

<p>All Q. No A: <i>More Tales of a 10th Grade Social Climber</i> by Lauren Mechling and Laura Moser Graphia/Houghton Mifflin, 2006, 277 pp., \$7.99</p> <p>Teen Girls/Humor/Moral Issues ISBN: 0-618-66378-9</p> <p>This sequel to <i>The Rise and Fall of a 10th Grade Social Climber</i> finds transplanted Texan Mimi returning to Baldwin, her ultra-progressive New York City school, and writing "Texan in Gotham," a column chronicling her experiences for their newspaper.</p> <p>Baldwin's finances fall, but art dealer Serge Ziff's huge donation means Mimi is assigned his interview; she uncovers and reveals his unfair business practices in her article. Baldwin halts publication, but her piece is leaked, causing chaos until an alumni newspaper owner uses Mimi's story and financially saves the school.</p> <p>This simple, contrived plot is almost overshadowed by sophisticated, sarcastic narration of complicated events, items potentially troublesome for its marketed younger females. Descriptions are over-long, numerous characters mean uneven development, and events are not always chronological, causing confusion. Still, Mimi is delightful with perceptive, hilarious narration; she nails NYC's pretentiousness and matures. Advanced readers should find her adventures enticing and enjoyable.</p> <p>Lisa A. Hazlett Vermillion, SD</p>	<p>Archer's Quest by Linda Sue Park Clarion Books, 2006, 167 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Time Travel/Fiction ISBN: 0618596313</p> <p>Kevin dreads his social studies homework. After all, why memorize things you will never need? As he is throwing a rubber ball against the wall, he hears a loud noise and an arrow darts through his hat, pinning it to the wall! The strange older man that appears calls himself Chu-mong and claims he is from Koguryo, now known as Korea. He says he was riding a tiger in the mountains before finding himself with Kevin in New York. Kevin and the Archer discover they were both born in the year of the Tiger. They realize there is one more day left in this year of the Tiger, and they must find a way for the Archer to get back to his country in 55 B.C.</p> <p>Kevin learns his heritage comes with fascinating stories and is amazed at what the Archer is able to do. Along the way the Archer tells Kevin he is successful because he keeps his eye on the goal and practices regularly. Practice is not boring; our minds can make anything interesting.</p> <p>Barbara Ray Tulsa, OK</p>
<p>The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Traitor to the Nation by M. T. Anderson Candlewick Press, 2006, 351 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Racial Discrimination ISBN: 0-7636-2402-0</p> <p>The acclaimed author of <i>Feed</i> now escorts readers to a haunting, almost Gothic, Boston, just as the Revolutionary War brews. Octavian appears the privileged recipient of a classical education and lifestyle with rational scholars. Only after he dares to open a forbidden door does he realize that he is really the object of a ghastly experiment affecting not just him but his entire race.</p> <p><i>Octavian Nothing</i> gains verisimilitude from supposedly first-person sources—from classical, scholarly testimonies by Octavian to rough but idealistic soldiers' letters. However delightful the style, the story's implied questions are tough: Has our country from its origin been motivated more by economic gain than by ideals of equality? When and how does rational scientific investigation mislead the public?</p> <p><i>Octavian Nothing</i> provokes thought by its haunting retelling of history with sophistication enough for adults as well as young adults. Both can look forward to volume 2.</p> <p>Judy Beemer Junction City, KS</p>	<p>The Beautiful City of the Dead by Leander Watts Houghton Mifflin, 2006, 254 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Science Fiction ISBN: 0-618-59443-4</p> <p>"It starts with fire." It is Zee's first day of high school, and she has a 102° fever. The day is a blur except for meeting Relly, the only one who really sees past her name. Relly is the leader of a Ghost Metal band, and when they need a new bass player, Zee is their girl. Zee is swept up into a world of gods and goddesses who have powers over fire, water, earth, and air. She is a goddess of water and, though she does not believe Relly in the beginning, she soon sees both his and her own powers at work. But what will happen when another group wants Zee to join them?</p> <p>Leander Watts uses dynamic characters and a fast-paced story to create a fantasy world filled with music and power. When stepping into the world Watts has created, a reader steps into a modern world much like today's, thus giving the story a more believable edge. The plot's twists and turns will keep readers interested until the last page is turned.</p> <p>Colleen Freeburg Shorewood, IL</p>

