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The Well-Stocked Bookshelf

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The Well-Stocked Bookshelf

BY ED SPICER

WITH MARGUERITE FOSHEE

In this issue we feature books for a wide variety of readers. What books did I miss for this column? As always your comments, complaints, or compliments are appreciated. You may send them to: info@spicyreads.org. Happy reading!

Ali-Karamali, S. (2012). *Growing up Muslim: Understanding the beliefs and practices of Islam*. New York: Random House/Delacorte Press. 214 pp. ISBN: 978-0-385-74095-1. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Growing up Muslim may not win any prizes for the best nonfiction of the year, but it is a book that middle school and high school libraries should purchase. Every day, it seems, there is some hue and cry clanging in the media about the perils posed by Muslims, the evils of Islam. Folks shout warnings about “Shariah law” and “jihad” with ignorant claims that Muslims have some sort of organized plot to overthrow Christianity. This book, in the first part, systematically defines the basic beliefs and practices of Muslims: what do Muslims eat, what is Islam, how does prayer work, why do Muslims fast, what holidays do Muslims celebrate, what behavior is allowed, what about clothing, and more. Just as Christianity has many forms of worship and many different types of worshippers, so to does Islam. Ali-Karamali is very good at explaining the range of belief, as well as the commonalities. The first part of the book is integrated with the five pillars of faith in the Islamic religion: the declaration of faith, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and charity. The second half of the book explores the contemporary Muslim world and includes a rich discussion of the wide differences within the Muslim community over the proper way to follow God. Ali-Karamali does an especially good job of comparing the Muslim community and its differences to the Christian community and its differences. Readers will come away from this book with a better understanding of Islam; some may even be surprised by the similarities between Jewish faith, Christianity, and Islam. Be sure to share this book with the social studies department in your school.—E.S.

Archos, C. (2012). *Out of reach*. New York: Simon Pulse. 256 pp. ISBN-10: 978-1-4424-4053-1. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

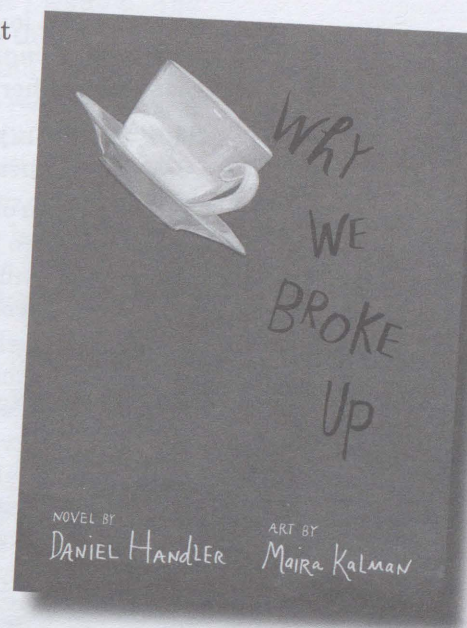
Seniors are stereotyped as an egocentric bunch; always worried about themselves, their awesomeness, and of course graduation. The author of *Out of Reach* must realize that this is simply a fallacy and creates for the reader a sincere character that young adults can relate to. As a high school senior Rachel is a girl on a mission: to search for her meth-addicted brother, Micah, who left home unexpectedly. At the onset of her journey, Rachel enlists her brother’s best friend, Tyler, as both a guide and a companion. The duo works well together, each with their own secrets and intimate knowledge of Micah as well as a heavy amount of personal guilt for the roles they played in Micah’s addiction. Together they explore the streets and beaches of California uncovering the sad truths about Micah and themselves. While Rachel and Tyler don’t necessarily find what they seek, there is a catharsis of sorts since they both reveal their innermost secrets. For Rachel, there is a sort of spiritual awakening that allows her to maintain hope, create closure, and move forward in her own life. Initially, I thought this book lacked sustenance and depth of emotion. At some degree, the emotions portrayed by this Rachel and Tyler could be more authentic, but the purpose and warning intended by the author come through clearly. *Out of Reach* certainly will be enjoyed by teens for its hints of romance and teen issues, but can at times become ‘preachy’ and too grounded by research. However, the author does many things in this piece that lead to the use of this book as a great mentor text in the high school classroom. Carrie Archos makes a great analogy at the onset of the book comparing a lie to a tapeworm, which leads beautifully into the great “awakening” of Rachel at the conclusion of the book. During this era of non-fiction writing, teachers will find this a great example of using statistical and research driven data to make a point or introduce a topic. Often, the author draws the reader in at the beginning of the chapter by illustrating a statistic driven by research regarding teenage drug use. *Out of Reach* is a real success and has reached acclaim as a *National Book Award* finalist and will be an intelligent choice for instructors, librarians, and sponsors of clubs such as SADD and DARE. Curiosity will bring teens to open this book; however, its lack of poignant emotional appeal and scripted use of “typical teenage drug use” may leave some readers feeling a bit empty.—M.F.

