Outstanding Books Reviewed in This Issue

Miracle Man: The Story of Jesus by John Hendrix.

Aquifer: A Novel by Jonathan Friesen.

Deadlock by DiAnn Mills.

Plus: Selected 2015 Christy Award titles
A Letter from the Publisher

Dear CLJ Readers:

Welcome to the first 2016 issue of CLJ!

In this issue, we are pleased to present the 2015 Christy Award winners and finalists. Our Special Features Writer Valorie Cooper has put together a short, informative piece about these awards that highlight excellence in Christian fiction. We hope you enjoy it and the reviews of these outstanding titles.

I want to thank all of our wonderful, talented reviewers, who worked diligently through the holidays to produce the reviews included in this issue. I also want to thank my mentor Nancy Hesch and CLJ’s Editorial Assistant and Production Manager Justina McBride, without whose hard work and support CLJ could not continue to be published.

We pray you will continue to journey with us this year as we seek to know and glorify God through the enjoyment and promotion of excellent literature.

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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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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INTRODUCTION

In this issue, CLJ is pleased to present reviews of the 2015 Christy Award winners! The Christy Awards originated in 1999 when several Christian publishers banded together to establish an annual Christian fiction award to honor and promote excellence in Christian fiction. The awards are named after Christy, the impact of the novel that currently has 10 million copies in print and is estimated to have been read by 30 million people. The novel was based largely on the real-life adventures of author Catherine Marshall’s mother while teaching children in Appalachia, and was ranked by Christianity Today as #67 out of 94 books (published after WW2) that, according to survey, most shaped the minds of evangelicals.

The Christy Awards are designed to:
* Nurture and encourage creativity and quality in the writing and publishing of fiction written from a Christian worldview.
* Showcase the diversity of the genres.

Every year, publishers are invited to submit novels written from a Christian worldview and copyrighted in the year preceding the awards. Each year, 27 participating publishers enter 27 novels in 10 categories: Book of the Year, Historical, Historical Romance, Contemporary Romance, Suspense, Contemporary, Visionary, First Novel, and Young Adult. Each novel is entered in one of several categories and an advisory board is made up of eight members, including librarians, reviewers, academicians, literary critics, and other qualified readers, none of whom have a direct affiliation with a publishing company.

Each novel is read and evaluated against a ten-point criteria by a panel of seven judges composed of librarians, reviewers, academicians, and other qualified readers, none of whom have a direct affiliation with a publishing company.
Category : BOOK OF THE YEAR

Thief of glory : a novel / Sigmund Brouwer.
326 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

After the Japanese invade the Dutch East Indies in 1942, ten-year-old Jeremiah Prins finds himself imprisoned with his mother, younger siblings, and the island's other Dutch inhabitants. Life under the sadistic camp commander is a series of brutal, violent events, during which Jeremiah learns how cruel mankind can be to one another. Jeremiah matures quickly as his mother sinks deep into despair, and he becomes the primary caregiver for his brothers and sisters, taking repeated risks to his life to find them food, shelter, and medications. A few months later, his former childhood crush, Laura Jansen, is transferred into the camp. His infatuation develops into true friendship that enables them to face their ordeal together. Through his experiences, Jeremiah matures and grows to care for others in the camp as well.

Narrated in flashback by the elderly Jeremiah Prins, Sigmund Brouwer's *Thief of Glory* is a fictionalization of the childhood experiences of the author's father. Dark, gritty, and disturbing, the story is a well-researched, accurate account of the Jappenkamps during World War II. A worthy addition to any library's holocaust literature.

Includes episodes of extreme violence throughout.
*Linda Matchett, CLJ*

Category : HISTORICAL

Award Winner

The sentinels of Andersonville / Tracy Groot.
Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014.
xvii, 348 p.: maps ; 24 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4


Award Finalists

The advocate : a novel / Randy Singer.
473 p. ; ill. ; 23 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

*The Advocate* is a gripping legal thriller with historical and fictional characters interwoven into the plotline. The story revolves around a Roman named Theophilus, who lived during the reign of the Julian Emperors Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius,
and Nero. Theophilus is also the name of the person to whom Luke addresses the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Theophilus is 14 years old and attending a school of rhetoric in Rome when the fallout from an altercation with a classmate compels him to finish his training in Greece. At the age of 20, Theophilus returns to Rome to establish his own law practice. However, due to the political climate, he travels to Judea to serve as legal advisor to Pontius Pilot. During his time in Judea, Theophilus witnesses the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, which have a deep and lasting influence on his life. Theophilus goes back to Rome and works as a public defender, becoming embroiled in the political intolerances and inequities of the legal system. When he is asked to defend the Apostle Paul before Emperor Nero, will Theophilus take on the case?

Randy Singer provides a fascinating look not only into ancient Rome and the cruelty and bloodshed that were an inherent part of the culture but also into the beginnings of Christianity and the persecution and suffering experienced by the early followers of Jesus. The book has been thoroughly researched to maintain historical accuracy about the culture, political climate, legal system, and vast disparities in the treatment of citizens of the Roman Empire in the first century. The majority of the story is told from the viewpoint of Theophilus. A list of historical and fictional characters upon which the story is based is included at the beginning of the book.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

The invention of wings / Sue Monk Kidd.

373 p.; 20 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4
Grimke, Sarah Moore--1792-1873--Fiction.

Sue Monk Kidd has written a riveting story that illustrates not only the brutal and degrading treatment of slaves but also the courage it takes to fight for freedom in the face of insurmountable odds.

Sarah Grimke’s wealthy and prominent slave-holding family resides in Charleston, South Carolina. On Sarah’s eleventh birthday, ten-year-old slave Hetty “Handful” Grimke is gifted to Sarah to serve as her handmaiden. Even though Sarah is adamantly opposed to taking Handful on as a slave, she is unsuccessful in her efforts to give Handful her freedom. A friendship develops between the two girls, and their lives become permanently intertwined. The story follows the lives of both Sarah and Handful over the course of thirty-five years from 1803 to 1838. Both women yearn for freedom. Handful dreams of escaping her life of servitude, and Sarah longs to make her own choices in life instead of living under the constraints of a patriarchal society. Will the two women ultimately succeed in their endeavors?

The Invention of Wings is told from the viewpoints of Handful and Sarah and switches from chapter to chapter between them. Sue Monk Kidd realistically depicts the appalling treatment of slaves, the struggles against slavery and women’s oppression, and the harsh punishments for defying societal norms that were an inherent part of early nineteenth-century American culture. A few curse words and an illicit affair are included.
in the story. The author’s note provides details about the historical figures upon whose lives the story is loosely based, with the majority of the story inspired by the real life of Sarah Grimke.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

Category : HISTORICAL ROMANCE

Award Winner

Thief of glory : a novel / Sigmund Brouwer.

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

See review under “Book of the Year.”

Award Finalists

A beauty so rare / Tamera Alexander.
(Belmont Mansion novel)

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


Eleanor Braddock is plain and sensible, not a woman that attracts men. Convinced she will never marry, Eleanor, upon hearing a dying soldier’s final words, is determined to make her life count. When family finances dwindle and her father’s mental loss worsens, Eleanor makes the difficult choice of moving to Belmont Mansion to live with her wealthy aunt, Adelicia Acklen. While her aunt is determined to find her a suitable husband, Eleanor discovers her own calling.

Unlike Eleanor, the Archduke Marcus Gottfried is a man too handsome for his own good who has lived a life full of frivolity, privilege, and selfish pursuits. While initially coming to America to temporarily escape his royal heritage and a family scandal, Marcus becomes a changed man, desiring to accomplish something of importance through his love of botany and architectural work.

When Eleanor and Marcus cross paths, sparks instantly fly between these two opposites, while a kindred purpose and growing attraction unite their hearts, blossoming into an impossible love. Will circumstances beyond themselves prove too great an opposition?

In A Beauty So Rare, Tamera Alexander weaves a historical masterpiece worthy of being a 2015 Christy award finalist for best historical romance. The storyline goes far beyond that of a typical romance novel by delving into family dynamics, grief, societal flaws, friendship, and life purpose. The poverty and loss of the South in the post-Civil War era is richly and tragically portrayed through the lives of the widows and fatherless interlaced throughout the plot. The novel is full of unforgettable characters who will arrest readers with their complexity and heart. Eleanor and Marcus are picture in contrast, coming from two different worlds in more ways than birth and location. Both, however, seek to find God’s purpose for their lives while learning the valuable
lesson that “the mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). The overarching theme centers on uncovering “a beauty so rare,” one that shines deep from within and is often overlooked by those who lack the patience and right perspective to take a closer, longer look.

Justina McBride, CLJ

With every breath / Elizabeth Camden.

Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2014.
360 p. ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5


Category:
CONTEMPORARY ROMANCE

Award Winner

A broken kind of beautiful: a novel / Katie Ganshert.

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

Ivy Clark is a fashion model, beautiful and poised in front of the camera—if only her beauty were more than skin deep. Ivy feels her brokenness and impurity so deeply, but when it comes to her line of work, only the outward appearance counts. No one really cares about what is going on inside her mind and heart.

Desperately, she agrees to be the new face of her stepmother’s line of bridal gowns, pretty ironic for a girl who is far from pure herself. But her current job is evaporating and she wants to continue in the fashion business, even though working for her stepmother and coming back to South Carolina is a very bitter pill to swallow for a big city girl who thought she had it made on her own.

Her future seems to be partly in the hands of the photographer, Davis Knight. He is an enigma, having given up the kind of fame and notoriety that Ivy has always desired. What is his motivation? What makes him do what he does and act as he acts? She is not used to being treated the way that Davis treats her nor can she understand a man who works in maintenance at his local church, a man whose goals are God-centered yet who is flawed himself.

Almost the entire cast of characters in A Broken Kind of Beautiful seems to challenge everything that Ivy has believed about herself and about the world in general. She has pictured herself as broken and cast aside. Could God view her differently—could he care for her and have a plan for her life?