<p><i>Behind the Curtain</i> by Peter Abrahams Laura Geringer Books, 2006, 346 pp., \$16.89</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Mystery ISBN: 0060737042</p> <p>Ingrid is trying to find out why she was kidnapped. Because Ingrid is a fan of Sherlock Holmes and loves the theater, everyone thinks she made up the mystery and is doing a good job of acting. The fact that she says she was chloroformed, blindfolded, tied up, put in the trunk of a car and yet escaped is hard to believe. She has suspects and motives. Mrs. Groome picked her for the MathFest, and she was on her way to the event when she was kidnapped. Ingrid discovered that someone is selling steroids to teen athletes, her brother being one of the victims. Julia LeCaine, assistant soccer coach, kicked a soccer ball so hard it knocked Coach Ringer out, allowing Julia to coach Ingrid's team in the most important games. The Ferrand Group would do most anything to get Grammy to sell his farmland.</p> <p>This is the second book in the Echo Falls Mystery series, but it stands on its own. There is lots of humor, suspense, and intelligent deductions as she works to solve the case.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Barbara Ray Tulsa, OK</p>	<p><i>Behind the Eyes</i> by Francisco X. Stork Penguin Group, 2006, 246 pp., \$16.99</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Fiction/Gangs ISBN: 0-525-47735-7</p> <p>In the projects of El Paso, Texas, there's no shortage of trouble and grief for sixteen-year-old Hector Robles. After being hospitalized from a fight with the local gang called the Discipulos, he's sent away to Furman, a boarding school for troubled teens who show promise. However, Hector slowly realizes that his problems didn't remain in El Paso and that his so-called "safe and undisclosed" environment may not be all that it appears. As Hector tries to make sense of his past, he is bombarded by his future. With the arrival of El Topo, a potential hit-man sent by the Discipulos, the story's intensity rises. This new rivalry huris Hector into a battle that he does not desire to be part of. He must decide if he'll resort to violence or maturity, a decision that will shape the rest of his life.</p> <p><i>Behind the Eyes</i> is a smartly written page-turner that mature young adult readers can't afford to miss. Some strong language and intense subject matter may keep it away from middle-grade readers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Matt Coasdone Narragansett, RI</p>
<p><i>Blind Faith</i> by Ellen Wittlinger Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006, 280 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>For Liz Scattergood, the only escape she has from her grandmother's recent death and her mother's resulting depression is the piano. She soon finds that this isn't enough, as Liz's mother begins attending the Singing Creek Spiritualist Church in an effort to speak to her own dead mother. With a father scarred as a child by religious experiences, Liz finds her once intact family cracking like the discarded pottery in her mother's shop. But, through her newfound friendship with Nathan, whose mother dragged her children to her hometown to await her death, Liz begins to work through her grief and helps Nathan and his younger sister along the way.</p> <p>Wittlinger's melodic sense of humor and compassion create a story that all teens who have suffered a loss of any kind can relate to. It's a story that illustrates that although blind faith in an institution can be deceiving, blind faith in those you love can make you stronger.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Robyn Seglem Olathe, KS</p>	<p><i>Born to Rock</i> by Gordon Korman Hyperion, 2006, 261 pp., \$15.99</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Coming of Age/Family/Friendship ISBN: 0-7868-0920-5</p> <p>Woven with wit and anecdotal wisdom, <i>Born to Rock</i> is a charming story of adolescence, politics, music, sexuality, family, and friendship. When Leo, a typical 4.0 Young Republican bound for Harvard, finds out his biological father is the lead singer in an '80s punk rock group, one crazy summer ensues. King Maggot, said biological father, invites Leo along for the group's revival tour, and Leo commences to live the life of a roadie—minus the drugs, parties, and women—for two months. Amidst late-night poolside pursuits, drummers embezzling emeralds, best friend blog revelations, and cavity searches, Leo learns the meaning of friendship, loyalty, and responsibility.</p> <p>While the title and subject matter may suggest a raucy book loaded with sex, drugs, and profanity, Korman manages to pack in the adventure and open the discussion without raising the censorship flag. With a cover that rocks on its own and a story that draws kids in from the first line, this novel is "born to rock."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Julie Jones Hutchinson, KS</p>