Handler, D. (2011). *Why we broke up*. (Ill. by M. Kalman). New York: Little, Brown and Company. 355 pp. ISBN: 978-0-316-12725-7. (Hardcover); \$19.99.

For readers who are aware that Daniel Handler writes the Lemony Snicket books, this book may be one that shocks and surprises—I know that I was very surprised when it won a Printz award because I had a hard time reconciling Lemony Snicket and an illustrated book and an award for distinguished quality. This will teach me to judge a book by its cover and author and format. [Note to self: Ed, you *must* read the books.] Told from the point of view of Minerva, Roman goddess of wisdom (or Min, for short), we hear a boxful of reasons explaining why she broke up with Ed Slaterton, told one artifact at a time. Min drops off a box of artifacts collected during the course of her involvement with Ed Slaterton. Maira Kalman illustrates each of these artifacts, and they form the outline for telling the story. It is rather brilliant to frame the story in this way because it is so spot-on teen. Fortunately the publisher printed the book on a quality paper stock that adds heft to the illustrations and prevents them from seeming childish. We all know teens who collect and save souvenirs and ascribe them with almost magical powers to cement the love we feel for this person or that. Min's voice is superb. She sounds like a teen. She is sarcastic like a teen. Her language is naturally teen, including the perfectly natural (and believable) cussing. What is especially strong about this Printz Honor book, is the scatological, conflicted, and inconsistent diatribe that cannot always decide whether Min loves Ed Slaterton or is breaking up with him. Handler also does an excellent job of using the artifacts to document realistic growth in Min's character. Like many young women with boyfriends, Min gets sucked into thinking that it is the job of a girlfriend to, say, watch your boyfriend's basketball practice even though you hate basketball. The exploration of sacrificing and sharing in a relationship is very believable. While readers may see the better fit with Al, that is not necessarily a teen reality. The novel ends with the clear implication that Min is wiser now and that her relationship with Al will benefit from what she learned from her relationship with Ed. High school teachers will see all sorts of possibilities in this fine novel. Thank you Printz committee for being a better, more conscientious reader than me. Purchase this book for high school libraries and make sure that both English teachers and art teachers know about this book and its format.—E.S.

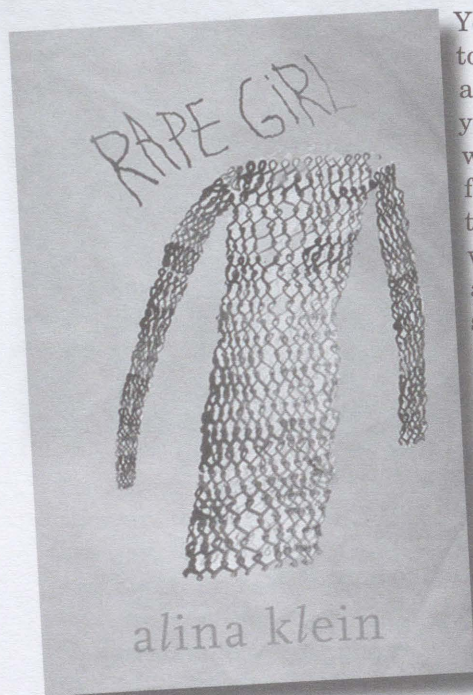
Kindl, P. (2012). *Keeping the castle*. New York: Penguin/Viking. 262 pp. ISBN 978-0-670-01438-5. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

