



Booth, Coe. **Tyrell**. Scholastic, 2007. 310p. 9780439838801 \$7.99 (pbk)

* Coe Booth's *Tyrell* is the poignant story of a family making their way through the shelter system. Booth creates a fresh voice with Tyrell's narration, which ignores conventional grammar rules. However, with a limited vocabulary, Booth also manages to convey exactly what she wants to. There is not one moment in which Tyrell's feelings are unknown. *Tyrell* reads like a diary, keeping it compelling and easy to read. Booth also creates characters through her usage of different speech patterns. Tyrell's girlfriend, Novisha, is in a private school and has more or less impeccable grammar, and a girl living in the shelter with Tyrell, Jasmine, has a way of speech that makes it clear she talks loud and fast with Spanish words interspersed here and there. Novisha, therefore, is the "good girl," whereas Jasmine is more along the line of a "honey." Coe Booth spins a touching story of homelessness and family with *Tyrell*. Definitely worth a read.

- Megan Gaebler, Teen Reviewer, Berkeley Public Library

Dessen, Sarah. **Lock and key**. Viking, 2008. 384p. 9780670010882 \$18.99

* 17 year old Ruby is abandoned by her mother- who has been a barely functional parent at best. She tries to live on her own, taking over her mother's job, but is discovered by authorities and taken in by her older sister Cora and brother-in-law. Ruby and Cora were once close, but have not spoken since Cora left for college ten years ago. Ruby experiences intense culture shock as she moves from the dilapidated farmhouse she and her mother shared to a huge swanky suburban house in a gated community, and from a rough public school to an exclusive private school. The theme here is abandonment, and the trust issues that arise for those who have experienced it. As always, Dessen excels in creating multidimensional characters, and the slow, believable change that occurs for both Ruby and Cora draws the reader in. However, there are a couple strikes against this title: it's slow-moving, and the male characters are all surprisingly one-dimensional, either too good to be true or utter nasties. Teen Dessen fans I've shared this with also had a reaction I didn't anticipate: "What's Ruby complaining about? I'd love to have to put up with a beautiful house, huge income and a really great school to attend!"

- Debbie Carton, Berkeley Public Library

George, Jessica Day. **Sun and Moon, Ice and Snow**. Bloomsbury U.S.A. Children's Books, 2008. 328p. 978-1599901091 \$16.95

* When an enchanted isbjorn (polar bear) offers Pika incredible wealth for her poverty-stricken family in exchange for one year in his palace, she goes without pause, entering a mysterious world of trolls, fauns, selkies and centaurs. This incredible story is based on the Nordic fairy tale, *East of the Sun, West of the Moon*, a Northern version of the classic *Beauty and the Beast*. The author's words conjure a new world created from an ancient text. This story has the anatomy of a typical children's folktale transformed into a well-seasoned novel that any teen (or adult) who loves fantasy with relish. (This book comes complete with a glossary of Nordic names and terms as well as a bibliography of reference sources.)

- Brandi Bette Smead, Benicia Public Library

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)

Guidelines for reviews:

baya.org/guidelines.html

Grant, Michael. **Gone**. HarperTeen, 2008. 576p. 978-0061448768, \$17.99

* Imagine sitting in a 9th grade history class when suddenly, everyone over the age of 15 disappears. In addition to having no adults around, many kids are developing mutant powers. In a book reminiscent of *Lord of the Flies*, children struggle to find their place in a community filled with bullies. *Gone* starts slowly but begins to pick up pace as the story progresses. The plot is lacking in terms of a realistic description of the origins of the children's powers. By the end of the book there are many unanswered questions which will probably lead to a sequel.

- Sarah La Torra, Redwood City Public Library

Jenkins, A.M. **Night Road**. HarperTeen, 2008. 368p. 9780060546045, \$16.99

* A.M. Jenkins, winner of the Printz honor for *Repossessed*, creates a pièce de résistance in her new vampire book *Night Road*. The blood sucker community prefers to be called hemovores because unlike omnivores, they require blood to survive. This fresh look at vampires shows them not as superheroes, but humans dealing with a "disease." During the course of a road trip, Cole and his companions struggle to find the humanity in their lives. This beautifully written thriller will keep you reading until the last page.