Readers looking for a more unusual setting for a Christian read might find this setting of super models and the fashion industry an interesting change.

Ceil Carey, CLJ
Award Finalists

Firewall : a novel / DiAnn Mills. (FBI : Houston; 1)

Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014.
LCCN 2014007964 ISBN 9781414389936,
paperback, $14.99.
xi, 403 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5
Missing persons--Fiction. Terrorism investigation
--Fiction.

See: Christian Library Journal, July/August 2015.

Undetected / Dee Henderson.

LCCN 2013047000 ISBN 9780764212437,
paperback, $15.99.
476 p.; 23 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4


Category : SUSPENSE

Award Winner

The color of justice / Ace Collins.

LCCN 2014008448 ISBN 9781426770036,
paperback, $14.99.
351 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Race relations--Fiction. Trials (Murder)--Fiction.
African Americans--Crimes against--Fiction.
Mississippi--Fiction. Mystery fiction. Legal
stories.

It’s 1964, and the small town of Justice, Mississippi is stunned by the murder of a
tenaged, white girl. Within hours, a black boy is
arrested. When attorney Coop Lindsay agrees to
defend the young man, Coop and his family are
inundated with bribe offers and death threats.
Despite the dangers, he follows his conscience and
prepares for the case, quickly discovering that
there seem to be numerous people intent on
making sure he doesn’t finish the job. Fifty years
later, Coop’s grandson, Cooper arrives in Justice
seeking answers to the questions unresolved by
the trial that changed his family's legacy. A new
case is presented, and Cooper has a chance to
right the wrongs of so many years ago.

Author Ace Collins effectively illustrates life in the
South during the turbulent era of racial
integration and civil unrest. Using both
description and dialogue, Collins creates authentic
characters who are conflicted and flawed
characters who constantly question their deep-
seated beliefs of right and wrong. The Color of
Justice addresses the volatile topic of racial
discrimination realistically, yet with sensitivity,
giving readers much food for thought.

Recommended for public and church libraries.
Teens may enjoy The Color of Justice, but it is best
read with discussion in mind because of the
subject matter.

Linda Matchett, CLJ
Award Finalists

**A cry from the dust / Carrie Stuart Parks.**
xvi, 368 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Forensic artist Gwen Marcey is recruited to reconstruct the faces of recently unearthed victims at Mountain Meadows, Utah (the location of an 1857 massacre perpetrated by a group of militant Mormons). When her work is vandalized beyond repair, and a young woman is killed in a ritualized murder, Gwen realizes there is more at stake than a simple victim identification case. Then evidence of a cover-up surfaces, and Gwen must take on the entire Mormon church to find the truth.

Author Carrie Stuart Parks is an FBI-trained forensic artist, and her background lends accuracy to the plot details and authenticity to the protagonist. The intricacies of the Mormon beliefs, which have the possibility of being confusing to the reader, are effectively explained through a combination of dialogue and description. The plot twists and fast pace of *A Cry From the Dust* provide page-turning suspense. Contains episodes of violence and graphic description.

_Linda Matchett, CLJ_

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**Sky zone / Creston Mapes.** (Crittendon files, 3.)
443 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4


**Category : CONTEMPORARY**

Award Winner

**The story keeper / Lisa Wingate.**
x, 438 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning author Lisa Wingate weaves an intriguing story with a dual timeline—a contemporary one involving a New York editor, the other involving a mixed-blood woman living in the Appalachians at the turn of the century.

In *The Story Keeper*, Jen Gibbs is a successful New York editor. Newly hired by Vida House, she is surprised to find an old manuscript on her desk. Glancing at it, Jen quickly finds herself drawn into the story of Rand, a wealthy boy from Charleston, and Sarra, a mixed-race Melungeon girl.

Born in the South, she identifies with the rural setting in the manuscript. It takes place in the
Blue Ridge Mountains, not far from Jen’s home, causing her to believe she knows the writer’s identity. Jen starts on a journey to contact the author, which leads to an intersection with her own Appalachian family roots. She follows a hunch to locate the author and secure the publishing rights. When she goes to that region, Jen doesn’t expect to reconnect with her family. As Jen uncovers more details about the manuscript’s reclusive author, she learns valuable insight into her own past.

Faith is an integral element in this multilayered story within a story, as are the details of the history of the Appalachian Mountains and its peoples. Wingate does an excellent job in character development. Her characters grip one’s heart as the parallel stories are read, causing one to ponder. The second story is printed in a different font, making it easier for the reader to keep track of which storyline is being followed.

Recommended for adult collection in public and church libraries. The Story Keeper is the winner of 2015 Carol Award and 2015 Christy Award.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Award Finalists

Farewell Four Waters: one aid worker’s sudden escape from Afghanistan; a novel based on true events / Kate McCord, a protective pseudonym.
363 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5
Afghan War, 2001-- Fiction. Literary programs--

The Amish Blacksmith, second in The Men of Lancaster County series, is the 2015 Christy Award Winner and is presented here as part of a review of the entire series.

The Amish groom / Mindy Starns Clark, Susan Meissner. (The men of Lancaster County; 1)
338 p.: ill.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4
Amish--Fiction. Love stories. Christian


The Men of Lancaster County series revolves around an Amish community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and features Amish men who are struggling to cope with personal challenges in their lives. Readers will gain insight not only into the religious beliefs and lifestyle of the Amish people but also into the Rumspringa, which is a coming-of-age ritual for teenagers.

In The Amish Groom, 23-year old Tyler Anderson is facing a crossroads in his life. Tyler lives in the “English” world until the death of his Amish mother, and then he is sent by his father to live with his Amish grandparents. Now that it is time for Tyler to make the decision about whether or not to be baptized and to fully commit to the Amish lifestyle, he is conflicted between an Amish or an English way of life. The dilemma leads him to embark on a journey of self-discovery in order to find out God’s plan for his life. This is a poignant and touching story about a young man who is in the midst of an identity crisis and uncertain about where he belongs in the world.

In The Amish Blacksmith, the story centers on 24-year old Jake Miller. He is content with his life working as a blacksmith apprentice, rehabilitating troubled horses, and courting Amanda Shetler, a young Amish woman. Jake’s boss asks him to help his niece, a woman with a troubled past, get reintegrated into the Amish community. Life becomes complicated for Jake when he begins to have romantic feelings toward the niece. A thread of mystery is woven into this heartfelt story that encompasses friendship, forgiveness, dealing with challenges in life, hearing God’s voice, and healing.

The Amish Clockmaker focuses on Matthew Zook and Clayton Raber and a decades-old mystery. When a property dispute arises that involves an acre of land purchased years ago by the Zook family from the Raber family, Matthew takes on the task of locating Clayton. Clayton has left the Amish community in Lancaster County under questionable circumstances. Can Matthew succeed in finding Clayton when fellow members of the community are reluctant to help him? This is a heartbreaking and uplifting story that illustrates the power of perseverance, the tragic consequences a horrible tragedy can cause, the importance of forgiveness, effects of mental illness, and God’s enduring love.

Each book can be read as a stand-alone, and discussion questions are included. Anyone who wants to gain first-hand knowledge of the Amish culture will enjoy the books.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ
Award Finalists

(*Home to Chicory Lane* is a 2015 Christy Award Finalist, and is presented here along with its sequel as part of a series review.)

**Home to Chicory Lane / Deborah Raney. (A Chicory Inn novel; 1)**


272 p.; 22 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 4


**Two roads home / Deborah Raney. (A Chicory Inn novel; 2)**


299 p.; 22 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 4

Christian fiction. Domestic fiction.

In *Home to Chicory Lane*, Audrey gets her dream of having a bed and breakfast, now that the children are all grown. Her ever-loving husband, Grant, dutifully performs all the tasks she assigns him, whether he likes the job or not, just to put smiles on his wife’s face. While they are living their dream, their youngest, Landyn, is fleeing back to the safety net of Mom and Dad, away from her husband of six months and his dreams of being a famous artist. While Landyn is questioning God and His plans, her husband Chase is fully leaning on Him. On top of the challenges of starting a new business, her parents are now caught in the middle of these two and have to decide whether—and how much—they should try to help. Before things get too crazy in both families, will they remember that God knows best, even though they cannot see the big picture yet?

In *Two Roads Home*, the reader gets a closer look at Landyn’s older sisters, Corrine and Danae, along with their families. Corrine is a stay-at-home wife and mother. Her husband Jesse has to travel a lot with his job. Tension brews between Jesse and Corrine when accusations of sexual harassment surface at work. Will the trouble go so far as to put their three high-spirited little girls in danger? Danae and her husband Dallas are not without their own difficulties. The pain in Danae’s heart grows every time she sees her sister’s children, while her arms are still empty. Will both couples remember to lean on God and in His perfect timing?

Deborah Raney does a marvelous job of making the reader identify with her characters. Many will be able to relate to the true-to-life struggles. It is a great series to share with those who are struggling with issues similar to those her characters are facing. The added sneak peek into the next book at the end of each book will make readers eager for the next book. Ideal for public and church libraries.

*Lisa Allen, CLJ*

**When I fall in love / Susan May Warren. (Christiansen family; 3)**

Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014.


xiv, 378 p.; 22 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 4

Category: VISIONARY

Award Winner

Once beyond a time / by Ann Tatlock.
321 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic  Rating: 4
Space and time--Fiction.

Award-winning author Ann Tatlock pens a novel that combines elements of time travel, science fiction, and mystery. Set in an old house in the mountains, Tatlock’s novel inspires the reader to grasp the "healing power of forgiveness" (back cover).

In *Once Beyond a Time*, the Crane family moves from Philadelphia to Black Mountain, North Carolina in the aftermath of the father’s extramarital affair. Former pastor Sheldon Crane is offered a job as car salesman. Sheldon’s wife is unwilling to forgive him, and their daughter is angry about the move away from her friends.

Eight-year-old Digger is the only one who is happy. When Digger disappears, they fear he is kidnapped or lost in the mountains. It takes this situation to break through the walls the family has built between themselves, as the Crane family interacts with past and future residents of the house.

