



Asher, Jay. **Thirteen Reasons Why**. Penguin/Razorbill, 2007. 256p. 9781595141712 \$16.99

\* A package containing cassette tapes with no return address. An empty desk. A teen suicide.

Two rules – Rule No. 1 – you listen. Rule No. 2 – you pass them on the next person on the list.

We all wonder how we affect other people by our actions and our words. Or do we ever even think about that? Do our actions or words really mean anything to anyone else?

Before committing suicide teen Hanna Baker records her story of how certain people affected her life. “I hope you’re ready, because I’m about to tell you the story of my life. More specifically, why my life ended. And if you’re listening to these tapes, you’re one of the reasons why”.

This book is about alienation, how rumors ruin reputations, and trying to fit in. It is well written and even has a website so that you can follow Clay Jensen through town as he listens to the tapes.

- Janice Bauman, Pleasanton Public Library

Balliett, Blue. **The Calder Game**. Scholastic, 2008. 379p. 9780439852074. \$17.99

Y Third in the mystery series that started with *Chasing Vermeer* (2004) and *The Wright Three* (2006), Calder goes with his father on a business trip to the town of Woodstock in England. While there, both Calder the boy, and a sculpture by Alexander Calder go missing. Calder’s best friends Petra and Tommy (unbelievably) come to England to help search for him. Fans of the previous books will overlook the coincidences that propel the plot. The puzzles and rich language make this a great book for children who like challenging books, and it may lead them to visit a museum or to books to see some of Calder’s mobiles and sculptures. The b&w sketches by Brett Helquist, one or two per chapter, add interest and have puzzles imbedded in the pictures. These multicultural urban (Chicago) seventh graders are nerdy, thoughtful, and entirely relatable by many of our middle schoolers.

- Penny Peck, San Leandro Public Library

Benway, Robin. **Audrey, Wait**. Penguin Young Readers Group, 2008. 313 p. 978-1-59514-191-0. \$16.99

M When she broke up with her boyfriend, Audrey Cuttler knew it would be hard, but not this hard. See, he’s in a band and he wrote a song about the break-up called, *Audrey, Wait*. All of sudden it’s popular and now so is she. People are staring at her on the street, they’re writing about her on message boards, and the paparazzi is on her tail after video appears on the internet showing her making out with a singer from another semi-famous band. Audrey is finding it difficult to live a normal life and the attention is putting a strain on some of her relationships. Although the plot line is a little over the top, the dialogue between Audrey, her friends and parents is crisp, witty and humorous. This book will appeal to celebrity and music obsessed teens who may yearn for the limelight and also like a little romance.

- Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Caletti, Deb. **The fortunes of Indigo Skye**. Simon & Schuster, 2008. 298p. 978-1-4169-1007-7

\* One of Caletti’s strengths is creating truly likeable protagonists. Indigo Skye is the nicest one

#### Recommendations:

- \* Titles suitable for YA
- M Mature, ages 16-20
- Y For younger teens, 11-14
- H/L High interest/low vocabulary books
- B/A Borrow from Adult
- R Rejected (no review)

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[baya.org/guidelines.html](http://baya.org/guidelines.html)

yet. She's just a regular girl, about to graduate with high school with no immediate future plans and no angst either, enjoying her sweet boyfriend, happy if somewhat riotous family life, and waitress job at Carrera's restaurant in Seattle. When a well-dressed stranger and infrequent customer leaves her a \$2.5 million tip, she begins a journey of self-discovery, which takes her to Hawaii and Los Angeles. Yes, it's a "money can't buy happiness" story, but because Indigo isn't trite, neither is her tale. A perfect summer read- with a happy ending!

- Debbie Carton, Berkeley Public Library

Caletti, Deb. **The Nature of Jade**. Simon Pulse, 2007. 288 p. 1-4169-1006-9. \$8.99

**M** Aside from doing homework, high school senior, Jade DeLuna, spends most of her time in her room obsessively watching a webcam trained on elephants at the Seattle Zoo. In a way, she's hiding from her panic attacks, afraid she'll be caught in public and not be able to breathe. After noticing a boy in a red jacket visiting the elephants, Jade becomes obsessed with meeting him and eventually volunteers to work with the elephants. Meanwhile, her mother tries to relive high school and her father remains emotionally detached offering a hint to a reason for her malaise. Caletti writes in a stream of consciousness style that gets tiresome at times. However, there are moments in the book when she captures well the feelings of separation that come with the transition from high school to college. Teens suffering from panic disorder may also be able to relate to Jade.

- Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Cox, Lynne. **Grayson**. Harvest Books; Reprint edition (February 4, 2008). 148p. 0156034670 \$13.00

**Y – B/A** In this captivating memoir, the author recalls the time when, as a teenager swimming in off the coast of California, the life of a baby gray whale rested entirely with her. Lynne was in the last stretch of her morning workout when she felt a 'presence' all around her; something was swimming with her. It was a baby gray whale that had adopted her in the absence of its own mother. Although extremely tired and hungry, if Lynne headed back now, the calf would follow her and become grounded, suffering from his own hunger and collapsed lungs. In an instant, she made the decision to continue swimming until she found Grayson's mother.

Although this book may have been written for adults, the teen appeal is apparent through Lynne's teenage superhero swimming strength and incredible maturity. For the first time in her life, the survival of another living being was completely dependent on the choices she made. This is a magical tale of the connection and unspoken communication between a young girl and a baby gray, Grayson. As the two journey through the Pacific waters, Lynne travels to her past reassessing her life's choices. This mystery and adventure demonstrates how we are all just one tiny element in a vast ocean of magnificent creatures and how the species must work together to survive in this ever-changing world.

- Brandi Bette Smead, Benicia Public Library

Harper, Suzanne. **The Juliet Club**. HarperCollins, 2008. 402p. 978-0-06-136691-8. \$17.99

\* Three American teens and three Italian teens participate in a summer Shakespeare Scholar program set in Verona, where they study and perform scenes from Romeo and Juliet. We've got three girls and three boys, each with their own particular quirk- they're bound to end up as three perfect couples, and the reader's challenge is to figure out who will end up together. Echoing Shakespearean themes, there's star-crossed lovers, bickering a-plenty and ghost-written love letters. Character development is minimal, but readers probably won't mind. It's fun summer reading for academically inclined teens seeking light, frothy entertainment. The cover photo (close-up of a period beaded gown in lush colors) will intrigue teen readers, and sells the contents well- there's not a lot of depth here, but plenty of pretty trappings. A guilty pleasure for Shakespeare buffs.

- Debbie Carton, Berkeley Public Library

Henkes, Kevin. **Bird Moon Lake**. Greenwillow/HarperCollins, 2008. 179p. 9780061470769. \$15.99

**Y** Mitch and his mom are staying at the lake with his grandparents for the summer, while his parents work out the details of their divorce. He befriends the family next door, who only use their house for summers at the lake, because their eldest child drowned several years ago. The honest emotions,

including sadness, loneliness, and anger, will remind many readers of Henkes' Olive's Ocean, another quiet but memorable summer vacation novel. The little girl next door, Lolly is cute but not entirely believable, but both Spencer and Mitch are middle school male characters with depth. The adult characters are also more complex than is common, since too many "tween" books feature cardboard character adults. The chapters alternate between Mitch's and Spencer's first person voice, although Mitch seems more the main character. Because there is not a lot of action, this is more for the patient or thoughtful reader.

- Penny Peck, San Leandro Public Library

Johnson, Maureen. **Suite Scarlett**. Point, 2008. 368p. 978-0439899277 \$16.99

\* Scarlett is left behind in New York City working at her family's historic hotel while all of her other friends have fled the city for more exciting summer vacation jobs. Life in the city starts to heat up for Scarlett when she meets her brother's new attractive friend. This fun light read will draw teens who feel enclosed by family obligations. The quirky characters will keep the audience intrigued. This is another absorbing read by Maureen Johnson.

- Sarah LaTorra, Redwood City Public Library

Lane, Dakota. **The Secret Life of It Girls**. Atheneum, 2007. 126p. 981-1-4169-1492-1 \$14.99

\* Dakota Lane has struck a chord with *The Secret Life of It Girls*. Unlike other "confessions of" style books, *It Girls* is not told from the first person. Its characters do not expect their actions to be noteworthy or scandalous—they just tell it like it is. The book starts with the story of four girls who have obviously had their possessions handed to them on a silver platter. All but one of them can be pretty hard to relate to, as they are all pretty shallow. However, the book does not follow these four as it goes on. Instead, it brilliantly follows different girls of similar dispositions. I found this to be extremely refreshing because it meant that the reader isn't stuck with the selfish girls they got to know (and possibly tired of) in the first chapter. The message of the book, in fact, has nothing to do with designer labels. As it progresses, the girls become more likeable and relate-able, perhaps showing that what matters is truly on the inside.