- Sarah La Torra, Redwood City Public Library

Law, Ingrid. **Savvy**. Dial, 2008. 352p. 9780803733060 \$16.99

* Savvy is a coming of age story wrapped in a magical mystery tour. Mibs, short for Mississippi, is making the transition from child to teen. In the Beaumont family that means more than the usual changes of puberty. Each member of the family discovers their unique talent or "savvy" on their 13th birthday. Brother Rocket creates electricity, while brother Fish can generate a hurricane. Gramma catches radio waves in Mason jars and Mom does everything perfectly. As Mibs' birthday approaches she wonders what her savvy will be, but just before her birthday her father is in a car accident. As Mibs discovers her own talent, she tries to find a way to use it to help her father. The magical situations illuminate the author's message that each and every person is special in their own way. At times the tale becomes a bit too introspective, as Mibs continually reflects on her situation and what it all might mean. Older readers will get the author's point and will wish the author had focused more on the magical elements of the story. Tweens will find the story more appealing and are sure to be drawn to the book's eye-catching cover art.

-Nancy Kreiser, Contra Costa County Library

LeVine, Mark. **Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam**. Three Rivers Press, 2008. 296p. 9780307353399. \$13.95 (paper).

M Written by a professor of Middle Eastern studies at UC Irvine, this examines how Heavy Metal music (and rap and hip-hop) influences a portion of the world's Islamic youth. As much for adults as teens, this book goes into great detail and is fascinating, but not a brisk read. Each chapter focuses on a different country, from Morocco to Pakistan, and he includes lots of interviews and anecdotes along with solid history of these regions. LeVine sees hope in the Islamic youth who identify with Heavy Metal music – it is their way of rebelling against political oppression. Some teens may find the focus on music a great opening into learning more about the Middle East, but LeVine's narrative will challenge their attention spans.

- Penny Peck, San Leandro Public Library

Mitchard, Jacquelyn. **The Midnight Twin**. Penguin, Razorbill, 2008. 224p. 9781595141606 \$16.99

* Mallory and Meredith Brynn are identical twins that do not share the same birthday. They are midnight twins, one born just before and the other just after midnight. Mallory is serious and athletic, while Meredith is a popular cheerleader. Their personalities are different, but they share something besides their mirror image appearances; up until their 13th birthdays the sisters dreamt the same dreams. When they begin to dream different dreams they dismiss it at first. Is this just part of growing up? They soon discover, and almost die, when events reveal that their dreams are mirrors too. Mallory dreams the future and Meredith dreams the past. Their ability to see through time uncovers horrible secrets. Can they impact the events Mallory sees coming? Will their family be put in danger if they try to act? Author Mitchard delivers a winning combination of magic, mystery, and melodrama. Readers will fly through this

story and will be eager for the next installment of the Midnight Twins trilogy.

- Nancy Kreiser, Contra Costa County Library

Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. **Almost Alice**. Atheneum, 2008. 272p. 9780689870965. \$16.99

* Focusing on the last semester of her junior year, Alice is going through a transition in this 23rd "Alice" adventure, questioning her identity. She is a good friend, but always feels like she is in the background – helping Molly who has leukemia, doing stage crew for the Drama club, working on the school paper, and being the shoulder to cry on for her friends. The average tween or teen reader is more like Alice than many other popular series book characters, and the things that happen to Alice and her friends could really happen. The pregnancy and sudden early miscarriage by one of Alice's friends occurs in the last 50 pages and seems tacked on, but otherwise this is Naylor's usual solid writing. Alice is now being featured in a new DVD series with popular Disney channel actors, so there may be more interest in this series once tweens see the DVDs.

- Penny Peck, San Leandro Public Library

Rennison, Louise. **Stop in the Name of Pants! Confessions of Georgia Nicolson**. HarperTeen, 2008. 310p. 9780061459320 \$16.99.

* Covering just six weeks in the late summer and beginning of the school year, not much happens in the ninth entry in the "Georgia Nicolson" diaries. While Massimo is in Italy, she has a quick snog with Dave the Laugh, and wonders if she can be a loyal girlfriend. She argues with her friend Jas and family, and is as self-involved as ever, but this entry lacks the humor of the first few. It still is packed with British slang and features a glossary, but it doesn't have the originality and charm of *Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging* (2000), the first and still best in the series. Although libraries will want to purchase this due to demand, Rennison is really just typing here, not writing – no real plot, and adding nothing to the main character.

