

★ **Nerd: Adventures in Fandom from This Universe to the Multiverse.**

By **Maya Phillips.**

Oct. 2022. 288p. Atria, \$27 (9781982165772). 306.4.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 15, 2022 ([Booklist](#)).

There's no culture like nerd culture, according to professional fan Phillips. She draws parallels between her own personal development and that of fandom culture at large, encompassing media from comics and books to movies and television. Her loose chronological organization is interwoven with themes that emerge as she has evolved to use a more critical lens on her cultural consumption. She dives into the power of superhero stories, the appeal of anime and manga in the West, racial and nationalist tropes in popular genres, belief systems, and depictions of mental illness. Some of her strongest observations appear in the chapter "Birth of a Black Hero," as well as in the transitions where she compares cultural commonalities and muses on gendered experiences in fandoms. The conclusion looks at pejorative attitudes toward fandoms and how fandoms capture what makes the narratives truly great parts of human culture, creating a book that will satisfy both scholars and casual readers. The chapter on trends of the 1990s intersects nicely with Mathew Klickstein's history of Nickelodeon, *Slimed!* (2013), and academics might pair *Nerd* with *The Greatest Cult Television Shows of All Time*, by Christopher J. Olson and CarrieLynn D. Reinhard (2020).

— Erin Downey Howerton

What Moves the Dead.

By **T. Kingfisher.**

July 2022. 176p. Tor Nightfire, \$19.99 (9781250830753); e-book, \$10.99 (9781250830784).

[REVIEW](#). First published July 29, 2022 ([Booklist Online](#)).

Edgar Allen Poe's short story, "The Fall of the House of Usher," gets new life in a modern retelling. Narrator Easton gets a letter from old friend Maddy Usher and heads to their ancestral home for a wellness check. But, as they say, "this place breeds nightmares," and a host of frights are around every corner. From zombie-like rabbits to a landscape laced with fungus, the environment of the Usher mansion collects terror at all turns. Kingfisher (*The Hollow Places*, 2020) ratchets up the original story with an interesting cast of associates that help Easton try to make some sense of this dismal, suffocating place. While trying to encourage the Ushers to regain their health, Easton discovers that there may well be an explanation for the lurid illness that seems to haunt them. Kingfisher's neatly built world of otherworldly dread rampant with disease will lure fans of classics like Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, as well as those who like modern environmental terror like Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation* (2014) and English folk horror movies like *In The Earth* (2021). An infectious new spin on classic Gothic horror.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Under Fortunate Stars.

By **Ren Hutchings.**

May 2022. 368p. Solaris, \$24.99 (9781786185921); e-book, \$8.99 (9781786185914).

[REVIEW](#). First published April 1, 2022 ([Booklist](#)).

The *Gallion* was just another corporate starship running a diplomatic errand between loads of researchers. But in a strange patch of blank space, they lost communications, power, and navigation systems. That's when they got a ping from the *Jonah*, a small, beat-up ship containing what seemed to be historical impersonators—members of the legendary Fortunate Five, who ended the Felen war more than 150 years before. But these are no actors, and the history that the *Gallion* knows by heart is upended. Hutchings' plucky space outlaws crash headlong into a time-space rift with their future and face the possibility they may have been exalting the wrong version of history all along. Strong characterization propels the narrative, from the outlaw *Jonah* passengers to the *Gallion*'s supposedly squeaky-clean corporate crew. Their rich backstories unspool compellingly alongside the urgent need to turn a few days of power into a solution to save everyone on board and possibly the peace of their known universe. An engrossing interstellar escapade with appeal for fans of Becky Chambers, Alex White, and S.K. Dunstall.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Hidden Pictures.

By **Jason Rekulak.**

May 2022. 384p. Flatiron, \$27.99 (9781250819345); e-book, \$14.99 (9781250819369).
[REVIEW](#). First published March 1, 2022 (*Booklist*).

The Pottery Barn-perfect town of Spring Brook promises to be a safe haven for Mallory, who needs a job and a second chance at life. After all, Mallory does a pretty good imitation of squeaky-clean suburbia for someone who's a year and a half sober. When the Maxwells take a chance on her as a nanny for their adorable son Teddy, Mallory is overwhelmed with gratitude—for the opportunity, the cozy cottage provided for her to live in on the property, and the wholesome environment so unlike her own childhood. But things start going sideways pretty quickly. Who's going to believe a recovering addict when she tries to tell them about Teddy's gruesome drawings? And is the property haunted by a long-hidden secret? Rekulak (*The Impossible Fortress*, 2017) expertly injects the story with a supernatural twist, sowing doubt in the minds of readers who must decide: is Mallory backsliding into her old ways, or is there something rotten beneath the Maxwell's glossy surface? The explosive third act gives this story a nail-biting ending sure to thrill. Paranormal perfection. **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** This crime-horror mash-up has a large print run (250k) so expect lots of attention.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Dark Breakers.

By C. S. E. Cooney.

Feb. 2022. 292p. Mythic Delirium, \$33.95 (9781732644069); paper, \$17.95 (9781732644045).
[REVIEW](#). First published February 25, 2022 (*Booklist Online*).

Back in the alternately opulent and Dickensian worlds of *Seafall*, Cooney weaves new stories into the *Dark Breakers* collection. In the same setting as *Desdemona and the Deep*, (2019), the author reimagines the homes of Gilded Age robber barons as portals to other worlds, where the immortal gentry and goblins mix with humans. Adding to “The Breaker Queen” and “Two Paupers,” both previously published stories, three new tales join the mix. A muckraking reporter on assignment is sent to investigate scores of the missing in “Salissay’s Laundries.” In an echo of the real-world Irish Magdalene Laundries, those imprisoned are cleansed of magic influences by the Abbess and her fellow supplicants through salt, iron, and hard labor. In “Longergreen,” human Ana is tempted by an offer from her old friend Alban Idris, the Gentry Sovereign, after her husband, Gideon, dies. “Susurra to the Moon” sees Desdemona’s old friend Chaz, now an immortal Queen of the Gentry, deal with her goblin-spouse’s moon obsession. Cooney’s rich fantasy worlds flesh themselves out even further in this deliciously sumptuous addition.

— Erin Downey Howerton

★ The Ghost Sequences.

By A. C. Wise.

Oct. 2021. 358p. Undertow, paper, \$17.99 (9781988964331).
[REVIEW](#). First published October 1, 2021 (*Booklist*).

Is this a short story collection or 16 hauntings that will chase you through your dreams? Toying with different formats and genres, Wise explores ghosts of people and places throughout time. And time is another thing that bends here—a recurrent motif is the concept that past, present, and future are sandwiched together in a perpetual state of being, which is haunting in itself. Whether it's a stage play with a twist ending, a band of tortured Nancy Drew-ish teens, a scrimshaw depiction of sea monsters, or an instructional pamphlet about hosting a murder mystery party, Wise's supernatural travels will fascinate. Among the spookiest stories are ones where Wise weaves in twenty-first century technology like apps and surveillance cameras, creating a lore that marries the “once upon a time” elements of ghosts with more modern elements. Standouts include “Crossing,” where a young swimmer is seemingly haunted by the ocean itself, and “The Nag Bride,” both a hideous campfire tale and an exploration of women’s power and vulnerability in rural America. Fans of Paul Tremblay, Kelly Link, and Seanan McGuire will gravitate to this standout exploration of the supernatural. An essential read for fans of the horrible, shivery, and unsettling.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Prince: A Portrait of the Artist in Memories and Memorabilia.

By Paul Sexton.

Sept. 2021. 144p. Welbeck, \$24.95 (9781787391642). 782.42164092.
[REVIEW](#). First published October 8, 2021 (*Booklist Online*).

Those who worked with Prince have a unique insight into the Purple One, and journalist Sexton has collected some of their anecdotes here. He juxtaposes the stories against pictures of Prince-a-bilia, whetting the appetite for devoted fans to learn more about the superstar both in front of and behind the curtain. Sexton gathers anecdotes and impressions from those who worked with Prince, told in chronological order. Some of Prince's closest collaborators are quoted, but other contemporaries like KT Tunstall, Suzanne Vega, and Beverley Knight, share their encounters and their impressions of the artist who inspired so many. Readers may wish that more of the written artifacts were larger on the page so that they could be clearly read, as it's a little deflating to learn via a text box that Prince charged \$250 for latecomers to rehearsal sessions. Whose name is embossed on the front of Prince's travel bible? Sexton quotes liberally from previously published articles and social media posts, so big fans may not be surprised by much here. A good addition to collections with demand for music history.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The All-Consuming World.

By Cassandra Khaw.

Aug. 2021. 288p. Erewhon, \$25.95 (9781645660200); e-book, \$19.99 (9781645660248).

[REVIEW](#). First published July 30, 2021 (Booklist Online).

Clone kid Maya walks into a fight and finds her past catching up to her. Khaw drops readers into a hastily drawn cyberworld where a former famed criminal cabal, the Dirty Dozen, has scattered to the winds after their last heist 40 years ago. Entrancing former ringleader Rita returns to reunite anyone left—a cop, a pop star, fighter Maya, and disembodied consciousness Elise. They dodge clone-killing ageships, threatening megaminds, and surveyor bots with their own agendas. The reader may struggle to keep up as the action propels the story forward at a breathless pace. Without much explanation about why everyone's headed to legendary planet Dimmuborgir, it feels more like a MacGuffin than an actual destination. Khaw laces the narrative with a florid vocabulary; her clones aren't restricted to the usual chatty fare with access to limitless databases. Readers who enjoy their expletives and fists flying in equal measure will like this cybernetic caper with carnage aplenty. Give to sf fans who enjoy AI and strong female leads like those in *Medusa Uploaded* by Emily Devenport (2018).

— Erin Downey Howerton

Revelator.

By Daryl Gregory.

Aug. 2021. 352p. Knopf, \$27 (9780525657385); e-book, \$13.99 (9780525657392).

[REVIEW](#). First published July 21, 2021 (Booklist Online).

Many families are religious, but what if your family was the religion? Stella Birch Wallace was raised in Cades Cove, Tennessee, by her grandmother Motty, one in a line of female Revelators able to speak with the God of the Mountain. Surrounded by Baptists, the family religion is a peculiarly insular institution built on the god's promise: an earthly immortality in "one body, ever blooming." This idea is pushed by Stella's Uncle Hendrick, whose written commentary is all that exists of the Birch womens' interactions with the god. Gregory skillfully unfurls Stella's doubt that Hendrick truly understands their revelations while bouncing between her Depression-era childhood and her postwar return to the family farm after Motty's death. Hendrick is obsessed with welcoming the god from its cave into the larger world, and will stop at nothing to ensure he's there when it happens . . . including using vulnerable young Sunny, the next Revelator. An eerie and otherworldly tale laced with moonshine, *Revelator* questions the bonds of kin and challenges the ideas of power and divinity. A darkly intoxicating chiller.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Power of Awareness: And Other Secrets from the World's Foremost Spies, Detectives, and Special Operators on How to Stay Safe and Save Your Life.

By Dan Schilling.

June 2021. 272p. Grand Central, \$28 (9781538718674). 153.7.

[REVIEW](#). First published June 1, 2021 (*Booklist*).

Special-ops veteran Schilling translates his professional skills into tools that readers can easily use. Peppered with real-life anecdotes from military and civilian incidents alike, Schilling lays out a convincing path for the average citizen to employ basic skills and avoid being targeted by all manner of criminals. Channeling the same spirit as that of Gavin de Becker's *The Gift of Fear* and other self-help books, Schilling addresses the full spectrum of preparedness all the

way through to recovery from such an event. This convincing volume creates a road map for the behaviors and tools easily used to reduce the likelihood of becoming a target for violence. A core set of six rules is laid out for both offense and defense at home, work, school, and other locations where one might find danger. “Thinking pauses” to help consider preparations and strategies are a good addition here, prompting readers to make concrete changes to their typical mindsets. An empowering guide with the potential to transform readers’ approach to personal safety.

— Erin Downey Howerton

★ **Cultish: The Language of Fanaticism.**

By **Amanda Montell.**

June 2021. 320p. HarperWave, \$27.99 (9780062993151). 361.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 15, 2021 (*Booklist*).

The author of *Wordslut* (2019) turns her linguistic examinations to belief and belonging. Cults use an insider lingo to draw in new recruits and make them feel like valued members of the community. And “cult” doesn’t necessarily equate to, say, Jonestown. The concept is rooted in many group enterprises, from Mary Kay to SoulCycle to Amway. Montell demystifies this twisty language into something readers will recognize, whether it’s being employed to manipulate or to motivate. She links the linguistic trick from Heaven’s Gate and Scientology down to “woo-woo” in all its different guises: multilevel marketing, religious organizations, even exercise gurus and QAnon. Implicitly stated, it’s all about the American dream: perfecting oneself spiritually, bodily, and financially, all promising a deep connection to others. Reading Montell is like a satisfying chat session with your bestie—albeit one that focuses on obsession, language tricks, and manipulation. Her personal connection to the topic is compelling, as we learn of her father’s teen experience living in Synanon and her own disturbing brush with Scientology. *Cultish* will have huge appeal for those who have been listening to the podcasts *The Dream* or *American Rehab*, or watching *The Vow*. Montell’s masterful translation of our need to belong will mesmerize.

— Erin Downey Howerton

★ **Prince and the Parade and Sign “O” the Times Era Studio Sessions: 1985 and 1986.**

By **Duane Tudahl.**

June 2021. 620p. Rowman & Littlefield, \$40 (9781538144510). 781.66092.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 15, 2021 (*Booklist*).

In this second Prince Studio Sessions series (after *Prince and the Purple Rain Era Studio Sessions*, 2017), Tudahl continues to explore the annals of Prince’s voracious creative drive, even while touring the *Purple Rain* album at a pinnacle of his stardom. Working day-by-day and session-by-session, Tudahl meticulously recreates Prince’s daily timeline in 1985 and 1986 while layering in a heap of technical information about the production process, equipment, and mixes that were created (many vaulted, still unheard). Brief snippets of information provide context for Prince’s surroundings, the people he worked with, and concurrent events, but the focus remains on the music and how it poured out of Prince wherever he was, whether on the road or back at the studio. While these years weren’t all glory—Prince sustained blows like the failure of his directorial debut *Under the Cherry Moon*, his decision not to participate in the “We Are the World” recording, and wavering public opinion after strutting around with his bodyguards at awards shows—it seems to have had little effect on his creativity and productivity. Compulsively readable and hugely useful to researchers, this dense chronology will command the rapt attention of casual fans and scholars alike.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Hype: How Scammers, Grifters, and Con Artists Are Taking Over the Internet—and Why We’re Following.

By **Gabrielle Bluestone.**

Apr. 2021. 352p. Hanover Square, \$28.99 (9781335016492). 363.

[REVIEW](#). First published March 15, 2021 (*Booklist*).

It’s a post-truth world; we’re just living in it. Journalist and producer Bluestone makes a convincing argument that scamming has reached a high point in the last five years, with a surge in narcissism and valuing emotions over facts compounded by the rise of social media influencers. Bluestone’s coverage of the Fyre Festival debacle of 2016 gave her a backstage pass to the mayhem, and here she uses the story of serial scammer Billy McFarland (of Fyre and Magnises credit card infamy) to frame the recent past. From would-be influencers renting private jets on the ground and buying second-hand luxury-brand shopping bags to emulate fabulous hauls, to the crash-and-burn story of faux

entrepreneur Elizabeth Holmes of Theranos—is everyone just faking it? While grifters have always existed, Bluestone points out that today’s influencers are the new way to “launder” schemes into something more palatable to the masses. If you’ve ever been tempted to buy a Juicero or enroll in one of Caroline Calloway’s “workshops,” Bluestone’s premise will resonate. Pairs nicely with Tori Telfer’s *Confident Women* (2021) or Rachel DeLoache Williams’ *My Friend Anna* (2019). **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** Scams are hot right now, and Bluestone covers the hottest here; expect media coverage and patron interest.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Notes from the Bathroom Line: Humor, Art, and Low-Grade Panic from 150 of the Funniest Women in Comedy.

Ed. by Amy Solomon.

Mar. 2021. 256p. Harper, \$29.99 (9780062973641). 792.2.

[REVIEW](#). First published March 26, 2021 (Booklist Online).

One hundred fifty funny females times a million anecdotes, one-liners, insecurities, and mysteries of life equal one hilarious book. Editor Solomon’s assemblage of comediennes tackle the great and not-so-great parts of lady life in a collection of comedy that’s even better read out loud to your best girlfriends. Big names like Margaret Cho, Sasheer Zamata, Quinta Brunson, Samantha Irby, and Kristen Schaal contribute alongside tomorrow’s stars. By giving her writers a free hand with their contributions, Solomon pulls together an impressive array of pieces in both written and visual formats; alongside sketches, scripts, one-liners, and the usual fare, we get comics, drawings, collages, a Choose Your Own Adventure–style story, an honest Outlook calendar, want ads, and even an original musical composition. If the bit doesn’t land on the page, here’s a hint: read it out loud to your bestie over FaceTime and wait for the snorts and giggles. This diverse collection finds the funny in nearly every wacky situation ladies can find themselves in. A much-needed dose of delight.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Soulstar.

By C. L. Polk.

Feb. 2021. 304p. Tor.com, paper, \$17.99 (9781250203571).

[REVIEW](#). First published January 1, 2021 (*Booklist*).

The final book in the Kingston Cycle (beginning with *Witchmark*, 2018) is a signature blend of Polk’s masterful world building, compelling characterization, and riveting plot. The storms of Aeland have been averted and the new king has made witchcraft legal, which means Deathsinger Robin Thorpe can freely join her comrades Miles and Grace Hensley as the country begins a new era. Robin’s first order of business is to liberate her spouse, Zelind, imprisoned for twenty years in an asylum with other witches. What one might expect to be a loving and delightful reunion gets cut short: Robin is pulled into political intrigue and mysterious murders, while Zelind takes on conniving relatives and the challenge of rebooting Aeland’s energy grid without witch torture. With a realistic portrayal of a relationship after trauma, Polk again tightly braids the strands of the personal and the political in a fantasy world few will want to leave. As Robin and Zelind discover, real revolution is when the people stick together—and, occasionally, turning bureaucracy against itself as an effective response to tyranny. A satisfying conclusion to a splendid series.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Speculative Los Angeles.

Ed. by Denise Hamilton.

Feb. 2021. 272p. Akashic, \$25.95 (9781617758645); paper, \$15.95 (9781617758560); e-book, \$25.95 (9781617758683).

[REVIEW](#). First published January 1, 2021 (*Booklist*).

Fans of Akashic’s Noir titles (e.g., *Tampa Bay Noir*, 2020) will be excited to see the first entry in a new series focused on strange, otherworldly, and futuristic happenings. Stories organized in sections by editor (and contributor) Hamilton lead readers around the map of greater L.A., bobbing and weaving through genres and thematic groupings. The contributing authors skillfully capture the presences of different Los Angeles neighborhoods that become characters all on their own, teetering on the precipice of many possibilities. Standouts include Lisa Morton’s “Antonia and the Stranger Who Came to Rancho Los Feliz,” a time-bender where threats come from parallel universes; Kathleen Kaufman’s “Sailing That Beautiful Sea,” an elegy for humanity and its legacy in the midst of artificial intelligence; “Purple Panic” by Francesca Lia Block, in which a return to the old neighborhood leads to supernatural revelations;

and “Jaguar’s Breath” by Luis J. Rodriguez, one family’s desperate struggle to survive the political and social upheaval after the Big One strikes along the San Andreas fault. An excellent collection of what-ifs that will pique readers’ imaginations.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Confident Women: Swindlers, Grifters, and Shapeshifters of the Feminine Persuasion.

By Tori Telfer.

Feb. 2021. 352p. HarperPerennial, paper, \$16.99 (9780062956033). 364.16.

[REVIEW](#). First published December 1, 2020 (*Booklist*).