<p><i>Bushnell's Submarine</i> by Arthur S. Lefkowitz Scholastic, 2006, 136 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Few people realize the first submarine to appear in the history of warfare was the "American Turtle," developed by David Bushnell during the Revolutionary War. <i>Bushnell's Submarine</i> is a brief account of Bushnell and his craft.</p> <p>Although the tone of the book is somewhat pedantic, Lefkowitz includes a number of fascinating details about the construction of the Turtle, and chapters are interspersed with frequent discussions of related events or issues (e.g., the destruction of most university libraries during the Revolutionary War) provided as asides in boxed format. <i>Bushnell's Submarine</i> attempts to balance the historical details with personal details of Bushnell and other figures surrounding the development and deployment (such as it was) of the first submarine.</p> <p><i>Bushnell's Submarine</i> should be appealing to middle school students interested in military history, construction, or engineering; however, the book might also be considered for inclusion in interdisciplinary or thematic studies.</p> <p>F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>Dear Author: Letters of Hope</i> edited by Joan Kaywell Philomel Books, 2007, 240 pp., \$14.99</p> <p>Being a teenager is tough business. Young adult authors have the pulse of today's teens and show it with their willingness to approach the very real issues that teens face each day. When young adult literature connects to teens, teens often have the desire to connect with the authors, to share ways in which the words latched onto their souls. <i>Dear Author</i> highlights the best of the letters received by today's most beloved authors. T. A. Barron, Laurie Halse Anderson, Nancy Garden, Neal Shusterman and others write letters of hope to the teens, offering their insightful, heartfelt, humorous, and sometimes emotional responses in return.</p> <p>Whether faced with a life-changing decision or reflecting on events that robbed their innocence, teens profiled speak for the infinite number of people who have been forever changed by reading a book. <i>Dear Author</i> shows that although young adult authors cannot change the tough lives teens have to face, they can guide their readers to finding the hope within their books and, ultimately, the hope within their lives.</p> <p>Shelbie Witte Manhattan, KS</p>
<p><i>Falling</i> by Doug Wilhelm Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007, 244 pp., \$17.00</p> <p>Matt was good—really good—at basketball, but he's not playing this year. All he can think about is walking around listening to his iPod and trying to ignore what's going on at home. But what is really going on? Matt has his suspicions, but is too afraid to confront his older brother Neal, a former high school b-ball star who didn't get the scholarship to play Division I ball like he planned.</p> <p>One night, Matt logs in to a teen chat room and "meets" a girl (Katie), and when they discover they attend the same high school, they "connect," spending time together after school. But when things begin disappearing from Matt's house, enough to alert the parents to call the police, Matt is under suspicion for the burglaries.</p> <p><i>Falling</i> is a great story, even if it is a little contrived. Chapters alternate between Matt and Katie, keeping the book flowing, and elements of high school gossip and popularity keep the book interesting for girls as well as boys. <i>Falling</i> is a recommended, quick-read, high-interest title for students in grades 7-10.</p> <p>Nancy A. McFarlin Wamego, KS</p>	<p><i>Fallout</i> by Trudy Krishner Holiday House, 2006, 315 pp., \$17.95</p> <p>Genevieve must face her ninth-grade year alone. Her best friend Sally has moved; her cousin Wills is allowed to stay home after completing eighth grade. Her father is obsessed with hurricanes, Communists, and preparing for a nuclear attack. Her mother tries to be the perfect housewife and Tupperware consultant. Gen doesn't quite know what to make of the new girl Brenda Wompers or her liberal-thinking parents. When Brenda is assigned as Gen's Algebra tutor, a hesitant friendship forms. But Brenda's parents begin to question the school's required Civil Defense courses, and the rumor mill of the small town begins to grind. An assigned project on the Salem witch trials shows Gen that the climate of insecurity that fed the suspicions in Massachusetts in the 1600s was not that different from the climate of insecurity in North Carolina in the 1950s.</p> <p>Krishner has done a remarkable job developing characters that, through their own social struggles, personify the distrust and suspicion that often prevailed during this period in our nation's history. Middle and high school readers will relate to Gen as she reconciles the hypocrisies she sees in friends and family with the faith to which she clings.</p> <p>Vicki Sherbert Wakefield, KS</p>