- Penny Peck, San Leandro Public Library

Saenz, Benjamin Alire. **He Forgot to Say Goodbye**. Simon & Schuster, 2008. 321p. 1416949631 \$16.99

M This book has a lot of strikes against it: contrived situations, unrealistically paranoid portrayal of drugs, and adult characters that are either thinly terrible or transparent saints. Yet, it charmed me and I found myself wanting to keep reading and reach the joyous ending that I saw coming miles away. Good for those looking for books about abandonment by fathers, also, one of the two main characters is a Mexican-American.

- Brian Boies, Oakland Public Library

Schmid, Susan Maupin. **Lost Time**. Philomel, 2008. 169p. 978-0399244605. \$16.99

* It's been one year since twelve-year-old Violyne Vivant's parents disappeared. When thieves break into her house, Violyne begins to see that her archeologist parents may have actually found something on their dig for the ancient city of Ninthon. Once she finds out that her butler is actually a former Arguaylan spy, she embarks on a journey that leads deep into the bowels of her planet. This adventure is a great way to delve into science fiction for the novice reader. Although the Violyne's story is one that tweens and young teens would love to experience, to the experienced reader the plot may seem rushed and the ending, a little too convenient.

- Brandi Bette Smead, Benicia Public Library

Stone, Jeff. **Eagle**. Random House, 2008. 223 p. 9780375830839. \$15.99

* Stone introduces the legend of enchanted gifts hidden in a treasure hoard by four mystical dragons in this episode, the fifth, of his Five Ancestors series. These gifts will enable the human race to bring about peace. The map leading to this treasure is the coveted prize sought by the Emperor. The story picks up with Ying, now wanted for treason, escaping from his hideout, the Jinan Fight Club. The 5 young monks he tried to destroy become his allies in his search for the mystical dragons' treasure. Their quest leads them to Ying's mother who reveals the true story of his past and the treasure they seek. The forces of the

Emperor, led by Tong Long, overtake them and seize the treasure from a hidden cave. Through a spyglass Ying and Malao see the treasure aboard Tong Long's ship. This episode ends with their discovery that a new friend, ShaoShu, the Mouse, is hiding on the boat. Fans will eagerly await the next chapter in the series entitled appropriately enough, *Mouse*. Readers will get to know the 5 monks a little better through Ying's eyes. Lots of skirmishes and violence, so not for those easily frightened or offended. A good engaging read for martial arts enthusiasts and adventure story fans.

- Elsie Tep, Contra Costa County Library

Supplee, Suzanne, **Artichoke's Heart**. Dutton Juvenile, 2008. 224p. 9780525479024, \$16.99

* Rosemary has been criticized and ridiculed for being overweight all her life. Finally she decides to take matters into her own hands and lose the weight. It is not as easy as it sounds—she must constantly struggle to resist the impulse to eat. And if this challenge were not enough, her mother is dealing with cancer. Through a counselor, friends, and her first boyfriend, Rosemary finds a good balance for her life. This is a heartwarming novel about weight, first loves, friendships, and seeing through the superficial. Highly recommended!

- Sarah La Torra. Redwood City Public Library

Volponi, Paul. **Hurricane Song**. Penguin Group, 2008. 136 p. ISBN 9780670061600. \$15.99

* 16-yr-old Miles wakes up to screaming at the beginning of this tale of a young teenager spending a summer with his dad, a jazz musician, in New Orleans in August of 2005. The screaming is coming from somewhere inside the Superdome where Miles & his dad sought refuge from Hurricane Katrina. Miles relationship with his Dad strengthens as they struggle to survive at the Superdome, get transferred to the Astrodome, relocate to Seattle, and finally return to New Orleans.

Volponi's tale will chill you to the bone. As in his other books, his writing puts you right there in the Superdome experiencing the chaos, the roving gangs, the lack of food, water and basic sanitation. The simple prose and fast paced dialogue bring to life the desperation, outrage, and resignation to these horrific conditions, the temptation to take advantage of chaotic conditions, and the struggle to stay true to your moral values when the risks are high. It's a graphic reminder of the scandalous handling of relief efforts 3 years ago. In Volponi's tale, one of the thugs gets what he deserves, but Volponi doesn't stop there. Sitting in the reopened Superdome, Miles realizes he doesn't want to forget his experience there and thinks "What happened to us there was too important to let go of, or to give a free pass to anyone who helped cause it." This book will help keep the memory of the inept disaster relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina. Volponi leaves it for us to decide who helped cause it. A good choice for reluctant readers, fans of urban fiction, historical fiction, and stories about father and son relationships.

