valor, set in the coastal Maryland area.

Recommended for high school libraries, as well as adult collections in public and libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, Worthy2Read.wordpress.com

Chivalrous / Dina L. Sleiman. (Valiant hearts; 2)

358 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9 and up
Fic Rating: 5

Dina Sleiman writes another story of adventure and romance about young women in the Middle Ages who step out of conventional roles.

In Chivalrous, Gwendolyn Barnes longs to be a knight and even trains with her brothers. However, when her parents plan her marriage to an overbearing man, she takes matters into her own hands. She enters the upcoming tournament impersonating a man. Allen of Ellsworth also enters the tournament and ends up facing the disguised Gwendolyn in the jousting contest.

Sleiman presents another 13th century young woman with courage to step outside the conventional role to find her true destiny. She isn’t waiting for a handsome knight to save her; she is willing to fight for her future. Gwendolyn bravely tries to escape the loveless marriage planned for her.

Chivalrous is both plot- and character-driven. The story is filled with plot twists that will engage the reader until the final page. One twist is a legend or prophecy; another is the plot to overthrow Gwendolyn’s father, the duke. Both play a central role in Allen and Gwendolyn’s future. Gwendolyn struggles with her worth as a woman in a culture where Divine Order reigns (nobles over peasants, men over women).

Like Dauntless, the faith elements in Chivalrous are strong but not overpowering. The characters struggle with understanding how their faith plays out in everyday life. While there is some sorcery mentioned, it is consistent with the thought of that time period (i.e., viewed as evil).

Recommended for public libraries and school libraries. Fans of medieval young adult books by Melanie Dickerson and Lisa Bergren will enjoy this series. The third book, Courageous, will be out next year.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Someday home : a novel / Lauraine Snelling.

352 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Someday Home has a rather unusual plot, although the theme of women’s friendship is a perennial favorite of readers. Lynn Lundberg has no real financial need to sell her sprawling house since her husband’s unexpected death a few years ago but she has often considered why she continues to stay. Yes, her family is very close by but her home
is a lot of house for one person. When she hears of a new way of living where single women become housemates, she feels this may be the answer to her prayers. But where do you find these women and how do strangers become friends and live in harmony? How do you provide a space to live in, be restored, perhaps to grieve? Where these women can even become family and eventually call their dwelling, home.

Soon Lynn meets two women who need a place to call home: Angela Bishop, a successful real estate agent whose husband of twenty-five-years has just left her, and Judith Rutherford, who is left without a home after having spent her adult years caring for her ailing father. Can it be God at work bringing these women together?

Fans of Lauraine Snelling will enjoy her easy-reading storytelling and the many, many nuggets of spiritual truth evident throughout the book. Those who are grieving—the death of a loved one or the death of a dream—will find much to uphold and strengthen them.

_Ceil Carey, CLJ_

**Through waters deep / Sarah Sundin.**  
*Waves of freedom; 1*  
LCCN 2015000435  
374 p.; 22 cm.  
Adult  
Fic  
Rating: 5  
Sabotage--Fiction.  
Criminal investigation--Fiction.  
Destroyers (Warships)--United States--History--20th century--Fiction.  
Romantic suspense fiction.  
Mystery fiction.  
Historical fiction.

_Through Waters Deep_ finds America on the brink of WWII. Tensions over whether or not the United States should enter the war flare at the naval shipyard where Mary Stirling is a secretary. When a couple of ships are sabotaged, Mary determines to help discover the culprit. Meanwhile, she runs into classmate Jim Avery, who is from her home town but stationed in Boston. In the countdown to Pearl Harbor, all of Mary’s relationships grow steadily more complex, and her behind-the-scenes investigation endangers her. When Jim sails out of Boston, he also encounters increasingly perilous situations. If their friendship is ever to mature into more, both must encounter some waters deep.

Sarah Sundin weaves intrigue, history, and romance seamlessly together in this exciting work of historical fiction. Both Mary and Jim present complex characters whose friendship prompts them to grow in the Lord and to change in order to honor Him and their friendship better. In addition to the budding, fragile romance, intrigue at the shipyard, tension in the country, and danger at sea all drive the plot quickly. Sundin brings WWII Boston to life, scattering just enough detail to bring authenticity to the story. In doing so, she allows the reader to walk the streets with Mary and her friends as they shop, attend church, and go to the movies. She also provide a glimpse into WWII-era naval tactics. The theme—hoist your sails and see where the Lord takes you—runs like a golden thread through the book, pulling Mary and Jim out of their comfort zones and into the life God has in store for them.