Tatlock’s book uses multiple points of view, with each chapter identified by the character who provides the point of view. *Once Beyond a Time* starts off slowly, and reading the first part was challenging. The pacing picks up in the second half of the book: the characters change as they interact with other characters from other eras. They can’t touch one another but they can see and talk to one another. The time portal helps the reader understand the concept of God being the same yesterday, today, and forever.

A departure from her usual genre, this novel contains her signature rich prose and character development. Tatlock makes the reader think about her characters long after the final chapter is read.

*Once Beyond a Time* won the 2015 Christy Award and was a finalist for the 2015 Selah Award. Recommended for adult collections in public libraries and church libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Award Finalists

Shadow hand / Anne Elisabeth Stengl.  
(Tales of Goldstone Wood; 6)  
408 p.; 22 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic  Rating: 4


A time to die / Nadine Brandes. (Out of time; 1)  
389 p.; 22 cm. Adult (Grades 10-12)
Fic  Rating: 4

Nadine Brandes makes her debut with a dystopian
trilogy where individuals have a personal clock counting down to their death.

In the first book, *A Time to Die*, seventeen-year-old Parvin Blackwater has less than a year left on her clock. When the government discovers Parvin was illegally sharing one with her twin brother, she is sent through the Wall, where no one has ever returned.

Wanting her life to count for something, Parvin writes her thoughts as she experiences life beyond the Wall. A journalist agrees to publish her journal and make her famous. She meets Willow (an albino who befriends her unconditionally) and Jude (who teaches her how to survive). Her experiences make her want to return to her former world, to teach other Radicals how to survive.

Brandes creates a future world where new technology and government control is all too real and possible. Her writing is imaginative with realistic characters and suspenseful plot twists. The albino culture takes environmentalism to an extreme, resulting in the maiming of a major character. The writing gets intense but the violence is appropriate for the story (including a birth scene and several killings). Military control, an assassination, and conspiracy are part of the novel’s plot twists. Parvin struggles in her Christian faith, making her journey both a spiritual and physical one.

*A Time to Die* is well-written, especially for a debut novel, and its excellence is recognized in the honors garnered. It won the 2015 Carol Award and was a 2015 Christy Award finalist as well as a 2014 Clive Staples Award semi-finalist. *A Time to Die* is followed by *A Time to Speak*, and *A Time to Rise*.

Recommended for fans of dystopian fiction and speculative fiction, especially readers of Krista McGee’s Anomaly series, Lisa Bergren’s Remnant series, Bonnie Calhoun’s Stone Braide Chronicles series, and Jill Williamson’s Safe Lands series.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

**Category : FIRST NOVEL**

**Award Winner**

*A feast for thieves / Marcus Brotherton. (A Rowdy Slater novel)*


287 p.; 22 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 3

Sergeant Rowdy Slater has a reputation as the most incorrigible paratrooper in Dog Company during WWII. True to character, after the war he robs a bank in Cut Eye, TX with fellow soldier, Crazy Ake. Circumstances force them apart, and Rowdy vows to turn his life around. He returns the money and owns up to the crime. Suspicious of the genuineness of Rowdy’s confession, the sheriff gives him an ultimatum: serve one year as the town minister or go to jail. Rowdy settles in at the community church, but it’s not long before things take a turn for the worse when Crazy Ake appears and demands his share of the cash.

Author Marcus Brotherton tells a story of second chances to which readers can relate. Rowdy’s transformation from a cavalier roughneck with no interest in God to a sincere, down-to-earth pastor impacts his tiny congregation in ways he never imagines.

Written in first person, *Feast of Thieves* reads as part adventure story and part memoir, and the unusual premise of the book makes for an
entertaining story. The Texas dialect and colloquialisms may be occasionally difficult to follow, and the dialogue and descriptions reflect the era. Indicative of the topic, there are two scenes that include violence. The novel may be enjoyed by teens as well, but may be best read with discussion in mind.

Linda Matchett, CLJ

Award Finalists

For such a time / Kate Breslin.

430 p. ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5
World War, 1939-1945--Jewish resistance--Fiction.
Jewish girls--Fiction.

Set in 1944 at the transit camp of Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia, For Such a Time is a retelling of the biblical story of Esther. Hadassah Benjamin is saved from the firing squad to be secretary to the camp's new commandant, Aric von Schmidt. Her Aryan-like looks allow Hadassah to hide behind the false identity of Stella Muller as she appeals to Aric on behalf of those at camp. Convinced God has put her at the camp to save her people, she risks discovery with each attempt to help the prisoners.

The harshness of life at the camp is made apparent through vivid description and realistic dialogue. The characters are highly believable with even minor players having distinct personalities and voices. Readers are quickly pulled through the story as the tension builds between Hadassah and Aric, who both struggle with feelings of guilt, doubt, and despair. An excellent portrayal of redemption, For Such a Time is well written, and readers will be impacted long after the last page.

Indicative of the situation, there are periodic episodes of brutality. Despite the violence, For Such a Time has value as a fictionalized yet true-to-history account of World War II. Teens may enjoy the novel as well, but it might be best read with discussion in mind.

Linda Matchett, CLJ

House of living stones / Katie Schuermann.

350 p. : ill. , maps ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

House of Living Stones is a charming and heartfelt story revolving around the congregation of a Lutheran church in the small town of Bradbury, Illinois.

Emily Duke is hired by Pastor Michael Fletcher to fill the choir director position at Zion Lutheran Church. In her new job, Emily is faced with the bias of long-term parishioners who are resistant to change, as well as gossip, personality clashes, resentment, underhandedness, meddlesomeness, and misunderstandings. Will she be able to overcome these challenges and gain the respect of the congregation, or will she give up and resign from her position?

Kate Schuermann provides readers with an in-depth look into the effects of social norms on church parishioners living in a small town. There are not only painfully awkward moments in the
story but also humorous incidents that give readers an entertaining glimpse into the funny side of church life. The majority of the story takes place during choir rehearsals at the church. The story flows smoothly with rich character development, and multiple storylines are effortlessly woven together.

Latin phrases are scattered throughout the story, and the translations are provided at the end of the book. Discussion questions are also included. The novel reflects both the intricacies and appeal of small town life.

Dianne Woodman, CLJ

Category: YOUNG ADULT

Award Winner

Storm siren / Mary Weber. (Storm siren trilogy; 1)  
341 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12  
Fic Rating: 4

See: Christian Library Journal, July/August 2015.

Award Finalists

Failstate: nemesis / John W. Otte. (The Failstate series; 3)  
315 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12  
Fic Rating: 4


John Otte concludes the adventures of Failstate—his teen superhero—in this sequel to his earlier novels, Failstate (reviewed in Christian Library Journal, June/July 2013) and Failstate: Legends (reviewed in Christian Library Journal, July/August 2014).

In Failstate: Nemesis, Robin Laughlin (aka Failstate) achieves his dream of being a licensed superhero. Robin is respected by his fellow superheroes, feared by criminals, and his relationship with his brother Ben (also a superhero) is good.

But when a family secret is revealed and a warning about Abaddon (a villain) is delivered by Lux, who supposedly died in Failstate’s arms a year ago, it shakes Failstate’s world. As Abaddon brings death and destruction to New Chayton, different but somewhat familiar superheroes appear on the scene. Why are they here? Can Failstate get to the bottom of Lux’s reappearance, the arrival of these new superheroes, as well as discover the truth about his father’s past while he tries to defeat Abaddon?

Otte does an excellent job of creating books with a comic-book feel to them. This novel is more plot-
driven and slightly darker than the earlier books; nonetheless, it is full of twists to keep readers on their toes, especially concerning Abaddon.

While there is some violence, none of it is graphic; all of it is expected in a world where superheroes are battling evil villains. With its short chapters, comic-book feel, and mixture of humor, light romance, mystery, and adventure, Failstate: Nemesis—a Christy Award finalist (Young Adult) in 2015—is the perfect read for teens and adults.

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

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

This quiet sky / Joanne Bischof.

149 p. ; 20 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5

Eighteen-year-old Tucker O’Shay has big dreams for his future: go to college and become president of the United States. With his determination and brain, he could accomplish both. There is only one problem—his future may be nonexistent.

While walking to her new school, 16-year-old Sarah Miller is warned by her friends about the boy with the fatal illness, which may be catching. Soon after arriving at the one-room schoolhouse, Sarah is directed to share the bench with the handsome boy sitting at the back of the classroom, the very boy her friends have warned her about. Sarah cannot help her growing curiosity or slight frustration towards Tucker, who has no difficulties stirring her wrath by letting her know her algebra equations are wrong.

After their initial meeting goes poorly, Tucker volunteers to tutor Sarah. Tucker teaches her algebra, but even more, he teaches her to live with determination and conviction, while she gives him the gift of friendship and a new purpose for life. What begins as friendship swiftly develops into something much deeper, but time is running out.

In This Quiet Sky, a 2015 Christy award finalist for best young adult novel, Joanne Bischof poignantly paints a tender story of young love, one that even death cannot erase. So much beauty, pain, love, and loss are portrayed in this character-driven plot that readers will not reach the final pages without being moved to tears. The author vividly depicts the thoughts and feelings of the characters with rich imagery, making simple statements about profound life truths. Tucker is a boy full of depth and wisdom with a strength that seems out of this world but is balanced by his moments of vulnerability, while Sarah possesses a strength and ability to live richly that she is just discovering. A clear theme of this story is that God’s gifts of life and love are not defined or bound by time. Overall, this is a short but impacting read that ends much too soon, mirroring the time that Tucker and Sarah have together, making both all the more valuable for it.

Justina McBride, CLJ
PRIMARY FICTION

Stanley at school / written by Linda Bailey ; illustrated by Bill Slavin.