- Elsie Tep, Contra Costa County Library

Yoo, David. **Stop Me If You've Heard This One Before**. Hyperion, 2008. 320 p. 9781423109075 \$16.99

R While David Yoo is ridiculously fantastic at capturing the painful and irrational emotions of social hermit Albert Kim breaking his way into high school life with his first girlfriend, the plot of *Stop Me If You've Heard This One Before* feels overwritten with many superfluous details. The story takes place in the 1980's, made foggily clear by references that make the characters seem outdated and really pretentious about only listening to old bands and remembering "the good ol' days" that they weren't around to experience in the first place. Yoo should have brought the main story up to speed by incorporating cell phones instead of pay phones and using contemporary pop culture references. The main character, Albert, is a Korean-American who's Asian-ness only appears in his immigrant parents. However, Albert being a pariah probably has more to do with his race than Yoo lets on—which, incidentally, doesn't make any sense for a story set in the 1980's. The story feels like an amateur memoir with a too self-involved main character and no editing down of the story. Much of the story should have been condensed to bring up the pace and keep five months under 300 pages. In fact, there are a lot of references that are not important; for instance, Ryan's cancer walk being on Halloween has no bearing to the story, and the walk could have been on any other day of the week. Everything is embellished too much, and what is already a long plot is made unnecessarily longer with these superfluous details.

- Megan Gaebler, Teen Reviewer, Berkeley Public Library

R I tried really, really hard to make this a "with caveat" review- because there are so few Asian America men writing for teens, and Yoo has an entertaining, edgy, self-deprecating tone that feels very genuine. I liked *Girls for Breakfast* (2005), and this one had potential- but it's too darn long at 320 pages (377 in galley form), with the kind of unnecessary repetition that crops up in the last few Harry Potter books (we watch protagonist experience something, then watch as protagonist runs into best friend and says what just happened- all over again). Yoo nails the kind of over-analysis of "she said ____ to me, and then she touched my hand- what does that really mean?" that teens do, but he repeats this device so often that it gets really tiresome. There are so many nice moments and touches- like Albert's social circle of 6th graders who play nerdy games with him and idolize him, and the absolutely beautiful scene demonstrating Albert's lack of driving skill - but Yoo, who captured the feeling of the Asian American as outsider so nicely in *Girls for Breakfast*, never addresses the inevitable and very real issue of Albert's ethnicity being a very real factor in his social exclusion. The references to 80's pop culture are entertaining for those who've been there, but realistic touches like Mia scrambling for a pay phone to check on Ryan will puzzle and lose our current cell phone generation. At the core, there's a good book here- it's just covered with extraneous and not very entertaining filler.

- Debbie Carton, Berkeley Public Library

SPECIAL FEATURE:

a young person's take on Stephenie Meyer in general, and *Breaking Dawn* in particular.

Editor's note: This was sent to me by a former teen volunteer, who now works in Santa Cruz at Border's bookstore as their children's specialist. She is a rabid reader with decided and fascinating opinions, and a real gift for reader's advisory. Shortly after *Breaking Dawn* was released, she sent me this message.

WARNING: SPOILERS ABOUND!

"...As I'm sure you know, the current YA book craze is Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga. I hope you haven't read them (especially the last book) but I have. Partially a work related duty and partially due to the crack I'm convinced the publishers put in the paper. I wanted to give you my review of the last book, *Breaking Dawn*, because I think it's important for you, as teen library kingpin, to know what all these teenage girls are reading.

DO NOT RECOMMEND THIS SERIES TO ANYONE UNDER 15ISH!

The first three books, although bordering on promoting abusive and generally unhealthy relationships, are basically fine. Poorly written vampire/human/werewolf love triangle, but not anything objectionable really. But the fourth book? I was almost physically ill while reading it! What follows is me being really weirded out. Being me, I babble on, so I've got bullet points at the end of my rant. I assume you don't care if I spoiler at you, but just in case, that's what I'm about to do.

So the vamp and the human chick get married in the beginning of book four. The chick is just barely 18 and both her parents are totally fine with this. The happy couple goes on a honeymoon (after which he will be turning her into a vampire) and, of course, they have sex. Nothing graphic. It's all "the water was warm and perfect. I wrapped my arms around him..." and then she wakes up the next morning. But after the sex...