_Kristina Wolcott, CLJ_
The legacy: a novel / Dan Walsh and Gary Smalley. (Restoration series; 4)


330 p. ; 22 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 4


The Legacy completes the Restoration Series covering each main character in the Anderson family. This is the story of Doug, the son of Marilyn and Jim Anderson. He has been drinking steadily over the last few years and drifting not only from his parents but also from the faith he grew up with and which once was such an integral part of his life.

Doug’s life is close to bottoming out and his friend Christina, who certainly cares for him more than just as a friend, hopes what she sees portrayed by Doug on social media is not really as it seems. For his part, Doug feels Christina’s past life has made her not worthy of his attentions and he has written her off as a potential girlfriend. Yet he knows she cares for him. When a crisis strikes, the question is will he see clearly enough to turn his life around, spiritually and romantically.

This fourth book concludes the reader’s look at the Anderson family and their spiritual journey. Many life lessons can be gleaned from the maturity and expertise of the authors, Dan Walsh and Gary Smalley. Although each title in the series can be a stand-alone read, reading them in order brings a continuity to the entire story.

Ceil Carey, CLJ

Keeping Christmas: a novel / Dan Walsh.


215 p. ; 23 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 3


Keeping Christmas is about an empty nester that is searching for purpose after her kids are no longer nearby. Judith Winters finds herself depressed, and her friends and husband are unable to cheer her up.

Until this year, Judith has always loved Christmas. Unfortunately, her three grown kids and their families were unable to make the trip home for Thanksgiving. Judith spends Thanksgiving with just her husband, Stan. That day, Judith also learns that her children will not make it home for Christmas either.

When Judith decides to not decorate for Christmas because her kids will not be there to celebrate with them, Stan begins to realize how depressed his wife is without her kids and grandkids there. Despite Stan’s attempts, nothing seems to cheer Judith up. They try to maintain their old traditions, but that just upsets Judith more.

For months, Stan and Barney have been saving up for their dream fishing boat. They planned to split the cost and own it by Christmas. When Stan has a crazy plan to cheer up his wife, he wonders if he can actually pull it off. Pulling it off means dying to his dream of owning the fishing boat. Is it all worth it?

Dan Walsh has crafted a heartwarming holiday story within the pages of Keeping Christmas. The characters are developed nicely, and the central conflict is the main character’s sadness over missing her children. The plot starts off strong, but seems drawn out and does not move much
beyond Judith’s depression. Overall, *Keeping Christmas* is a nice story that emphasizes the importance of family.

*Dani Seilhamer, CLJ*

**The wonder of you / Susan May Warren. (Christiansen family; 5)**  
xiv, 399 p. : map ; 22 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 4  

Susan May Warren continues her contemporary series set in Deep Haven, Minnesota, featuring six adult children in the Christiansen family and their relationships.

In *The Wonder of You*, Amelia Christiansen cuts her year abroad short and returns home, feeling like a failure. When Roark St. John shows up in Deep Haven, she is caught off-guard. Now Amelia faces Seth, the hometown boyfriend who always assumed they would marry, and Roark, the British beau who broke her heart but is begging for another chance. Seth is a safe choice, but is he the right choice for her? Roark’s continued presence in Deep Haven causes her to reconsider whether God has something else in store, and if she has the courage to follow her dreams.

Warren writes character-driven, contemporary books that make readers care about the characters. Each book opens with a letter from their mother, giving insight into the main character. *The Wonder of You* focuses on Amelia’s need to be different from her older siblings. She has always dreamed of doing something outside of Deep Haven, but she isn’t sure what that would be.

While each book is a stand-alone novel, the stories from the earlier books continue as ongoing plot lines. More than just romances, these are stories of flawed individuals and how God woos them back into relationship—which is why readers are so captivated by this series. Warren does an excellent job of building suspense as Amelia’s story unfolds. Warren weaves in details updating the reader about the other siblings and lays the groundwork for the final book, *You’re the One That I Want*, coming in spring 2016.