ISBN 9781771380966, hardcover, $17.95.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 x 27 cm.     K-Grade 3
E     Rating: 4

Children will be drawn to Linda Bailey’s story about Stanley, leader of a gang of dogs, and the rest of the gang—Nutsy, Alice and Gassy Jack. In Stanley at School, Stanley leads this gang into the neighborhood elementary school to find out what their kids do every day. The calm, cheerful narrative brings a suspenseful adventure involving dogs that are curious but not irresponsible, trouble-causing but not destructive.

Slavin’s illustrations add a lot to the story as each dog has a distinct personality but isn’t too artsy or realistic, removing the excitement. They capture the hilarity of the dogs’ shenanigans. Human characters depicted are ethnically diverse and cover the realities of life—e.g., one little girl wears glasses, and one little boy is in a wheelchair.

This is a tremendously appealing book, due in no small measure to the calm, cheerful, and yet suspenseful narrative and the remarkably engaging crew of dog heroes.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Edgar wants to be alone / written and illustrated by Jean-François Dumont ; [translated by Leslie Mathews].

LCCN 2014018605     ISBN 9780802854575, hardcover, $16.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 22 x 27 cm.     K-Grade 2
E     Rating: 5
Earthworms--Fiction. Rats--Fiction.

French author and illustrator Jean-François Dumont provides a story in Edgar Wants to Be Alone that says something insightful about individuality and community life. Edgar is a crabby rat who prefers to be alone and, because of his bad temper, the other animals avoid him. One worm, however, doesn’t want to leave him alone, though Edgar cannot seem to outrun or outswim the worm.

The dark, earth-toned illustrations depict worms in their underground tunnels so that children will find it believable that there is a worm following Edgar. The reddish-orange backgrounds reflect Edgar’s temper. Edgar gradually comes to the realization that he is his own worst enemy, and the animals he has treated so horribly come out in the end to be much happier and content than he. The moral is one that can be pondered by children with ages from 5 to 8 as Edgar receives advice from each of the animals that he consults on how to get rid of the worm. The imaginative, appealing pictures capture the essence of the different settings of the worms and animals as well as the emotional climate.

Dumont’s earlier A Blue So Blue won the Prix Saint-Exupery, an award given yearly to the best illustrated picture book in France.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ
The legend of the Easter robin / an Easter story of compassion and faith / written by Dandi Daley Mackall, illustrated by Richard Cowdrey.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 cm. K-Grade 2
E Rating: 3
Rabbits--Fiction. Easter stories.

In The Legend of the Easter Robin: An Easter Story of Compassion and Faith, author Dandi Daley Mackall introduces a Pennsylvania Dutch tale that ties Easter symbols and traditions to the story of the crucifixion. The book is a newly-illustrated release of the author’s earlier The Story of the Easter Robin.

When young Tressa worries about a robin’s nest outside her window, Gran assures her that the Creator will keep the eggs safe. They prepare for Easter by making oschter-foggel (hollowed eggs dyed and decorated to look like birds) while Gran tells the story of the Easter robin.

In this legend, a plain robin tried to help Jesus on the cross by tugging a thorn from His forehead. The bloody thorn stained the robin’s breast, which continues to be red as a reminder of Christ’s sacrifice. Additional details suggest the bird’s nest as symbolic of Christ’s crown of thorns and the robin as a sign of new life and His resurrection.

The Legend of the Easter Robin is a picture book best viewed by children and parents together, owing to the challenging vocabulary, legend-within-a-story format, and subject matter. Richard Cowdrey’s moving gray-tone images of Christ carrying the cross and being struck with a knotted whip are sandwiched between happy kitchen and nature scenes—a juxtaposition that may be jarring for young readers. The illustrator’s bird drawings are impressively detailed and worthy of note.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

The specific ocean / written by Kyo Maclear ; illustrated by Katty Maurey.

ISBN 9781894786355, hardcover, $17.95.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 32 cm. K-Grade 3
E Rating: 5
Ocean--Fiction. Sea stories.

In The Specific Ocean, the reader is quickly brought into the story of a little girl who slowly falls in love with the Pacific Ocean even though she didn’t want to go at the start of vacation. That journey becomes for the reader a welcome, interesting experience.

Author Kyo Maclear has command of language and is able to describe with vibrant feeling, just as if each sentence moves to the next with the movement of the ocean waves. “There is no late or hurry or racing in ocean time” we read early on, and this gradually encourages the girl to appreciate the ocean.

The girl mistakenly calls the water the “specific ocean” instead of the “Pacific Ocean.” It is easy for the reader to relate to the little girl and feel how her view of the ocean changes from resentment to love. The illustrations by Maurey promote this transition as the pastel shades and soft lines call forth a simple and emotive mood.

Maclear’s previous children’s picture books have won the Governor General’s Literary Award for illustration, Canada’s most prestigious children’s book prize, and it is easy to guess that this one will likely follow suit.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ
Brother Giovanni's little reward: how the pretzel was born / by Anna Egan Smucker; illustrated by Amanda Hall.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 25 x 26 cm. K-Grade 3
E Rating: 5

The upbeat nature of Anna Egan Smucker's story of how the pretzel came to be lends a heartwarming atmosphere and endearing reaction to Brother Giovanni and the children. The children are having a hard time learning their prayers, and the Abbot seeks help from the young and energetic monks. Though the first efforts are not successful, Brother Giovanni comes up with a solution in the presence of his orange tabby cat, arriving at a special treat: bread rolled and twisted into the shape of praying arms. The combination of baking and learning prayers in Brother Giovanni's Little Reward soon has the children folding their arms over their chests in the shape of the "pretiolas" and praying.

The warm illustrations by Hall reinforce the cheery nature of how the story progresses, with even the endpapers showing Brother Giovanni riding from the monastery to the hilltop village. The pastel watercolor inks and gouache reflect the exuberance generated by the kind baker. In the style of illuminated manuscripts, many of the illustrations are framed with decorative and interesting borders. A reader's note explains the historical background of the invention of the pretzel as well as a recipe for soft pretzels.

This story goes well with Eric Carle's Walter the Baker.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Loula and Mister the monster / written and illustrated by Anne Villeneuve.

ISBN 9781771383264, hardcover, $16.95.
32 unnumbered pages : col. ill. ; 29 cm. PS-K
E Rating: 4

Loula and Mister the Monster is the third in a series with the first being Loula is Leaving for Africa and Loula and the Sister Recipe following. Loula overhears her mother saying that she can't live with the monster anymore, and Loula assumes she is referring to her constant companion, a somewhat unruly dog. She sets out to train her pet to be the perfect dog, and therein lies the fun and funny failures.

The illustrations are cute with a comic-like feel. The story is easy to read. From bath time to the museum, readers are pushing for Mister to learn his manners because Loula could not survive without her best friend. Accompanying every action in the story, the illustrations add a great deal to the story, making it possible to tell the story by focusing just on the illustrations.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ
**Animal supermarket** / written by Giovanna Zoboli; illustrated by Simona Mulazzani; translated by Laura Watkinson.

LCCN 2014028079 ISBN 9780802854483, hardcover, $16.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm. K-Grade 2
E Rating: 5

Translated from Italian, *Animal Supermarket* centers around animals who are shopping at their supermarket for natural foods: birds and ants are picking up crumbs, cats are checking out milk, bears are eating berries, polar bears load up on cod, cuttlefish, and squid, and lemurs go for grubs and insects.

The colorful illustrations by Mulazzani present in cartoon, whimsical folk-art format the animals and their food choices. Of particular merit is that each animal shows a different facial expression. Even the shrubs around the market appear to be animated shoppers. She has won the Society of Illustrators Silver Medal for earlier children’s titles *The Big Book of Slumber* and *I Wish I Had*. The editorial skills of author Giovanna Zoboli, who worked with Mulazzani on the earlier works, contribute to making this story both entertaining and a springboard to discussing healthy eating habits.

*Leroy Hommerding, CLJ*

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**PRIMARY NONFICTION**

**The super gifts of spring** / Dandi Daley Mackall; illustrations by Katherine Blackmore. (*Seasons* series)

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 22 cm. PS-Grade 3
E Rating: 5

**The special gifts of summer** / Dandi Daley Mackall; illustrations by Katherine Blackmore. (*Seasons* series)

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm. PS-Grade 3
E Rating: 5
Summer--Juvenile literature. Christian literature.

God created the seasons, with all of their splendor and blessings. *The Super Gifts of Spring* and *The Special Gifts of Summer* by Dandi Daley Mackall remind us to notice and appreciate all that is special about each time of year.

*The Super Gifts of Spring* celebrates the birds, puddles, breezes, wildflowers, baby animals, dandelion fluff, and the Resurrection. *The Special Gifts of Summer* include sunshine, swimming, lemonade, Independence Day, fishing, and camping. The uplifting theme is thankfulness.

These sweet books depict happy children immersed in God’s world and showing joy and gratitude for all that He has provided. Each page contains a four-line rhyming stanza and a relevant Bible quote. Author Dandi Daley Mackall’s bright verses are especially quick and clever, ideal for reading aloud. Katherine Blackmore’s lovely
Miracle Man: The Story of Jesus retells stories of Jesus healing, providing, and ministering to His believers, leading up to the most glorious and enduring miracle of all—His resurrection.

Author/illustrator John Hendrix movingly presents a selection of Bible-based stories with imagined dialogue between Jesus and his followers. Featured are well-known events from the Gospels such as Jesus calming the storm, walking on water, feeding five thousand, and healing the leper, the paralytic, and the blind. The book concludes with Jesus’s last supper and crucifixion.

The brilliant and imaginative pen-and-ink artwork distinguishes this picture book and extends the audience appeal to include older readers. Scenes of Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee are captivatingly overlaid with creative fonts, speech bubbles, and animated text. On some pages the pictures literally speak the word of God!

Whether revisiting these stories or introducing young children to them for the first time, this striking book is fresh and engaging. Rich with dramatic, visual intricacy and powerful messages, Miracle Man: The Story of Jesus is a timeless treasure, memorable for all the right reasons, and ideal for read-aloud sharing.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Goodnight songs / Margaret Wise Brown; illustrated by twelve award-winning picture book artists.