<p><i>Geography of Girlhood</i> by Kirsten Smith Little, Brown & Company, 2006, 184 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Contemporary Fiction ISBN: 0316160210</p> <p>All Penny can think about is getting away from her dull, small-town life, just like her mother did when Penny was six. Her story begins at the end of ninth grade. She is consumed by the great life she sees her sister living. Tara is pretty, popular with boys, and able to defy their father. Problems are compounded when Dad marries and adds a stepbrother, Spencer, to the equation. Penny shares her first kiss, infatuation with her history teacher, experimentation with drinking and sex, and finally running away with her sister's ex-boyfriend, Bobby.</p> <p>Kirsten Smith shares, in the form of verse, how fragile life can be while growing up. Penny gets her wish and runs away with Bobby, only to realize that dreams are so different from the reality of those dreams. Penny learns how to accept things for what they are, not wishing to be someone else or go some place else. It is okay to just be.</p> <p>Barbara Ray Tulsa, OK</p>	<p><i>Grand and Humble</i> by Brent Hartinger Harper Tempest, imprint of HarperCollins, 2006, 212 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Mental Health/Family ISBN: 0060567279</p> <p><i>Grand and Humble</i> is an intriguing tale of two young men, Harlan and Manny, whose lives are intertwined in a mysterious journey of similarities and opposites, making the reader presume they are connected. Harlan, the good-looking, popular teenage son of a senator, has premonitions of disaster that haunt his life. The forebodings cause anxiety attacks and a greater rift between his mother and him.</p> <p>The Chess Club geek, Manny, is consumed with nightmares that leave him terrified and exhausted. The geek controls the lighting in the theatre, but he cannot control the frightening scenes of his nightmares. His easygoing father becomes aloof and avoids Manny's questions regarding Manny's childhood.</p> <p>The connections between the two teenagers seem to surface and the plot unravels, until the engrossed reader realizes an astounding new twist is added. The secret of the two boys lies at the intersection of Grand and Humble.</p> <p>Paulette Clark Junction City, KS</p>
<p><i>Heroes of Football: The Story of Americas Game</i> by John Madden with Bill Gutman Dutton Children's Books, 2006, 80 pp., \$18.99</p> <p>Nonfiction/Football ISBN: 0-525-47698-9</p> <p>On the shelf, <i>Heroes of Football</i> appears to be a glossy, light celebration of professional football. The book's cover and design suggests lots of colorful pictures and limited text, a book suitable for struggling readers at the middle-school level.</p> <p>The inside of the book does not match those expectations. The book is a surprisingly detailed and rich history of American football from its origins in the early days of the 20th Century through the contemporary National Football League. The text is well written, replete with lively anecdotes about the personalities involved in the evolution of the game and a thorough discussion of rule the development of the way the game has been played through the years.</p> <p>While the book is clearly well done, it does present two concerns. First, struggling readers will be drawn by the book's style and design and become frustrated by the density of the text. Conversely, strong readers might well be put off by those same design elements. Nevertheless, <i>Heroes of Football</i> is an invaluable resource for young people with an interest in the history of football.</p> <p>F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>I Am the Great Horse</i> by Katherine Roberts Chicken House, 2006, 401 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Action ISBN: 0-439-82163-0</p> <p>Alexander the Great was a mighty conqueror and a powerful warrior. Little is known about him personally. Perhaps that might be different if his greatest friend could tell his story. That is the premise behind Roberts' <i>I Am the Great Horse</i>. Alexander's story is told by his powerful horse, Bucephalas.</p> <p>After Bucephalas kills his first master, he is shipped north to be sold in Macedonia. The instant Alexander sits on his back, their fates are forever intertwined. Bucephalas and Alexander ride into battle, cutting down all who oppose them. Never far from their side is the groom, Charm. Like Bucephalas, who sees ghosts in one eye, Charm, too, has many secrets. She often acts as Alexander's conscience, questioning his self-proclaimed role of liberator and hero. The reader is often left wondering who is right, a question our equine narrator never totally answers.</p> <p><i>I Am the Great Horse</i> is an exciting look at one of the world's great military leaders. Roberts' approach allows the reader to revel in the battles while still being able to see the negative consequences of Alexander's conquests.</p> <p>Karolinde Young Manhattan, KS</p>