As she did in her previous book, *Lady Killers* (2017), popular internet columnist and podcaster Telfer brings readers more babes who’ve done bad, bad things. This time, she swerves toward opportunistic tricksters, with short accounts organized by the nature of their crimes: the fame- and luxury-chasing Glitterati, the otherworldly Seers, the Fabulists, and the Drifters. While Telfer mines history for interesting examples of women who infiltrated the French royal court or who hit the town, pulled their scams, then drove off in pink cars full of puppies, she also includes more recent grifters like the pseudo-rich Anna Delvey, fake Grenfell and 9/11 victims, and other assorted con women of the internet era. Whether she’s describing women pretending to be doctors, socialites, or just another nice lady who desperately needed help, Telfer dishes up their scandalous schemes for true-crime fans to relish. Recommended for fans of Rachel DeLoache Williams’ true-crime memoir, *My Friend Anna* (2019).

Women in Focus: The 19th in 2020

— Erin Downey Howerton

★ **The Ministry for the Future.**

By Kim Stanley Robinson.

Oct. 2020. 480p. Orbit, \$28 (9780316300131); e-book, \$14.99 (9780316300162).

[REVIEW](#). First published September 1, 2020 (*Booklist*).

The 2025 Paris Agreement begets the “Ministry for the Future,” led by pragmatic Irishwoman Mary Murphy, to ensure Earth’s future through the reversal of climate change. Simultaneously, U.S. clinician Frank miraculously survives an extinction-level heat event in Uttar Pradesh. Robinson’s dense prose explodes Mary’s and Frank’s stories (among scores of human, animal, and other stories) into a provocative look at the economic, legislative, and scientific leaps that must be made in order to control rampant climate events that seem all too real. This creates a prickling tension as epic-scale world events are married to micro-scale storytelling, in which even a lowly photon gets a turn to relate its experiences. Humanity is pitted against an inexorably ticking clock as Mary struggles with the ramifications of rogue nation-states manipulating the weather, anarchist political groups trying to force change with violent, massive attacks against wealthy resource-hogging elites, and her kidnapping at the hands of Frank. A breathtaking look at the challenges that face our planet in all their sprawling magnitude and also in their intimate, individual moments of humanity.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Secret Life of Groceries: The Dark Miracle of the American Supermarket.

By Benjamin Lorr.

Sept. 2020. 336p. Avery, \$27 (9780553459395). 381.41.

[REVIEW](#). First published August 2020 (*Booklist*).

Some food books leave a bad taste in your mouth. In the muckraking tradition of Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation* (2001), Lorr goes on a deep dive into the nesting doll that is the American grocery experience. While confronting readers with the question of “our food, our selves?” he reveals the stark realities of how challenging it can be to capture a market segment (Trader Joe’s), what it takes to get a new product onto shelves (Slawsa), how products actually get to stores nationwide (Lynne the trucker) and how horribly intertwined our consumption is with human trafficking, global structural inequalities, and dangerous farming practice (Thai shrimping). It’s commodities all the way down, Lorr suggests, and readers may find a dangerous urgency—especially amidst COVID-19-related stay-at-home orders—to the deep psychological dependency on a well-stocked supermarket. Lorr’s exploration of the systems and individuals that create the modern grocery store will move readers to ask far more probing questions about what they’re putting on the table. For fans of Michael Pollan’s work and Michael Ruhlman’s *Grocery* (2017).

Calling Bullshit: The Art of Skepticism in a Data-Driven World.

By Carl T. Bergstrom and Jevin D. West.

Aug. 2020. 352p. Random, \$30 (9780525509189). 149.

[REVIEW](#). First published August 2020 (*Booklist*).

With the mounds of “infotainment” being shared on social media and in the news, it’s increasingly difficult to convince others that some of it is, indeed, bullshit. Bergstrom and West’s portable guide is for readers who are interested in teasing out truth, evaluating their own confirmation biases, and learning strategies to help persuade others to take another look at “scientific evidence” that may be presented in misleading and occasionally malicious ways. Starting with the idea that most laypeople are not well versed enough in STEM methodology to quickly determine if that chart their friends are sharing on Facebook is giving them a false view of a given situation, Bergstrom and West break down illuminating examples of bullshit in the wild. Encouragingly, the authors remind readers that they don’t need to be a statistics expert to refute a misleading headline; it’s often enough to apply simple skepticism in order to evaluate the information for truth. Libraries who are tackling election year information literacy will find *Calling Bullshit* a useful tool to encourage thoughtful, rational conversations.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Action Park: Fast Times, Wild Rides, and the Untold Story of America’s Most Dangerous Amusement Park.

By Andy Mulvihill and Jake Rossen.

June 2020. 352p. Penguin, paper, \$17 (9780143134510). 791.06.

[REVIEW](#). First published June 1, 2020 (*Booklist*).

Reading Andy Mulvihill’s chronicle of fast times at his father Gene’s amusement park resembles an actual visit: fun and hilarity one second, shock and horror the next. New Jersey’s Action Park earned the nicknames “Traction Park” and “Class Action Park” from the copious accidents springing from Gene’s peculiar ethos: that park-goers should control their own experiences, safety rules be damned. While teenaged Andy took on trash duty, Wave Park lifeguarding, managing ground crews, and falling in love, his father encountered mounting difficulties keeping the park open: lawsuits, gruesome injuries, and even deaths. Without glossing over Gene’s lack of judgement (opening a German brewery on site, failing to obtain any insurance), Andy guides the reader through the highs and lows of a park that featured motor racing, water features, and the unforgettable Cannonball Loop, a terrifying, 360-degree, fully enclosed waterslide. Andy, his marketing guru sister Julie, and their siblings provided child labor and slapstick humor, and were occasional human test subjects for their father’s grand visions. Alternately wistful and clear-eyed about the past, Andy’s story will be cherished by those who remember their own Coppertone-scented teen summers.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Greatest Cult Television Shows of All Time.

By Christopher J. Olson and CarrieLynn D. Reinhard.

June 2020. 336p. Rowman & Littlefield, \$54 (9781538122556); Rowman & Littlefield, e-book, \$42.50 (9781538122563). 791.456.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 15, 2020 (*Booklist*).

The Greatest Cult Television Shows of All Time might be a subjective list, but readers will find that it’s a pretty solid one. Centering squarely on the 1990s, Olson and Reinhard used criteria that considers the show’s impact on popular culture, transgressiveness, and popularity with American audiences. While many shows from the 1980s and 2000s are also listed, only a smattering of earlier shows and more recent ones from the 2010s were included. (The authors feel a show needs five years to gain cult status). Each entry includes show information including the main cast, notes on the production, and some critical commentary on the show’s impact. With a “see also” list of related shows at the end of each entry, readers will make connections and discover new favorites. Woven throughout are references to networks like Nickelodeon, Comedy Central, and Cartoon Network that were critical in offering a platform to these often off-beat series. Finding favorites among these shows will warm readers’ hearts as efficiently as a cathode-ray tube. For fans of Matthew Klickstein’s history of Nickelodeon, *Slimed!* (2013).

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Madwoman and the Roomba: My Year of Domestic Mayhem.

By Sandra Tsing Loh.

June 2020. 304p. Norton, \$25.95 (9780393249200). 818.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 1, 2020 (*Booklist*).

Middle age comes at you fast, and Loh's (*The Madwoman in the Volvo*, 2014) chronicle of a year in her life illustrates the highs and lows of being in one's fifties. Through a series of zingy anecdotal entries, readers follow Loh on her journey to make sense of the world as a newly minted 56-year-old. She recounts a bevy of experiences, including her colonoscopy prep, being audited by the IRS, her partner's enthusiastic Mardi Gras parties, being a "C-Plus Tiger Mom" to her two teen daughters, an exploration of single friends' "postcohab" lifestyles, and an Ayurvedic oil experience gone awry, all in hilarious detail. Her warm, chatty, stream-of-consciousness style will attract book clubs as well as those looking for reassurance that they, too, are doing OK despite unsuccessful stabs at homemaking and dealing with hot flashes. Fans of her previous memoirs and of her bite-sized NPR podcast, *The Loh Down on Science*, will scramble to pick this up and dive back into Loh's world.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Out of Body.

By Jeffrey Ford.

May 2020. 176p. Tor, paper, \$15.99 (9781250250155); e-book, \$3.99 (9781250250148).

[REVIEW](#). First published April 15, 2020 (*Booklist*).

Librarian Owen's quiet small-town life in Westwend is upended when he witnesses a murder during his habitual convenience-store stop. After being pistol-whipped, his sleep paralysis is transformed. Now, he moves through the night as a sleeper able to project himself out of body and into an invisible plane right alongside our own. He meets Melody, another sleeper, who helps him avoid the dangers of the night. Together, they begin to investigate the murder with a small clue plucked from the crime scene. But Owen's voyeuristic journey leads him to see things more sinister than he had imagined. His sleepy hamlet is hiding a killer who knows about the dream plane and is determined to eliminate any threat to his continuing carnage. Ford (*A Natural History of Hell*, 2016) conjures a mesmerizing dream state for his main character that only serves to heighten the sense that Owen's waking life is like moving through a dream, too. Juxtaposing the horrific and the mundane, Ford's tale will prickle readers' arm hairs and inspire them to check over their shoulders a little more often.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Beetle.

By Richard Marsh.

Apr. 2020. 400p. Poisoned Pen, paper, \$14.99 (9781492699712).

[REVIEW](#). First published April 1, 2020 (*Booklist*).

The new Haunted Library of Horror Classics, produced by the Horror Writers Association and Poisoned Pen Press, offers a buffet of classic titles from the late Victorian and Edwardian period. The second release in the series (after *The Phantom of the Opera*, 2020) is a revenge story set in London with an Egyptian twist, a shape-shifting being who seeks retribution after being attacked by a member of Parliament who escaped the cult of Isis. Detective Champnell narrates the story as a series of four eyewitness accounts of the creature's mayhem, ending with his own. Modern readers will find the text greatly enhanced for their convenience by prefacing notes and a short essay on the book's importance. Helpful footnotes keep readers immersed in the narrative but do not overwhelm the text. A brief note about the author caps things off and leads into the back matter, where discussion questions and further suggested reading of the era are offered. Perfectly poised to be useful for group as well as individual reading, this series is a fun new way to encounter the spine-tinglers of yesteryear.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Sea Change.

By Nancy Kress.

Apr. 2020. 192p. Tachyon, \$15.95 (9781616963316); e-book, \$9.99 (9781616963323).

[REVIEW](#). First published April 1, 2020 (*Booklist*).

Kress' latest is one woman's story of climate change, espionage, and how the political is intensely personal. After Renata's son is inadvertently killed by a poisonous algae bloom, she's recruited for a secretive organization that struggles to develop genetically modified crops in an environment of suspicion and sabotage. Society has broken down after a long-trusted biopharmed antidiarrheal children's drug became suddenly lethal through horizontal gene transfer, and the elimination of GMO crops means that the world is now going hungry. Kress writes a brilliantly imagined near future complete with false identities and analog spycraft mixed into an aggressively digital world in which greenhouses hiding GMO carrots are as vulnerable as missile bases, "drive" houses cruise unassisted down streets, and disinformation campaigns blaze on social media. As Renata's story unfolds, readers learn more about her ties to the Quinault Nation and her tragic past just as she discovers the horrible truth about her current mission. An ecothriller that urgently asks readers, Which side will you take when your personal life and the world as you know it completely collapses?

— Erin Downey Howerton

Jane Goes North.

Lansdale, Joe R. (author).

Mar. 2020. 232p. Subterranean, \$40 (9781596069381); \$5.99 (9781596069398).

[REVIEW](#). First published March 6, 2020 (Booklist Online).

Jane is dateless, carless, jobless, and broke. None of this will prevent her from making her sister Ronnie's wedding, if fate and a grumpy woman named Henry have anything to say about it. Lansdale (*The Sky Done Ripped*, 2019) reinvents the road-trip novel with a pair that make Thelma and Louise seem like rank amateurs. In her quest to get to the wedding (and score Ronnie a Super Toaster in the bargain), Jane gets to know Henry, who has great aim but only one good eye. They cruise along and bump into strange characters at Save-Mart, endure Henry's car being stolen, and have a brief yet frightening brush with human trafficking before they reach their destination, where Jane reunites with her family and Henry has an appointment with a doctor. Laced with steely-eyed observations on the condition of working-class America, profanity-laden dialogue, and the occasional confessional between two women on a mission, *Jane Goes North* is a doggedly grounded tale with moments of real heart.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Stormsong.

Polk, C. L. (author).

Feb. 2020. 352p. Tor, paper, \$17.99 (9780765398994); e-book, \$9.99 (9780765398987).

[REVIEW](#). First published March 6, 2020 (Booklist Online).

Miles Hensley's sister, Grace, takes a star turn in this dramatic follow-up to *Witchmark* (2018). Aeland's industry grinds to a halt without the power of the aether network. Hunger is imminent as crops are lost in the violent weather that Grace and the secret, elite Stormsinger witches struggle to control. Among the common folk, witches still live in fear of the Protection Act. A young, talented Laneeri emissary is found mysteriously dead. As the newly appointed chancellor, Grace experiences a role reversal by falling under the spell of news reporter Avia. Is she interested in getting closer to Grace, or just in a newsworthy scoop? While Miles and Amaranthine Tristan pop in and out of the action, *Stormsong* concentrates closely on Grace and her attempts to discern a way forward for herself and her homeland. Polk weaves family secrets, political power struggles, murder, natural disasters, and romance into a new, lush fantasy ripe with sensory detail. Readers will gasp at the deft twists and turns laced into this newest entry in the Kingston cycle. A most bewitching sequel.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Happy Step couple: How Couples with Stepchildren Can Strengthen Their Relationships.

By Rachelle Katz.

Feb. 2020. 224p. Rowman & Littlefield, \$28 (9781538130643). 306.8747.

[REVIEW](#). First published February 15, 2020 (*Booklist*).

Experienced therapist and stepmother Katz advises those (re)marrying with children. Her message is simple: settle for less than perfect, and you will be happier. Katz explores the myths of supposedly ideal blended families, in which all children happily accept new family structures, and adults are all on great terms, eagerly spending time with one another. Citing research that claims only 20-percent of stepchildren feel close to their stepmothers, Katz cautions women that they will have a much harder time than anticipated in their new families. While the book does include

perspectives from men in heterosexual relationships as well as same-sex couples, much of the advice centers on women entering into a marriage with a man who has children from another relationship. Overall, Katz emphasizes that the couple in question needs to be in a healthy, communicative, secure relationship before they can anticipate success with their stepchildren. Because of many examples drawn from her therapeutic work, readers will likely identify themselves in these pages and come away with new ideas for reducing conflict in their homes.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Prosper's Demon.

By K. J. Parker.

Jan. 2020. Tor, paper, \$11.99 (9781250260512); e-book, \$3.99 (9781250260505).

[REVIEW](#). First published December 15, 2019 (*Booklist*).

A mysterious exorcist faces the ultimate challenge: fight the possession of the most intelligent, well-loved sage in the kingdom and his inadvertent cultivation of the perfect demonic vessel. Fantasy author Tom Holt, writing as Parker, tells of a nameless exorcist managing his territory (109 demons exorcised and counting). Unfortunately, the kingdom's newly wed Princess and Duke are expecting a child and their guru, Prosper of Schanz, is possessed by a demon that is plotting to raise the royal baby as its new host. The tone of the book is equal parts dryly amusing and horrifying, as the exorcist contemplates the (often fatal) risks and rewards of ejecting demons. Moreover, the realization that Prosper's genius may have stemmed largely from his possession haunts the exorcist as he contemplates what the demons will do with the royal baby, given time and other advantages. His solution is extreme, to be sure, and readers may be shocked by the abrupt ending. This tightly told little parable of good versus evil will linger in the minds of readers long after the last page is turned.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Burn the Dark.

By S. A. Hunt.

Jan. 2020. 384p. Tor, paper, \$17.99 (9781250306432); e-book, \$9.99 (9781250306418).

[REVIEW](#). First published November 15, 2019 (*Booklist*).

An ambitious YouTube celeb gives her viewers more than they bargained for in this first installment of the Malus Domestica trilogy. Robin Martine trained to kill witches with Hammer, the best in the business, and has returned to her childhood home in Alabama to begin her slayfest in earnest. Her aim is to eliminate the coven that made her mother into a dryad when she was a child, and she encounters a new and terrifying foe known as the Red Lord. Robin gets assists from friends old and new, from childhood friend Joel to war vet Kenway. Hunt supplies each character with snappy dialogue and situates the action in a Southern Gothic setting evocative of other supernatural series, such as Charlaine Harris' Sookie Stackhouse books. Robin is a distinctly modern new heroine, combining classic tropes with twenty-first-century methods. She might be the only hunter in literature to keep her passive income stream in mind while shooting B-roll on the way to confront witches, which is likely to delight readers looking for a new twist in their horror picks.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The RBG Way: Secrets of Success of Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

By Rebecca Gibian.

Dec. 2019. 206p. Skyhorse, paper, \$17.99 (9781510749580). 340.

[REVIEW](#). First published November 15, 2019 (*Booklist*).

If you yearn to achieve success like Ruth Bader Ginsburg, this is your book. Unabashed super-fan and journalist Gibian analyzes the life of Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg, cataloguing her habits of mind, family life, and work ethic which may point the way for today's aspiring leaders. Gibian's exhaustive research reveals significant patterns to the Justice's behavior that are neatly arranged into sections, each complete with examples and anecdotes from RBG's life and career. What can be identified can be emulated, enthuses Gibian, and although many readers may find it a challenge to imagine struggling through law school as one of the only women in their class or finding a spouse as supportive as Marty Ginsburg, many of RBG's proclivities and abilities are illuminated in an accessible and hopeful way. While more established RBG devotees will likely read this, younger readers may use this volume as a guidepost pointing them to the rich, larger body of literature on the Justice's life and times and encourage further exploration of her extraordinary life. A road map for those who aspire to become notorious.

— Erin Downey Howerton

A Pocket History of Human Evolution: How We Became Sapiens.

By Silvana Condemi and François Savatier.

Nov. 2019. 160p. Experiment, paper, \$14.95 (9781615196043). 599.93.

[REVIEW](#). First published November 1, 2019 (*Booklist*).

For those who need their science compelling and efficient in the style of Neil deGrasse Tyson's *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* (2017), this slim volume is full of scientific wonders. Of all the primates, humans are arguably the ones most likely to produce a book like this, what with our giant baby heads and our bipedalism and our hands able to fashion sophisticated tools. Journalist Savatier and paleoanthropologist Condemi join forces to take the mystery out of our very human development. Their use of new scientific evidence clarifies some of the great questions about human evolution, from more accurate dating of early prehuman migration to understanding the social aspects of culture that we and our prehuman cohorts shared as we mixed and mingled. While this volume is not for the true beginner (it assumes that the reader has a passing familiarity with basic biology and some fairly sophisticated vocabulary), even knowledgeable readers will find themselves marveling at the incredible journey we have taken to become the preeminent life-form on our planet.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Life and Afterlife of Harry Houdini.

By Joe Posnanski.

Oct. 2019. 336p. Avid Reader, \$28 (9781501137235). 793.8.

[REVIEW](#). First published September 15, 2019 (*Booklist*).

In the shadowy land between truth and fiction, magic and illusion hold court. Perhaps nobody appreciated this more than Harry Houdini. Despite an abundance of existing biographies, longtime sportswriter Posnanski tackles the cult of fame around Houdini, his fans and rivals, his family and friends, and his own thirst for notoriety and immortality. With a mix of history and legend, the author interviews obsessive Houdini fans and even goes on a voyage of his own, hunting an ultra-rare book called *Houdini: The Key* by Patrick Culliton, of which only a few hundred copies exist. Posnanski beckons readers ever closer to the page as he discloses secrets, builds suspense, and gently lifts the curtain on the legend. Also of value are the references to many prominent Houdini sites on the internet, where readers may want to follow up on parts of the story and learn more about today's Houdini communities. Readers will gladly disappear into the pages, proving that Houdini's unique brand of magic is still at work today, long after his death.