It's a truth universally acknowledged that a poor single teen girl in possession of a run-down castle must be in want of a husband. Readers familiar with *Pride and Prejudice* will find much that is familiar in this delightful Austen-like story of a pragmatic beautiful 17-year-old woman who is determined to marry money to save her castle home. The story is set in 19th century England, and Althea explores appropriate options (for the times) to trade her good looks for the ability to provide for her mother and save her castle home. The banter between Althea and the various men she meets is delicious, with her too sharp tongue often getting her into trouble with the social conventions of the time. She digs into Mr. Godalming about why his appreciation of her beauty is acceptable, while her interest in his money is loathsome, but at no time do readers feel like we have a modern teen pretending to be from the past. Kindl keeps the characters in the times, and this is part of what makes the book work so well. That said, we do have a character, Miss Vincy, who eschews thoughts of marriage and has a son that is almost illegitimate. She is an artist and has Althea contemplating, however briefly, what life without men might be like. Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy arrive in the form of Lord Boring and Mr. Fredericks. While Althea weaves webs



to trap Lord Boring into marrying her, readers (and many of the other minor characters) are well aware that Mr. Fredericks is the better catch. Much of the social, economic, and political humor of *Pride and Prejudice* is echoed in Kindl's version, but readers need not read *Pride and Prejudice* to enjoy this romp through 19th century England. The language play, delivered by characters who stay true to the time period, carries the day in this excellent novel. The fact that English teachers can show students the inter-textual features in the novel, as well as compare and contrast Austen and Kindl is frosting. Give this one to students who love romance. Purchase this book for all high school libraries and buy a copy for English teachers too. I am betting middle school students knowing nothing of Austen will read and love this book. With any luck at all, students will go grab *Owl in Love*, *Goose Chase*, or *Woman in the Wall*, also by Kindl. It has been a long time since Kindl's last book—good to have her back!—E.S.

Klein, A. (2012). *Rape girl*. South Hampton, NH: Namelos. 125 pp. ISBN: 978-1-60898-124-3. (Paperback); \$9.95.



Your name is Valerie. You have a little sister, Ainsley. You love her and want to protect her, but you do not always want to babysit. You do well in school and take pride in your academic accomplishments. You have a best friend, and you have a popular boyfriend. People admire you. This story begins, however, when Valerie is not Valerie—she is the Rape Girl. Valerie's mother goes away for the weekend and leaves Valerie in charge of her younger sister. Like many teens left alone, Valerie plans a party. At her party, her friends see her go willingly into the den with her boyfriend and crush, Adam. They saw all the alcohol she willingly consumed. Her friends do not see her throw up on his shoes. They do not see her passed out alone. Nor do they see Adam come back to her house the next day and rape a very hung-over Valerie, who is worried that her little sister will see what is happening. When Valerie reports the rape to the police, she is accused of trying to ruin this fine Mormon boy's life. Rape is not often reported because of many of the issues raised in this short book—somewhere in the neighborhood of 75% of rapes are *not* reported. Valerie's best friend abandons her and the school treats her as if she is the problem. Despite the fact that Adam is not held accountable for his actions legally, this book is more about Valerie finding ways to move forward without being a victim. This book is an attempt to see the value in reporting a crime even when you may not win. Klein, a rape survivor herself, shares with teens a very realistic scenario for what happens after

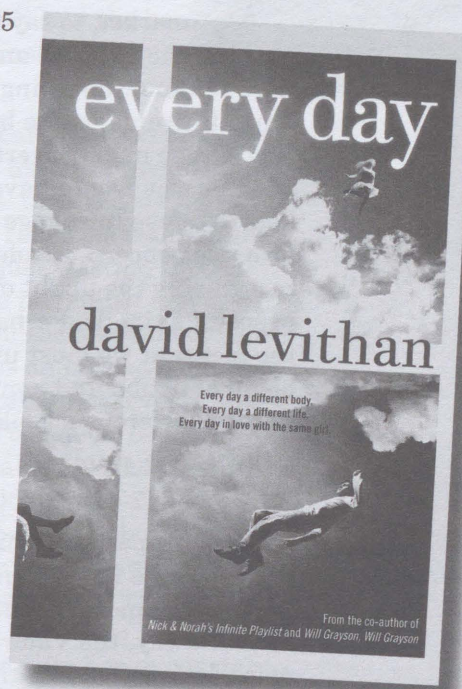
one reports a rape. Teens will read this book and understand that, perhaps, the best reasons for reporting a rape do not stem from the possibility of justice or revenge, but from documenting the crime, identifying the perpetrator, and moving forward. When Adam asks her why she reported him and then discovers that she is not, as he feared, pregnant, he says, "Then what the hell? He shook his head at me. 'It's not like I'm some pervert lurking on a jogging trail somewhere waiting for a victim. I'm just a *guy*, not a rapist'" (p. 120). Readers understand that our society has a long way to go toward educating teens about what is and is not appropriate between young men and women. This book is a direct and straightforward look at rape. It will not win any awards for language, but it should win a spot in high school libraries. It is a book that should be shared with school counseling offices. If your school is like most schools around the country, you will have students who will benefit from Klein's description of the various emotions possible after a rape. Perhaps reading this book will keep your school from responding as poorly as Valerie's school.—E.S.