Recommended for public libraries and church libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

**The hawk and the dove / Penelope Wilcock. (The hawk and the dove; 1)**  
174 p. ; 20 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 5  

**The wounds of God / Penelope Wilcock. (The hawk and the dove; 2)**  
187 p. ; 20 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 5  

**The long fall / Penelope Wilcock. (The hawk and the dove; 3)**
In The Hawk and the Dove, Father Peregrine is appointed Abbot of St. Alcuin’s Benedictine abbey when his gentle, easy-going predecessor, Father Gregory, passes away. Peregrine is a difficult man, one who is respected but not loved. An incident from his past resurrects itself, and he is violently attacked. He is nursed back to health, but remains badly crippled. The community of monks must come together to care for their now vulnerable leader.

In The Wounds of God, calculating, self-absorbed Prior William from the Augustinian Priory of St. Dunstan is determined to humiliate Father Peregrine any way he can. He challenges Father Peregrine to debate a matter of justice masked as doctrine, and Peregrine must overcome his physical limitations to make the arduous three-day journey to arrive in time for the proceedings.

Further incapacitated in The Long Fall, Peregrine begins a difficult recovery with the help of his brothers in the infirmary. Dejected by the perceived hopelessness of the situation, Brother Tom, the young monk closest to Peregrine, pulls away from him. Through a series of events, Tom finds the courage to stay alongside his vulnerable leader.

The narrator is not present in The Long Fall, and the book reads as a novel.

Author Penelope Wilcock has done her research to provide an accurate portrayal of life within an abbey six hundred years ago in these character-driven stories. A glossary, liturgical calendar, and outline of the monastic day are included to aid the reader’s understanding of the time and place. Teens may enjoy these books, but because of the inclusion of topics such as pre-marital sex, death, and serious illness, they might best be read with discussion in mind.

Linda Matchett, CLJ

A worthy pursuit / Karen Witemeyer.

341 p. ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 3

Award-winning author Karen Witemeyer combines diligent research with superior storytelling in her latest historical fiction featuring a former headmistress and a bounty hunter.

In A Worthy Pursuit, Charlotte Atherton, former headmistress at Sullivan’s Academy, will do whatever it takes to protect her students. When asked by a dying mother to take care of her little girl Lily, and to keep Lily from her grandfather, Charlotte goes on the run to protect her. Due to her past experiences, she is reluctant to trust anyone else, especially the handsome Stone Hammond who is hired by Lily’s grandfather to locate Lily. Stone Hammond, the best tracker in Texas, is a rugged, honest man who discovers his
employer has been less-than-honest with him. He is forced to reconsider his employer’s motives–Charlotte has papers listing her as Lily’s legal guardian. Stone tries to convince Charlotte that he has their best interests at heart.

Witemeyer’s books are filled with faith elements that are clearly evident, and the historical elements are well-researched. Main characters see their relationship with God grow as they experience trials and challenges, yet the tone is not preachy. Her books are a delight to read, leaving the reader with a smile upon reading the last page.

Witemeyer manages to use the right combination of adventure, humor, and romance to produce an enjoyable book. However, *A Worthy Pursuit* is not as good as some of her other books. Charlotte comes across as too stiff and hard to relate to, except in her fierce determination to protect her charges at all costs.

*A Worthy Pursuit* will be enjoyed by her fans as well as historical fiction fans, and fans of Julie Lessman and Mary Connealy.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

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**Amish Christmas at North Star**

: four stories of love and family / Cindy Woodsmall ... [et al.]. Mindy Starns Clark and Emily Clark, Katie Ganshert, and Amanda Flower.

329 p.; 21 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 3  
Amish--Fiction. Christmas stories. Christmas--


One snowy night on the eve of December, Amish midwife Rebekah helps bring four babies into the world. Later that night when all is calm, Rebekah prays that each child will one day come to know the hope and light that came into the world as a babe in a manger a couple thousand years ago. In *Amish Christmas at North Star*, five authors collaborate together to tell the stories of Rebecca’s babies 25 years later.

In Katie Ganshert’s *Guiding Star*, hobby journalist Chase Wellington stumbles upon a story in an old newspaper about a local Amish midwife who delivered four babies 25 years ago during a blizzard. This leads him to the mysterious disappearance of baby Anna and into the life of beautiful Elle McAllister, unfolding a sweet story of adoption, family restoration, and love.