<p><i>The Keys of the Kingdom Book Four: Sir Thursday</i> by Garth Nix</p> <p>Scholastic Press, 2006, 352 pp., \$ 16.99</p> <p>Arthur wants nothing more than to go home and lead a normal life. Unfortunately, nothing has been normal since he first encountered the mysterious Monday and found himself appointed heir to the architect. In book number four of <i>The Keys of the Kingdom</i>, Arthur's problems go from bad to worse. Not only is his leg still broken, but he finds himself unable to return home from the mysterious House, home of the immortal demizens. Just as things seem to be at their darkest, a messenger arrives with draft papers.</p> <p>While Arthur's friend Leaf battles an evil Arthur look-a-like on Earth, Arthur must try to keep his true identity hidden from Sir Thursday and his minions. Even more frightening, an evil army has managed to enter the House and is quickly taking over Sir Thursday's dominions.</p> <p>Just as in the previous three books in the series, Nix spins an intricate tale of deception and survival. The only caution: The series is best read in order to understand the complete story. <i>Sir Thursday</i> is sure to be popular with fantasy and action lovers in middle school and high school.</p> <p>Karolinde Young Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>The Killing Sea: A Novel about the Tsunami that Stunned the World</i> by Richard Lewis</p> <p>Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006, 183 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>ISBN: 1416911650</p> <p>It is a beautiful morning in Meulaboh, Aceh, Indonesia. Sarah and her American family are on a sailing vacation and in need of some engine repair. Going ashore, they meet Ruslan, a boy working at a café on the shore. Ruslan guides them to his father who fixes their engine, and they sail on, but not before Ruslan notices Sarah and her crystal blue eyes.</p> <p>Later that morning, both Ruslan's and Sarah's worlds are shattered by an oceanic earthquake, followed by a tsunami that devastates the area. In the aftermath, Sarah and her brother Peter discover their family's sailboat wrecked, their mother dead, and their father missing. Ruslan, thinking his father is on a job fixing the engine on a tanker in the harbor, desperately begins searching for him. Thus the story begins for both teens as they search for their missing fathers in a devastated countryside.</p> <p>The story, told in alternating chapters, is a disturbing one, but one that will pluck at the heartstrings – the strength of these teens, and the challenges they face alone, and then together, reflect only slightly the immense sorrow that overtook this region in December 2004. Recommended for grades 7-10.</p> <p>Nancy A. McFarlin Wamego, KS</p>
<p><i>Love, Football, and Other Contact Sports</i> by Alden R. Carter</p> <p>Holiday House, 2006, 261 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Alden Carter's most recent offering is a collection of stories following a group of young people through high school, football, and relationships. In typical Carter fashion, the narratives are set in rural Wisconsin, the characters are deeply sympathetic, and a strong sense of the Midwest permeates the book.</p> <p>While the book addresses serious themes, it is a genuinely funny book. Of particular note is the story "Pig Brains," in which our protagonist declares he is going to take Lithuanian fried brains with Cossack sauce to his social studies class as an example of food reflecting his ethnic heritage. This story would be an ideal read-aloud selection for high school students.</p> <p>Likely to appeal to both girls and boys, <i>Love, Football, and Other Contact Sports</i> is a well-crafted, gentle exploration of the extraordinary nature of ordinary adolescents. Secondary teachers can recommend this book for independent reading without reservation.</p> <p>F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>Naïted</i> by Patrick Jones</p> <p>Walker and Co., 2006, 216 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>ISBN: 0-8027-8077-6</p> <p>The nail that sticks out the farthest, Bret Hendricks just invites someone to hammer him down. At school, the "jockarchy" call him "Freak Faggot" because of his preference for theater and music over sports. At home, his tough-guy dad criticizes Bret's green-tinted ponytail and baggy Goodwill clothes, then ignores him to spend time, instead, with a cherished vintage red Camaro. Bret's one refuge, girlfriend Kylee, even dumps him when he refuses to fight the jocks who taunt him.</p> <p>After a year of being hammered on, Bret decides not to yield but to stick out even more. He runs for student body president on an anti-bullying platform that endangers both his school career and his physical safety. He also learns he has support from unexpected quarters.</p> <p>Bret's voice will call to adolescents who feel they also don't quite fit in and will urge them to consider constructive, rather than token, ways to take a stand.</p> <p>Judy Beemer Junction City, KS</p>