Leavitt, M. (2012). *My book of life by Angel*. New York: Macmillan/Farrar Straus Giroux. 247 pp. ISBN: 978-0-374-35123-6. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

Heck, Superhero is still one of my favorite books of all time, and *Keturah and Lord Death* was a National Book Award finalist. Consequently, when I saw that Leavitt had a new book out this year, I was determined to review it. However, when I read this book the first time, it threw me for a loop. It is a verse novel, and I had decided that I was tired of verse novels. It is about teen prostitution and drug use, and that is a difficult sell for many schoolteachers. It wasn't until I went back and read a second time that I could see the strength in the form, see how it added to the content, appreciate it for what it is, as opposed to what I wanted. And then when I read it the third time, I could pick up on many of the very subtle things that take place in this novel, not the least of which is that an Angel hears a Call and answers it. The Call, however, is not what readers may expect and the Angel bears little resemblance to the fear inducing Angels of the Bible, nor to the cherubic cute creatures of popular culture. Angel meets Call in a mall. He buys her dinner. Eventually he supplies her with drugs—candy. Shortly after, she is pulling tricks on Hastings and Main, a well-known spot for hookers in Vancouver, Canada. When Call brings an 11-year-old girl into the house, Angel decides to be an angel and save Melli, but it will take divine help and may not be possible. The fact that Leavitt has incorporated the real life sad and sorry history of Hastings and Main into this story only serves to add punch to the poems. English teachers will very much appreciate the deft way in which Milton's *Paradise Lost* is used to add layers to this story of innocence and loss with hints of redemption. Purchase this one for high school libraries and English teachers.—E.S.

Levithan, D. (2012). *Every day*. New York: Random House/Knopf. 325 pp. ISBN: 978-0-307-93188-7. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

When you wake up every day in a brand new body, are you male or female? What do you look like? Does it matter? Since you take the name of the body you inhabit for that day, do you have your own name? A, our protagonist, has adopted this one letter name. We begin the story with A waking up in a new body on day 5,994, which is somewhere over 16 years old. A has never known any other sort of life—each day A searches through that day's memory bank to determine the daily gender, family history, and other essential memories for navigating successfully through the day. A makes sure not to get too attached, not to be noticed, and to do no harm to the person whose body is possessed. He lives passively. When A wakes one morning in the body of Justin, he meets Rhiannon, Justin's girlfriend. A is smitten. A believes that Rhiannon deserves so much better than Justin. How does one form a relationship, however, when each day there is a new body, which may not be male? Forming a relationship is an active process, very different from the passive life previously. While the world building in this book must be overlooked from time to time, the questions that this book forces teens to explore are deep. Just what is it about another person that we fall in love with? Do looks really matter? Teens often feel invincible and often act as if they will live forever. What happens when a teen has just one day to make a difference? Does a day really matter? I appreciate the clever way Levithan demands attention, *every day* to those things over which we do have control and are able to change. For readers who really wish to figure out this book, try to write a gender-neutral review of *Every Day* without using a passive voice.—E.S.



