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REVIEW: Also Known as Harper

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Off the SHELF

The Georgia Library Quarterly reviews books on aspects of life in Georgia and the South, including history, literature, politics, education and genealogy. Materials written by Southern authors or published by regional publishers may also be considered, as well as those on libraries and librarianship.

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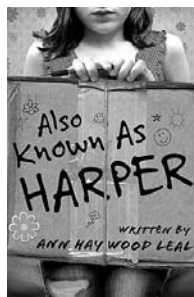
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FICTION

Also Known as Harper by Ann Haywood Leal (Henry Holt and Company, 2009; ISBN 978-0-8050-8881-6, \$16.99)

Have you ever been down on your luck and can't seem to get back on top? Well, that is exactly what has happened to fifth-grader Harper Lee Morgan. Since her father left, her mother has been struggling to pay the rent and put food on the table. Then, after a few missed rent payments, Harper and her family are now faced with the new realities of being homeless. The worst news for Harper comes when she must stay out of school to watch after her younger brother, Hemingway, missing the annual school poetry contest. Poetry has always been the one place where Harper can find solace and peace within her complicated life, and to miss the contest for the second year in a row is essentially devastating. To top it all off, Harper's schoolmate, neighbor and cruel archnemesis, Winnie Rae Early, makes it a daily ritual to squash Harper's hopes and dreams of a better situation for herself and her family. Leal's characters are detailed and emotionally intricate, forcing the reader to feel as if they are sharing in the same life struggles. Their trials and struggles of homelessness and rejection become your own. The antagonist of the novel is one readers will love to hate, with a Nurse Ratched-esque personality that will invoke



unfounded depths of anger within the reader's soul. However, in the end, it is delightful to see the family find strength in the written word: Harper's poetry or, more specifically, the great novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a character in which Harper is named after. Intended for readers ages 9-12, *Also Known as Harper* is a heart-warming and triumphant tale for every literature buff. ►►

— Reviewed by **Jennifer Green**
Gwinnett County Public Library
Snellville Branch

NONFICTION

Naturalist by Edward O. Wilson (Island Press, 1994; ISBN 1-55963-288-7, \$30.00)

There are books that linger in the heart and mind yet languish on library bookshelves. They are neither new nor old but undeclared "classics" that deliver powerful story lines via eloquent, honest, easily accessible prose. It's good to be reminded of their existence and celebrate them again. Octogenarian Wilson's autobiography falls into this category. Names of outstanding scientists surface in the popular press every October like whales coming up for air when Nobel Prize winners are announced for chemistry, physics