LCCN 2013037539 ISBN 9781454904465, hardcover, $17.95.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 28 x 29 cm. + 1 audio disc (4 3/4 in.) PS-Grade 2
782.42 Rating: 0
Songs. Lullabies. Children's songs.

Goodnight Songs and Goodnight Songs: A Celebration of the Seasons are collections of previously unpublished poems and song lyrics by famed author Margaret Wise Brown (Goodnight Moon, The Runaway Bunny), each illustrated by a different notable picture book artist and set to music in an accompanying CD.

The fascinating story behind the Goodnight Songs series is as captivating as the books themselves. An introduction details how a cache of manuscripts was discovered in an old cedar trunk more than 40 years after the early and sudden death of the beloved author.
Each page is a treasure! The twelve poems in each volume offer wide appeal, with titles in the first book that are clever ("When the Man in the Moon Was a Little Boy"), intriguing ("Mambian Melody"), and simple ("Sounds in the Night"). The more recent Goodnight Songs: A Celebration of the Seasons focuses on animals and the natural world ("Quiet in the Wilderness", "Winter Adventure"). The gentle and lyrical quality of the verses evokes the soothing familiarity of the author's well-known classics.

Two-page illustrations by an international trove of award-winning artists represent an appealing variety of styles that fit well together to complement the verse and engage the reader. There is a nostalgic and timeless element to the illustrations that comforts and endears. Profiles of each artist are included in the final pages.

A note from musicians Tom Proutt and Emily Gary explains how Goodnight Songs became a "soundscape" for their charming 12-song CDs that are included with each book.

With beautiful artwork, tender poetry, a bonus musical track, and a compelling back story, there are many ways for families to share and enjoy each volume in this wonderful collection!

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

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Fur, fins, and feathers : Abraham Dee Bartlett and the invention of the modern zoo / written and illustrated by Cassandre Maxwell.


1 v. (unnumbered pages) : col. ill. ; 29 cm. Grades 1-4

B Rating: 5

Christian fiction. Love stories.

Interesting, colorful, and informational describes Fur, Fins, and Feathers well. Cassandre Maxwell’s biography of the inventor of the modern zoo captivates the young reader while providing much to linger in while at the same time imparting the reality that the happiness of animals is important.

The charming illustrations and engaging endpapers bring to life the story of Abraham Dee Bartlett’s love of animals and how he became “the walking animal encyclopedia.” Maxwell’s softly colored and cut-paper collage illustrations attract attention and make the animals the focal point of these spreads.

As a non-fiction picture book, this has just the right amount of information per page with layout so pleasing that one appreciates use of space and respect for illustrations. The unusual illustrations will capture children’s attention—cover, endpapers, and quotations related to the story along with the colorful artwork. The information about Abraham Dee Bartlett is probably little known, but his life and contributions to the modern zoo are intriguing and will likely enable children to gain new appreciation for zoos.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ
INTERMEDIATE FICTION

Pieces and players / by Blue Balliett.
   LCCN 2014947736     ISBN 9780545299909,
   hardcover, $17.99.
   306 p. : ill. ; 22 cm.     Grades 4-8
   Fic     Rating: 4
   Art thefts--Juvenile fiction.     Mystery and detective
   stories.     Chicago (Ill)--Juvenile fiction.
In Blue Balliett’s Pieces and Players, five teenaged sleuths are brought together to help solve a Chicago art heist.

School friends Tommy, Petra, and Calder, known to readers from Balliett’s previous mysteries (Chasing Vermeer, the Wright 3, and The Calder Game), join forces with Early and Zoomy, the author’s later characters from The Danger Box and Hold Fast. Thirteen pieces of art have been stolen from the Farmer Museum, and the young sleuths are summoned to help solve the crime.

The characters’ backstories and distinct personalities contribute to their unique abilities and enhance the development of the fairly complex layers of this tale. This is a fun but challenging book for middle grade readers, who must sift through many clues (some of which are mere distractions), number games, puzzles, plot twists, and a few supernatural elements including a Ouija board.

Blue Balliett’s fantastically descriptive writing style is the highlight of Pieces and Players, with such spot-on phrases as, “eyes darting around as if she’d landed in a crowded fishbowl” (pg. 16). Cover art and a single interior illustration by Brett Helquist give the characters even more life, while a detailed map helps to add realism and context.

Though the Farmer Museum is fictitious, an intriguing author’s note informs that the mystery is based on a true art theft that took place in Boston in 1990 and remains unsolved.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Cottonmouth and the river / C. S. Fritz. (Cottonmouth; 1)
   LCCN 2013955268     ISBN 9780781410335,
   paperback, $7.99.
   1 v. (unpaged) : ill. ; 20 cm.     Grades 3-7
   Fic     Rating: 4
   Friendship--Fiction.     Promises--Fiction.
   Christian life--Fiction.

Cottonmouth and the great gift / C.S. Fritz. (Cottonmouth; 2)
   LCCN 2014944344     ISBN 9781434706904,
   paperback, $7.99.
   1 v. (unpaged) : ill. ; 20 cm.     Grades 3-7
   Fic     Rating: 4
   Friendship--Fiction.     Reincarnation--Fiction.

Cottonmouth and the end / C. S. Fritz. (Cottonmouth; 3)
   LCCN 2014948628     ISBN 9781434706911,
   paperback, $7.99.
   1 v. (unpaged) : ill. ; 20 cm.     Grades 3-7
   Fic     Rating: 4
   life--Fiction.

C. S. Fritz writes and illustrates a children’s trilogy that is a fantasy adventure for young readers.

In Cottonmouth and the River, the reader meets Frederick Cottonmouth, a boy who loves the river and adventure. His new friend Tug is a furry beast who will take him on any adventure in exchange
for a promise to never eat the mysterious egg Freddie found in the river. But after two weeks of adventures, Freddie asks Tug to grant him something he really wants. When Tug doesn’t do that, Freddie gives into temptation offered by the rat Menson, breaks his promise, and discovers the cost of his action.

In *Cottonmouth and the Great Gift*, Tug asks Freddie to go on a dangerous mission: he is to deliver the black egg to a girl with different-colored eyes. Frederick must deliver it on his own without Tug’s help. But Tug is sending his friend Yellowthroat in his place to help Frederick on his mission. A different sort of adventure awaits!

In *Cottonmouth and the End*, Frederick continues on his mission and faces his greatest challenge: true darkness. Accompanied by Yellowthroat, Frederick goes through the door into the darkness where he is led. Menson the rat is back to tempt him to give into his fear of the darkness, but has Frederick learned his lesson?

Fritz creates an endearing trilogy with the whimsy of *Where the Wild Things Are* (M. Sendak) and dark and light illustrations that rival *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (B. Selznick) in their storytelling ability. Each volume is just over 100 pages, each with a full-page illustration or text filling about one-third of the page. They introduce the Gospel to children through highly-imaginative, beautifully illustrated stories that will have them clamoring to read over and over again. Because each volume builds on the previous, the books should be read in order.

Recommended for families, church libraries, and young readers everywhere.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

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**Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library / Chris Grabenstein.**


291 p.; 22 cm. Grades 4-7

Fic Rating: 4


**Mr. Lemoncello’s Library Olympics / Chris Grabenstein.**


278 p.; ill.; 22 cm. Grades 4-7

Fic Rating: 4


Agatha Award winner Chris Grabenstein, author of several middle school books, presents two humorous novels combining the elements of an adventure, a literary mystery, and a reality game show.

In *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello’s Library*, middle-schooler Kyle Keeley is a fan of all games: board games, word games, and video games. When the famous gamemaker Luigi Lemoncello builds the new town library, Kyle wins one of the 12 coveted spots for an overnight event at the library. The doors are still locked when the morning comes. It’s up to Kyle and the others to solve the puzzles to find the hidden escape route.

Kyle and the others navigate the Dewey Decimal System, working on the challenges that pay homage to literary classics such as *The Phantom Tollbooth, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Newbery titles, and contemporary books like *Harry Potter* and Dr. Seuss.

In *Mr. Lemoncello’s Library Olympics*, Kyle Keeley...
is back with his four teammates. Regional four-member teams join Team Kyle in the first-ever Library Olympics, hosted by Mr. Lemoncello. The winning team receives a full four-year scholarship to the college of their choice.

The duodecimalthon (12 games) includes a library cart relay, mixed-up children’s book titles, and quotes from banned books. Mysterious events threaten to sabotage the Olympics. Will they discover who is behind it and why are they doing it? Will Kyle’s team remain the library champions or be beaten by another team?

These books are part mystery, adventure, and suspense, with puzzles along the way for the reader to solve. Grabenstein’s humor is geared toward an audience that enjoys the video humor of crashes and flying squirrels that bite their victims on the butt– but the mean kids get their just rewards. The values of friendship and teamwork are encouraged. The reader is challenged to read the books mentioned. Gamers and bibliophiles will enjoy deciphering the clues to the final puzzle.

Recommended for school and public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Ms. Rapscott’s girls / written and illustrated by Elise Primavera.

262 p.: ill.; 20 cm. Grades 3-6
Fic Rating: 4

Author and illustrator Elise Primavera pens an illustrated story for young readers about girls at an unusual boarding school who learn to find their way and enjoy adventure.

In Ms. Rapscott’s Girls, the headmistress of Great Rapscott School for Girls of Busy Parents teaches her students using silly lessons and adventures. It all starts when five flying boxes arrive at the lighthouse where the school is located–inside are her new students: Bea, Mildred, Fay, and Annabelle. After the girls arrive, they discover that one box is empty–Dahlia is missing!

Ms. Rapscott brooks no nonsense from the girls who are too independent because their parents are too busy to teach them valuable lessons about life. They also never learned to obey someone in authority. But while searching for their lost classmate, they learn important lessons about bravery, teamwork, personal strength, and the importance of birthday cake. Finding Dahlia becomes their biggest adventure.