Schrefer, E. (2012). *Endangered*. New York: Scholastic Press. 264 pp. ISBN: 978-0-545-16576-1. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

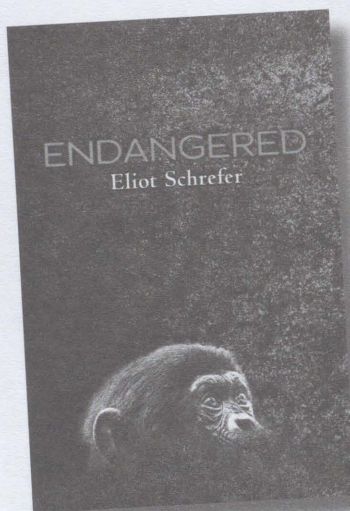
Bonobos! Who knew? Schrefer's National Book Award nominated title features bonobos, a close relative to the chimpanzee, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, a land torn by violence and corruption. While this book is fiction, it is based on the very real situation in the Congo and Schrefer's research at the Lola Ya Bonobo sanctuary.

Sophie is Congolese and American. Her mother loves her family, but her family is not as important to her as her work with the bonobos, which has driven her father away.

Consequently, Sophie does not feel that she belongs anywhere. While visiting her mother at the sanctuary, she blunders her way into taking charge of Otto, a baby bonobo. Bonobos, unlike other apes, unlike chimpanzees, have a peaceful, matriarchal society. Babies do not do very well when separated from mom. When Sophie's mother is forced to leave early to release bonobos back into the wild, Sophie is supposed to return to her father. When it comes time to leave, however, Sophie cannot bring herself to abandon Otto, knowing what this will mean to Otto who has come to think of her as his new mother. Instead of boarding the plane, Sophie bolts with Otto through the electrified fence into the bonobo sanctuary, a place that no one enters alone. Eventually rebels enter the nursery and kill the staff and many of the babies and newly rescued, quarantined bonobos. They cannot get to Sophie, however, because of the fence. When the electrified fence loses its charge, Sophie must figure out a way to find safety for herself and Otto. She is forced to run. In a land that has people killing and eating bonobos and selling babies on the black market, to say nothing of killing each other, where does one run? Schrefer exposes the political and ecological drama in a country that not many American students know anything about. One of the important questions considered in this white-knuckle drama, is the basic question of why one should care about a bonobo in a country that has so much poverty and pain. Read this story about Sophie and Otto and ask yourself whether you would have been able to abandon Otto. Caring is important and sometimes our hearts refuse to engage in qualitative arguments over the relative value of the object of our love and concern. Readers should be warned that they will fall in love with bonobos. While recognizing the plight of the humans, readers will also care about what happens to these peaceful animals. Perhaps the most important writing Schrefer does in this book is reinforce the fact that we must understand those whom we hope to help *first*. This is an excellent blend of fiction and nonfiction. Purchase this one for both middle school and high school libraries. Here is a book that we can share with school life science departments. —E.S.

Schmidt, G.D. (2012). *What came from the stars*. Boston: Clarion Books. 294 pp. ISBN: 978-0-547-61213-3. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Tommy Pepper hates his Robotroid lunchbox. Sixth graders just do not carry them anymore. So he may be forgiven for trying to hide his lunchbox and not necessarily knowing that hidden within it is a necklace, far beyond anything Earth is able to produce. Meanwhile, far, far away, the Valorim are desperately trying to preserve their civilization in the face of mass destruction and the annihilation of their people. Just before their final destruction, Waeglim crafts a chain necklace infused with all the art and creativity of his people. Lord Mondus covets the art of the Valorim, but arrives too late to capture it. Waeglim has sent the necklace soaring into space and, ultimately, into Tommy Pepper's lunchbox. Waeglim is not killed when the faceless O'Mondim break into his final refuge, but imprisoned, until Lord Mondus is able to trick him into revealing the location of his necklace. Eventually this task is accomplished, and Lord Mondus sends his minions to retrieve this artifact that will ensure his power forever. However, the necklace is crafted in such a way that it must



be given willingly. Tommy is too preoccupied with his mother's death (and the blame and guilt he carries) to care about much else. However, after donning the necklace, his drawings become animated and far better than his ability would allow. He has visions of watching *both* suns set, something obviously not earthly. Clearly this necklace is worth keeping and protecting. Let the adventures begin! Schmidt has not written science fiction before, but he has lots of knowledge and experience with our English-Anglican roots. So why not build a world filled with Old English myth and lore? Why not phrase the alien culture as if it were related to Sir Gawain or Beowulf and describe the good and evil battle in cosmological and theological terms? The alternating chapters may not be equally compelling to young readers, but readers who are patient will be rewarded with a rich world containing many nooks and crannies for the imagination to explore. Along the way readers are treated to a contemporary realistic novel that explores grief, loss, and forgiveness. It is no accident that both the Valorim thread and Tommy's thread share these themes of loss and grief but in decidedly different forms. Schmidt includes a lengthy glossary to assist students who become immersed in the linguistic details of the Valorim language. While this book will probably find the bulk of its readers in middle school, high school English teachers will not be sorry to recommend this one to readers who are fans of Tolkien or Lewis. Purchase this book for middle school and high school libraries.—E.S.