Since he's all super strong, he was all worried about hurting her. When she wakes up, he's all angry and doesn't want to touch her because he accidentally bruised her entire body. What follows is a twelve page conversation in which she convinces him that it's ok that she's bruised because she knows he really loves her. Does this wave a "let's validate abusive relationships" flag for you too?

Don't get me wrong. I've got no problem with people having rough sex. But these books are being marketed to the 13-18 crowd, and being read by kids as young as 10. And Meyer does not make a clear distinction!

OK, so the chick gets preggers with the vampire baby (SO WEIRD) and the fetus grows hellsa fast. She starts showing a week or so after the first sex and is ready to deliver within a few months, or maybe less. The biggest problem with her being pregnant (other than the part where she's just 18) is that the baby is a lot stronger than her. It starts attacking her from the inside every time it moves, so she ends up having a pregnant belly covered with super huge internal bruises. Also, the baby cracks her ribs multiple times and her pelvis. Since the baby is all half undead (it's complicated) it starts feeding on live mommy from the inside. It basically drinks her blood and won't let her eat anything. Until they all figure out that she can drink human blood.

This is a really sickening view of pregnancy and it just feels wrong and twisted. I might be a little biased because I think babymaking is gross anyway, but I've never had this kind of reaction to reading about a pregnancy before. Even the part where the baby is a leech that's destroying her, which is a joke I've made many a time, creeped me out because of the way she was writing it. I'm not sure what it was, but I was reading it and fully convinced that the author must have had miscarriages and was putting all her pain on paper in gruesome metaphors.

This whole time that she's carrying baby, she loves it to death. Of course. The vampy father wants her to have an abortion (though they never use the word) and so does his vamp sire (who just happens to have been a doctor since the 18th century). In a conversation that vamp daddy has with the wolf boy (his rival and point 3 of the triangle) he explains that the only reason that they didn't use their superior strength to force an abortion, is that one of the female vampires has been protecting the pregnant mom. And the author definitely presents the physically forced abortion (again, not with that word) as the best possible option!

In the same conversation, vamp boy suggests that if she just wants to be a mom, they could abort the undead baby and have the wolf boy father another child for her, in the hopes that it wouldn't kill her. Cause that would take care of her need to mother. Yeah. She goes there. And they two guys definitely consider sharing her because "it would be worth it to save her life." While Meyer doesn't present this as though it's a good option, she does have the characters we're supposed to really like suggest it, and they don't really ever decide it's a bad idea. Uncomfortable and something the chick would never agree to, but not ever that bad.

When the baby eventually is born (the only way the mom lives is by being turned into a vampire at the very very last second) a crazy thing happens. The wolf pack does this imprinting thing where the first time they meet the eyes of their soul mate, both parties immediately love each other and realize that they are perfect for each other and are completely devoted to each other forever. There is no choice in the matter and it doesn't matter how old the two people are. Can you see where this is going? Yeah... the wolf boy who has been madly in love with the human chick this whole time imprints with her newborn half undead girl. EEEEEW! So what this means is that he's super protective of her and cares about her. Nothing sexual, but you know it's going to turn into that when she's old enough. And they explain it away by saying "I guess this is why we never worked out: we loved each other, but just as family."

OK, so that last one is weird, but not unreadable. The other stuff, I do not think 11 year olds should be reading. I could be wrong, but I just don't want girls thinking this stuff is ok. As promised, here are the bullet points.

- Girl gets married and preggers right out of high school, and her parents and the author are fine with it.
- After sex that leaves the girl bruised all over her body, girl convinces boy and readers that it's ok

because boy really does love her and it's not really his fault.

- During pregnancy, fetus starts attacking mommy from the inside, bruising her and not allowing her to ingest anything.
- During pregnancy, the only reason boy doesn't physically force an abortion on mommy against her will, is that a stronger character is protecting her.
- As a suitable way to convince mommy that she can abort and still have a kid, babydaddy suggests she sleeps with another guy so that guy 2 can father the child, and the guys will just share her.
- And finally, boy who was in love with mommy and never gets with her, ends up being the soul mate of mommy's newborn baby.

Like I said, **DO NOT RECOMMEND THIS SERIES TO THE UNDER 15 CROWD!** Although the first books are fine, you can't start the series without reading all of them (see my crack theory above).

Maybe I'm just a prude, but that was my opinion and, as all high teen book lady, I figured you should know."