- Megan Gaebler, Teen Reviewer, Berkeley Public Library

Lane, Dakota. **The Secret Life of It Girls**. Atheneum, 2007. 126p. 981-1-4169-1492-1 \$14.99

\* I completely agree with Megan's assessment of this title. I'd add that it's extremely visual, more like a very cleverly done yearbook than a standard novel. The photos and hand-drawn graphics tell as much of the stories as the text. It is truly a relief that the reader is not stuck with the protagonists of the first story- a more shallow, scheming bunch of \*\*\*\*\* I haven't met in a long time. Also, there is refreshing diversity in the stories, including a teen mom, an African American dancer who is completely happy with her curvy body and cannot understand "girlz like chelsealaurenalexakelli" with "\$um anorexic-a\$\$ bootayz in ma face". As always, Dakota knows, understands and focuses on the iconoclastic girls who dare to defy convention (see Johnny Voodoo and *The Orpheus Obsession*), but it's terrific to see her expanding her focus and therefore her readership.

- Debbie Carton, Berkeley Public Library

Levine, Gail Carson. **Ever**. HarperCollins, 2008. 256p. 978-0061229626, \$16.99

\* Olus, god of the winds, has never felt at home amongst his peers. He decides to try life living incognito among humans. During his travels, he meets a mortal named Kezi. Through a rash promise by her father, Kesi has a month to live. To thwart destiny, the two lovers must face a series of quests to make Kesi immortal. Fans of Levine will flock to this latest addition to the collection. *Ever* is an extremely satisfying read.

- Sarah LaTorra, Redwood City Public Library

Marr, Melissa. **Ink Exchange**. HarperTeen, 2008. 336p. 978-0061214684 \$16.99

**M** Leslie wants to take back control of her life by tattooing her body. After perusing tattoos for

over a month, she selects one that speaks to her. Unfortunately for Leslie, this tattoo will link her to the Dark Court of the faeries. In this companion novel to *Wicked Lovely*, the audience learns more about the sinister faerie courts. *Ink Exchange* is a gripping tale of addiction. This series will appeal to readers of the *Twilight* series and *A Great and Terrible Beauty* series.

- Sarah La Torra, Redwood City Public Library

Meyer, Carolyn. **In Mozart's shadow**. Harcourt, 2008. 350p. 978-0-14-205594-3 \$17.00

\* Young musicians and historical fiction lovers will enjoy this accurate, and therefore frequently depressing, tale of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's older sister, Nannerl. A talented and hardworking musician, Nannerl was, like her brother, exploited by their father Leopold as he paraded his genius children through the courts of Europe, winning acclaim, applause and occasionally, money. But Wolfgang's charm and extraordinary composing talent became Leopold's focus- and the fact that Nannerl was female in the 1700s made Leopold's emphasis on his son a societal given. The book is too long and detailed, but the Mozart children's love of music and their joy in sharing it with each other come through loud and clear, as does Nannerl's love for her little brother, despite her understandable jealousy. The cover means well, a color photo showing a glum, bewigged young woman in period costume, standing in the... yes! shadow! But it's painfully obvious. Tell your young musicians to ignore it, and dive in.

- Debbie Carton, Berkeley Public Library

Millner, Denene and Miller, Mitzi. **Hotlanta**. Point, 2008. 278p. 0-545-00308-3. \$8.99

**M** Twins Sydney and Lauren Duke have all the right clothes, the right cars, they go to the right school and live in an exclusive Atlanta neighborhood. Their mother is all about appearances too and their step-dad doesn't have a problem supplying the money for their expensive tastes. The only thing the girls are not allowed to do is keep in touch with their biological father who is in prison. Sydney defies her parents rule though and reaches out to him. When she does she uncovers a secret that forces her to question everything she knows about her family. This is the first book in what is to be the *Hotlanta* series. It is urban fiction light: loaded with bling, but devoid of rated r sexual and criminal situations that may force similar fiction into the adult section. Readers of the *Bluford* and *Drama High* series' should enjoy this book, if anything, for the conflict between the two sisters who are polar opposites.

- Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Minsky, Nancy. **Denim Revolution: Dozens of Ways to Turn Denim Cast-Offs into Fashion Must-Haves** Potter Craft (May 13, 2008) 127p. 030735377X \$19.95

\* - **B/A** This book claims to show the experienced seamstress how to transform out-of-style denim into highly fashionable and trendy threads. There are dozens of ideas but not many photos or illustrations to aid the novice designer. In looking for books on clothing reconstruction, one tries to find what to do with all of the awkward hand-me-downs or good deals but bad styles from the local thrift store. This book shows how to turn something that already fits and still looks good into something that still fits and still looks good. If you are looking for something to do with all of those jeans you have been saving over the years, look for another book.