— Erin Downey Howerton

★ **Monster, She Wrote: The Women Who Pioneered Horror and Speculative Fiction.**

By Lisa Kröger and Melanie R. Anderson.

Sept. 2019. 352p. Quirk, \$19.99 (9781683691389). 813.

[REVIEW](#). First published June 1, 2019 (*Booklist*).

Some you knew, others you missed, and some you weren't aware existed. *Monster, She Wrote* is an ideal adjacent read for those who loved Mallory O'Meara's *The Lady from the Black Lagoon* (2019). Kröger and Anderson's superb little directory covers women authors of the gory and fantastic, past and present. Each author is placed into a section that best fits her most innovative work, and each entry is an informative treatise on what she wrote, her lasting influence, and how she touches the horror we know and love today. A chapter on current writers looks to the future, and is in direct conversation with the zeitgeist that the authors tap into on their podcast "The Know Fear Cast." Sprinkled liberally throughout are more reads related to each entry, lists, anecdotes, and favorite quotes. Librarians can use this volume to flex their creepy-reads credibility, as the suggestions alone for related works, movies, and TV series are worth the price of admission. Straddling the divide between highly useful reference and compulsively readable stories about the writing lives of the women of horror, this book will keep you up all night (one way or another).

— Erin Downey Howerton

Medusa in the Graveyard.

By Emily Devenport.

July 2019. 304p. Tor, paper, \$18.99 (9781250169365); e-book (9781250169358).

[REVIEW](#). First published July 5, 2019 (Booklist Online).

Oichi, her Medusa unit, and a ragtag crew from the generation ship Olympic have a new mission. They are headed to Graveyard, a mysterious planet filled with decommissioned ships and powerful, ancient beings. Having rejected an offer to join the Weapons Clan, who'd like to profit from any discoveries that Oichi and her team may make through the advanced technology potential of Graveyard salvage, the Olympic group finds new allies and sets off to contact The Three of Graveyard lore. Devenport provides moments of levity with Oichi's tiny friends, the Minis, who warble show tunes and act as small supplementary Medusa units. As in *Medusa Uploaded* (2018), Devenport weaves a dense tapestry of cultural delight with references to human culture, including Aztec gods, Greek drama, Broadway musicals, Oceania, and even Baba Yaga herself. Time, space, and memory all collide in this second installment of the Medusa Cycle filled with the mystery, adventure, and political intrigue that made the first so enjoyable. A space opera that takes delight in the past while imagining unique possible futures.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Desdemona and the Deep.

By C. S. E. Cooney.

July 2019. 224p. Tor, paper, \$14.99 (9781250229830); e-book, \$3.99 (9781250229823).

[REVIEW](#). First published July 2019 (*Booklist*).

Seafall is the nexus of three worlds in which magic, history, and intrigue collide. Desdemona's mother, a suffragist and socialite, uses her influence to benefit victims of industry, like the rotten-jawed Phossy Gals of Seafall's match factories. Her father, an ironfisted capitalist, signs away his mine workers in exchange for unlimited wealth drawn up from the realms beneath. Desdemona and her best friend, Chaz, attempt to resurrect the dead miners through a drunken, late-night escapade and instead find themselves entangled in the politics of the realms below, between humans and gentry and goblins, and facing the ultimate choice—will their transformation be enough to save the lives of others? Readers will thrill to the extravagant descriptions of Cooney's worlds, the plot's socioeconomic allusions to our own world will draw in history buffs, and Desdemona's strong sense of justice and bravery will lead new fans to Cooney. Though it is marketed as a standalone (and can be read as such), this is Cooney's third foray into Seafall (after *The Two Paupers*, 2015). A rococo romp through strange and eerily familiar worlds.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Lake of the Ozarks: My Surreal Summers in a Vanishing America.

By Bill Geist.

May 2019. 208p. Grand Central, \$26 (9781538729809); e-book, \$13.99 (9781538729816).

[REVIEW](#). First published March 29, 2019 (Booklist Online).

Geist (*Way off the Road*, 2007) pays tribute to the summers of his 1960s adolescence spent working at the Arrowhead Lodge resort in central Missouri at the Lake of the Ozarks. In this meandering, free-association ramble through Geist's memory bank (he will often break into a recollection with yet another, tangentially related anecdote), readers time-travel through the rites of passage of a midcentury, midwestern teen boy. "Accidentally" broken air conditioners for rooms rented by pretty girls? Aplenty. Shenanigans involving the youthful staff and stolen booze? By the case. Thwarted attempts to lose his virginity? Loads. The wistful retelling of these halcyon summers becomes clear towards the end as Geist turns to the next chapter in his life, combat photography in the Vietnam War. The juxtaposition of his raucous, fun-filled days with the stark realities of war sinks in even further when he attempts to revisit the lodge; like his youth, it now exists wholly in memory. Readers of Geist's vintage will enjoy sauntering through his formative summers and perhaps recall some of their own on the way.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Ungovernable: The Victorian Parent's Guide to Raising Flawless Children.

By Therese Oneill.

Apr. 2019. 288p. illus. Little, Brown, \$25 (9780316481908). 649.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 3, 2019 (Booklist Online).

In *Ungovernable*, Oneill (*Unmentionable*, 2016) bets that an encounter with Victorian parenting will reassure today's stressed-out parents who are worried about their own abilities. This wild ride through 19th-century child-rearing is an

exploration of anal worms, strange tinctures, inappropriate education, child labor, and questionable food stuffs, told in the form of a Q&A with the author. Readers will learn the altogether shocking practices of Victorian parenthood—and be reminded that people did live to tell the tale. Of course, this is Oneill's point: it seems indulgent for modern parents to flagellate themselves over their shortcomings when flagellation itself produced our predecessors. After all, we're no longer feeding beer to babies, so we can't be doing so badly. The author's breezy style strikes an amusing and marked contrast with the subject matter, which hopefully keeps readers focused on their successes as modern, enlightened parents—which the Victorians also considered themselves, a fact that is slyly related in delicious irony. While Oneill will likely not supplant Spock and Brazelton, she may well set parents at ease in her own hilarious way.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Moth Presents Occasional Magic: True Stories about Defying the Impossible.

Ed. by Catherine Burns.

Mar. 2019. 368p. Crown Archetype, \$25 (9781101904428). 808.

[REVIEW](#). First published February 15, 2019 (*Booklist*).

There's something essentially human and intimate about sharing stories. Storytelling group The Moth (*All These Wonders*, 2017) has a well-earned reputation built on its live events and a radio show doing just that. Occasional Magic is its third group of live stories adapted to print, and the selections take the reader on a roller coaster of raw emotion as the famous and the unknown alike give true accounts of various life challenges. Stories about writing haiku in defiance of angry drivers ("Honku"), an unrequited crush on a man who isn't who he seems, and an unlikely astronaut are among the many small jewels here. Self-image and prosthetic limbs nestle next to family tragedy set against the backdrop of the civil rights movement, a best friend with a haunted freezer jostles in beside a preschooler with an unconventional imaginary friend—each story is as captivating as the one before it. If The Moth's live events are full of people gently holding their beating hearts up to the mic in front of a breathless audience, these written adaptations definitely do such sacrifices justice.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Race Me in a Lobster Suit: Absurd Internet Ads and the Real Conversations That Followed.

By Kelly Mahon.

Mar. 2019. 208p. illus. Quirk, paper, \$12.99 (9781683691044). 650.

[REVIEW](#). First published February 15, 2019 (*Booklist*).

In today's gig economy, there is but one place to find the best of the truly absurd: the online classified ads. Debut author Mahon turns her advertising background into hilarity as she posts ludicrous premises asking for help online, then toys with the respondents. Will readers believe there are people willing to knit Mahon into a cocoon for the winter, or people willing to let her practice her tattooing on them while sitting in the back of her uncle's auto-body shop? Anyone who's been on the internet won't be surprised, but the conversations that follow are all hilarious in their own way. Each unsuspecting mark has a different boiling point, and what makes one double down while another bails will keep you reading in disbelief. Mahon's work in ad writing helps her keep premises short and witty, and her ability to respond with earnest and outrageous candor turns the exchanges into repartee that wouldn't be out of place on a sitcom or behind a stand-up mic. This is bite-size comedy you'll devour.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Dannemora: Two Escaped Killers, Three Weeks of Terror, and the Largest Manhunt Ever in New York State.

By Charles A. Gardner.

Mar. 2019. 270p. Kensington/Citadel, \$26 (9780806539249); e-book, \$12.99 (9780806539263). 365.641.

[REVIEW](#). First published January 1, 2019 (*Booklist*).

This latest true-crime account of the 2015 Dannemora prison break is told by a former New York State Department of Corrections officer. The first half of the book outlines the protagonists' backgrounds: career criminals Richard Matt and David Sweat, corrupt guard Gene Palmer, and tailor-shop contract employee Joyce Mitchell. Gardner lionizes rank-and-file officers, who he felt were overburdened with excess duties—which opened the door to Matt and Sweat's escape—then charged with tirelessly combing the countryside for the escapees. Also examined is the tailor shop where Matt and Sweat fraternized with Mitchell, a major money-maker for the Department of Corrections where daily supervision of inmates was farmed out to private contractors rather than trained officers. This dramatic story will be of keen interest to those following the Showtime series *Escape at Dannemora*, and book clubs might pair this with *New*

York Daily News reporter Chelsia Marcus' *Wild Escape* (2018) for the first-person interviews with sole-survivor Sweat. A true community insider's perspective on a legendary manhunt.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The World of Lore: Dreadful Places.

Mahnke, Aaron (author).

Oct. 2018. illus. Del Rey, \$28.99 (9781524798024); e-book (9781524798031). 001.944.

[REVIEW](#). First published August 27, 2018 (Booklist Online).

The final volume of the Lore book trilogy (after *The World of Lore: Wicked Mortals*, 2018) takes readers to spots best avoided. Unknown phenomena, spooky structures, and tainted soil all figure in this short-story collection. While fans of the podcast and Amazon Prime series will immediately recognize many as transcripts of previous episodes, the stories are no less creepy in this format. Mahnke's writing evokes classic oral tradition; the stories unfurl gently, as one might regale new generations of curious listeners by the fireside. The well known (the New Orleans LaLaurie mansion) lie cheek to jowl with more obscure tales (the haunted ship Ourang Medan) and, as in the previous volumes, are bundled into little thematic collections-within-a-collection. Readers still don't get tidy explanations or resolutions to the tales of terror and woe within, but they do get to enjoy the little pen-and-ink-style drawings by M.S. Corley sprinkled throughout. While more cheerful and less morbid than Edward Gorey, Corley's corpses are quite atmospheric and lend to the volume's drama. A chilling little road map to locations best left undisturbed.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Squeezed: Why Our Families Can't Afford America.

Quart, Alissa (author).

June 2018. 304p. Ecco, \$27.99 (9780062412256). 330.973.

[REVIEW](#). First published August 13, 2018 (Booklist Online).

Is there even an American middle class anymore? Examining her own hardships as an erstwhile member of the "Middle Precariat," Quart (*Republic of Outsiders*, 2013) probes the myriad difficulties families face in a postrecession landscape. Quart's own family struggles inform this exploration, as does her work for Barbara Ehrenreich's Economic Hardship Reporting Project. Examining the forces that squeeze American workers and their families, the book recounts stories of the debt-laden intelligentsia, the "hand-to-mouth" wealthy, care workers of all stripes (day-care providers, nurses, and other pink-collar professions). Quart also shares stories of ersatz solutions, such as communal housing, gig jobs such as Uber, and those struggling for an encore career after the first evaporates. Touching on coping mechanisms like "bling porn" on television and Instagram as well as the insidious reach of robot labor eliminating decent-paying jobs, Quart pulls together the many strands of culture that affect the families of *Squeezed*. First-person interviews and profiles of her peers bring a human face to the stress and suffering of families struggling to get by in a nation that formerly prided itself on a vibrant, thriving middle class. A thorough and moving profile of U.S. families in a time of crisis.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The World of Lore: Wicked Mortals.

Mahnke, Aaron (author).

June 2018. 368p. illus. Del Rey, hardcover, \$28 (9781524797997); e-book (9781524798000). 364.3092.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 4, 2018 (Booklist Online).

Podcast host Mahnke presents the second book of gruesome stories, complementing *Lore*'s podcast episodes and visual episodes on Amazon Prime. People who prefer the content on paper will appreciate these nicely compiled stories gathered into thematic bundles. While the first book concentrated on "monstrous creatures," this volume concerns itself with "wicked mortals," people whose transgressions continue to haunt long after their deaths. These true stories of murder, mayhem, and mystery are mainly transcriptions of popular *Lore* podcast episodes, with what appear to be a few new stories sprinkled in. *Lore* listeners who are not donating to the podcast through Patreon will like the transcriptions of episodes offered exclusively to those supporters as "Lore Extras," several of which are included here. The collection benefits from being composed for oral storytelling; pacing leads to payoff in a gently dramatic fashion, while short, rhythmic sentences propel readers along. Although there's not much new here for dedicated *Lore* fanatics, the book may serve as a gateway for potential listeners. A snappy, shivery little story collection.

★ **Witchmark.**

By **C. L. Polk.**

June 2018. 320p. Tor, paper, \$15.99 (9781250162687); e-book (9780765398970).

[REVIEW](#). First published April 1, 2018 (*Booklist*).

The magnetically handsome Tristan brings a dying man to Dr. Miles Singer's doorstep, aware of Miles' secret identity as a witch, though he is well hidden in an unfashionable hospital after returning from the just-concluded war in Lanear. Miles quickly becomes entangled in the hunt for the man's killer, while dealing with an attraction to the mysterious Tristan and a deepening malaise among fellow soldiers returning from war. Then Miles' powerful family threatens to shackle him to his sister to be used as a sort of magical battery, to enhance her storm singing and protect Aeland from the ravages of bad weather. Many disparate elements are expertly woven together to make this debut a crackler, with layers like a nesting doll and just as delightful to discover. There's a will-he-or-won't-he heat to the romance, a Philip Pullmanesque setting full of mages, wizards, and political intrigue, all wrapped up in the feeling of a historical mystery that fans of Maisie Dobbs and other WWI-era novels will dive into. Polk has created an amazing new world with hints of Edwardian glamour, sizzling secrets, and forbidden love that crescendos to a cinematic finish. *Witchmark* is a can't-miss debut that will enchant readers.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Medusa Uploaded.

By **Emily Devenport.**

May 2018. 320p. Tor, paper, \$15.99 (9781250169341); e-book, \$9.99 (9781250169327).

[REVIEW](#). First published May 1, 2018 (*Booklist*).

Oichi toils in the bowels of generation ship Olympia, cruising across the stars in service of the ruthless Executive clans. She hides a dangerous secret: among other modifications, Oichi's parents hid code in her brain amidst the data of an innocuous music-history module, allowing her to silently wreak deadly havoc among Executives to avenge the death of her family. After discovering artificial-intelligence units that assist and protect her, Oichi morphs into a half-human, half-AI kraken. As Oichi pursues justice, she discovers that the Executives may not be the purebred families they imagine themselves to be. Devenport (*The Kronos Condition*, 1997) grounds the reader in current culture that Oichi considers ancient history, weaving it in with classical music to evoke emotion, as this implanted knowledge makes her a master of such cultural references. There's more than ghosts in this machine, and as Oichi fearlessly plunges ahead, the reader can nearly feel the grasp of a tentacle as it reaches down from the ceiling to pluck an Executive to their death. A chilling tale of class warfare in deep space. — Erin Downey Howerton

Liar's Candle.

Thomas, August (author).

Apr. 2018. 320p. Scribner, hardcover, \$25 (9781501172847); e-book, \$12.99 (9781501172861).

[REVIEW](#). First published May 4, 2018 (*Booklist Online*).

The image of Penny Kessler, splashed with blood and trailing an American flag, shocks the world after the U.S. embassy in Ankara is rocked by an explosion. Thomas' debut novel takes the reader on a journey of espionage and high-stakes statecraft centered around young intern Penny, a broke student fluent in Turkish but clueless about the motives of those who surround her. Thomas weaves together disparate strands of intrigue as the State Department and CIA battle it out to discover the identity of the bomber and the motive behind the attack. The scheming daughter of the Turkish president gets involved, and Penny herself comes under suspicion while trying to determine if her new boyfriend was part of a plot, and if he's even still alive. Penny's only hope may be to go on the run with a rogue agent who has motives of his own. As the story bounces between Langley, D.C., and Ankara, the languages of spies, statesmen, and everyday Turks are peppered throughout this political thriller with a street-level view of modern Turkey. — Erin Downey Howerton

Norman: The Doll That Needed to Be Locked Away.

By **Stephen Lancaster.**

Apr. 2018. 240p. Llewellyn, paper, \$16.99 (9780738755519). 133.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 1, 2018 (*Booklist*).

Paranormal investigator Lancaster (*True Casefiles of a Paranormal Investigator*, 2012) gives a chilling first-person account of a haunted doll he purchased at an antique shop. Like many other possessed items, Norman is a fairly

common child's toy: a midcentury Matty Mattel doll. That's where the similarities end, though. Lancaster claims that the months following Norman's acquisition led to a smorgasbord of terror for him and his family, including horrified children, vermin infestations, the death of his beloved pet cat, and more. Despite a failed attempt to auction away the doll, Lancaster's story builds with horrible tension towards an incoming hurricane and the potential of Norman to wreak further havoc on his life. The story is told in a straightforward and linear fashion; the narrative is studded with very small screencaps of Lancaster's home-surveillance system to provide proof of Norman's doings. Dedicated readers of horror and internet creepypasta stories will thrill to the mounting evil and the ersatz solution Lancaster and his wife devise to appease Norman. A must-read for fans of the Chucky and Annabelle movies. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Trouble Never Sleeps.

Tromly, Stephanie (author).

Apr. 2018. 304p. Penguin/Kathy Dawson, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780525428428). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published March 26, 2018 (*Booklist Online*).

In this sequel to *Trouble Makes a Comeback* (2016), River Heights High has been rocked by a drug bust, Sally's ultimate fate is still unknown, and three friends struggle to help Zoe and Digby pull off their biggest heist yet, involving government data, potential treason, and a mad scientist. This third outing finds Tromly at the top of her game, seamlessly weaving in high-school scandal, government espionage, a hilarious mix of high- and low-culture references, and social-media sabotage in a turbocharged plot that careens along the edge of sanity. Although fan-favorites Zoe and Digby are now trying to define a budding relationship, Zoe's unexpected acceptance to an NYC prep school threatens to tear them apart for good. However, Digby's hidden secrets could also be a deal breaker for Zoe. Although things seem to be wrapped neatly with a bow by the end, Tromly can't resist dangling one more juicy scandal before readers. If this is the last tango with Digby, at least we get to go out on a high note.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Outpost.

By W. Michael Gear.

Feb. 2018. 432p. DAW, \$26 (9780756413378).

[REVIEW](#). First published February 1, 2018 (*Booklist*).

On the distant planet Donovan, the realities of colonization meet the cold, hard demands of corporate overlords. In the years since Donovan was settled, many original colonists have died and several supply ships have completely vanished, leaving the planet nearly feral. Corporation Supervisor Kalico arrives to discover disarray, and demands answers from community leaders. Competing interests from Corporation employees create tension, as Donovan's loose organization offers opportunity for deception and deceit. However, Kalico must first deal with one of the missing ships that reappears bearing horrific cargo and a seemingly impossible paradox. Gear (*Moon Hunt*, 2017, with Kathleen O'Neal Gear) kicks off a new sf series by weaving a number of compelling characters into the narrative, including bold heroine Talina Perez and Donovan itself, a planet teeming with danger and delights in turn. The mix of stolen identities, rapacious greed, and treacherous landscape propels the reader forward, hurtling toward the possibility that nobody is destined to escape Donovan alive. Fans of epic space opera, like Rachel Bach's *Fortune's Pawn* (2013), will happily lose themselves in Donovan's orbit.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Sleep Over.