In Amanda Flower’s *Mourning Star*, Eden Hochstetler gets pulled into solving the mysterious death of her friend Isaac Yoder. With the help of her best friend and Isaac’s handsome nephew, will Eden uncover who is responsible for Isaac’s murder?

Work and family bring Kore back to his home town where he is forced to share the care of three young children with Savilla, the girl who broke his heart over a year ago by ending their relationship with no explanation. Will Kore finally get answers and will Savilla come to understand that love is a bond thicker than blood? Cindy Woodsmall’s *In the Stars* is a tale of sacrifice, forgiveness, and true love.

In Mindy Starns Clark and Emily Clark’s *Star of Grace*, 12-year-old Sam Danner is determined to accomplish his Great Christmas Challenge. If he can raise enough money to purchase a train ticket, his brother Andy has promised to come home after leaving six months ago when Nellie broke his heart. To earn the money, Sam takes on extra
This collection of stories is short and sweet, providing brief relaxation and entertainment, perfect for the busy time of the season. Each story stands on its own; however, the prologue and epilogue help tie things together, as well as the central location of North Star and Rebekah’s character who appears or is referred to in each story. The first story smoothly transitions from the prologue with a plot that is centered on discovering what happened to Rebekah’s babies; however, this makes the transition to the following stories somewhat disjointed as they are more distantly connected to the introduction. All four stories have an element of mystery, suspense, and romance that is engaging, though at times predictable. The last story stands apart from the others as it is mainly written from the perspective of a 12-year-old boy; however, it is perhaps the most moving. Themes of God’s grace, divine plan, love, redemption, and forgiveness resonate throughout each story, echoing the hope and joy of Christmas.

Justina McBride, CLJ

ADULT NONFICTION

Jesus, jihad and peace: what Bible prophecy says about world events today / Michael Youssef, Ph.D.

xii, 239 p.; 21 cm. Adult
220.15 Rating: 5
Bible--Prophecies--End of the world. Islam--Relations--Christianity. Christianity and other religions--Islam.

Michael Youssef was born and raised in the Middle East, and knows it and its people well. He has had firsthand experience with Islamic practices and thought processes. He wrote this unique volume with the aim of educating the western reader regarding the global goals of Islam.

This book contains an eye-opening history lesson about the beginnings of Islam and their prophet, Mohammed. The author tells about the Muslim Brotherhood which was organized in 1928 with seven members, and grew to two million by the 1940s. It has spread throughout the world with the slogan, “Get Ready!” Today it has chapters in major European capitals and across the United States. He also tells about other Islamic groups, such as Al-Qaeda, which was organized in 1988. Muslims are currently winning 50,000,000 people annually to their faith; one out of five people in the world today is Muslim.

Youssef discusses many events throughout history, chief among them 9/11, which, he says, took away our innocence about the world. He claims that the mission of the Muslims is a global Caliphate, bringing the entire world under Sharia Law and submission to the Koran.

Youssef explores the differences between the Christian God and the Allah of Islam, explaining that, while the Bible teaches love and invites people to accept Jesus, Islam professes that all must be subject to the Koran by conversion, subjugation, humiliation, or elimination. Christians believe in a personal relationship with their Savior, but Muslims cannot imagine fellowship with Allah. The most any Muslim can hope for is to avoid Allah’s wrath. According to Youssef, Muslims view Christians as unconverted infidels who must become subject to Allah, and since Muslims cannot have peaceful existence
with infidels, they engage in terrorism.

This book is very thought-provoking and relevant to the present day.

Juanita Nobles, CLJ

Finding truth : 5 principles for unmasking atheism, secularism, and other God substitutes / Nancy Pearcey.

383 p.; 23 cm. Adult (College)
239 Rating: 4
Apologetics. Christianity and culture.

Finding Truth by Nancy Pearcey critically examines secularism in a clear and compelling way. She offers five principles that provide “a basic game plan for making sense of any worldview.” Pearcey's strategy is derived from Romans 1 and assumes that anyone who rejects God will set up some idol in His place. The five strategic principles for tackling idolatry are: identifying idols, identifying the idol's reductionism, testing the idol for contradiction with the known world, testing the idol for self-contradiction, and replacing the idol with a case for Christianity.