<p><i>Mergers</i> by Steven L. Layne Pelican Publishing, 2006, 206 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Racial Intolerance/Leadership ISBN: 1589801830</p> <p>In a world where all races have been blended into one, Dirk, Mateo, Nicci, and Keiko are unique. In addition to their supernatural abilities, they've retained their ethnic features, and that's why Senator Broogue will stop at nothing to destroy them. The Merger, a vision of utopia originally designed to abolish racial differences and eliminate conflict, has become a nightmare of reality that only Dirk and his friends have the ability to reverse. With the help of a mysterious trio of Elders whose ethnicity and abilities mirror those of the teens, Dirk and his friends refine their abilities and prepare to step back in time to meet Senator Broogue and prevent him from ever setting the Merger into motion.</p> <p>The characters are well-crafted, likeable and vivid; adolescent readers are sure to identify with them. Layne weaves a fantastic story full of action and tender moments, conflict and teamwork. Engaging to reluctant and avid readers alike, <i>Mergers</i> blends science fiction, fantasy, and our all-too-human struggles—providing a story that resonates from beginning to end.</p> <p>Rachel Lance Elgin, IL</p>	<p><i>The Murder of Bindy Mackenzie</i> by Jaclyn Moriarty Arthur A. Levine Books, 2006, 494 pp., \$ 16.99</p> <p>Mystery ISBN: 0-439-74051-7</p> <p>Bindy Mackenzie can do no wrong. She is in the top of her class, notices everything around her, and offers self-help sessions for her fellow students. Bindy is the last person who needs a friendship and development class. Her fellow classmates take on the personality of vicious animals, and her too American teacher is too much to deal with. Life couldn't be worse, until it gets worse.</p> <p>The mystery behind two teachers' arguments, the enigmatic and cute Finnegan Blonde, and her own family's hidden secrets unfold as Bindy tells her story through memos, ponderings, letters, and her ever present electronic journal. More mysterious are the changes within Bindy herself. Is she being poisoned? Or is she just losing her mind?</p> <p>Moriarty spins a fascinating story of an overachiever forced to deal with her own limitations, at the same time presenting an intriguing mystery. Not until the end are all of the mysteries revealed. An excellent book for upper middle school and high school.</p> <p>Karolinde Young Manhattan, KS</p>
<p><i>Private</i> by Kate Brian Simon Pulse, 2006, 227 pp., \$8.99</p> <p>Coming of Age/Suspense ISBN: 13: 978-1-4269-1873-8</p> <p>Reed Brennan has won a scholarship to Easton Academy. She has dreamed of this moment when she can escape her gray, suburban life and her alcoholic, prescription drug dependent mother. When her kind, good-hearted father drives their dented Subaru onto the manicured campus, Reed has a moment of misgiving. But seeing this as her only hope, she puts on a brave face and says good-bye.</p> <p>This is the story of a young girl's attempt to escape her painful world and find her place in a privileged one. As Reed tries to break into the inner circle of the most elite group on campus, she finds she must choose between the new love in her life and the hope of becoming one of the Billings Girls. Better suited to high school readers, this first book in a series left me in complete suspense about the choices Reed will make, the disappearance of her boyfriend, and the ceremony that could change her life. Reading the sequel is a must!</p> <p>Vicki Sherbert Wakefield, KS</p>	<p><i>Pucker</i> by Melanie Gideon Razorbill, 2006, 273 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Fantasy ISBN: 1595140557</p> <p>Burn victim Thomas Gale is ignored by his classmates and referred to as "Pucker." Now, his closest friend is his dying mother. As Thomas' mother is facing her last days, she asks him a favor: Thomas must find a cure for his mother's illness in Isaura—the home dimension from which they were banished years ago.</p> <p>As Thomas cons his way back into Isaura, something extraordinary happens—he is healed of his wounds. People finally notice him without disgust. Thomas enjoys the attention and starts having trouble deciding how to use his time. Does he want to stay in Isaura and have friends, or should he be searching for his mother's cure? His deceit gets dangerous as he starts to arouse suspicion. Now, Thomas and his new friends are facing danger, and he must make the right choice—fast.</p> <p>Melanie Gideon writes a gripping tale on redemption, love, and the blessing of the unknown future. Readers will walk away from this book inspired to live life fearlessly.</p> <p>Patrick McGrath Bartlett, IL</p>