Bells, H. G. (author).

Jan. 2018. 376p. Skyhorse/Talos, paperback, \$14.99 (9781940456690).

[REVIEW](#). First published December 15, 2017 (*Booklist*).

When the apocalypse comes, it might just keep you up at night. Various accounts from people around the world tell of a sudden, irreversible plague of insomnia. Whether it's viral, chemical, or something else matters less and less as society breaks down and people start dying. Doctors, gamers, teachers, gurus, researchers, and more share their accounts in turn of society's breakdown and spiral into oblivion as people start to hallucinate and become catatonic. Perhaps most poignant is the lone account of an insomniac child whose prior experience with sleep loss steels her to the difficulties as the adults around her succumb to madness. Bells' debut presents creatively imagined chaos, from planes crashing to natural disasters to drug abuse brought on by those trying both uppers and downers in a frantic search for relief. Readers looking for a twist on conventional apocalypse tales will enjoy this look at alternative human

zombies that is no less political than Nancy Kress' *Beggars Trilogy*. A grimly suspenseful tale with a brutally real ending.

— Erin Downey Howerton

★ **Beneath the Sugar Sky.**

McGuire, Seanan (author).

Jan. 2018. 176p. Tor, \$17.99 (9780765393586).

[REVIEW](#). First published December 1, 2017 (*Booklist*).

McGuire's latest *Wayward Children* book (after *Down among the Sticks and Bones*, 2017) laces the threads of time into an impossible knot. Eleanor West's pupils are disrupted by the arrival of newcomer Rini. She claims to be the child of murdered Sumi, who somehow grew older and had a family in the Nonsense world of Confection. Rini is literally running out of time—she is physically disintegrating, as she logically should not exist. Classmates Christopher, Kade, Cora, and Nadya agree to break the cardinal rule of No Quests to help Rini save her world. The true standout of this story is Cora, who longs to return to her watery world, but her keen sense of observation and quiet bravery are vital to the quest. As the motley crew travels through worlds, readers will thrill to encounter familiar characters and marvel at the sugar-studded landscape of Confection. McGuire suggests entire universes in a few spare sentences, and the delightfully diverse cast of characters is similarly conjured. We're told some doors open only once, but readers will beg McGuire to keep the door open to these worlds in perpetuity. Phenomenal.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Born to Be Wild: Why Teens Take Risks, and How We Can Help Keep Them Safe.

Shatkin, Jess P. (author).

Oct. 2017. 304p. TarcherPerigee, hardcover, \$26 (9780143129790). 155.5.

[REVIEW](#). First published September 6, 2017 (*Booklist Online*).

Everyone thinks they know why adolescents make poor choices, take risks, and generally go bonkers during the teen years (and even beyond). There are many preconceived notions about the teen brain, and Dr. Shatkin sets the story straight in a book that will help parents and caregivers learn the vocabulary needed to walk teens through a deeper understanding of their own developmental state. Taking the reader on a journey through science and medicine, Shatkin gently prods the viewer to take a broader look at why teens act the way they do. Not just inexperienced adults, teens haven't yet built the skills that will allow them to become level-headed decision makers in future. For example, Shatkin gives examples that demonstrate that it's not about teens failing to think about the consequences of their actions, it's that they think of far too many outcomes and therefore fall prey to choice overload, which leads to fatigue. An accessible and compelling look at a frequently misunderstood developmental stage that will provoke talk around the family dinner table.— Erin Downey Howerton

★ **Down Among the Sticks and Bones.**

McGuire, Seanan (author).

June 2017. 192p. Tor, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780765392039).

[REVIEW](#). First published May 1, 2017 (*Booklist*).

Many fairy tales begin this way: neglectful parents, a kindly grandmother, and a loss. We learn Jack and Jill's backstory after the events in *Every Heart a Doorway* (2016): perfectly feminine Jacqueline is bedecked in frills and lace, while Jillian runs free with the boys in the mud. One day, they find a staircase that leads to the Moors, and this seals their fates. Jacqueline becomes Jack, apprentice to resurrectionist Dr. Bleak, adopting masculine clothing and falling in love with a village girl, while Jill stays with the Master, a powerful vampire who showers her with chiffon dresses and luxurious bubble baths in exchange for her blood. One girl wishes to become undead; the other spends her time bringing people back to life. Ultimately, the twins learn that the Moors are just as unforgiving of transgressions as the world they came from, and the stakes are even higher. McGuire pairs form with function in this spare story of two sisters who yearn for love, recognition, and belonging in ways that readers will readily identify with—chafing against rules both external and internal as they long to break free of the expectations of others. She taps into the horror and romance of classic fairy tales while weaving an extraordinarily modern and wise allegory of girlhood. Exquisitely well crafted, this is the rare companion novel that can stand alone.— Erin Downey Howerton

Goodbye, Things: The New Japanese Minimalism.

Sasaki, Fumio (author).

Apr. 2017. 288p. illus. Norton, hardcover, \$21.95 (9780393609035). 648.5.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 14, 2017 (Booklist Online).

This dude only owns one towel, and he's proud of it. Sasaki shed most of his possessions in a quest to achieve true minimalism. After reevaluating his life's direction, it seemed logical to do dishes and dry off after bathing with the same cloth (it helps him truly appreciate fancy hotel towels) and to live with as little as he could in order to focus more fully on his relationships and in being consciously present. Of course, as a Tokyo book editor, he refers to Marie Kondo and the larger trend of decluttering starting around 2010; he's fully aware that he's taking these philosophies to the extreme. But the book is also suffused with a deep sense of loss, referencing the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and aftermath as the tipping point for many Japanese to focus on people over possessions. A list of 55 tips to help rid yourself of excess belongings is included as well as a reflection on his grand experiment that will inspire some (but certainly not all) to say good-bye to things and hello to life. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

The Unprotected.

Sokol, Kelly (author).

Apr. 2017. 296p. Skyhorse, hardcover, \$24.99 (9781510718326).

[REVIEW](#). First published March 3, 2017 (Booklist Online).

Lara's life seems perfect: high-flying ad executive marries superhot professor, ticking off the boxes of life neatly and on her own terms, because control is important to her. She's got an eating disorder, one of many secrets kept in the tony Virginia suburbs. She's previously disdained family life and her sister's kids, but, come her mid-thirties, Lara desperately seeks pregnancy. The narrative dives deep into the minutiae of infertility: medical treatments, a flood of sex, then denial, and even Lara's sad postings in an online forum full of TTC (trying to conceive) women. Miscarriages and confessions of a past abortion strain Lara's perfect relationship until, blissfully, she's pregnant. But instead of a Hollywood ending and a fade to black, Lara begins to suffer from isolation and fatigue after birth, quitting her job and spiraling down to dark places as she spends endless hours charting her baby's feeding schedule and struggling with daily life. An unflinching look at one woman's quest to achieve domestic bliss behind the glossy, milk-stained haze of Pinterest-perfect mommy culture. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

One Perfect Lie.

Scottoline, Lisa (author).

Apr. 2017. 384p. St. Martin's, hardcover, \$27.99 (9781250099563); St. Martin's, e-book, \$14.99 (9781250099587).

[REVIEW](#). First published March 1, 2017 (*Booklist*).

Central Valley High's new government teacher and assistant baseball coach, Chris Brennan, is looking for a boy that fits his precise criteria: a little lost and open to a malevolent scheme. He has a truck and a bunch of fertilizer but needs the perfect accomplice as the anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing approaches. But he is on shaky ground—one of his fellow teachers just happens to be from his hometown and threatens to blow his cover in a gust of friendly gestures. More importantly, the moms of Chris' three top prospects all have family dramas that distract Chris from his goal. Heather, mom of a talented player, is broke and desperate to make ends meet. Insecure Mindy suspects her husband of using their son's money to hide an affair. Susan's dead husband looms large in the background as she struggles with a troubled older son, while her younger son is clearly in over his head. Scottoline keeps the pace relentless as she drops a looming threat into the heart of an idyllic suburban community, causing readers to hold their breath in anticipation.

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Best-selling Scottoline's latest promises plot twists that will keep readers flipping pages.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Year of No Clutter.

Schaub, Eve O. (author).

Mar. 2017. 320p. Sourcebooks, paperback, \$15.99 (9781492633556). 616.85.

[REVIEW](#). First published February 1, 2017 (*Booklist*).

Owning your mess is everywhere, from episodes of *Hoarders* to Marie Kondo books. Schaub (*Year of No Sugar*, 2014) admits she has a real problem letting go of stuff. Her quest to reclaim the giant, junk-filled "Hell Room" in her home is aided by her two daughters, who seemingly represent the two parts of her brain, catch-and-release and keep-it-forever. While musing on what led her to save her fifth grade report card and a long-deceased rodent in a box, Schaub weaves in thoughtful cultural references, pointing out that while the ability to have too much stuff is a phenomenon of privilege, it also reflects how far we'll go to put off painful decisions. She describes the pain of how much messier her

entire house got until the boxes and bags of trash and donations were hauled away and questions, “at what point . . . do we hold on to our past so tight that we risk strangling it to death?” Her recognition that clutter of the mind is as real as tangible clutter makes this a personal and powerful read.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Ultimate Guide to Raising Teens and Tweens: Strategies for Unlocking Your Child’s Full Potential.

Haddad, Douglas (author).

Feb. 2017. 264p. Rowman & Littlefield, hardcover, \$18.95 (9781442256958); Rowman & Littlefield, e-book, \$17.99 (9781442256965). 373.236.

[REVIEW](#). First published March 3, 2017 (*Booklist Online*).

Former middle-school teacher Haddad reveals the secret strategies to raising successful, smart, and self-disciplined future adults. Using anecdotes from his years of teaching, his own childhood, and experience raising children, Haddad lays out ways to motivate, effectively discipline, and intervene in problematic behaviors exhibited by tweens and teens. The book is laid out in two parts: tools to encourage positive behaviors, and how to handle challenges that youths today may face in their journey toward adulthood. Haddad is clearly a proponent of authoritative parenting, where clear boundaries are set and maintained. A major repeating motif of the book also addresses nurturing acceptance and diversity in tweens and teens, so that they are able to interact with others in an empathetic and tolerant way. Haddad also does an excellent job of dissecting the unspoken problematic societal messages that youths receive, and helps readers understand how to strategically intervene to prevent these from limiting kids’ full potential. A sensitive and thorough parenting manual that will help families navigate the muddy waters of adolescence with confidence.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Revenge of the Evil Librarian.

Knudsen, Michelle (author).

Feb. 2017. 320p. Candlewick, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780763688288). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published December 9, 2016 (*Booklist Online*).

Do demons dream of musical theater? Of course! In this sequel to Knudsen’s *Evil Librarian* (2014), we rejoin Cynthia, teen theater-set designer, after her defeat of the demon librarian Mr. Gabriel. Cyn’s adventures attracted the attention of Peter, a supposedly “good” demon, whose fondest wish is to make it big on Broadway. Peter has invisibly linked himself to Cyn as she and her boyfriend, Ryan, head to theater camp, where the two lovebirds plan a peaceful summer. Peter also knows that Cyn is obligated to return twice more to the demoness queen, and things get hairy as Cyn discovers that Peter’s exit has left a gaping entrance to the underworld. Ryan cranks up the drama factor with a secret of his own: his superhot best friend inflames Cyn with jealousy. Returning readers will love hearing from Cyn again, who narrates her story with aplomb and keeps readers laughing despite the hellfire and danger around every corner. A pleasing and excellently evil mix of regular theater kids with highly irregular death.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

★**The Impossible Fortress.**

Rekulak, Jason (author).

Feb. 2017. 288p. Simon & Schuster, hardcover, \$26 (9781501144417).

[REVIEW](#). First published December 15, 2016 (*Booklist*).

The year is 1987, Billy is happily ignoring his failing grades in favor of teaching himself programming on his home computer, and his buddies have cooked up a money-making scheme selling copies of Vanna White’s newly released nudes—which they don’t yet own. When they throw Billy at Mary Zelinsky, a local shopkeeper’s daughter who could help them get the pictures, he discovers that Mary is an ace programmer after his own heart but also way above his skill level. The pace beats steadily along, like Hall & Oates’ dreams coming true, as the two race towards a contest deadline for creating a computer game that could break them into the big time. Unfortunately, they each have secrets that threaten their success. The gang can’t believe Billy’s been seduced by Mary’s coding prowess, and the crude rumors about Mary might have a basis in truth. Rekulak layers in nostalgic ‘80s references, like a mixtape created by Mary’s recently deceased mother, an oblique nod to *Beetlejuice*, and the wacky group of misfit friends with a “really good” plan. Despite all that, in the end the plot manages to magically subvert the time period while also paying homage to it. An unexpected retro delight.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

The Enlightened College Applicant: A New Approach to the Search and Admissions Process.

Belasco, Andrew (author) and Dave Bergman (author).

Nov. 2016. 240p. Rowman & Littlefield, hardcover, \$30 (9781475826906); Rowman & Littlefield, e-book, \$29.99 (9781475826920). 378.1.

[REVIEW](#). First published November 15, 2016 (*Booklist*).

Here's one college guide that does away with trite advice about teaching teens to do laundry, letting go, and navigating their first Thanksgiving back home. Belasco and Bergman, experienced education consultants, address parents of college-bound students in a six-part guide to the search and admissions process. The book's title is slightly misleading: rather than those ready to apply, readers should ideally be families of early teens at the very latest (much of the advice requires careful planning through high school). There is a laser-sharp focus on targeting a school and major to maximize return on investment: how to solve seemingly impossible and infinite equations, including variables such as school rankings, class sizes, percentage of full-time faculty, and what you could make back on your money through different majors and study paths. The authors address tangible costs of college, helping readers carve through recruitment language and dive into the realities and (dis)advantages of institutions, from Ivies to in-state schools. Families seeking enlightenment about how to rationally and reasonably advise their teens in the higher-education arms race would do well to seek out this title.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Trouble Makes a Comeback.

Tromly, Stephanie (author).

Nov. 2016. 304p. Penguin/Kathy Dawson, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780525428411). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 6, 2016 (*Booklist Online*).

Following the wild escapades of *Trouble Is a Friend of Mine* (2015), Zoe's pursuits are more pedestrian: football star Austin is her new boyfriend, her mom's boyfriend has moved in, and she's got a slew of new friends. But Digby isn't gone for long—you doubted him?—and he's bearing gifts with strings attached. Although becoming a normal is tempting, there's just something about Digby that makes Zoe crazy. The mystery of his missing sister is still driving Digby to the edge, and Zoe follows him through mansions, locker rooms, and further to help figure out exactly what his family was doing that might have prompted Sally's disappearance. As Zoe's erstwhile boyfriend, Austin makes a great foil for Digby; Tromly excels at oddball character chemistry as well as crackling dialogue. Additionally, Austin's athletic connections reveal another town scandal that could shed light on the situation, though the mystery of Zoe and Digby's relationship is another thing entirely. This zany sequel has everything to make fans of the first outing swoon.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Butter: A Rich History.

Khosrova, Elaine (author).

Nov. 2016. 288p. Algonquin, hardcover, \$25.95 (9781616203641). 641.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 1, 2016 (*Booklist*).

From the very first milk collected from goats, camels, and sheep domesticated by humans, butter has been a precious and delectable by-product. Khosrova takes readers on an amazing journey in the history of butter, tracing butter's creation through time and geography, from the clarified butter known as ghee, which is able to be preserved longer in the intense heat of India, to the cold fingers of Sami women from the Far North stirring high-fat reindeer milk into a unique and delicious butter found nowhere else. For those who have ever wondered about the legendary purity of milkmaids or why butter is used in so many ways around the world, from religious rituals to cooking, this book sets out to answer the questions. There are lovely recipes included. An ambitious and interesting look at one of the world's most beloved dairy products, this is a great gateway to other food microhistories, including Mort Rosenblum's *Olives: The Life and Lore of a Noble Fruit* (1996) and Holley Bishop's *Robbing the Bees: A Biography of Honey, the Sweet Liquid Gold That Seduced the World* (2005).— *Erin Downey Howerton*

★Atlas Obscura: An Explorer's Guide to the World's Hidden Wonders.

Foer, Joshua (author) and Dylan Thuras (author) and others.

Sept. 2016. 480p. illus. Workman, hardcover, \$35 (9780761169086). 910.

[REVIEW](#). First published September 15, 2016 (*Booklist*).

A sophisticated adult answer to Ripley's *Believe It Or Not!*, this unusual atlas manages to surprise and delight on every page. Drawing on material from the ever-expanding website of the same name, this ersatz tour guide to the fabulously interesting secret corners of the globe is arranged geographically by continent and country. Each entry details a wonder of the natural world, architecture, sculpture, taxidermy, or other general curiosities. These share space with unique festivals and ephemeral occasions, noted on maps scattered throughout. Whether describing a Canadian museum that showcases world history through shoes, a pet-casket company that will also sell you a unit for your severed limb, a Greek snake festival, or a place in the Canary Islands where inhabitants communicate through whistling, the authors have compiled an enthralling range of oddities. Featuring full-color illustrations, this hefty and gorgeously produced tome will be eagerly pored over by readers of many ages and fans of the original website. This referency title will be a big hit in the circulating stacks, where armchair travelers and lovers of the unusual alike will snap it up. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Elite.**Lackey, Mercedes (author).**

Sept. 2016. 368p. Hyperion, hardcover, \$17.99 (9781484707852). Grades 8-11.

[REVIEW](#). First published September 1, 2016 (*Booklist Online*).

Having risen to the status of Elite Hunter (*Hunter*, 2015), Joy faces more complex enemies than ever. While trying desperately to keep up with increasing attacks from mythical Othersiders, Joy is commanded to take her 11 hounds and patrol the sewage system, where an alarming number of Psimons, the mind-reading forces, are found dead. Distractions abound, like Joy's boyfriend and Mark Knight's fiancée, but relationships end up taking a backseat to the immediate danger that Apex City faces. Simultaneously, Joy's mortal enemy Ace vanishes, likely plotting his revenge against the Hunters. Readers will be tightly wound into the action as the Hunters anticipate a horrible battle. Lackey peppers the plot with Joy's observations, which draw distinct parallels between our world and hers: tensions between the outlying settlements and cities over protection and resources, and the idea that city-dwelling youth end up interacting mainly through screens and role-playing games rather than through real-life experiences. Another fascinating chapter in Joy's saga that successfully marries fantasy and science fiction for teen readers.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

★Every Heart a Doorway.**McGuire, Seanan (author).**

Apr. 2016. 176p. Tor, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780765385505).

[REVIEW](#). First published March 17, 2017 (*Booklist Online*).

If fairy tales are true, then what happens once you leave Wonderland? Nancy is one of those children who found a magic door, but to prove that she's worthy of staying forever in the Underworld, she is sent back—where her parents desperately enroll her in Eleanor West's Home for Wayward Children. In this cross between a school and an asylum, Nancy mixes with others just like her: a prince with a mistaken identity, twins who've hung out with mad scientists and vampires, and many other girls who wandered through other worlds only to find themselves inevitably stranded. All of the students are trying to find the portal back to their fairyland—despite reminders that most doors open only once. Nancy discovers the lengths that Wayward Children will go to rediscover their worlds when her roommate, Sumi, turns up mutilated and murdered. McGuire takes readers by the hand and leads them down the twisty pathways of childhood, opening mysterious trunks and tapping on magical doors, down the rabbit holes of realization that perhaps every legend was true, once, for some child. And for every child who discovered the magic of a world where he or she finally perfectly fit in, there's an adult who reluctantly returned to earth by stumbling through a door of realization or simply by turning the page. This amazing fantasy pierces the shimmering veil of childhood imagination by reminding adult readers that their own doorways still exist deep in the chambers of their all-too-human hearts.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Peas and Carrots.**By Tanita S. Davis.**

Feb. 2016. 288p. Knopf, \$17.99 (9780553512816); Knopf, lib. ed., \$20.99 (9780553512823); Knopf, e-book (9780553512830). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published January 1, 2016 (*Booklist*).