Shusterman, N. (2012). *UnWholly*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 402 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4424-2366-4. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

Unwind still finds fans at the high school where I run the teen book group. What happens to Risa and Connor are recurring questions. In this book, this *second* book, this second book in a *trilogy*, we may not find out all we need to know, but we will certainly end the book with a *whole* new set of questions for Shusterman! Despite the cliffhanger ending, teens will find plenty to love in this continuation of *Unwind*.

We still have the harvest camps that take people from age 13-17 (a year younger) and give them a new "divided" life, which basically means that these folks are used to provide organs or body parts for the medical community or for the cosmetic surgeons. In this book, however, some of the big money made from harvesting is used to fund a public relations war against Connor and Risa suggesting that recycling parts from teens who are just wasting their lives hurts society by, say, delaying the healing of heroes who provide incredible services to the greater society. In this book Shusterman moves a bit away from the abortion debate of *Unwind* to a more complex discussion of what value a society places on human capital, such as organs and other body parts. The evolution of the argument produces several new characters, including Miracolina who functions in a very similar way to Lev in *Unwind*. She is a very dedicated tithe who has a spiritual connection to being a tithe—one who will be moved to a divided state and recycled. We also have Cam, the world's very first full-harvested being made from all the best parts. Risa has been manipulated into becoming a spokesperson for the Proactive Citizenry. She even consents to use harvested parts to move her out of her wheelchair. Of course Connor views her decision as a betrayal. Connor is still gamely fighting to protect the AWOLs from becoming Unwinds. Cam has fallen in love with Risa who initially thinks of him as an abomination. Her manipulation puts her in constant contact with Cam, and the proximity has Risa second-guessing her first impression of Cam (as well as introducing romantic competition for Connor). Insert a brilliant and twisted manipulative Starkey who competes with Connor for control of the Graveyard camp AWOLs; inject a parts pirate who vows to revenge the humiliation at the hands of Connor, Lev, and Risa, and we have all the makings of another popular thriller. While this book does not have the element of surprise that *Unwind* does, it nevertheless manages to keep the story fresh. The introduction of parts pirates will have students exploring the connections between Proactive Citizenry and the black market organ donor market that exists in our world today.

Starkey's thread in the book introduces the element of orphaned, storked, Unwinds. These teens feel unwanted by anyone, which allows Shusterman to introduce the theme of racism. Most teens, however, will simply give into the rousing adventure and then hope and pray that the third book does not take as long to finish as the second one. Purchase this for high school libraries.—E.S.

Silvey, C. (2011). *Jasper Jones*. New York: Knopf/Random House. 312 pp. ISBN: 978-0-375-86666-1. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