Elise Primavera, author and illustrator of the "Auntie Claus" series, provides delightful black-and-white illustrations (similar to Brian Selznick’s illustrations in The Invention of Hugo Cabret) at the beginning of the story, the end of the story, and scattered throughout the text. They enhance the plot as it unfolds. Readers will enjoy Ms. Rapscott as she fills the lives of girls who never learned to write thank-you notes, celebrate their birthdays, or even follow directions, with lessons about friendship.

Recommended for school and public libraries. Fans of The Mysterious Benedict Society (Trenton Stewart), Mary Poppins (P. L. Travers), and Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle (Betsy MacDonald) will enjoy this book. The sequel, Making Mistakes on Purpose, will be available in fall 2016.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ
INTERMEDIATE NONFICTION

What was D-Day? / by Patricia Brennan Demuth ; illustrated by David Grayson Kenyon. (What was...?)
940.54 Rating: 5
World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--France--Normandy--Juvenile literature.

What was Ellis Island? / by Patricia Brennan Demuth ; illustrated by David Groff. (What was...?)
304.8 Rating: 5

What was Pearl Harbor? / by Patricia Brennan Demuth ; illustrated by John Mantha. (What was...?)
940.54 Rating: 5
Pearl Harbor (Hawaii), Attack on, 1941--Juvenile literature.

Where is the Great Wall? / by Patricia Brennan Demuth ; illustrated by Jerry Hoare. (Where is...?)
106 p. : ill. , maps (some color) ; 20 cm. Grades 3-6.
931 Rating: 5
Great Wall of China (China)--Juvenile literature.

These titles in the “What was ...?” and “Where is ...?” series by Patricia Brennan Demuth are high interest and easy-to-read for readers in grades 3 and up. Each of the easy chapter books is motivating and fun to read with approximately 100 pages and black-and-white illustrations. Each title has an introduction, chapters, full-page sidebars, historical photos, timelines, and a bibliography.

What Was D-Day? gives a clear idea about the number of Allied soldiers, the Allied forces, and how this event was the beginning of the end of World War II. A photo montage of soldiers, paratroopers, and other war scenes makes it easy to understand this event.

What Was Ellis Island? conveys well what a biography is through the many stories portraying the people coming through the testing center, and explains how Ellis Island was a gateway to a new life in America. It also deals with how enemies of the United States were detained at Ellis during World Wars I and II, and the museum at this site now celebrating the stories of immigrants.

What Was Pearl Harbor? talks about the 794 Japanese planes over Hawaii, how US battleships exploded, and how this giant military base influenced the reaction and developments in the world war.

Where Is the Great Wall? explores how and why the wall was built from its first walls around 4000 B.C. to Deng Xiaoping’s plans to restore the wall at the end of the twentieth century, along with
highlighting aspects of Chinese life such as Confucius, making silk, and inventions.

These series titles can be used effectively in homeschooling, and are a must for primary and middle school library collections. Both series provide great value. The writing encourages the learning of vocabulary since many words are defined within the context of the sentences.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Who was Galileo? / by Patricia Brennan Demuth ; illustrated by John O'Brien. (Who was...?)

105 p. : ill., maps ; 20 cm. Grades 3-6
B Rating: 4

In Who Was Galileo?, readers travel back to the 1500s to meet Galileo, the man known today as the father of modern science. With ten concise chapters, this biography covers Galileo’s life from early childhood to final years, exploring his love for science, mathematics, invention, and the heavenly bodies, as well as his radical thinking about the universe that often led him into trouble.

In Who Was Laura Ingalls Wilder?, the author helps separate fact from fiction concerning Laura Ingalls Wilder, the author and main character of the Little House on the Prairie series, one of the most beloved historical fiction series of all time. From birth to pioneer life to teaching to old age, this mini-biography explores it all, including some little known facts about Laura’s life and her writing career.

Most people living in the twenty-first century have heard of Bill Gates, the cofounder of Microsoft and once the richest man in the world. Few, however, may know who Bill Gates was before he became famous. In Who Is Bill Gates?, readers will be inspired as they follow the journey of a young boy with a brilliant mind and love for computers who grew to become the richest man in the world and also one of the most generous. A description of Bill’s modern home is an additional feature that is sure to delight.

In these three biographies, a part of the "Who Was...?" series, Patricia Brennan Demuth brings history to life through the stories of two brilliant men and one innovative woman who have left their mark on the world. Written for elementary school-age children, the author uses a narrative style and short chapters, which are broken up with black and white sketches that bring visual
life and appeal to the text. World events relevant to the time and person are sprinkled throughout each title in one- to two-page sidebars, depicting the settings and times of the respective eras and adding a broader world scope to the historical events recounted. This fun, inspiring series is a recommended addition to any personal or school library.

*Justina McBride, CLJ*
HIGH SCHOOL FICTION

Lightning : a novel / Bonnie S. Calhoun. (Stone Braide chronicles; 2)

411 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic Rating: 4
Science fiction.

Bonnie Calhoun continues her young adult dystopian series set in a world where life is very different 150 years from now. Most of the population lives in the ruins of American cities destroyed by a nuclear holocaust.

In Lightning, Selah Rishon thinks her problems are over when she finds her birth father, but her special abilities continue to increase—and no one is exactly like her. She is part Lander, part human. Selah is the “novarium”—someone who plays a major role in an unfolding prophecy.

Both Bodhi Locke, the Lander who is her romantic interest, and her newfound father Glade seem to have no time for her. Who will tell her how to handle her abilities and visions? Can she rescue her family from their imprisonment? What about the Third Protocol of Landers that will complete her transformation?

Although the book is interesting, the faith element is non-existent. The book covers for this series are dramatic, and the second book is much better then the first. Lightning has more action and less romance than Thunder.

However, one should read the first book before reading this one; otherwise the reader will find it challenging to understand the backstory. Calhoun has also written two novellas in this series, Tremors and Aftershock. Her characters are believable and flawed, reinforcing the realism of the story.

Calhoun creates a credible futuristic world with a strong heroine, which should appeal to fans of Suzanne Collins’ The Hunger Games and Lisa Bergren’s Remnants series. Book 3 will be published in Fall 2016.

Recommended for public libraries and school libraries. This book is more appropriate for older teens and adults.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Doon / Carey Corp and Lorie Langdon. (A Doon novel; 1)

Grand Rapids, MI: Blink, 2013.
399 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5

The Doon saga transports readers into a fantasy tale of teens sacrificing all to find and keep true
love. It follows best friends Veronica and Mackenna along their adventures from their ordinary American lives into the magical kingdom of Doon.

In Doon, Veronica’s traumatic breakup causes hallucinations. She is certain that the boy she sees means that she has gone crazy—that is, until she and Mackenna discover a vision journal while in Scotland. Chasing the boy of Veronica’s dreams, the friends cross a bridge into a new world, Doon. With a witch threatening the kingdom and the princes (one who happens to look like Veronica’s vision-boy) suspicious of Veronica and Mackenna, the girls must prove their loyalty to the crown and stop the witch from crossing the border—if they haven’t helped her enter already.

Destined for Doon begins with Mackenna discovering her modern-world theater dream was not all she hoped it would be. She feels guilty for leaving her prince and Veronica behind in Doon. When her prince appears with bad news, Mackenna follows him to Doon to defeat a curse then return to the modern stage as soon as she can. Attempting to delay knowledge of the curse, Mackenna is forced to pretend she returned to the kingdom for love. The witch may be back, and the hunt for a cure could tear apart more than one relationship.

In Shades of Doon, Doon finally appears at peace, but Veronica and Mackenna are on edge. A spy for the witch thrusts them back into their old lives and makes the girls wonder: was it all a dream? The princes rescue them, but upon returning to Doon, they all believe that the witch could be disguised among the civilians. When the witch reveals herself, Veronica must make a choice: allow the Doonian to die or forfeit the kingdom.

This series is extremely well-written, and each book is difficult to put down. If readers can overlook moderately risqué behavior from high schoolers (including intimate kissing scenes), witches with magic, and mild violence, this series will be an excellent adventure and escape. There is a light faith element, in that the characters go to church and the protagonists hold to moral standards. From the point of view of a teenage girl, Doon crosses pop culture references with medieval lifestyle in a way that will have readers laughing out loud. Corp and Langdon’s characters will connect with any YA fantasy enthusiast. Book four, Forever Doon, will release in fall 2016 to complete the series.

Rebecca A. Schriner, CLJ

Aquifer : a novel / Jonathan Friesen. 

Grand Rapids, MI: Blink, 2013. 


303 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 9-12 

Fic Rating: 5 


In a dystopian world where emotions are monitored, Luca has never thrived. Though he wants to fit in, it isn’t possible. Luca is expected to inherit his father’s job—as a hero. Once a year, Luca’s father travels through an underground labyrinth, the way known only to his family, to ensure fresh water on the surface. Protectors of the Aquifer, the last fresh water source in the world, demand him to return annually to discuss the water.

The day before his voyage, Luca’s dad judges a group of “criminals,” including one of Luca’s classmates. A government man lies to the civilians about his ruling, condemning them to death. Knowing all were pronounced innocent, Luca saves his classmate. Then, Luca awaits his father’s return from the Aquifer. His father doesn’t arrive on time, and the governing Council lies to cover
their hero's disappearance.

When Luca discovers the Council is trying to become heroes by killing him and his father, he flees to safety—to the Aquifer. He discovers the truths about his father's disappearance and the real story of the Aquifer. Led by a voice of peace, he returns to surface chaos. Will he listen to the voice and bring peace?

Luca develops from timid kid into hero, becoming more likable with each page. Jonathan Friesen does a great job using dialogue and action to move the plot forward. There are moments when the mood darkens with ideas of suicide, mild violence, and discussions of fate, but the plot progresses quickly to lighten the mood and hold the reader's attention. This world seems real enough that it could be our future, but it is fantastic enough to feel fictional. One major theme emphasizes the power of words, both encouraging and deceptive.

Engaging, active writing allows readers to dive into Aquifer. Mystery from the outset lures readers into uncovering the truth with Luca. The final resolution leaves readers satisfied and may lead people to see things in their lives they have taken for granted.