Odessa, called Dess, likes to be left alone. But that's not happening: she has been placed with a foster family while her mother is in jail, waiting to testify against Dess' felon father. Dess is reunited with her half brother, Baby, and introduced to new foster sister, Hope, in a mainstream, middle-class home, populated by a close-knit, squeaky-clean African American family—a huge contrast to Dess' meth-addled, biker-gang parents. Davis writes in alternating perspectives, drawing from her own experience as a foster sister, as she shows each young woman negotiating the new situation. Although Dess faces complex issues including estrangement from her grandmother, fear of her incarcerated father, and conflict over her role in Baby's life, she faces the world with a steely practicality that pampered Hope has never had to adopt. Hope is an equally vivid character who, despite typical teen angst, is supported by her family's kindness, and tries her best to see the world through Dess' eyes. A raw and emotionally moving story of family, both lost and found.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Hollowgirl.**Williams, Sean (author).**

Nov. 2015. 512p. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780062203274). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published November 1, 2015 (*Booklist*).

Clair finds herself at a crossroads once the d-mat world is in a smoking heap. The Twinmaker trilogy comes to a

thundering conclusion with dupes upon dupes inhabiting the Yard, a parallel world based on the data of the original world. The technology that made instantaneous travel possible now puts Clair face-to-face with her pre-Improvement self, as well as her fellow Lucky Jumpers from the original Crashlander's Ball—as well as several *other* Clairs. Also returned is Q, whose intelligence seems less and less artificial as the series progresses. While the future of humanity hangs in the balance, Clair relishes a reunion with her former best friend, Libby, as they arm themselves for one last epic battle. The idea of Qualia (the perceived realness of things, as well as Q's name) will haunt readers as they grapple with deep questions of reality, humanity, and how to strike a balance between opposite ways of thinking. Williams' world shares many qualities with modern polarized human society, and it is this intelligent consideration that continues to set these books apart.

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Williams' status as a number-one best-seller ought to propel this one high, even without the planned Comic-Con and outreach promo plans.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Autumn's Kiss.

Thorne, Bella (author).

Nov. 2015. 240p. Delacorte, hardcover, \$18.99 (9780385744355); Delacorte, library edition, \$21.99 (9780375991622); Delacorte, e-book (9780385385244). Grades 7-10.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 22, 2015 ([Booklist Online](#)).

Fans of *Autumn Falls* (2014) will be clamoring for this follow-up. Autumn's inherited wish-granting diary stops working, and her love life tanks. But when she discovers a strange map that gives her teleporting powers, things start to look up. It's great for a visit to long-distance BFF Jenna, but then Autumn decides to try to use the map to help her friends find love and stumbles into a situation that even magic can't fix: both longtime friend J. J. and a famous teen heartthrob declare their love for her, leaving Autumn more confused than ever. Readers will be glad to see familiar characters, like Amalita, return, and thrill to the possibilities of romance around every corner. A guaranteed hit for fans of love, drama, and a little bit of magic.— Erin Downey Howerton

One of Us.

Waudby, Jeannie (author).

Nov. 2015. 320p. Running Press, hardcover, \$16.95 (9780762457991). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 15, 2015 ([Booklist](#)).

Shocked from a Brotherhood subway bombing, K, an orphan, is adrift in the world, flunking school and without job prospects. So it seems fortunate when Oskar persuades K to infiltrate the Brotherhood, a plaid-wearing group that lives apart from Citizens and adheres to a different set of morals and ideals. They are the source of the Strife, and K takes on an identity that might allow her to reveal their secrets and save lives. What K doesn't count on is liking many aspects of Brotherhood life, falling in love with Greg, or feeling manipulated by Oskar. Waudby creates a fog of disquietude where both the reader and K become lost, and a final revelation will cause readers to think deeply about how easy it is to manipulate those disconnected from society and in need of a sense of belonging. In the end, whether K is Brotherhood or Citizen matters less than the understanding that social differences rarely occupy such tidy categories in real life. Impactful and thought provoking. — Erin Downey Howerton

Darkness Hidden.

Marriott, Zoe (author).

Nov. 2015. 352p. Candlewick, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780763669584); Candlewick, e-book (9780763680558). Grades 7-10.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 5, 2015 ([Booklist Online](#)).

Fresh off their victory against the Nekomata in *The Name of the Blade* (2014), Mio and her best friend Jack join sister Rachel and ancient Japanese warrior Shinobu to get some rest—until Jack is attacked by hideous Shikome, birdlike monsters who infect their prey. Mio appeals to the Kitsune for help, but they risk everything outside the spirit realms should they tangle with such power. Amidst the chaos, Mio has three great realizations: Rachel's wound from the Nekomata might turn her into a threat, the voice of the magical katana is insisting that Mio pursue its own agenda, and her growing love with Shinobu is reciprocated. An exceptional pick for myth-loving readers looking to move on to more mature fare.— Erin Downey Howerton

A Thousand Nights.

Johnston, E. K. (author).

Oct. 2015. 336p. Hyperion, hardcover, \$18.99 (9781484722275). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published November 1, 2015 (*Booklist*).

This fantasy, rich with layers of legend and meaning, will captivate readers ready to embark on an adventure spawned by the deadliest of threats. A girl sacrifices herself to the local evil king, Lo-Melkhiin (known for carrying off brides only to kill them in short order), for she believes that with some strategy, she can keep herself alive and save other girls from this hideous fate. We never learn the name of this Scheherazade, but she is capable of interesting magic and able to see faraway happenings as though she is there. Her biggest challenge, however, is to ensure her own survival, and, by association, the survival of all the girls the king might wed and kill. Johnston's writing is densely lyrical, evoking the legendary tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*, from which this story derives. While that may deter more casual readers, those that persist will find the nomadic cadence compelling and the texture of the unforgiving desert a fascinating backdrop to a story inspired by some of the most ancient folktales. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Faceless.

Sheinmel, Alyssa (author).

Oct. 2015. 352p. Scholastic, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780545676014). Grades 7-10.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 5, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

Maisie's life towards the end of high school looks rosy: a promising romance, athletic talent, and college all lay ahead. But a freak accident puts her in the hospital for an extended time as extensive burns require her to be put into a coma. The worst injury was to her face, requiring a partial transplant from a donor. Wearing half of someone else's face, Maisie has to relearn how to move through the world as an object of curiosity and pity among her classmates. What hurts more than the cruel comments, though, is the realization that her boyfriend wants to break up with her. Maisie decides to take back control of her life and, by doing so, risks her own well-being, though a new acquaintance at group therapy helps her find unexpected ways to reengage with the world. While teens with injuries will definitely identify with Maisie's deep sadness and grief, Sheinmel's prose is accessible to a wide range of readers who, for whatever reason, find themselves struggling with differences. A touching reminder that real change is rarely skin deep. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

The House.

Lauren, Christina (author).

Oct. 2015. 384p. Simon & Schuster, hardcover, \$17.99 (9781481413718). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 1, 2015 (*Booklist*).

Delilah's return to her sleepy Kansas hometown is an unpleasant one, until she runs into her old crush Gavin. Delilah wastes no time getting closer to see if the chemistry's mutual, but Gavin has some secrets to hide, and none as big as House: his ever-vigilant, protective, and vindictive guardian. Ever since Gavin's parents disappeared when he was a toddler, House—literally the house in which he lives—has been his whole world. Clothes appear in his closet, food is lovingly cooked and served, and Piano invites him to learn a few chords whenever he wants. But this paranormal creep-fest is just getting started: House decides that Delilah is out to steal Gavin, and she is not happy. Some crucial characters aren't as well delineated as they could be. But Delilah and Gavin's relationship is intense, and House itself is an impressive character, the force that pushes along this unique portrayal of an abusive relationship. It will send chills down your spine—or worse if House gets angry. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

The Sixth Man.

Feinstein, John (author).

Sept. 2015. 304p. Knopf, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780385753500); Knopf, library edition, \$19.99 (9780385753517); Knopf, e-book (9780385753524). Grades 6-9.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 5, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

Alex Myers returns in the second installment of the Triple Threat trilogy, and this time he is aiming for the hoop. After a heart-wrenching defeat in postseason play with the football team, Alex has missed the first few weeks of basketball practice and must start as a JV player. He quickly proves his worth and moves up to varsity, where he and superstar newbie Max Bellotti turn heads. But things aren't as simple off the court, as the team grumbles about older players being displaced by these young upstarts, the coach draws criticism by dating a player's mom, and the school community explodes over the news that Max is gay. In true Feinstein fashion, the game provides a reason for Alex and his teammates to put differences aside in favor of pulling together. The realistic social situations are interspersed with sports strategy, practices, and plenty of action. Alex's romance with reporter Christine provides an interesting assist to Max as he draws strength from other out athletes and publishes his story in the school newspaper. Fans will cheer for more of Alex's story as he inches closer to spring and the dugout. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Edge: Collected Stories.**Kerr, M. E. (author).**

Sept. 2015. 172p. Open Road, paperback, \$11.99 (9781504009911); Open Road, e-book (9781504009898). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 15, 2015 (*Booklist*).

Teens will find much in common with the characters in this collection of stories spanning back to 1984. Kerr's finely crafted tales capture both real-life and otherworldly dilemmas in tones both earnest and satirical. The traditional teen love story is turned on its head in "Do You Want My Opinion?," where sex is practically mandatory and sharing one's innermost feelings taboo. Deep questions of inheritance plague the protagonist of "Like Father, Like Son" when a foul-mouthed kid comes to live with a family who doesn't share his proclivities. Perhaps most haunting of all, "I Will Not Think of Maine" addresses the aftermath of love and death. Stories are told with the immediacy of youth but also with a slight cushion of reflection, just enough so that young readers can begin to appreciate the insight that distance brings. Educators should take careful note of this collection, as the issues raised by the resolution of their situations (or lack thereof) will get even the most reluctant readers chatting. Kerr's unique characters are not easily left behind. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Hunter.**Lackey, Mercedes (author).**

Sept. 2015. 384p. Hyperion, hardcover, \$17.99 (9781484707845). Grades 8-11.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 1, 2015 (*Booklist*).

Lackey tries a reboot of dystopian fiction with the story of Joy, a Hunter who has found herself in a perilous situation. A biblical-level event disrupts Earth, and creatures once thought to be merely legend now plague the planet. The religious believe it's Revelation, but everyone else just wants to avoid being obliterated. Joy's monster-fighting training serves her well when she is called from her village to the capital city, where she stars in her own reality show and puts on a display to dazzle ordinary Cits. But as more and more monsters pour through from the Otherside, Joy allies herself with unlikely fellow Hunters, not all of whom prove trustworthy. If readers can persevere through the initial world building, they are in for a treat. Joy's abilities make the battle scenes really spark, and despite many tests, her integrity remains intact, garnering her both friends and foes. Spirituality, psychic abilities, propaganda, magic, monsters, and mayhem make this a book with a dozen hooks to snag readers and win Lackey even more fans. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Midnight Dolls.**Sullivan, Kiki (author).**

Sept. 2015. 336p. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray, paperback, \$9.99 (9780062281500). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published August 31, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

The stakes are higher than ever for Eveny and her zandara-wielding Carrefour queens after her father returns. The discovery of her andaba magic heritage means she is twice as powerful, the heir to two magical offshoots of voodoo, and an appealing target for the Main de Lumière, who consider Eveny's death the way to end magic altogether. The atmosphere becomes more Caribbean-inflected than Cajun, as readers learn more about the andabatradition and Eveny's role as the first andabaqueen, rather than a traditional king. Weaving in a smoldering romance with Caleb, Eveny's protector, Sullivan's words cast a spell to make readers flip pages faster than before.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Shades of Doon.**Corp, Carey (author) and Lorie Langdon (author).**

Sept. 2015. 352p. Blink, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780310742357). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published August 31, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

What could be worse than Vee and Mackenna having to battle the forces of evil inside the magical kingdom of Doon? Being cast out, of course. The BFFs are face-to-face with their former lives as it appears that they and their princes have been exiled from Doon, and no amount of musical theater or popular culture has prepared them for hunky Scottish rogues inside a modern-day Cabela's. Between fealty ceremonies to draw out traitors, promises of handfasting, and more, readers will thrill to the drama and intrigue of this latest installment in the Dooniverse.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Juniors.**Hemmings, Kai Hart (author).**

Sept. 2015. 320p. Putnam, hardcover, \$18.99 (9780399173608). Grades 9-12.

REVIEW. Lea's mother is a quasifamous actress with a new role that has led the family to move back to Hawaii. Despite her mother's profession, they are hardly flush with funds, so it's a bit of a culture shock when Lea finds herself living in the guest house of an incredibly wealthy classmate, Whitney West, and attending a first-rate high school. Hemmings allows the action to deliberately unfold, letting Lea show readers what it's like to feel out of place in so many ways. Not only is she not as rich as those around her, she is also a hapa teen—only part Hawaiian—and is drawn to Whitney's brother despite the obvious chasm of difference between them. Friendship and romance brush cheek to cheek in a story that deals frankly with race, class, and culture while also managing to wonderfully portray the luminous, dreamlike setting of Hawaii. A perfect complement to the shelves of readers who follow Jenny Han and E. Lockhart. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Thirteen Days of Midnight.

Hunt, Leo (author).

Aug. 2015. 336p. Candlewick, hardcover, \$13 (9780763678654). Grades 9-12.

REVIEW. First published July 14, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

Luke Manchett believes he has cashed in when his television-star father dies and leaves him a large inheritance. The catch is killer: Luke's estranged father was raising and possessing souls, and they are displeased with their continued enforced servitude. Since it's almost Halloween and their powers are heightened, they conspire to free themselves by any means necessary. Luke's best hope is Elza, a strange classmate with second sight who agrees to help him flush out the souls and rescue his possessed mother. As readers learn the true price his father paid for fame and fortune, they will eagerly follow Luke and Elza as they rip open the layers separating them from the "Deadside" and discover what it takes to put a life right again. Hunt builds suspense as the days to Halloween melt away and creates a sharp contrast between the mundane details of Luke's pedestrian school life with the fresh horror he sees as the veil between the living and the dead grows ever thinner. A solid pick for paranormal enthusiasts.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Trouble Is a Friend of Mine.

Tromly, Stephanie (author).

Aug. 2015. 352p. Penguin/Kathy Dawson, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780525428404). Grades 9-12.

REVIEW. First published July, 2015 (*Booklist*).

When Zoe's parents get divorced, she moves with her mom to a new place and plans to double down in public school so she can transfer to a private prep, but her plans go awry when Digby enters her life. Before Zoe knows it, she is committing vandalism and break-ins and combing the town with Digby in an attempt to find a girl from their school who has gone missing. Digby seems like a criminal mastermind, but his motivation is personal—he believes his sister's long-ago kidnapping is connected to their missing classmate. With acerbic banter and a healthy dose of high-school high jinks, screenwriter Tromly weaves together traditional elements of teen stories to create a *Breakfast Club* for a new century. Writing with a light hand, she uses humor to keep the story afloat even as darkness descends. Although Digby is "done being the Boy Whose Sister Was Taken," Zoe has much to learn about herself and her own family. The town's secrets and lies are a real draw, but readers will be most interested in the friendships and romance that develop.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

What You Left Behind.

Verdi, Jessica (author).

Aug. 2015. 368p. Sourcebooks/Fire, hardcover, \$16.99 (9781492614401); Sourcebooks/Fire, paperback, \$9.99 (9781492608745). Grades 10-12.

REVIEW. First published June 1, 2015 (*Booklist*).

Ryden is trying to hold down a part-time job and a place on the varsity soccer team while caring for his infant daughter. His girlfriend, Meg, has died of cancer, and his guilt about getting her pregnant casts a pall over his entire existence. Despite Ryden's need to hide the truth about his life, he makes a powerful connection with an amazing new coworker named Joni—meanwhile discovering that Meg left behind messages in journals hidden shortly before her death. As he uncovers more and more of Meg's secrets, the past threatens the future he's worked so hard to build. Verdi ratchets up the drama and tension by planting one of Ryden's feet firmly in the past and the other in an uncertain, perhaps unrealistic future. His belief in a Division I college athletic career begins to shatter under the weight of homework, cash-flow problems, day-care issues, and his fragile emotional state. Teens will be hooked by the premise but will stick with Ryden and his friends in this all-too-real portrait of a modern family.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Calling Maggie May.**Anonymous (author).**

June 2015. 272p. Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse, paperback, \$9.99 (9781481439015). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 21, 2015 (Booklist Online).

Maggie is an alienated, reluctant honors student who stumbles into prostitution as a way to feel love and a sense of belonging. Shocking and similar to books such as *Go Ask Alice* and *A Child Called "It"*, this "found journal" documents Maggie's descent into a teenage prostitution ring through her desire to befriend Ada, a glamorous classmate. Maggie's mother is a two-dimensional Asian stereotype who insists she achieve high grades and actually spurs her journaling as a suggested way to track her progress in college applications. Her pressure drives Maggie to seek friends and acceptance elsewhere, and when Ada introduces her to a former client, Maggie feels transformed by his intimate attentions. But it's the money that keeps Maggie's interest. Feeling she has little control over her life, prostitution at least allows her a measure of independence. Teens will pass the book around for the salacious details of Maggie's new profession, and some readers may inadvertently conclude that controlling parents will drive you to stand on street corners. A cautionary tale that will get teens talking.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Stars Never Rise.**Vincent, Rachel (author).**

June 2015. 368p. Delacorte, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780385744171); Delacorte, library edition, \$20.99 (9780375991530); Delacorte, e-book (9780385383936). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 29, 2015 (Booklist Online).

Nina Kane struggles to provide for herself and her illicitly pregnant sister, believing their mother to be in the throes of addiction—but Mom, it turns out, is a demon. In a grim, unforgiving future where the Church rules with a titanium grip, Nina fears they will lose their home, until she discovers that she is an exorcist, able to drive out demons with a blow of her red-hot fist. The plot picks up steam when the Church discovers Nina's powers and scares her into going on the run, where she joins a small tribe of fellow undercover exorcists. While Vincent develops Nina's voice and her opposition to the Church's cruelty, it feels a bit unfair when her love interest turns out to be a permanently unhomed soul, able to leap from body to body via benign possession. Still, questioning teens who like a robust tale of good versus evil will find much to enjoy here, including a fully realized religious sect that echoes other fictional totalitarian governments. A devil of a thriller.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Between Us and the Moon.**Maizel, Rebecca (author).**

June 2015. 384p. HarperTeen, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780062327611). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 15, 2015 (Booklist).

Sarah "Bean" Levin has the best worst summer ever. While she is in the process of applying for an important science scholarship, stinging from a breakup with her childhood sweetheart, and turning 16, her family is going through growing pains of their own. Her mom has lost her job, and rich but cranky Aunt Nancy is financing the family's future—her way. Accused of being overly academic, Sarah initiates the Scarlett Experiment, deciding to dress, act, and play like her popular older sister in hope of reinventing herself. She meets and falls in love with Andrew, an older guy with a sad past seeking his own escape, but he doesn't know that Sarah has lied to him about her age. Maizel does a fine job of showing a family in flux from the perspective of a teen taking her first steps toward adulthood. Teen readers who can't quite figure out the social scene will identify with Sarah's tumultuous feelings about her peers and family, and her ultimate realization that logic can't solve matters of the human heart.

— Erin Downey Howerton

The Truth about My Success.**Sheldon, Dyan (author).**

June 2015. 352p. Candlewick, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780763672720). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 1, 2015 (Booklist).