As a teacher for many years, I regularly see young students who have not learned how to interact with other students. Some call these students bullies, and sometimes they are correct. However, there is another side to bullying that is not as often recorded. Students will come tell me about something the bully has done, even when they do not have any direct evidence that proves it. I have had students tattle on this prototypical boy for things he did even when he was absent. Silvey's book is about this boy, Jasper Jones, the answer to all that is wrong in the mining town of Corrigan. Straight off the bat, Jasper takes Charlie to show him something that will forever change Charlie: he shows him the dead body of Laura Wishart hanging from a tree. Jasper and Charlie are not friends. They do not hang out together, but Charlie instinctively trusts him and is flattered that the town bad boy has come to him for help. Charlie is not popular and is honored by Jasper's trust. Charlie is a bookish 13-year-old and he quickly understands that Jasper *will* be the one blamed for the death, especially considering that the location is a place Jasper has often taken girls, including Laura. Jasper cuts Laura down from the tree, and Charlie helps him dump her body into the river, with blocks of granite tied to her to keep her from surfacing. Eventually Corrigan begins a search for Laura, and Charlie is complicit in her disappearance (and death). Afraid to say anything because of his involvement and because he believes Jasper, Charlie is, nevertheless, racked with guilt. As predicted, the town suspects Jasper, and even Charlie has his doubts. This book is 312 pages and all of this action happens in the first 50 pages. Silvey fills the pages with references to *Huckleberry Finn*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and several other texts that provide readers with clues to Charlie's personality. One book that he does not use is *Crime and Punishment* even though Charlie agonizes over his part in Laura's disappearance. Since Jasper and Charlie are not close friends, they cannot be seen together. Consequently, much of the book, in *To Kill a Mockingbird*-fashion shows Charlie's interactions with the town as he and Jasper attempt to puzzle out who killed Laura. Charlie's best friend is Jeffrey Lu, a Vietnamese boy, who is "ruthlessly" bullied. The "Boo Radley" of the book could very well be Mad Jack Lionel—the test of bravery is to steal peaches from his property, which is beyond Charlie's bravery threshold. The final linchpin character, and the character who provides the novel with most of its dramatic tension, is the girl that Charlie likes: the dead girl's sister, Eliza Wishart. The exploration of racism from several different lenses is brilliant because this book is not just a painful look at racism. It also explores how we tell the truth to our friends. And let's not forget the humor! Silvey's book often sparkles with its dialog between Charlie and Jeffrey who are not always sure that they should be friends:

I shake my head. Jeffrey leans back and yawns. He scratches his chest.

"I feel like an icy cold beer," he says.

"What? Why?"

"I don't know. It always looks so refreshing. I wishhhh to be refreshhhhed by an icy cold beer."

"But you've never *had* beer."

"So?"

“So how can you feel like something you’ve never tasted?”

“You’ve never kissed Eliza Wishart before, but you still wanted to do that.”

I roll my eyes at him.

“That’s a lot different to a beer.”

“Telling me. A beer is farrrr superior. You don’t have to sit around holding its hand and saying nice things about its hair.”

“Jeffrey, you’re a volcanic eruption of stupidity.”

“I’m a volcanic eruption of truth; you know it.” (p. 224)

The gradual discovery of the many truths germane to Laura’s death makes sense and surprises the reader. The character growth we see in Charlie feels as real as it is hard-earned, much like the growth of Scout or Jeb. Purchase this Printz winner for all high school libraries. This is an obvious book to pair with many of the books required in AP English classes, so make sure to purchase an extra copy for AP English teachers.—E.S.

Valente, C.M. (2012). *The girl who fell beneath fairyland and led the revels there*. (Ill. by A. Juan). New York: Feiwel and Friends/Macmillan. 258 pp. ISBN: 978-0-312-64962-3. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

I love poetic language and I love authors who take risks. This book is the sequel to *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making* (also fabulous). In that book September is described as a child, which is a creature without a heart—for her own protection—since hearts are so easily damaged, as it says in the first book:

All children are heartless. They have not grown a heart yet, which is why they can climb tall trees and say shocking things and leap so very high that grown-up hearts flutter in terror. Hearts weigh quite a lot. That is why it takes so long to grown one. (p. 4)

Now September is older, a teenager:

For though, as we have said, all children are heartless, this is not precisely true of teenagers. Teenage hearts are raw and new, fast and fierce, and they do not know their own strength. Neither do they know reason or restraint, and if you want to know the truth, a goodly number of grown-up hearts never learn it. And so we may say now, as we could not before, that September’s heart squeezed, for it had begun to grow in her like a flower in the dark. We may take a moment to feel a little sorry for her, for having a heart leads to the peculiar griefs of the grown. (p. 8)



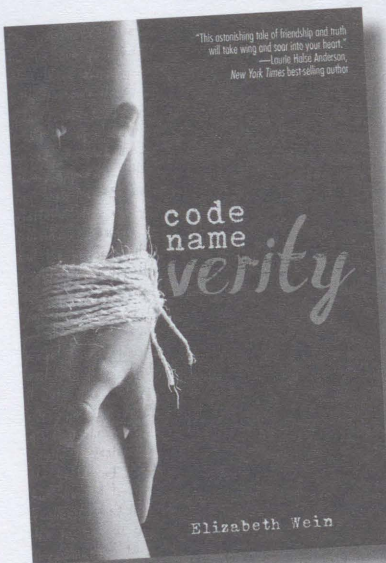
In this novel all the shadows are being sucked down below, which has the effect of deleting the magic from Fairyland. The nether lands below, however, are becoming a churning, roiling, teeming mass of magical revelry—a perfect place for a clever teen. Lo and behold, the person behind the revelry is September’s very own shadow that she gave away in the first book. Consequently, September’s goal is to convince her shadow to come back to her, which will stop the flow of magic from Fairyland. New characters, especially Aubergine, the dodo bird, spice up this sequel without replacing favorites from the first book. The Wyverary is back! If the first book is compared to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, then maybe this is *Through the Looking Glass*? Valente’s world is not one that works through logical rules, but one that works because of the poetic detail, which has the effect of making this book one