<p>Ruby Parker Hits the Small Time by Rowan Coleman HarperTempest, 2007, 240 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Identity/Friendship/Family ISBN: 0-6-077628-5</p> <p>Ruby Parker, at 13, would be the envy of every middle school girl as she has the ingénue role on a popular British soap opera, <i>Kensington Heights</i>, and attends Sylvia Lighthouse's Academy for the Performing Arts. Troubled teens pour out their hearts to her in fan mail, and she solves their problems with ease. Her best friend Nydia supports her fame and celebrity. Her parents live an upper middle class life, while they bank her money in trust and provide the stability every teen needs.</p> <p>Then her parents decide to divorce; her dad moves into an apartment; her mom is in tears; the advice letters begin to mirror her life. She overhears that her role may be cut, but she thinks she is saved by the aging actress who plays her mom. Her first screen kiss looms with her secret crush, her teen hunk co-star. Ruby slowly grows up amidst all the drama, both onscreen and off. This novel was first published in England in 2005 and includes fan mail, Ruby's answers, and sections of TV script.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>	<p>Secrets, Lies, Gizmos, and Spies: A History of Spies and Espionage by Janet Wyman Coleman (with the International Spy Museum) Abrams, 2006, 114 pp., \$24.95</p> <p>ISBN: 0-8100-5756-6</p> <p>The International Spy Museum in Washington, D. C. is fast becoming one of the most popular field trip destinations in the city, and this colorful, glossy book brings the resources of the museum to classrooms and libraries. It is hard for adolescents not to be interested in spies and spying, and this text is replete with high-interest illustrations and photos of cool spy gadgets, as well as discussions of spies and spying throughout history and in the popular culture.</p> <p>This book is an invaluable addition to any social studies class, providing examples of the kinds of historical details that never find their way into the textbooks. While passing reference is made to other historical periods, the vast majority of the book focuses on the World War II and Cold War eras. Any discussion of 20th century American history would be enriched by this text, and many reluctant adolescent readers would be captivated by the discussions of umbrellas that fire lethal pellets, listening devices hidden in decorative wall plaques, and all of the other treasures compiled here.</p> <p>F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>
<p>7 Days at the Hot Corner by Terry Trueman HarperTempest, 2006, 160 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Baseball/Friendship/AIDS ISBN: 0-06-057494</p> <p>This page-turner opens with Scott, a senior in high school, nervously sitting in the waiting room of the Spokane Public Health building to take an AIDS test. His best friend Travis has outed himself in an anonymous interview published in the school newspaper, and his parents asked him to leave home because they are worried he will negatively influence his younger brother. Scott's dad is allowing Travis to live with them, much to Scott's discomfort. During impromptu practice at the batting cage, Travis gets hit and develops a massive nosebleed. Scott now fears the worst result of an unexpected homosexual encounter and gets tested.</p> <p>The novel follows Scott during the seven days he must wait for the results. He is the third baseman on the undefeated high school baseball team, and Trueman highlights the plot with baseball action, sports allusions, and flashbacks. This is the powerful, well-written story of a young man who plays the "hot corner," a reference to both his baseball position and the tense place he finds himself in life. As a bonus, myths about AIDS are dispelled with accurate information.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>	<p>Shug by Jenny Han Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006, 248 pp., \$14.95</p> <p>ISBN: 978-1-4169-0942-2</p> <p>As the summer comes to an end, twelve-year-old Annemarie Wilcox, known as "Shug" to her family, realizes junior high school is going to be completely different from elementary school. Everything around her is changing, and everything is happening fast. All Shug wants is for her life to stay just the way it is.</p> <p>All the boys her age are starting to take an interest in girls; however, Annemarie finds herself being left behind. She thinks of herself as too tall, too flat-chested, and too freckled. Annemarie has a crush on her longtime friend, Mark, but he is oblivious. When Annemarie is forced to tutor her worst enemy, Jack, she discovers he can relate to her problems better than anyone. Tension mounts at home as Shug's parents constantly fight because of her father's extensive traveling and her mother's drinking binges.</p> <p>Jenny Han's descriptive style and realistic dialogue brings Annemarie's character to life. Han is able to effectively express the trials and tribulations that an average 12-year-old girl faces in her first year of middle school.</p> <p>Nicole Runge Algonquin, IL</p>