Sheldon's latest outing mashes elements of *Pretty Woman* with *The Prince and the Pauper* to create a twenty-first-

century answer to *The Slums of Beverly Hills*. Oona Guinness is a poor teen with a grief-stricken, alcoholic father and the absurdly bad luck to resemble Hollywood wild child Paloma Rose, whose squeaky-clean teenybopper image is swirling down the toilet as she tantrums and parties her way to oblivion. Paloma's handlers coerce Oona into swapping places with the star, solving their cash-flow problems while Paloma is sent to a rehab-style dude ranch. Sheldon deftly reveals the inner lives of both teens, troubled on either end of the social and financial spectrum, as they are affected by choices made by the adults around them. Paloma comes off like a combination of Lindsay Lohan and Miley Cyrus at their most troubled; Oona, meanwhile, uses her quiet skepticism and warmth to vastly improve upon Paloma's reputation. Recommend this to teens who appreciate wry commentary on contemporary life.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Swept Away.

Dalton, Michelle (author).

May 2015. 320p. Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse, hardcover, \$17.99 (9781481436090); Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse, paperback, \$10.99 (9781481436083). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 15, 2015 (*Booklist*).

Mandy is a Mainer through and through, right down to her love of blueberries and the local lighthouse. When her mother recruits her to volunteer at the lighthouse, and her best friend heads off to drama camp, Mandy is left solo, hoping she will meet a handsome visitor and get swept off her feet for the summer. When Oliver arrives, Mandy knows he is the one. Unfortunately, he is the grandson of local weirdo Freaky Framingham, and Mandy also feels like she can't be herself around Oliver—because who would like the real Mandy? Dalton does a fine job of layering a summer beach-community romance with more substantial fare, such as Mandy's struggle to reveal her true self to her crush and the financial realities of operating a historic lighthouse. In the end, Mandy is entrusted with a secret that is worth keeping, and she is able to take stock of all that has happened to plan for the future. A romance with a heaping helping of personal development for readers, who are likely to become fans of all Dalton's Sixteenth Summer novels.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Wild Hearts.

Burkhart, Jessica (author).

May 2015. 304p. Bloomsbury, hardcover, \$17.99 (9781619632585); Bloomsbury, paperback, \$9.99 (978619632592). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 24, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

A cowboy and a developer's daughter lock horns in the latest teen romance from the publisher's If Only line. When Brie and her family arrive in Lost Springs, Wyoming, to build another hotel in her father's extended-stay empire, locals rebel at the idea that the new development will disrupt local fauna and occupy land used by wild mustangs. Local guy Logan bumps into Brie, and their initial disagreement slowly turns into something that looks a lot like love. As Brie begins to see Wyoming through Logan's eyes, everything changes. However, her father is completely opposed to their new relationship, and the couple must get creative to find ways to be together. Peppered with authentic details about ranch life, this will have readers sharing Brie's delight in the wind-swept landscape—and, of course, Logan. A romance that thunders along with hoofbeats and heartbeats.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Halfway Perfect.

Cross, Julie (author) and Mark Perini (author).

May 2015. 384p. Sourcebooks/Fire, paperback, \$9.99 (9781402297199). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 9, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

After model Eve's sleazy agent took advantage of her, she disappeared from the scene, seeking recuperation. College has helped her focus on the other side of the lens, and now an internship offers her a chance to start over—in the business she so recently fled. Eve has doubts about plunging back into the dark corners of the fashion industry, but when she meets newcomer Alex, she feels like she has seen his story play out before in her own life. Cross teams up with model and industry insider Perini to bring the steamy, soapy, provocative world of modeling to life, asking readers to consider the price of fame. A staged relationship between Alex and his costar will make many teens question the veracity of their favorite celebrity couples, and pulses will quicken as Alex and Eve narrate their stories in alternating chapters, spiraling ever closer to each other. A behind-the-scenes look at modeling mixed with romantic tension.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Fury.

James, Steven (author).

Apr. 2015. 382p. Amazon/Skyscape, paperback, \$9.99 (9781477827468). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 21, 2015 (Booklist Online).

The blurs are back, and this time, the stakes are even higher as 16-year-old Daniel fights to solve more mysteries in small-town Wisconsin. After a classmate was murdered in *Blur* (2014), Daniel suffered from disturbing hallucinations—or was he actually being contacted from the afterlife? Now the blurs, as he calls them, have returned, just as more mysterious activity threatens his family. This time, Daniel has a sidekick in new girlfriend Nicole, and the two of them set out to discover both who is killing wolves in the area and who has assaulted his father. Someone has his or her eyes on Daniel, and he must discover if the watcher is a friend or foe in the deadly race to find a killer. A solid middle act in the *Blur* trilogy, this convincing mix of realistic and paranormal elements will attract those looking for a teen sleuth with modern appeal. Readers may have a hard time waiting for the final installment after this one.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Summer by Summer.

Burch, Heather (author).

Apr. 2015. 288p. Blink, paperback, \$12.99 (9780310729631). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 21, 2015 (Booklist Online).

Eighteen-year-old Summer has an unbelievable nannying gig for the summer—she's going to Belize! But the family includes more than just the younger son, Joshie, who needs minding. There's also his big brother Bray, just her age, who clashes with Summer from the very beginning. Their season in paradise takes a more sinister turn when they must work together to survive being stranded on a remote island. Despite the Christian context, this romance has some steamy moments as Summer and Bray fall for each other. Fans of Burch's *Halflings* fantasy series will likely follow her into this realistic foray, told in alternating chapters, as Bray and Summer struggle not just to survive but to follow their convictions.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Longing for Normal.

Pattison, Darcy (author).

Mar. 2015. 214p. Mims, paperback, \$13.99 (9781629440422); Mims, hardcover, (9781629440415). Grades 6-8.

[REVIEW](#). First published March 10, 2015 (Booklist Online).

Two foster kids join forces to try and secure their forever families while keeping hope alive in the form of a sourdough bread starter. Eliot had three days of happiness before his adoptive father suddenly died, leaving behind a newlywed widow who isn't sure she is ready to be a mom. Alli is bounced back into the system after an accident nearly causes her long-term foster mom to lose her unborn child. The unlikely friends bond over Eliot's deceased dad's idea to raise money for the school, using a pyramid scheme to pass along sourdough bread starter that students' families will use to bake and sell bread to fund a new playground. While parts of the plot are merely sketched—the school doesn't seem desperate for a new playground, for instance—Pattison's characters provide a reason to keep reading. In voices old before their time, due to years in the system, they describe their desperate attempts to stay relevant to the adults in their lives. A rare book featuring foster kids in realistic scenarios.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Things I'll Never Say: Stories about Our Secret Selves.

Angel, Ann (editor).

Mar. 2015. 320p. Candlewick, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780763673079). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published February 15, 2015 (*Booklist*).

This new collection of short stories about secrets is an ideal combination of form and subject. Edited by award-winning biographer Angel (*Janis Joplin: Rise Up Singing*, 2010), this brings together 15 acclaimed voices from across the YA publishing field, all of them offering distinct, powerful, and often unexpected stories of teens who discover unexpected truths, reveal hidden secrets, and keep other things safely hidden as they continue on their journeys. It's

an impressively unusual spread of authors, including Ron Koertge, Chris Lynch, Katy Moran, and Cynthia Leitich Smith. Many of the stories speak to the contemporary lives of today's teens, while some, such as Zoë Marriott's lovely "Storm Clouds Fleeing from the Wind," evoke other times and places. The balance and diversity that Angel has achieved here is lovely, and teens who pick this up will likely find a bit of herself or himself—or at least a friend—inside these pages. A collection to share widely. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Disappear Home.

Hurwitz, Laura (author).

Mar. 2015. 272p. Albert Whitman, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780807524688). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published February 1, 2015 (*Booklist*).

Shoshanna, her mother, Ella, and her little sister, Mara, live precarious lives at Sweet Earth Farm, where her parents have founded a chaos-ridden commune. The cruel behavior of the girls' father, Adam, drives Ella to steal the commune's car and get help from an old friend. The family, meanwhile, is terrified—there is nothing worse than an angry Adam. Hurwitz's debut novel is full of great sensory details about life in 1970, from Ella's chain-smoking to the hippie funk of the commune and the feel of harvesting vegetables on the farm where they seek shelter. Shoshanna and Mara are wizened by what they have witnessed and haunted by drug rages, orgies, and casual violence. This is no tale of hippie paradise: Hurwitz tells it like it was and doesn't shy away from the bitter portions of the peace-and-love revolution. The threat of Adam's return pulls the story taut and drives the narrative relentlessly forward. A bittersweet coming-of-age story buoyed by Shoshanna's small triumphs as she learns to stand tall despite the circumstances. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Bet Your Life.

Casey, Jane (author).

Feb. 2015. 336p. St. Martin's/Griffin, hardcover, \$18.99 (9781250040664). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 21, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

The kettle is on the Aga, so don't miss a morning cuppa with Jess Tennant, who's determined not to become "Port Sentinel's answer to Nancy Drew." Yet here she is, spending the dark, murky nights of fall poking around the edges of a fellow teen's brutal beating, attempting to get to the bottom of what looks like very nasty business. As with her cousin Freya's death in *How to Fall* (2014), Jess holds far more cards than she realizes. Casey's latest teen sleuthfest showcases the tangled web of interpersonal connections in a modern-day version of Agatha Christie's St. Mary Mead, home to Miss Marple. The crimes of passion in Port Sentinel, however, involve distinctly twenty-first-century technology. Another fine and thoroughly British mystery.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Kalahari.

Khoury, Jessica (author).

Feb. 2015. 368p. Penguin/Razorbill, hardcover, \$17.99 (9781595147653). Grades 8-11.

[REVIEW](#). First published January 23, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

A safari trip goes utterly wrong for a group of teens struggling to survive in the Kalahari as they discover secrets that threaten the natural world. Sarah's mourning the mysterious, recent death of her zoologist mother as she and her father host five teen guests at their research outpost far into the bush. When her father and best friend take off in search of poachers, the teens are abandoned in one of the harshest regions on earth without adequate supplies or preparation. As they search for Sarah's father, what they find is mind-boggling: animals that seem to have been infected with a virus that causes them to turn metallic and a lab hiding secrets that are now out of control. Khoury builds a relentless plot and seeds the narrative with a deadly mystery that echoes themes of her first novel, *Origin* (2012). The science-fiction elements and setting evoke *Jurassic Park's* themes of human meddling in nature, while touches of teen angst and love keep the book realistic and broaden the appeal. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Dreamfire.

Alloway, Kit (author).

Feb. 2015. 352p. St. Martin's/Griffin, hardcover, \$18.99 (9781250063663). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published January 12, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

"Dream walking" is something Joshlyn has done all her life, but when confronted by mysterious forces within the Dream, she is called to fight an evil that threatens to tear the world apart. Josh leads dual lives: one at school and another at home, where her family and others collaborate to assist dreamers in ending their nightmares. These dream

walkers uncover long-kept secrets when a pair of gas-masked men gain the ability to escape the Dream itself. Alloway's characters leap off the page, especially Josh and her apprentice Will Kansas. One minute they are scanning the databases on the top-secret dream walker website, and the next they are resisting their undeniable attraction, while delving into the technology that killed Josh's loved ones. With backstory aplenty and enough real science to intrigue fantasy newcomers, this will make readers look askance at teens they see yawning—have they been up all night battling the innermost fears of humanity? Here's hoping Alloway has a sequel close at hand.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Soulprint.

Miranda, Megan (author).

Feb. 2015. 336p. Bloomsbury, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780802737748). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published January 12, 2015 (Booklist Online).

In a world where souls have been scientifically proven to reestablish themselves in newborns within hours of their previous owner's death, Alina Chase was born under a bad sign. Her soul previously belonged to the fugitive June Calahan, whose crimes have led Alina to spend her life isolated and imprisoned for fear that she will continue June's work. When one of her former guards breaks her out, Alina is on the run and determined to prove that she isn't just another June. Teens will thrill to the suspense that Miranda coils around a solid plot where corruption and blackmail slowly reveal themselves to be the driving factor behind "scientific" studies into the transfer of soul attributes. It's a unique spin on recent dystopian reads featuring genetic heritability, and it will fascinate teens already enthralled with questions about what they might do with their lives. A surprising new sf thriller with just enough of a touch of romance.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

I Predict a Riot.

Bruton, Catherine (author).

Jan. 2015. 304p. IPG/Egmont, paperback, \$12.99 (9781405267199). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published January 23, 2015 (Booklist Online).

Maggie goes places on Coronation Road that her posh MP mum wouldn't, and her video camera gives her a feeling of safety and distance from the poverty and violence that permeates the neighborhood. This time, however, she has filmed too much. We know from the start that one of her friends will die in the riots that explode that summer, but are left to discover if it's her new buddy Tokes, attempting to escape gangs; Little Pea, court jester of the Starfish gang; Ishmael, Maggie's crush; or vicious Shiv, ruthless leader of the Starfish gang. Bruton's characters will grab readers with the immediacy of their desires and emotions, which are amplified by a case of police brutality. The parallels between the 2011 English riots (which inspired this story) and recent 2014 American riots are remarkable, and readers will gladly work through the British slang to hear the voices of their neighbors, friends, and selves. Maggie's video camera seems to represent all the stories that aren't told in the media, making this searing tale one that will get readers talking.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Tracers.

Howard, J. J. (author).

Jan. 2015. 288p. Putnam, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780399173738). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published January 23, 2015 (Booklist Online).

Cam's dad is long gone, and his mother is dead, but the Chinese mafia is Cam's biggest problem—or is it? Cam feels at home on two wheels as a bike messenger, but he is not pulling in enough money to pay his debt to the Tong. When he crashes his bike in a run-in with a girl doing impossible tricks in the street, Cam's more than intrigued. He goes all-in with Nikki and her crew, learning the sport of parkour and using their athletic tricks to pull off heists. The street scenes sparkle with romance as Cam falls for Nikki, but theirs isn't the only tension as the Tong threaten Cam when he doesn't produce enough to get rid of his debt, and Cam's new crew starts to reveal their true colors. Snappy action scenes, tender stolen moments, and bold parkour moves keep the story flowing. If that's not enough, check out the upcoming movie's trailer, starring Taylor Lautner. Just like Cam, readers will ask themselves: what would I risk if I had nothing to lose?— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Hellhole.

Damico, Gina (author).

Jan. 2015. 368p. HMH, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780544307100). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published January 1, 2015 (*Booklist*).

Max Kilgore is in a hot mess. He is already stressed out about his sick mom, their unpaid bills, and his crappy after-school job, but then a minor act of shoplifting leads him to accidentally unleash one of the 666 Satans upon the world.

Burgundy Cluttermuck, Satan-at-large, demands a domicile from Max, but their bargaining gets out of control when Max promises things he can't deliver in order to extract a heart transplant for his mother. Along the way, he connects with a girl who has a reputation for devil worshiping, and the two team up to rid the town of Burg once and for all. Max is definitely an unlikely hero as he bounces from reconnaissance mission to part-time job and back again, all while trying to keep his mother in the dark about the devil in their basement and struggling to deal with a developing crush that he has no idea how to act on. As it turns out, the devil has a lot in common with teenagers (at least when it comes to junk food proclivities), and Max discovers that he is able to prevail when the chips are really down. Readers will howl, especially when the "cross-generational human-devil double-date dinner" scene arrives.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Doable: The Girls' Guide to Accomplishing Just about Anything.

Reber, Deborah (author).

Jan. 2015. 208p. Beyond Words/Simon Pulse, hardcover, \$19.99 (9781582704678); Beyond Words/Simon Pulse, paperback, \$12.99 (9781582704661). Grades 8-12. 158.0835.

[REVIEW](#). First published December 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

Today's girls, often overwhelmed by the amount of stuff on their plate, might feel a bit better after reading this can-do empowerment title—success, perhaps, is close at hand. Writing in a clear, accessible style, Reber demonstrates the importance of creating a plan to clearly articulate reasonable and achievable goals, break down projects into smaller chunks, and avoid being derailed by setbacks and obstacles. Chapter titles such as "Develop Support Systems," "Deal with Setbacks," and "Deliver the Goods" are self-descriptive of the straightforward advice. Anecdotes from famous leaders and high achievers of both genders are neatly tucked into the spaces between tips, adding to the material that sharp-eyed readers can use. With plenty of examples from the lives of actual teens and twentysomethings, this guide has the potential to help excelling girls turn that corner into superstardom. A nice resource for adult mentors to keep on hand, too.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

The Name of the Blade.

Marriott, Zoe (author).

Nov. 2014. 368p. Candlewick, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780763674168). Grades 8-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published November 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

Mio Yamato's grandfather died before he could explain the mysterious katana in the attic, and although Mio enjoyed Japanese fairy tales as a kid, she's way more interested in the sword's potential to spice up her outfit for a big party. Unfortunately for Mio, unleashing the katana on London means opening a portal that releases a (superhot) Japanese warrior named Shinobu and calls up the gods and monsters of Japanese legend to battle over this mysterious sword. Marriott gifts Mio with a bit of uncertainty and typical teen angst, tempering the hard edge of the high-stakes-action scenes with convincing, swoon-worthy moments between Mio and Shinobu. Fans of Japanese lore will appreciate the wily *kitsune* tribespeople, who agree to help this unlikely trio, and there's enough nail-biting action and near misses in the romance department to keep every reader on their toes. First in a trilogy originally published in the UK, this will win American fans who like their fantasy urban, their romances mysterious, and their swords well sharpened. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Crashland.

Williams, Sean (author).

Nov. 2014. 480p. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780062203243); HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray, e-book, \$17.99 (9780062203267). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published September 15, 2014 (*Booklist*).

Williams returns to the girl who broke the world and gives her a whole new set of complications in this thrilling futuristic follow-up to *Twinmaker* (2013). After bringing the planet to a screeching halt, Clair Hill begins to see the horror that the replication machines have wrought. An infinity of duplicates swarm the earth, wreaking chaos and mayhem while Clair attempts to find Q, the artificial intelligence that could save them all. Williams explodes the narrative he set up in the first novel with deep philosophical questions about the power of technology. While some use d-mat tech to heal people, others struggle to figure out to whom the consciousness inside a duplicate belongs, and still others realize that duplication is an excellent way to consolidate and maintain political might. The story powers on to a relentless, shocking conclusion that will leave readers howling for more. Recommend alongside other sci-fi titles with ethical complexity and logical quandaries, like William Sleator's *The Last Universe* (2005), Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* (2007) and Mary E. Pearson's *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* (2008).

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: An octopus-armed marketing campaign is in the works to help Williams, a best-selling writer for adults, capture a wide youth readership. Expect some demand from grown-up readers, too.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Dunces Rock.

Jaimet, Kate (author).

Oct. 2014. 224p. Orca, paperback, \$9.95 (9781459805859). Grades 4-7.

[REVIEW](#). First published November 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

The club from *Dunces Anonymous* (2009) roars back when their school cuts drama and music to direct funds to the hockey team. Even though his father rejects his musical ambitions, Wilmot obtains a secondhand guitar from his teen neighbor Headcase, who attempts to induct Wilmot and the rest of the Dunces into the mysteries of rock 'n' roll. In their attempts to support one another, the friends get into wacky situations that are wholly believable for this age group, such as Wang's bright idea to insert Magnolia's baby brother into a Salvation Army drop box to rescue the aforementioned guitar, and Josh's attempts to gather intel on Principal Hale by pulling a mean prank on a classmate. Jaimet keeps the story fast-paced and funny, giving each friend a distinct challenge to overcome while they work together to bring drama and music back to their school. With a subtle Canadian flavor, the Dunces' latest escapades prove that friends can accomplish anything as long as they've got one another's backs.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Waterfall.

Kate, Lauren (author).

Oct. 2014. 400p. Delacorte, hardcover, \$18.99 (9780385742672); Delacorte, library edition, \$21.99 (9780375990700); Delacorte, e-book, \$18.99 (9780307976321). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 22, 2014 (*Booklist Online*).