- Brandi Bette Smead, Benicia Public Library

Mitchard, Jacqueline. **All we know of heaven**. HarperTeen, 2008. 320p. 9780061345784 \$16.99

\* Inspired by a true and tragic story of mistaken identity, Mitchard's first teen novel, *All We Know of Heaven*, explores what happens when look-alike best friends are involved in a fatal car accident. Emergency crews desperately try to save both Maureen and Bridget. In the first frantic minutes of the rescue, the girl's identities are confused. One girl dies and the other lingers in a coma. Maureen's family holds a funeral. Bridget's family prays their daughter will regain consciousness. But when the survivor begins to communicate, it becomes clear they have made a terrible mistake. Maureen is alive and Bridget is dead. The families struggle with the emotional upheaval and onslaught of press coverage. Maureen faces a long and arduous recovery. She confronts both physical and emotional pain as she slowly heals, mourns the loss of best friend, Bridget, and tries to understand the misplaced rage of Bridget's mother. The first half of the book is dramatic and fast paced. After the mistake is revealed, the

book moves more slowly, but the pace complements the story. Maureen's journey back is tough and hard-earned, every step of progress offset by challenge. Will she ever be able to return to her old life? Would it just have been easier if she had been the one to die? This direct from the headlines melodrama is certain to appeal to Jodi Picoult fans. Readers may also want to check out *Mistaken Identity: Two Families, One Survivor, Unwavering Hope*, an account of the actual events from which Mitchard drew this story.

- Nancy Kreiser, San Ramon Public Library

Na, An. **The fold**. Putnam, 2008. 288p. 9780399242762 \$16.99

\* The Printz Award-winning author here offers a lightweight title about a serious subject: the cosmetic surgery Asian women undergo to achieve a more Western look to their eyes, known as the "double lid fold". Many non-Asians are unaware of this phenomenon, but for Asians and Asian Americans, it's a controversial issue. 16 year old Korean-American Joyce is a believable teen, obsessing over the gorgeous hapa (half Korean, half white) boy who doesn't know she exists, jealous of her beautiful, socially and academically successful older sister, and oblivious to the neighbor boy who is sweet, sensitive and a real friend. When Joyce's manipulative aunt wins the lottery, she decides she will gift her family members with what she feels they need. To Joyce, she offers the fold surgery- and Joyce is sorely tempted. While it lacks the lyrical prose and intensity of situation of Na's previous titles, this slight read will intrigue readers, Asian and non. I've already had several (non-Asian) readers ask me for it.

- Debbie Carton, Berkeley Public Library

Pfeffer, Susan Beth. **The dead and the gone**. Harcourt, 2008. 320p. 9780152063115 \$17.00

\* Pfeffer returns readers to a world forever changed after an asteroid hits the moon, pushing it closer to earth, and generating a seemingly endless series of interconnected disasters. Pfeffer's previous novel, *Life as We Knew It*, told the story of a small town family dealing with the aftereffects of this global event. In her latest novel, *The Dead and the Gone*, she tells a parallel story, introducing Alex Morales, a seventeen-year-old New Yorker who is struggling to survive and hold what remains of his family together. The impact of the disaster is more immediate in the city, where tidal waves result in widespread flooding. At first Alex and his two younger sisters wait for news from their parents, relying on their strong religious faith and the support system provided by their parish and parochial schools. Alex eventually realizes that his parents will never return and the fate of the family rests in his hands. As the city shuts down, food, friends, and hope become scarce. Alex is determined to keep his sisters alive, but survival may require the unthinkable. The book is a must read for fans of *Life as We Knew It*, but those new to Pfeffer will find that this story stands strong on its own.

- Nancy Kreiser, San Ramon Public Library

Spinelli, Jerry. **Smiles to Go**. Joanna Cotler Books/HarperCollins, 2008. 248p. 9780060281335. \$16.99

Y Will Tuppen is a high school freshman with a close male and female friend who hang out together and have known each other all their lives. Will Mi-Su become the girlfriend of either Will or BT? Not just a romance novel for boys, this humorous but philosophical book talks about how people figure out who they are and where they fit in the world. Will's first person voice sounds very authentic, and a dramatic plot twist involving Will's little sister Tabby will have readers devouring the last 100 pages. This should appeal to the same readers who enjoyed Spinelli's *Stargirl* (Random, 2000); his ability to portray young teen boys in an honest and thoughtful way is a huge plus, and gives his books wide appeal.

- Penny Peck, San Leandro Public Library