Rebecca A. Schriner, CLJ

The Handy American History Answer Book is a supplemental textbook-like tool for students. At the beginning of the book, a complete U.S. history timeline is provided. From there, the book is divided into time periods. Each major U.S. time period is explained thoroughly yet concisely. An additional sports section is included, as well as a music and entertainment portion. Each chapter includes enticing pictures that bring the topics to life. The detailed appendix boasts a states section that gives a brief profile of each state and a section on the presidents. The appendix concludes with the United States Constitution. An index is also provided. Each of these features makes this book thorough and helpful for students.

The detailed information in this Handy Answer Book makes it an ideal supplemental resource for high school and college students. It is helpful for research as well as general reading. The to-the-point writing style makes it both engaging and easily readable. Each topic is presented with a question, such as “Has the Wild West been romanticized in America” (pg. 133)? The information is revealed in answer format. This question-and-answer writing style helps readers feel connected to the content. While this guide is close to being a textbook, the writing style makes it much more interesting than the average textbook. Students and history lovers alike will enjoy The Handy American History Answer Book.

Dani Seilhamer, CLJ

HIGH SCHOOL NONFICTION


Detroit, MI: Visible Ink, 2016.
xx, 428 p.; 24 cm. Grades 10-12
973 Rating: 5
United States--History--Miscellanea.
ADULT FICTION

The Christmas joy ride / Melody Carlson.

168 p.; 23 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4
Joy, an eighty-five-year old widow, plans to drive her old RV from Chicago to her new apartment in Arizona in the dead of winter. But her much younger friend, Miranda, insists she cannot do it alone. Said RV is decked out like a huge Christmas decoration on wheels and Joy has a plan to deliver some holiday fun and gifts to several families along the way. Miranda doesn’t have any real plans—she is unemployed and facing foreclosure, so she agrees to this hare-brained adventure.

Joy's giving spirit and faith not only inspire her recipients along the way but make a huge difference in Miranda’s downward-spiraling emotions. And for those that like a tidy ending with all the threads neatly tied together, Melody Carlson's The Christmas Joy Ride is just the thing. A light, sweet and uplifting holiday story.

Ceil Carey, CLJ

The shock of night / Patrick W. Carr. (The darkwater saga ; 1)

459 p. : map ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Patrick W. Carr, author of The Staff and The Sword series, presents a new epic fantasy for adults, rich in character development and suspenseful plot twists.

In The Shock of Night, Willet Dura—the King of Bunard’s reeve—is called to investigate a brutal attack that results in the death of one man and near-death of a priest. The dying priest utters a foreign word as he grabs Willet and dies. Willet is unaware that a rare gift was passed to him: the ability to see a person’s deepest thoughts, a gift that will kill. Willet tries to discover the murderer’s identity and accidentally uncovers a plot putting Bunard at the center of a major conflict.

Like Carr’s earlier books, the church (The Vigil) is an important faction in the storyline, one that is sometimes good, sometimes corrupt. It involves gifts that are divinely given, but even traitors can infiltrate The Vigil. When people go into the Darkwater Forest, it causes significant changes, ones that might not appear until years later.

Carr’s book is filled with strong characters, and a plot with plenty of suspenseful twists. Unlike his earlier series, The Darkwater Saga is more intense—there is little hope for overcoming this darker evil. It is also harder for it to grab the reader’s interest. There is more violence than in his earlier books, but it is not too graphic.

Carr does a good job of developing this dark world and building tension as the story unfolds. The Shock of Night answers some questions as it ends, but lays the groundwork for the second book, The Shattered Vigil, coming in 2016.

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, Worthy2Read.wordpress.com
Centralia / Mike Dellosso.
xiv, 381 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Protagonist Peter Ryan awakens from a recurring nightmare without any knowledge of the last two months, including his wife’s and daughter’s deaths. When his memories of the funerals come back to him, he’s still not sure they belong to him. Ryan’s skepticism is confirmed when he finds a note from his daughter regarding their location: Centralia. Gunmen enter the house, and Ryan kills them as if he were a professional. Unsure how he knows combat skills, Ryan is led by fractions of memories and an old coworker toward Centralia and a life he doesn’t remember. He is filled with doubts about his reality, with only one thing he’s sure of: his wife and daughter are alive. With no clue whom to trust, he will do anything to get back his family back.

One man manipulates Ryan into a chase for the truth that will keep readers on the edges of their seats. Centralia’s plot is reminiscent of Robert Ludlum’s Jason Bourne series. Though this story is told in the third person, the reader feels the urgency, panic, pain, and hope that Ryan feels in his search.

Mike Dellosso has readers eager to learn what is real and who is telling the truth. He doesn’t waste any time bringing action into his story; readers should note that guns, frequent violence, and depression are major plot factors. Dellosso’s use of metaphors, similes, and description allow readers to clearly visualize each scene, especially fighting scenes. Each chapter ends with a hook that sets up great suspense for the next one. The book’s ending feels satisfying, even though there is the possibility for more danger in the future.

Rebecca A. Schriner, CLJ

Midnight on the Mississippi : a novel / Mary Ellis. (Secrets of the South mysteries; 1)
347 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 3

Midnight on the Mississippi is Mary Ellis’ debut novel in her series entitled Secrets of the South Mysteries. This story follows Nicolette Price as she teams up with her cousin, Nate, to put her new private investigator license to use. She joins Price Investigations just as Nate has taken on the high-profile case of his wealthy friend Hunter Galen. Nicolette is determined to prove herself to her cousin, and solve the 17-year mystery of her father’s murder along the way.

Hunter’s successful investment business partner has been murdered—and he is the primary suspect. Hunter hires Nate to prove his innocence, but when Nate runs into trouble with the law, Nicolette becomes the sole investigator. When Nicolette uncovers unsavory business deals with Hunter’s signature on them, Nicolette begins to wonder whether she should trust him. When romantic problems arise among Hunter, his girlfriend Ashley Menard, and Nicolette, everything gets more complicated with the case and their working relationship. Can Hunter and Nicolette put their growing feelings for each other on hold while they work to clear his name? Can
the two of them continue to work together to prove Hunter’s innocence, or will Nicolette turn and flee for home?

While there is a mystery in *Midnight in Mississippi*, the plot almost focuses more on the romantic entanglement of the main characters than it does on the actual solving of the mystery. The main characters of Hunter, Ashley, and Nicolette are well-developed, but the many secondary characters are flat with little development. Nicolette mentions she was raised a Christian, and that determines a few of the decisions she makes throughout the story. There is mention that the entire Galen family is Roman Catholic. The storyline is intriguing, but not deep. The plot makes for a nice, light read.

*Dani Seilhamer, CLJ*

**Thin ice : a novel / Irene Hannon. (Men of valor; 2)**

Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2016.
394 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning author Irene Hannon releases the next installment in her romantic suspense series featuring the former military McGregor brothers as they settle into civilian life.

In *Thin Ice*, Christy Reed lost her parents in a car accident eight months ago and her sister in a house fire two months ago. When Christy receives a note from someone claiming her sister is still alive and is a hostage, she turns to Lance McGregor, a new FBI agent and a former Delta Force operator, for help. Can Christy, a former ice skater, trust Lance to protect her and find out the truth? Or is she skating on thin ice?

When Lance and Christy start discovering the truth about her sister and her parents, all signs point to Christy as the next target. Will they find the mastermind behind the plot against her family before he strikes again? What is the motive behind his actions toward her and her family? Will they discover his identity before it is too late?

Hannon writes edge-of-your-seat inspirational romantic suspense that will keep the reader engaged until the final page. Unexpected plot twists are a Hannon trademark as the villain’s identity and sinister motives are unveiled.

Hannon’s books are filled with suspense, romance, appropriate violence, and clean language. The faith element is light, not heavy-handed. Although written for adults, the books would be acceptable for high school students as well.

Highly recommended for adult collections in public libraries. Fans of Dee Henderson, Dani Pettrey, and DiAnn Mills will clamor for this new series!

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

**Raptor 6 / Ronie Kendig. (The quiet professionals; 1)**

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

**Hawk / Ronie Kendig. (The quiet professionals; 2)**
As the first book in the Quiet Professionals series, Raptor Six introduces readers to the members of the American Special Forces team known as “Raptor Six,” with a focus on Captain Watters. Raptor Six is deployed in Afghanistan where they are working to stop the Taliban. After a catastrophe, Watters meets Zahrah Zarrick, a missionary teacher. As Watters’ mission becomes to keep Zarrick safe, they both end up in the hands of Zmaray, their greatest enemy, and they have to rely on Raptor Six to save them. Can the men pull off the mission without their captain? Can Watters keep his romantic feelings for Zarrick in check? Whenever Raptor Six forms a plan, the enemy always seems to be one step ahead of them. Who is leaking information?

Hawk, the second book in the series, focuses on Sergeant Brian “Hawk” Bledsoe, a quick-tempered communications specialist. When Zarrick’s Afghan cousin, Fekiria, asks Hawk to keep a secret, his temper lands him in jail. As punishment, Hawk is sent to a base in a different district. When a communications breach leads to deadly consequences, Hawk channels his anger to catch the hacker. In pursuit of the enemy, Hawk and Fekiria face harrowing adventures with Raptor Six desperately trying to reach them to save their lives. Can Hawk and Fekiria get over their hatred for each other as they fight for their lives? Will Fekiria’s secret lead to the devastating consequences she fears?

Falcon is the culmination of suspense that the series has led up to. Will the communications hacker finally be caught? Who is the mole? Trying to discover the answers to these questions is what drives Salvatore “Falcon” Russo to keep fighting. When Cassie Walker, someone from Russo’s dark past, reports for duty with Raptor Six, Falcon becomes angry and suspicious. Could Walker be the mole? Just when Falcon begins to trust Walker, she drops a bombshell on him, and their rocky relationship shatters. Raptor Six seems to be fighting a ghost. When a deadly blast rocks the team, Raptor Six is desperate. Do they have what it takes to stop the enemy for good?