Eureka Boudreaux finds herself facing off with Atlas, the evil ruler of newly risen Atlantis, in this sequel to *Teardrop* (2013). Legend has it that a strange, unique Seedbearer named Solon can help her learn to defeat Atlas, but there are many barriers in her way. Eureka's hopes to locate Solon depend on Ander, a Seedbearer with amazing allure who continues to pose a threat to Eureka's bond with Brooks. This has a less satisfying love story than the first volume, and readers new to the series may be confused by plot twists and the massive cast of characters. Still, avid fans will appreciate the story's oceanic, surging highs and debilitating lows, and Kate's legions of fans will dive in eagerly. —

Erin Downey Howerton

Girl on a Wire.

Bond, Gwenda (author).

Oct. 2014. 360p. Amazon/Skyscape, hardcover, \$16.99 (9781477847824). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published July 18, 2014 (*Booklist Online*).

Jules' future is up in the air, and so is she: as a member of the Amazing Maronis, she has inherited her father's wire-walking act. The Maronis languish on the small-time circuit due to an old feud with the Flying Garcias. When Jules forces her father to join the Cirque American and improve the family fortunes, she discovers that there might be some truth to her grandmother Nan's dire tarot readings. Sabotage and superstition causes Jules to question whether she's seeing sleight of hand or real, malevolent magic. Then, when Romeo (Remy) Garcia collides with Jules, sparks fly. Their forbidden love blooms as they team up to discover the identity of the saboteur out to ruin Jules' act, and each plot twist raises the stakes for the Maroni clan. With a skillful blend of modern-day circus tales, classically ill-fated love, and mystery, Bond gives readers scenes from the wire that will make them sweat alongside Jules as she steps out with no net, and teens will thrill to Jules' adventures as the Princess of the Air. —

Erin Downey Howerton

Invisible.

Metcalfe, Dawn (author).

Sept. 2014. 384p. HarlequinTeen, paperback, \$9.99 (9780373211074). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published January 12, 2015 (*Booklist Online*).

In this follow-up to *Indelible* (2013), the Council has sworn to protect Joy, following her defeat of the evil Aniseed, yet an adversary threatened by her abilities has arisen, and the Bailiwick gives Joy options that she can't fully accept. This lush romance deepens further as Joy attempts to use her talent for removing signature marks, promising to maintain

her status as a free human so that she and Ink can preserve their unstoppable love. Romance fans will melt for this new tale of the Twixt. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Color Song.

Strauss, Victoria (author).

Sept. 2014. 338p. Amazon/Skyscape, hardcover, \$17.99 (9781477847787). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 22, 2014 (Booklist Online).

Giulia, a young aspirant in a convent who produces beautiful paintings, struggles with an obligation to her mentor while trying to remain true to herself. This continuation of the tale started in *Passion Blue* (2012) focuses on the loss of Giulia's mentor, Sister Humilita, whose dying bequest to Giulia was the recipe to make Passion Blue paint. The magical paint leads Giulia into danger, and a disguise—to pose as a boy, blend into Venetian society, and make her own way forward rather than subject herself to a lifetime of imprisonment in the convent. Strauss lets Giulia's voice carry the story, allowing Renaissance Italy unfold through the details of studios and the aspiring artists who frequented them. While the paint is symbolic of Giulia's blossoming inner life, her discoveries in the outer world while posing as a boy are equally interesting. Readers will identify with Giulia's determination and doubt in equal measure in this story, which is classically romantic and lush as a painting of the time. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

The Dolls.

Sullivan, Kiki (author).

Sept. 2014. 384p. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray, paperback, \$9.99 (9780062281487). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 22, 2014 (Booklist Online).

What Eveny doesn't know about her mysterious Louisiana hometown may just kill her. Raised by her aunt in New York following her mother's suicide, Eveny is baffled by the upper-crust atmosphere of Carrefour, where her new private school's reigning, glamour-puss queen bees, the Dolls, practice zandara, a form of voodoo, and run the town as they cast charms for beauty, love, money, and all manner of frivolous things. Eveny discovers that she has inherited her mother's role in their circle now that she's 17, and that zandara operates on the principle of balance: every charm cast to keep Carrefour prosperous siphons from the neighboring people of the quickly disintegrating Péripherié. When the Dolls want to throw an epic party and expose the town despite the threat of a zandara-hunting clan, Eveny becomes vulnerable. The setting and plot are the highlights here, with a moody atmosphere that suffocates the reader, along with Eveny, who is unused to living in a gated community. Although a love triangle creates tension, the story really shines when Eveny weighs the moral implications of her deeds and must choose a path for herself. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Destined for Doon.

Langdon, Lorie (author) and Carey Corp (author).

Sept. 2014. 368p. Blink, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780310742333). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

In this follow-up to *Doon* (2013), readers can once again get swept away into the land where hunky Highlanders tempt best friends Vee and Mackenna while they attempt to thwart an ancient curse. Vee is now the queen, and her hold on the kingdom is tenuous at best. Kenna ditches the theater to help Vee and to see if her Calling really means she's destined for Prince Duncan (who is mysteriously rejecting her!). Another involving, romantic fling for teens eager to find their own Brigadoon. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Stupid.

Firmston, Kim (author).

Sept. 2014. 208p. Lorimer, paperback, \$9.95 (9781459406117). Grades 8-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published September 10, 2014 (Booklist Online).

Martin feels stupid most of the time, but not when he's behind the lens of his camera. Filmmaking is the only outlet Martin has in his constricted life, where his father hurls insults at him and suspects him of taking illegal drugs despite his efforts in school. But then Martin meets Stick, a foster teen who's into parkour—the gravity-defying urban sport of free running—and everything changes. Not only does Stick help Martin identify his problem as dyslexia but he inspires Martin to piece together a video of parkour for a competition that just might show his dad that he's talented and intelligent. Firmston's pairing of parkour and dyslexia is perfect, and the descriptions of the sport will likely inspire many readers to queue up some videos on YouTube to try it themselves. The portrayals of a kid's experiences with learning differences are spot-on, and a clear story line leads the reader through Martin's difficulties with nail-biting suspense, both at school and on the tops of abandoned buildings. A compelling high/low reader with wide teen appeal. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Evil Librarian.**Knudsen, Michelle (author).**

Sept. 2014. 352p. Candlewick, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780763660383). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published September 9, 2014 ([Booklist Online](#)).

High school can feel like hell some days, especially when you see the new librarian's ritual summoning circle, or spot his giant wingspan unfurl during study hall. Initially, Cynthia and Annie have no idea that the fantastically hot Mr. Gabriel, their new high-school librarian, is actually a minor demon planning to soul-suck their school into submission to conquer a demon throne. When Annie is targeted by Mr. Gabriel to be his human consort, it's up to Cyn to save the day. Cyn must carve time for reconnaissance and research around her busy school schedule, and, at the same time, she struggles to stay focused around her own crush, a dreamy fellow thespian who is starring in their school production of *Sweeney Todd*. The only thing buying time for the teens before a fiery death is the musical, which, unsurprisingly, is a favorite among demons. There's plenty to like here: a budding will-they-won't-they romance, demonic possession, musical theater references, and more. Knudsen keeps the terror well-tempered with plenty of hilarious situational comedy and touches of the absurd.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Blind.**DeWoskin, Rachel (author).**

Aug. 2014. 416p. Viking, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780670785223). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published August, 2014 ([Booklist](#)).

DeWoskin, author of the Alex Award winner *Big Girl Small* (2011), skillfully balances the pain of loss with the promise of new experiences and discovery in her YA debut. Emma's challenges keep mounting: an accident robs her of her sight and, with it, the opportunity to go back to her high school, see her new baby sister, and connect with her friends. Just as she begins to step back into the wider world after a semester at a school for the blind, she is shocked by the tragic death of a classmate and begins to question life's meaning. Readers can be forgiven for thinking that this death may tilt the novel toward a whodunit, but Emma's questing reaches far deeper than mere mystery. The life of a formerly sighted teen blossoms in Emma's strong voice as she explores the world, conquers fears, and attempts living everyday life again with her large, bustling, Jewish suburban family. A gracefully written, memorable, and enlightening novel. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Play Me Backwards.**Selzer, Adam (author).**

Aug. 2014. 288p. Simon & Schuster, hardcover, \$18.99 (9781481401029). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published August, 2014 ([Booklist](#)).

When Leon realizes that his life peaked in middle school, he turns to a logical source of help, best friend and fellow teen Stan (Satan, to his minions), whose advice includes oddly specific assignments: listening to the audiobook of *Moby-Dick*, seeking the Holy Grail of slushee flavors, and saying yes way too often for comfort. Along the way, Stan tells Leon of a dire-sounding prophecy and recounts his difficulty ruling the un-air-conditioned side of the afterlife, as the two rule their own version of heaven on earth at the Ice Cave, which might be the worst ice-cream joint in the universe. Characterization is chief among Selzer's achievements here; Leon and Stan's erstwhile slacker, stoner, and outcast associates are timelessly true to life. Leon's misadventures and accidental discoveries will keep readers flipping pages to see each successive struggle he will face. A diabolically funny, slacker-makes-good coming-of-age story in the tradition of Rob Thomas' *Rats Saw God* (1996).

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

How to Fall.**Casey, Jane (author).**

Aug. 2014. 352p. St. Martin's/Griffin, hardcover, \$18.99 (9781250040657). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published July, 2014 ([Booklist](#)).

In this thoroughly British, tightly spun mystery, Jess Tennant, a newcomer to Port Sentinel, defiantly bucks the local social order when she investigates the suspicious death of her cousin. Jess thinks her mother is crazy for trying to mend fences with her estranged twin sister—and even crazier for wanting to spend the summer in sleepy Port Sentinel, far from the excitement of London. Once there, though, Jess finds herself tangled in the knot of local cliques and long-established relationships that may have led to her cousin's death. Casey, author of several acclaimed adult police procedurals, uses a smart technique to get her girl detective thinking about the victim: since Jess' appearance

is almost identical to her dead cousin's, she literally steps into her shoes and becomes a living ghost, walking around town as she tries to catch a killer. Snappy dialogue and Jess' tenacity make this a page-turner, and readers will thrill to notice some very obvious loose ends that lead into her forthcoming second outing. High-quality mystery writing for young readers.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Summer of Yesterday.

Triana, Gaby (author).

July 2014. 256p. Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse, paperback, \$9.99 (9781481401302). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published June 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

Having a seizure in the most magical place on earth is the wildest ride of all for Haley, whose dad is forcing her to spend the summer with his new wife and twins at Disney's Fort Wilderness. Due to the seizure she had a few months ago, fun is off the menu. While exploring an off-limits area, a second seizure knocks her right smack into Disney World circa 1982! Triana's novel is less of a story about difficult family situations and more of a love letter to long summer nights spent with new friends, the promise of true love, and the magic of a Disney connection. Haley plays a small role in her own parents' meeting, and she gets to experience her own summer love when she talks a young, handsome Disney employee into hiding her at the park. Triana powerfully captures the lasting effects of an ephemeral summer in River Country, letting Haley's emotions splash over the page like a plunge on the park's water slides, as she discovers that being a teen in 1982 held many of the same challenges as being a teen today.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Drift.

Hutchins, M. K. (author).

June 2014. 400p. Lee & Low/Tu, hardcover, \$19.95 (9781620141458). Grades 5-8.

[REVIEW](#). First published September 10, 2014 (*Booklist Online*).

Tenjat wants to become a warrior and save his people, but when you're a teen who lives on top of a turtle adrift in an ocean called Hell, the heavily symbolic challenges are significant. Hutchins draws on ancient lore about a cosmic turtle and creates a world in which people live on the backs of the large creatures, where farmers are reviled as "hubs," or husbands who marry, reproduce, and slow down their reptile home. Tenjat rejects this fate and trains to become a warrior instead, falling in love with his mentor, Avi, and becoming distracted from his goal of thwarting the evil naga monsters that will keep their turtle from feeding at the shore. His sister, Eilet, will intrigue and frustrate readers with insights that aren't always immediately clear, but Tenjat's adventures will resonate with readers who similarly feel as if they're trying to find their way onto dry land. A magical fantasy with legs (and flippers). — *Erin Downey Howerton*

The Art of Lainey.

Stokes, Paula (author).

June 2014. 384p. HarperTeen, paperback, \$9.99 (9780062238429). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published June 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

Lainey is crushed when her longtime boyfriend, Jason, abruptly dumps her. However, her best friend, Bianca, steps in with a copy of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and tells her to "level the playing field." Preppy, sunny, soccer-playing, reality-TV-watching Lainey conspires with her coworker Micah, who is also pining for an ex-girlfriend, and they pose as a new couple. Micah, however, loves punk rock, wears a mohawk, carries a switchblade, and is into everything Lainey is not. The mismatched pair conspire to appear blissfully happy in public in order to win back their respective exes, using tips from Sun Tzu. Along the way, though, they struggle with new feelings that develop during their campaigns on the battlefield of love. Stokes' writing is as breezy as Lainey herself, and although readers will predict the ending relatively quickly, it won't stop them from enjoying Lainey and Micah's misadventures. Recommend this to fans of other lighthearted teen romances set against coffee shop backgrounds, such as *The Espressoologist*, by Kristina Springer (2009), and *Getting Over Garrett Delaney*, by Abby McDonald (2012).

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Let's Eat Breakfast.

Hibbert, Clare (author).

June 2014. 24p. illus. IPG/Laburnum, paperback, \$10.99 (9781909850200). PreS-Grade 1. 641.3.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

This British import will do quite nicely as an introduction to the wide variety of foods that people around the world eat at breakfast. Hibbert takes the reader from traditional Western breakfast foods, like toast and eggs, to more diverse offerings, such as congee and chapati. While the British English spellings and conventions are a slight distraction for American readers, the bright clear pictures are engaging and serve as a useful extension of the text. The book doesn't have much in the way of a narrative, yet readers may enjoy it as a way to build vocabulary around that most universal of pleasures, a hearty morning meal, as it quite nicely introduces the broad variety of foods consumed throughout the world.

— Erin Downey Howerton

While We Run.

Healy, Karen (author).

May 2014. 327p. Little, Brown, hardcover, \$18 (9780316233828); Little, Brown, e-book, \$18 (9780316233835). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 15, 2014 (*Booklist*).

The strong sequel to *When We Wake* (2013) continues the story of Tegan, the cryogenically preserved Australian murder victim who has been revived to become propaganda for the *Resolution*, a starship designed to seed a new, more viable planet as Earth withers and dies. This time, the novel is told from the point of view of Abdi, Tegan's love interest and unwitting fellow propagandist. The government has forced them to sing and dance for potential *Resolution* donors, and as they wait for help, isolated and broken, secrets emerge that are more sinister than those originally hidden in the cryogenics labs. While the pacing occasionally lags, readers will easily become entangled in the messy questions of ethics that Abdi and Tegan face as they try to escape a political plot. Together, Abdi and Tegan must decide whether freeing themselves is worth the lives of others and to what lengths they are willing to go to spread the truth. An apt parable for contemporary socioeconomic times.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Blur.

James, Steven (author).

May 2014. 368p. Amazon/Skyscape, paperback, \$9.99 (9781477847275). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

In the first book of a thriller trilogy, high-school football star Daniel Byers starts to see the ghost of a drowned classmate, Emily. Calling the sightings "blurs," Daniel struggles to understand why Emily, a girl nearly nobody knew, would select him, the son of the town sheriff, to contact in her afterlife. Determined to find answers, Daniel teeters between fantasy and reality as apparitions continue to haunt him, and he further doubts the state of his mind after a concussion on the football field. James weaves in references to Christian beliefs, worldview, and Scripture as Daniel and his friends investigate the strange happenings in Beldon, Wisconsin. Readers might find Daniel's voice closer to that of an adult looking back on the teen years than that of a contemporary teen, but they may stick with the story as James cranks up the creep factor and plays with Daniel's sense of reality. Suggest this to fans of Ted Dekker's youth titles, such as *Chosen* (2008).

— Erin Downey Howerton

Dreamer, Wisher, Liar.

Harper, Charise Mericle (author).

Apr. 2014. 408p. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780062026750). Grades 4-6.

[REVIEW](#). First published March 15, 2014 (*Booklist*).

When a best friend is leaving you, what can you do? Ashley dreads the upcoming summer and her last few weeks at camp with her best friend, Lucy, who is moving away. Ash feels further unmoored by the arrival of young Claire, a girl who will be spending the summer with Ash's family under nebulous circumstances. The only place Ash can get a little privacy is in her mom's overflowing basement, where she finds a jar marked "wishes." Ash discovers that when she pulls out a wish, she's transported magically to the past, where she views another friendship—this one between another Ashley and her friend Shue, who are moving through their own funny, strange, and painful summer. Through Harper's skillful combination of fantastical and wholly realistic situations, readers are presented with gently larger-than-life characters, who are magnified through Ash's eyes and take on the roles she needs them to as she steps into her coming-of-age journey. As sweet and tart as a strawberry lemonade, readers will want to sip slowly and savor every page. — Erin Downey Howerton

★The Art of Secrets.**Klise, James (author).**

Apr. 2014. 272p. Algonquin, hardcover, \$17.95 (9781616201951). Grades 7-10.

[REVIEW](#). First published February 15, 2014 (*Booklist*).

After her family's apartment goes up in flames, Saba Khan's Chicago high school organizes a benefit auction for her family. When a book by the famous outsider artist Henry Darger turns up among the items that have been gathered for sale, it raises a number of perplexing questions: How did such a unique piece go missing for so long? Shouldn't the financially floundering school get a cut of the profits? Instead of bringing everyone together, the discovery further marginalizes the school's outsiders. The story is told through documents, interviews, journal entries, and text messages from Saba, her father, teachers at her school, and her classmates as their suspicions about the art and the origin of the fire grow, and fingers are pointed in every direction. Klise lets loose a chorus of genuine voices as the disturbing truth emerges, and people's secrets grow too large to hide. This art mystery is that rare book that will be passed around by teens as well as teachers in the faculty lounge, discussed and dissected and immediately reread to scour for hidden clues and motivations. The incidents at Highsmith School will stay on readers' minds long after the last page. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

The Summer of Letting Go.**Polisner, Gae (author).**

Mar. 2014. 320p. Algonquin, hardcover, \$17.95 (9781616202569). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 29, 2014 (*Booklist Online*).

Francesca "Frankie" Schnell is drowning in an ocean of problems. She is crushing on her best friend's boyfriend, her father appears to be having an affair, and her mother has been distant for years, ever since Frankie's brother, Simon, died. Frankie can think of a thousand reasons why she is at fault, but she is caught short by her new summer job—babysitting a young boy who was born on the same day that her brother died and who might be her brother's reincarnation. There are mysteries aplenty for Frankie to solve but none so pressing as the ones inside her own head. Polisner does a great job portraying the inner world of a 16-year-old whose trials have aged her prematurely. With a light, deft hand, Polisner gives Frankie's world touches of humor, gravitas, and teen-centered reality, as well as multifaceted, sympathetic characters who seem plucked from any typical suburban street. Not precisely a light summer read, but one that deserves a spot beside the hammock nonetheless. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Mud Truck Racing: Tearing It Up.**Howell, Brian (author).**

Jan. 2014. 32p. illus. Lerner, library edition, \$26.60 (9781467721189); Lerner, e-book, \$19.95 (9781467724524).

Grades 2-4. 796.7.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

Readers will rev up over this title, feeling the engines thrum and the mud splatter on every page. Howell builds on basic facts, giving a clear explanation of the sport and its origins before expanding to include its larger context, including racing organizations, television shows, and sport champions. The joy of mudding is in the mess, and Howell's text delivers, from descriptions of how to create the perfect fast track or bog pit to the fuels used to supercharge the vehicles. Young readers will be fans long before they find the helpful resources in the back matter. Careful attention was paid to the integration of photos and text, with eye-catching sidebars integrated smoothly into the pages to highlight safety, record-setters, and variant vehicles, among others. Grab this one for aspiring racing buffs, but don't be surprised if it comes back showing signs of "field research."