Pearcey aims to supplant “privatized faith” with a faith that is unabashed by truth, logic, and reason. Pearcey walks the reader through the strengths and weaknesses of different worldviews and how to quickly identify a person’s worldview by asking thoughtful questions. Her analysis helps the reader gain an understanding of non-theistic perspectives and biases and will assist the reader in understanding how better to engage non-theists evangelistically.

The conversational style and use of personal story in Finding Truth ease the reader into Pearcey’s method for dismantling the secular worldview.

The book reads like a letter from an intelligent friend who fights daily the tide of secular culture, offering insights and explanations of where the current will take us next. Pearcey’s command of history and philosophy enable her to read the trajectory of American culture and advise Christians on where to invest their efforts for maximum cultural impact. Her discussion of cultural idols that have dethroned God in society—such as materialism, rationalism, empiricism, and romanticism—equip the reader with a proper orientation to these idols without discarding their merits.

This book will be an excellent addition to any young adult’s library, particularly those forming or reforming their Christian worldview. Finding Truth advances a strong apologetic that will build up Christians in their understanding truth and contribute to evangelism as well. The hardcover edition provides a 42-page study guide that corresponds with each section of the book. Readers who are interested in getting acquainted with a Christian analysis of secularism should consider Finding Truth worth reading.

Chad E. Graham, CLJ

Praying for your elephant : boldly approaching Jesus with radical and audacious prayer / Adam Stadtmiller.

237 p.; 21 cm. Adult
248.32 Rating: 5
Prayer-Christiansity.

In his introduction to Praying for Your Elephant, author Adam Stadtmiller indicates he wrote the book to "help free people from the refuse of shame and guilt that can so often mire their
prayer lives, removing the joy that is inherent to a prayer-filled life” (pg. 13). He follows that with a personal anecdote about praying to obtain a live elephant for his youth group and how God answered the prayer four years later.

Stadtmiller outlines widely held assumptions and traditions surrounding prayer, then uses testimonies and biblical references to address them. The remainder of the book explores how Christians can have a deeper relationship to God through specific, strategic praying. He urges the reader to pray for his or her own “elephants”—to ask God boldly for deeply desired things that are so crazy that only God could bring them about.

Written in conversational style with practical step-by-step instructions, Praying for Your Elephant is an easy-to-read, effective learning tool and provides ample inspiration to pray. The author does acknowledge that the book limited in its focus on asking prayer, while there are other forms of prayer (e.g., thanksgiving and healing prayer) not addressed. A sample prayer chart and small group discussion guide are included.

Recommended for teens and adults.

Linda Matchett, CLJ

Never say no: raising big-picture kids / Mark Foreman, Jan Foreman.

300 p.; 21 cm. Adult
649.1 Rating: 5

Authors Mark and Jan Foreman are the parents of Jon and Tim Foreman, who started life as pastor’s kids and later became members of the rock band Switchfoot. When a group of younger parents asked Mark for a tidbit of parenting advice, Mark responded, “Never say no.” The younger parents laughed, but Mark assured them he was serious.

The title does not refer to an absence of all limits. The Foremans suggest saying yes to three main things: children’s dreams or creative ideas, their requests to do activities with parents, and their ability to form their own opinions.

Chapters alternately written by Mark and Jan offer snapshots throughout the years their boys lived at home. Each chapter ends with a page of application questions for the reader to consider.

The first chapter addresses the question, “What is the purpose of parenting?” Mark and Jan conclude that it is to help children discover God, receive his love, and give that love away to others. Building on this foundation, Mark and Jan provide specific examples how they parented according to their values of creativity, positivity, and connection. However, they are clear that this book is not a blueprint for all parents to follow but rather a discussion about parenting lessons they learned along the way. One of the most important of these lessons is stated three-quarters of the way through the book: “A yes to something good is always more powerful than a no to something bad.” (p. 235)

While this is not the first book to advocate a positive approach to parenting, it does fill a gap. Many books that discuss gentle discipline, attachment parenting, or other positive parenting styles nevertheless focus on responding to children’s inappropriate behavior. Never Say No touches on this topic very briefly but emphasizes how parents should creatively encourage their children to represent God’s image to the surrounding world.

Rachelle Dawson, CLJ
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