Ronie Kendig’s Quiet Professionals series boasts dynamic character development, captivating plots, and intriguing enigmas. Kendig writes realistic military storylines. The detailed military talk makes the dialogue slightly difficult to follow, but the many military terms and acronyms are explained in a glossary.

As for language, there are some parts that lead into strong language being used, with the swear words being cut off by another character’s interruption. In Raptor Six, torture scenes are written vividly, almost to the point of going too far in the descriptions. Overall, The Quiet Professionals is a wonderful series, and is appropriate for adults.

Dani Seilhamer, CLJ
Deadlock / DiAnn Mills. (FBI: Houston; 3)
x, 388 p.; 21 cm. Adult (HS)
Fic Rating: 5
Award-winning author DiAnn Mills continues her contemporary romantic suspense series featuring FBI agents in the Houston area.
In Deadlock, Special Agent Bethany Sanchez is anxious to meet her new partner, Special Agent Thatcher Graves. She is a follower of the rules while he has a reputation for operating on instinct—that should make for an interesting work relationship!
Graves is also the man who arrested her brother. Bethany's family has never forgiven her for her part in her brother's arrest and time in jail. Now that Lucas is home, they continue to make excuses for him while excluding Bethany from their family circle. Has he returned to his old habits to make money, and are her parents covering for him?
As Sanchez and Graves try to determine whether two recent homicides are the work of a serial killer or a copycat, they find the clues drying up until they enter the crosshairs of the murderer. Will they be able to keep family and professional work separate while they work together to solve the case before they become the next victims?
Mills does an excellent job of plot and character development in this inspirational suspense series. Multiple plot twists abound as this unpredictable story unfolds. The characters are realistic, and the distractions are many, as the tension builds until the last page is read. Deadlock will appeal to readers who like carefully-researched details with their suspense: the mastermind behind the murders will surprise most, if not all, readers.
Fans of Dee Henderson and Irene Hannon will enjoy this new series, which includes an author note and discussion questions. Highly recommended for public and high school libraries.
Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

From the start / Melissa Tagg.
349 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4
From the Start introduces Kate Walker, whose writing dream crumbles around her as her home town suffers the forceful winds of a tornado. Kate's not the only one with problems. Colton Green's football career abruptly ended following an injury, and after he announces his retirement, his life starts to crumble around him also. Logan Walker, Colton's friend and Kate's brother, rescues Colton by inviting him to visit the Walker family in Iowa. Kate returns home to be with her family following the tornado scare. In their attempts to help family and others rebuild, Colton and Kate find hope and healing—but will they find love?
Melissa Tagg infuses this sweet romantic novel with humor and hope. Kate and Colton are well-rounded characters who—while working through their issues—grow in the Lord and in loving others. The dialogue is well-written, plentiful, and helps
move the story along. The plot, though somewhat predictable, is well-paced. In a world where so many bad things happen to good people—like losing careers, buildings, loved ones—this book pictures the beauty that comes from working together in community and what pouring love into others can look like. It shows that one is not defined by his or her work, but the love that motivates one to work. The theme is summed up well by one of Colton’s mentors: "...it’s when the stuff we think we want is stripped away, we finally see what we need...It’s knowing you were created by a God who loves you. Finding your purpose in that and that alone." (p. 323)

**Kristina Wolcott, CLJ**

**Until the harvest / Sarah Loudin Thomas.**


Tragedy strikes, and Henry Phillips is unable to return to college. Adrift in his grief, he works the family farm and immerses himself in playing his fiddle. His grandmother’s caretaker, Margaret, doesn’t seem to care about his troubles and is difficult at every turn. However, Margaret’s younger sister Mayfair befriends Henry and helps him adjust to his new life. When Mayfair’s health plummets, Henry and Margaret must put aside their differences and rely on each other to get Mayfair the assistance she needs.

Author Sarah Loudin Thomas’s second title in her Appalachian Blessings series continues the story of the Phillips family through Casewell and Perla’s son, Henry. However, the novel may be enjoyed without reading the first installment, *Miracle in a Dry Season* (See: Christian Library Journal, Jan/Feb/Mar/Apr 2015). The characters are well-developed, responding in true-to-life ways to their adversities. The themes of grief and the gift of healing are addressed realistically and sensitively. Recommended for public and church libraries.

**Linda Matchett, CLJ**

**In good company / Jen Turano.**


Miss Millie Longfellow has a tendency for mischief, which often gets her into trouble with her employers. Once again, she finds herself unemployed thanks to a minor issue concerning the most recent antics of her young charges. With no letter of recommendation and dwindling finances, Millie heads back to New York City’s unemployment agency, hoping that Mrs. Patterson will give her another chance, despite the woman’s growing impatience with Millie’s inability to hold a permanent position. Meanwhile, Mr. Everett Mulberry is at his wits’ end when his newly acquired wards succeed at scaring off yet another nanny. In their mutual desperation, these two unwilling parties are thrust together for a summer of certain mayhem among Newport’s high society. While Millie strives to prove her competency, Everett works to permanently secure his position in society. Will they both succeed without losing their hearts?

Jen Turano’s *In Good Company* is a delightfully charming tale full of humor, the pretentious absurdity of high society, and the scheming wiles of match-making women. Though not considered
part of a series, this novel goes on to tell the story of two of the secondary characters introduced in Turano’s *After a Fashion* (see: Christian Library Journal, September/October 2015). Millie is a loveable character who instantly endears herself to readers with her compassionate heart and plucky spirit, while Everett will initially frustrate and annoy before his charm and personal growth win out. The love story is sweet, replete with initial pride and prejudices somewhat reminiscent of Jane Austen’s own Darcy and Lizzy.

This is a lighthearted read; however, the suspicious circumstances surrounding the children’s parents’ death as well as their own grief and adjustment to their new lives lend a note of gravity and depth to the plot. Everett’s and Millie’s lives present a picture of God’s life-changing work and provision and love for His children. Overall, this is a great book to curl up with on a stormy winter afternoon.

*Justina McBride, CLJ*

**Refuge at highland hall : a novel / by Carrie Turansky. (Edwardian Brides; 3)**

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 32 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning author Carrie Turansky concludes the story of the Ramsey family as they face the conflict of World War I in London and abroad.

In *A Refuge at Highland Hall*, nineteen-year-old Penelope Ramsey leaves Highland Hall to stay with her pregnant sister Kate who is trying to run her London household of eight orphaned children. Jon Foster–Kate’s husband and a doctor–brings home his friend Alexander Goodwin, a slightly injured pilot, to stay with them while he recovers.

When the Germans begin to bomb London, Kate and Penny return to Highland Hall with nine children, two maids, and a cook. Penny corresponds with Alex while he flies over France, chasing the Germans. Will their developing relationship endure a separation?

Meanwhile, German prisoners of war from a nearby detention camp begin to work on the estate. Then Alex returns from the war, with serious injuries that keep him from flying ever again. Can Alex see God’s faithfulness in the midst of his circumstance?

The Ramsey household (family and servants) experiences trials as a result of World War I but their faith in God carries them through. Characters from the earlier books–Sir William and Lady Julia (*Governess of Highland Hall*), and Jonathan and Kate (*Daughter of Highland Hall*)–make appearances. Although this is primarily Penny’s story, there is a secondary story involving Lydia (a maid) and a German prisoner of war, Marius.

Turansky’s books are filled with likeable characters and a rich narrative. A reader’s guide with discussion questions is included.

Recommended for public collections and school libraries. It will appeal to historical fiction fans, as well as fans of the PBS television series, *Downton Abbey*.

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

Answering your kids’ toughest questions: helping them understand loss, sin, tragedies, and other hard topics / Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jessica Thompson.

173 p.; 22 cm. Adult
230 Rating: 5
Child rearing--Religious aspects--Christianity.
Parenting--Religious aspects--Christianity.
Christian education of children--Miscellanea.
Child rearing--Religious aspects--Christianity.
Theology, Doctrinal--Miscellanea.

Author of 20 books on daily living and the Christian life, Elyse Fitzpatrick coauthors Answering Your Kids’ Toughest Questions with her adult daughter and mother of three children, Jessica Thompson. Those familiar with their earlier Give Them Grace: Dazzling Your Kids with the Love of Jesus will find here the same clear and encouraging approach and solid foundation out of Scripture.


After discussing each topic, Fitzpatrick and Thompson give three answer summaries geared to three different age groups so that parents might relate better to the child. The first summary is for preschoolers, the second geared to ages 5 to 10, and the third one for ages 11 and older. This thoughtful, well-written book with a biblical mindset makes Answering Your Kids’ Toughest Questions a welcome addition for parents in the Christian home and a must-have for libraries serving parents.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

God made all of me: a book to help children protect their bodies / Justin S. Holcomb & Lindsey A. Holcomb; illustrated by Trish Mahoney.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 cm. Adult
248.8 Rating: 4

God Made All of Me by Justin S. and Lindsey A. Holcomb presents a biblical context for helping children understand and protect the private parts of their bodies.

A mother and father have a conversation with their young son and daughter to explain that our bodies, created by God, are wonderful and good; but some parts are private. The parents gently describe examples of situations in which touch is OK (a parent helping with a bath, a doctor giving a check-up) and when it is not. The children are encouraged to tell their parents if they are ever touched in any way that is uncomfortable, frightening, confusing, part of a game, or secretive. The parents refer to “parts covered by your underwear or bathing suit” and also use the terms penis, vagina, bottom, and breasts.

With youthful illustrations by Trish Mahoney and eye-catching colorful fonts, God Made All of Me has the appearance of a children’s picture book; however, the subject matter calls for parental
guidance in presenting the story. The book is intended for use by parents in opening a dialogue with their children ages 3 to 8 that will educate as well as invite questions, reassurance, and trust.

A note to caregivers presents abuse statistics and describes the authors’ intent to help protect children from sexual predators. The book concludes with an expanded summary and offers a few references for further information.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*
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