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

US Immigration Services.**Leavitt, Amie Jane (author).**

Jan. 2014. 48p. illus. Mitchell Lane, library edition, \$29.95 (9781612284477). Grades 4-6. 325.73.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

What happens when someone wants to become an American citizen? Leavitt introduces the basic requirements of the process to young readers in this title in the My Guide to US Citizenship series. It might have made more sense to present the process of immigration chronologically, rather than skipping from topic to topic, but the numerous sidebars and illustrations are informative and useful in keeping readers on track. Of particular note is the book's

helpful guide to Internet resources, in which Leavitt notes the best places to collect information for potential new citizens, complete with strategies to ensure that readers find only credible information while online. Although not an exhaustive source, this is a valuable starting place for youth with questions about citizenship and the process of becoming an American.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Doon.

Corp, Carey (author) and Lorie Langdon (author).

Sept. 2013. 368p. Blink, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780310742302). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published November 20, 2013 (Booklist Online).

Veronica feels like nothing is going right in her life—that is, until her friend Mackenna magically gives her a ticket to Scotland to spend the summer in her family’s cottage. Aunt Gracie’s bequest helps Veronica escape her mother’s bad relationships and tragic choice in men, and Mackenna’s love for the village of Alloway means that they grow closer to the bridge to the otherworldly land of Doon, where time ceases to exist and larger-than-life characters, such as the hunky princes Jamie and Duncan MacCrae, raise the girls’ pulse rates. While some readers may be confused by the alternating chapters featuring Veronica and Kenna’s very similar voices, musical-theater fans will rejoice to see two heroines so well versed in their world, who drop references to many well-loved Broadway productions as they stumble their way through a medieval village, out of the mists and out of time. The friends are tempted in various ways, but their fates may prove very different. Give this romance to *Twilight* fans who can’t get enough of “Will they? Won’t they?” plot twists.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Takedown.

van Diepen, Allison (author).

Sept. 2013. 288p. Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse, hardcover, \$16.99 (9781442463110); Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse, paperback, \$9.99 (9781442463127). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published November 15, 2013 (Booklist Online).

Darren is a whole teen living a half life. He would rather be writing lyrics and dropping beats with his best friend, White Chris, or hanging with his little brother, Kiki, and girlfriend, Jessica. Instead, he becomes wrapped up in Diamond Tony’s turf war. Fresh from juvie, where he took the rap as one of Diamond Tony’s lookouts, now Darren is one of DT’s foot soldiers, slinging drugs on street corners. But now Darren is only getting close to DT in order to exact revenge on him. Darren has flipped and become an informant, but he is in too deep, and Darren knows the stakes have gotten too high. The tight plotting and pacing are the strengths here. Every scene builds nail-biting tension, and the bit players reveal themselves to be critical threads in a tangled, menacing web. Darren’s motivations are wholly believable, and the setting—cold, snowy, and desolate Toronto—keeps readers shivering on the streets with him, as if you have taken a hit of Diamond Tony’s signature product yourself. This will win van Diepen new and dedicated fans. — Erin Downey Howerton

★ **Twinmaker.**

Williams, Sean (author).

Sept. 2013. 496p. HarperCollins/Balzer and Bray, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780062203212). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published September 15, 2013 (*Booklist*).

Best-selling sf author Williams borrows elements of the world he created for his adult novel *The Resurrected Man* (2005) in his YA debut. Thanks to D-mat technology, teen Clair can jump around the globe in a matter of minutes simply by entering a booth. Along with her best friend Libby’s boyfriend, with whom she shares an attraction, Clair is trying to join an elite party crew by using D-mat’s Lucky Jump feature. They initially dismiss Improvement, a way to transform yourself through a series of jumps, but then Libby uses Improvement to remove her prominent birthmark, and as the disturbing consequences roll out, Clair digs for answers, along with a cult that believes D-mat steals souls—and much more. Williams is adept at weaving together the disparate story strands: the sociopolitical implications of a giant corporation that has access to the very code to your being, and the frantic lives of teens caught in the middle of a devastating conspiracy. In the masterful hands of Williams, the technology, which has eerie parallels to contemporary life, provides a solid platform for great storytelling, and teens will revel in the drama, Clair’s tenacity, and the memorable characters who discover that their utopia isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. Readers looking for another strong Katniss-type character to follow through a treacherous near-future will hope for a sequel.

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: *New York Times* best-selling author Williams' plunge into YA is big news, and a full-scale, multiplatform marketing campaign is ensuring that the word gets out.

— Erin Downey Howerton

Indelible.

Metcalf, Dawn (author).

Aug. 2013. 384p. HarlequinTeen, paperback, \$9.99 (9780373210732). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 30, 2013 (Booklist Online).

Like most girls, Joy thought love would steal her breath away. Little did she suspect that it would try to cut her eye out instead! Indelible Ink and his sister, Invisible Ink, are Scribes, otherworldly beings who mark humans with the Sight for their particular clans. Joy has the dubious honor of being able to see them, while nobody else can. Now she has been marked by Ink, and their connection is much more than skin deep. Joy is being pulled between her world and Ink's realm of Twixt, and their love may not be powerful enough to overcome the threats that stand in their way. Metcalf's lush descriptions make the world of Twixt burst with sensory details, and readers will identify with Joy's head-in-the-clouds reaction to Ink's intoxicating effects. First in a new series, this will appeal to romance and fantasy readers who prefer their attraction peppered with mysterious lore. Give this one to readers who couldn't get enough of Karou and Akiva in Laini Taylor's *Daughter of Smoke and Bone* (2011). — Erin Downey Howerton

Texting the Underworld.

Booraem, Ellen (author).

Aug. 2013. 320p. Dial, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780803737044). Grades 5-8.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 1, 2013 (Booklist).

Conor O'Neill is a middle-schooler growing up in a large Irish family in South Boston. He has a distaste for math problems, a prized new cell phone, and a problem that's out of this world: a banshee named Ashling, who has shown up to wait for the family's next death, although she doesn't know whose it might be. Conor suspects the likely mark: his grandfather Grump, keeper of the family's Irish lore. Booraem manages to pack a lot of energy into this very modern story about ancient traditions surrounding death. Conor faces challenges by drawing on the strength of his family ties and a little help from his best friend Javier, who helps him solve ancient riddles using twenty-first-century techniques. As Conor learns what he is made of, readers will relish the quirky cast of supporting characters from the underworld, and they may well realize that there's more to life after death than they might have first imagined. — Erin Downey Howerton

Haunted.

Cooper, Susan (author) and Joseph Delaney (author) and others.

Aug. 2013. 336p. IPG/Andersen, paperback, \$8.99 (9781849393218). Grades 5-8.

[REVIEW](#). First published August 12, 2013 (Booklist Online).

Short stories and ghosts are like the chocolate and peanut butter of literature, and young readers will devour this collection that combines both, just as eagerly. Contributed by 11 heavy hitters in children's and teen literature, including Susan Cooper, Mal Peet, and Philip Reeve, the tales offer surprises and delight throughout. Notable stories include Derek Landy's contemporary "Songs the Dead Sing," featuring a girl who is unable to move on to the next phase of her afterlife, and Reeve's "The Ghost Wood," about a bond between a boy and his (new) best friend that transcends time itself. Each selection makes a strong read-aloud choice, and the book practically invites itself along on that next backyard camping excursion or late-autumn sleepover. Recommend this to kids who tore through Alvin Schwartz's *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* (1981) or Barry Yourgrau's *Nastybook* (2005). Just remember to warn them of an occasional "long, slow, almost thoughtful scrape of claws."

— Erin Downey Howerton

Invisible.

Bates, Marni (author).

July 2013. 300p. Kensington, paperback, \$9.95 (9780758269386). Grades 8-11.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 30, 2013 (Booklist Online).

Jane Smith has an uncommonly skilled ability to blend in, which, unfortunately, is what she would most like to avoid. Her over-the-top teen problems include two best friends who have become super-famous (online and in real life), while she remains a lowly editor at the school newspaper. She gets a chance to be a star reporter, though, and is challenged

with a page-one feature that will knock everyone for a loop. To pull it off, she has to get along with insufferable Scott, her assigned photographer. There's plenty of friend and relationship drama here for readers who like their angst whipped into a positive froth, and Jane's identity as dreary "Grammar Girl" offers plenty of introspection, too. A solid follow-up to *Awkward* (2012). — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Still Star-Crossed.

Taub, Melinda (author).

July 2013. 352p. illus. Delacorte, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780385743501); Delacorte, library edition, \$19.99 (9780375991189). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published July, 2013 (*Booklist*).

When Verona's violence can't be quelled, Prince Escalus orders the "dark, devilish" Montague Benvolio to wed Rosaline, of the Capulets. Benvolio sees Rosaline as the cause of the strife that ensues, while Rosaline struggles to reconcile childhood feelings toward Escalus. Together, Benvolio and Rosaline banter their way to a compromise, unmask the mystery person who is on the blood feud, reunite the families, and avoid their undesirable trip to the priest! This dark drama, set in the world of *Romeo and Juliet*, is tempered with wit and humor as Taub blends Shakespearean-style dialogue with a less opulent prose narrative that artfully decodes the vocabulary for readers new to the Bard. Readers will enjoy following the heroes as they encounter romance, intrigue, and characters reminiscent of *Hamlet* and the cast of *Much Ado about Nothing*, among others. Pair this highly enjoyable story with Sharon Draper's *Romiette and Julio* (1999) or Suzanne Selfor's *Saving Juliet* (2008).

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Confessions of an Almost-Girlfriend.

Rozett, Louise (author).

June 2013. 288p. HarlequinTeen, paperback, \$9.99 (9780373210657). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 30, 2013 (*Booklist Online*).

Rose Zarelli 2.0 is not taking crap from anyone—not the swim jocks or the anonymous nitwit who made her number two on the school's slut list, and especially not from her almost-boyfriend, Jamie Forta, who won't commit. Still grieving after her father's death, and with her love life up in the air, Rose decides to try new things, such as singing in the school musical, helping her BFF Tracy start an übersuccessful fashion blog, and basically rebooting her life. As Rose 2.0, she is smarter, wiser, and better able to protect herself from the things life pushes in her way: harassment at school, her psychoanalyst mother, and a brother who might be doing more than just a little pot. Rozett maintains her pacing through the rhythms of Rose's school year and gives the reader diamond-bright flashes of insight through Rose's inner dialogue, including the realization that a random compliment from a friend can "fill up all the empty spaces I haven't known what to do with lately." This is a strong follow-up to *Confessions of an Angry Girl* (2012), with vivid language and deft character development that puts Rose into the leagues of Ruby Oliver from E. Lockhart's *The Boyfriend List* (2005) and Jessica Darling from Megan McCafferty's *Sloppy Firsts* (2001) and *Second Helpings* (2003). Thematically, Rose's journey will appeal to fans of Sarah Dessen. It's clear that there's more forthcoming in the Confessions series, so crank up Rose's playlist, included in the back matter, and mark Rozett as an author to track. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Dare You To.

McGarry, Katie (author).

June 2013. 480p. HarlequinTeen, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780373210633). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 30, 2013 (*Booklist Online*).

Beth is living on the edges of her mother's drama of addiction and abusive relationships when her uncle rescues her and whisks her off to tony Bullitt County High. There she collides with Ryan, a star athlete whose family is socially and politically prominent, and sparks fly. Using the same setting from her previous book, *Pushing the Limits* (2013), and including some of the same characters, McGarry revisits the concept of star-crossed love with teens that have vastly different secrets to hide. (Ryan's Instagram-perfect life is darker than it seems.) The gritty details of Beth's mom's drug-and-alcohol addiction will draw in readers of Ellen Hopkins' similarly themed titles, and those who love tangled romance will find plenty to enjoy. While the titular dare that draws Ryan and Beth together is fleeting, their connection is anything but. Recommend this one to fans of Simone Elkeles' Perfect Chemistry series. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Ask My Mood Ring How I Feel.

Lopez, Diana (author).

June 2013. 326p. Little, Brown, hardcover, \$16.99 (9780316209960). Grades 5-8.

[REVIEW](#). First published July 16, 2013 (Booklist Online).

López (*Confetti Girl*, 2009) creates another likable character in Erica “Chia” Montenegro, whose comfortable middle-class life is flipped in an instant when her mother is diagnosed with breast cancer. Instead of being able to concentrate on cute boys, her friendly clique (the Robins), and the usual middle-school concerns, Chia is thrust into the role of caregiver to her two-year-old brother and feels additional responsibilities at home, where her younger sister also worries about their mother’s prognosis. When the family visits a *cuarto de milagros* to pray for help, Chia decides to make a big *promesa*: surely 500 sponsors for a 5K walk to fight cancer would help heal her mother. Chia’s struggle to keep up with friends, housework, and schoolwork is painfully realistic yet tempered with light touches of humor. The many characters in Chia’s life are individually and lovingly drawn; more than just props in Chia’s story, they have concerns, hopes, and dreams of their own. Readers will feel like Chia’s family and friends could do anything as long as they stick together—and they may be right. — *Erin Downey Howerton*

Tarnish.

Longshore, Katherine (author).

June 2013. 416p. Viking, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780670014002). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published July, 2013 (*Booklist*).

The court of Henry VIII flares back into life in this follow-up to *Gilt* (2012). Anne Boleyn collides with Thomas Wyatt, a poet and an important man of the court who might be a wise match for her, but Anne’s heart has been captured by her sister’s lover, the king. Torn between two very different men, Anne finds cold comfort in the other women at court, who consider her too French and unacceptably sharp-witted. Longshore captures the ensuing volley of emotions beautifully in dialogue that blends modern sensibilities with the cadence of Tudor English, creating a timeless setting for these ill-fated love stories. Anne’s situation is painted realistically, complete with rejected suitors and broken promises that underscore her value to the Boleyn family as merely a marriageable woman. Serious history students may object to Longshore’s tendency to experiment with the historical record, but this sweeping romance will encourage most readers to surrender gladly to the page.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Rush.

Silver, Eve (author).

June 2013. 368p. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780062192134). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published June 1, 2013 (*Booklist*).

There’s no tunnel toward the light in Miki’s near-death experience. Instead, she’s flung together with a group of other teens in an alternate universe where they must battle the alien Drau or lose their lives. Although the alien battle is framed as the Game, Miki realizes that the stakes are high as she tries to unravel the truth behind these interstellar invaders. Silver complicates her story line with the welcome addition of an Edward Cullen–like hottie, Jackson Tate (whose true identity may be more terrifying than any vampire), and a jealous friend, Carly, who doesn’t realize that Miki is being jerked from reality to the Game, rather than from boy to boy. A love triangle between solid boy-next-door Luka, Miki, and Jackson develops, but what readers may find most compelling are the habits of the Drau, whose crude attempts at human infiltration are as shocking as they are realistic. Whether teens read this for the romance or the science fiction, they’ll finish eager for the second installment of the Game series.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Spellbinding.

Gold, Maya (author).

Apr. 2013. 272p. Scholastic/Point, paperback, \$8.99 (9780545433808). Grades 6-8.

[REVIEW](#). First published October 30, 2013 (Booklist Online).

A rather pedestrian history class assignment has left Abby Silva a little . . . twitchy. Charged to find her first-generation American ancestors, Abby finds that she is descended from accused witches in Salem, and she may have more in common with them than she knows. When she goes to Salem to find out more, she casts aside her sensible friend Rachel after she meets Remy, a boy who can help her unlock the mystery of her past. While the story line seems to borrow heavily at times from other stock teenage tales (the movies *Teen Witch* and *Carrie*, among others), readers who have not yet been exposed to witchy lore may use this as their springboard to explore more in the supernatural genre. Recommend this to those craving lighter fare after Stephanie Hemphill’s *Wicked Girls* (2010) and Marc Aronson’s *Witch-Hunt* (2005).— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Allegra.**Hrdlitschka, Shelley (author).**

Apr. 2013. 256p. Orca, paperback, \$12.95 (9781459801974). Grades 7-10.

[REVIEW](#). First published July 16, 2013 (Booklist Online).

Allegra believed the move to a performing arts high school would bring her friends and the ability to devote herself totally to dancing. Instead, though, she finds herself in the grip of an unexpected crush on her music theory teacher, Mr. Rocchelli. Hrdlitschka allows Allegra to tell her own story, and her fine ear for teen emotion is well displayed in scenes that reveal Allegra's social anxiety and panic attacks, her sorrow and disbelief over her parents' crumbling marriage, and her resistance to unfamiliar feelings of love as handsome, young Mr. Rocchelli begins to fill the emptiness in her life. Allegra turns from dancing to composition as Mr. Rocchelli challenges her to write a full score from a melody he composed, and the metaphor is apt as Allegra runs with the assignment, sinking herself into a new obsession. Teens with a passion for the arts will see themselves in Allegra, whose intensity and flaws make her perfectly relatable.— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Adorkable: Love, Hate, Whatever.**Manning, Sarra (author).**

Apr. 2013. 400p. Little, Brown, paperback, \$7.99 (9781907411007). Grades 10-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published April 25, 2013 (Booklist Online).

Londoner Jeane Smith might seem to have it all: her own anticonsumerist lifestyle brand (Adorkable), a job writing for foreign teen magazines, her own apartment while her family travels the world, and tons of Twitter followers. Despite it all, though, she is deeply lonely and insecure, and she can't blog her way out of the facts that she isn't properly caring for herself, and her boyfriend has been cheating on her with cutie Michael's girlfriend. Jeane veers between competent, insightful observations about her generation and utterly self-destructive behavior, including hiding that she has fallen for Michael. What might come across as a fluffy, light teen novel is a surprisingly deep story about a girl who is struggling to define herself in a postrecession world full of posers and followers. The brands and trends may quickly date this book, but the characters' authentic, late-teen angst and snappy, believable dialogue, as well as Jeane and Michael's experiences, give this one legs. Jeane might not be the twenty-first-century Bridget Jones, but she is awfully close.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Brianna on the Brink.**McInnes, Nicole (author).**

Mar. 2013. 176p. Holiday, hardcover, \$16.95 (9780823427413). Grades 9-12.

[REVIEW](#). First published June 17, 2013 (Booklist Online).

Brianna's life takes a turn into train-wreck territory when her one-night stand impregnates her and then keels over, dead. In her debut novel, McInnes manages to take a boatload of typical teen-lit tropes—popular cheerleader, teen pregnancy, disappointing first-sex situation, teacher determined to make a difference, an awkward yet likable nerd, and a clique of mean girls—and turn all that into a sensitively grounded tale of a young woman taking the first steps toward owning her own life. Although one poor decision has flipped Brianna's life inside out, she keeps moving forward with the resourcefulness born of an uncertain home life and an ability to never take any kindness for granted. Her growth as a character is both realistic and compelling, with a unique combination of fragility and strength. Reluctant readers will devour this one, so here's hoping that McInnes is currently hard at work on more.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*

Money Run.**Heath, Jack (author).**

Mar. 2013. 256p. Scholastic, hardcover, \$17.99 (9780545512664). Grades 6-10.

[REVIEW](#). First published May 1, 2013 (*Booklist*).

Australian teen thief Ashley Arthur explodes stateside in a plot plucked straight from Hollywood: fast cars, sleek spy tech, and a ruthless assassin bent on finishing his job. Ash is a 15-year-old aspiring criminal mastermind, and her

friend Benjamin controls the computer side of their enterprise. Their goal: \$200 million from a noted business genius. The complication: an assassin improbably named Peachey, whose cat-and-mouse games with the target interfere with their mission. Lavish with details about the tools of the teens' devious trade, the heart-in-your-mouth chase scenes are tempered with quick flashbacks involving Ash and Benjamin's backstory and entanglements with a shadowy, unnamed source. Some readers may scoff at outlandish details, such as the big corporate heist hinging on (among other things) a set of reprogrammed Roombas, but most will easily lose themselves in this fast-paced, high-drama story in which everyone has a solid reason to risk it all. Great for reluctant readers, this will appeal to fans of Heist Society, Alex Rider, and Spy High books.

— *Erin Downey Howerton*