<p><i>Split Screen</i> by Brent Hartinger HarperTempest, 2007, 304 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Gay/Lesbian Relationships/Friendships ISBN: 0-06-082408-5</p> <p>Split screen refers to more than a visual effect as this novel is a flip-the-book. The plot is told from two points of view—Russel Middlebrook and his best friend Min Wei, 16-year-olds who sign on as extras in the locally filmed version of <i>Attack of the Soul-Sucking Brain Zombies</i>, which is also the title of Russel's tale. Min writes of her adventures in <i>Bride of the Soul-Sucking Brain Zombies</i>, which the reader finds by flipping over Russel's story.</p> <p>These two intelligent and sensitive characters, along with their other pals previously created the secret gay-straight alliance at Robert I. Goodkind High School the year before; that story was told in Hartinger's award-winning <i>Geography Club</i>. The filming provides students from other schools who also act as extras playing normal high school students who gradually morph into zombies. The setting provides the backdrop for teen romance, adolescent treachery, prejudice, and resolution. Hartinger has another winner in this well-written and often poignant story.</p> <p>Judith A. Haym Little Rock, AR</p>	<p><i>Trigger</i> by Susan Vaught Bloomsbury, 2006, 262 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Suicide ISBN: 1-58234-920-7</p> <p>Jersey Hatch can't remember the past two years. He can't remember why he's blind in one eye, why his once-athletic body no longer works quite right, and most of all, what happened the night he was shot. The night he shot himself. After months of rehabilitation, Jersey returns home, sending him on a quest to find the answer to what made him pull the trigger.</p> <p>Told in the stilted language of a young man who cannot control his thoughts and speech, Jersey's story unfolds through the help of his childhood neighbors: Mama Rush, Leza, and finally, his ex-best friend, Todd. Along the way, he must also face and accept the impact his actions had on his own family.</p> <p>Although not a conventional mystery, this book keeps the reader guessing and wondering what drove this once seemingly perfect boy to attempt the ultimate act. Jersey's story is not one that will quickly be forgotten.</p> <p>Robyn Seglem Olathe, KS</p>
<p><i>The Unresolved</i> by T.K. Welsh Dutton Books, 2006, 149 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Ghosts/Romance/Prejudice ISBN: 0-525-47731-4</p> <p>In an interesting twist for historical fiction, T.K. Welsh's first young adult novel, <i>The Unresolved</i>, develops a tale of romance told from the point of view of a ghost, a victim of the true-life burning and sinking of the steamship the General Slocum in New York City's East River in June 1904.</p> <p>In the novel, the steamship fire is started after our protagonist, 15-year-old Mallory, receives her first kiss from a young man. He attempts to save her, but the ship's lifejackets are rotten (a historically accurate detail), and she drowns after he pushes her into the water. He survives, only to be blamed for causing the fire, and our now ghostly narrator cannot rest until justice is done.</p> <p>No doubt many adolescents will enjoy this blend of romance and the supernatural set against the backdrop of an American tragedy that is often overlooked.</p> <p>F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>Trigger</i> by Susan Vaught Bloomsbury, 2006, 262 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Suicide ISBN: 1-58234-920-7</p> <p>Jersey Hatch can't remember the past two years. He can't remember why he's blind in one eye, why his once-athletic body no longer works quite right, and most of all, what happened the night he was shot. The night he shot himself. After months of rehabilitation, Jersey returns home, sending him on a quest to find the answer to what made him pull the trigger.</p> <p>Told in the stilted language of a young man who cannot control his thoughts and speech, Jersey's story unfolds through the help of his childhood neighbors: Mama Rush, Leza, and finally, his ex-best friend, Todd. Along the way, he must also face and accept the impact his actions had on his own family.</p> <p>Although not a conventional mystery, this book keeps the reader guessing and wondering what drove this once seemingly perfect boy to attempt the ultimate act. Jersey's story is not one that will quickly be forgotten.</p> <p>Robyn Seglem Olathe, KS</p>

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