to puzzle through as if it were some sort of allegorical riddle. Juan's illustrations remind me of how I felt when I saw Edward Gorey's illustrations in T.S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. They add a richness to the text, a bit of creep factor, which matches the story. You will be tempted to purchase this one for elementary school students, and I don't blame you—hearts make plenty of mistakes. Don't forget to purchase this one, as you did with the Alice books, for high school readers too.—E.S.

Wein, E. (2012). *Code name Verity*. New York: Hyperion. 352 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4231-5219-4. (Hardcover); \$19.99.

If there is a book to vie with Lanagan's *Brides of Rollrock Island* for the Printz award, it is this complex, richly layered historical fiction featuring women pilots and spies navigating the dangerous skies of Nazi-occupied France. Basically a plane crashes in France. Two

women are involved. *Verity* opens the novel claiming to be a spy. She claims her life depends on how well she can supply von Linden, the Nazi Hauptsturmführer (think Captain) with useful information that will help the German war effort. She tells us about Margaret Brodatt, Maddie, a young woman with an excellent internal compass and a way with engines, including aircraft engines. With a heading/name of "Verity," obviously readers will be attempting to sort out the truth from all the partial truths and red herrings. What quickly become apparent is that the truth is a carefully waged war and that each "battle" changes the nature of the conflict to the point that we don't know Verity, pun intended. When the second narration begins, readers still hold onto the truth that there was, indeed, torture. There is a war between Germany and England—but virtually every single thing readers have carefully pieced together must be totally rebuilt. Normally, when writing a review, I am not so concerned about spoilers, but this book is so painstakingly constructed that it seems wrong to deprive readers of the chance to puzzle this one out independently. The bad news is that it will take more than one reading to ferret out all the plot twists; the good news is that you will want to read it again the second you finish. With all the books written featuring war in general, not just World War II, how many can we name that feature women? How many feature smart women playing a leading role, as brave as any man? If it were just the women characters, however, that would not be enough to see this one as an award winner. Von Linden, an educated headmaster, somewhat outside of the inner Nazi circle, is a fully fleshed out fascinating character, as are *all* the characters. The setting and atmosphere of the book feels like a movie, an Academy Award winner. We must also factor in the extremely clever use of literature to tell the story. Of special note is the *perfect* use of Peter Pan. Perfect because most teen readers will only know of the Disney version; yet the version that matches the time period, the Barrie original, is much lonelier and darker. So do yourself a favor and buy this one for yourself first. Then purchase a copy for every single English teacher you know and all of the history teachers as well. Don't forget to purchase copies for your high school library. Heck, buy some to give as gifts, especially for any World War II history buffs. In addition to being an excellent book for smart students, this would make a fabulous adult book group title.—E.S.



Ed Spicer teaches first*grade students at North Ward Elementary School in Allegan, Michigan. Recently he has been writing curriculum guides for publishers, including one for Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why*. He runs a teen book group at Allegan High School and coordinates the high school literacy contest for high school authors and artists. He has been a member of the Teen Read Week Committee, the Michael L. Printz Committee (2005), Best Books for Young Adults (2006-2008), the Randolph Caldecott Committee (2009), and the Notable Children's Books Committee (2010-2011). Last year Ed served on the William C. Morris award committee for teen debut authors. He has taught a graduate young adult literature course at Grand Valley State University (adjunct). Ed gives presentations on books to schools, universities, libraries, and even groups like the American Chemical Society (on teaching visual literacy). Currently Ed is a member of the Margaret A. Edwards Award Committee of the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association. Ed's website is: www.spicyreads.org. Feel free to contact Ed at: info@spicyreads.org.

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