



Abdel-Fattah, Randa. *Ten Things I Hate About Me*. Orchard Books, 2009. 297p. 9780545050555. \$16.99. Y*

Jamilah anglicizes her name to Jamie, dyes her hair blonde, tolerates racist comments and keeps her friendships superficial so that no one will discover that she's Lebanese-Muslim. Abdel-Fattah's (*Does My Head Look Big in This?*) focus on the hazards of conformity will resonate with teens, though better books have been written on this theme.

Jamilah's decision to "pass" seems capricious, which makes it difficult to empathize with her as she agonizes

over whether or not to "come out." Despite this (and a need for stringent editing), *Ten Things* still gives voice to an extremely underrepresented group in YA fiction.

-Nicole Pasini, San Mateo County Library, San Carlos Branch

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Wintergirls*. Viking Juvenile, 2009. 288p. 067001110X. \$17.99. M

Wintergirls tackles the tumultuous inner dialogue of Lia, 18, as she deals with the death of her former best friend. Fighting a wealth of problems from anorexia to cutting, Lia's struggle is dark and gripping. Although the subject matter makes for a brutal read, readers will find Lia's story hard to put down. Anderson's layering of realism; delusional fantasy and biting sarcasm make this a powerful and chilling read for teens seeking dark, realistic drama with a literary tone.

-Laura Calverley, San Mateo County Library

Baskin, Nora Raleigh. *Anything But Typical*. Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing, 2009. 208 p. 1416963782. \$15.99. Y

Anything But Typical is told from the point of view of Jason, a 12-year-old with autism. Life can be challenging for Jason, who is often confused in social interactions and prefers to express himself through his stories on a website for creative writers. It is through writing that he befriends a girl online and is confronted with the frightening prospect of meeting her in person. Though short on plot, *Anything But Typical* is told beautifully and with an amazing emotional sensitivity. Most appropriate for younger teens and tweens, this is a heartbreaking work that will appeal to sensitive readers.

-Laura Calverley, San Mateo County 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

Cano-Murillo, Kathy. *Crafty Chica's guide to artful sewing: fabu-low-sew projects for the everyday crafter*. Potter Craft, 2009. 144p. 9780307406668. \$21.95. **BA***

Kathy Cano-Murillo, a.k.a., the Crafty Chica of column and blog fame, claims she's no seamstress; she prefers "thread artist," "freak for fibers," or "hardcore material mama." Part how-to manual and part pep talk, the *Crafty Chica's Guide* is peppered with sewing tips, stories and quotes from Cano-Murillo and other crafters. Many of the projects focus on repurposing and embellishing, introducing techniques that could be applied elsewhere. Overall, the *Crafty Chica's Guide* will appeal to crafty teens and adults interested in sewing, though many of the projects are definitely not "low-sew," and will be better suited to experienced sewers.

-Nicole Pasini, San Carlos Library

Herholz, Bret M. *Diary of the Black Widow*. Alterna Comics. 2007 9780979787416. \$9.95. *

This is a comic about a girl who realizes she can manipulate men and then starts killing them. After she has killed numerous times and become rich from her victim's inheritances, two investigators become suspicious and begin questioning her in relation to the crimes. This story is flat and predictable offering no motive for the black widow's killings making it hard to become invested. It is written as a spoof mystery with the bumbling investigator and his trusted assistant, but doesn't offer any of the humor. In a prologue, the author pays homage to Edward Gorey. His drawing style imitates this famous artist, but comes off muddy and hard to read. Skip this comic.

- Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Hernandez, David. *No More Us for You*. HarperTeen. 2009. 281p. 9780061173332. \$16.99. **M**

In alternating, first-person narratives, Carlos and Isabel describe episodes building toward their nascent romance. Hernandez creates distinct, credible voices for his vulnerable, 17-year-old protagonists, both grieving recent relationships. Vivid, economical scenes portray the characters with their friends, Carlos at his job guarding a modern art museum, and Isabel with her lizard-obsessed younger brother. Humor infuses the story, as Carlos jokes that his friend "dances like a bobble head in a car going over potholes." Although less gritty than Hernandez's previous book, this story faces its characters with tragedy; drugs, gangs, and teen pregnancy also figure as peripheral realities.

-Joy Shiohita, Berkeley Public Library

Hunter, Erin. *Seekers: Great Bear Lake*. HarperCollins, 2009. 301p. 9780060671253. \$16.99. **Y**

In this sequel to *Seekers: the Quest Begins*, grizzly, polar, and black bears make their way to Great Bear Lake for an annual ritual believed to guarantee a year of plenty.

Hunter presents an interesting conception of a mythological basis for a mass exodus of bears for an annual gathering. The gradual change in the environment the bears are accustomed to seems to imply the negative impact of global warming. Is there an environmental message here? The band of *Seekers* is a mixed bag of all 3 kinds of bears plus a grizzly that can change its form. This is sort of reminiscent of Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring*. In the same way their friendship strengthens as the story unfolds. The story itself moves along very slowly without much action. Vegans beware, there are many instances of catching, killing and eating other animals by the bears.

-Elsie Tep, Contra Costa County Library

Myers, Walter Dean. *Dope Sick*. HarperTeen. 2009. 186p. 9780061214776. \$16.99. M

Lil J was going to apply for a job at Home Depot, but after seeing the long line, he decides to make a drug run instead. What he thought would be easy money turns into tragedy after an undercover police officer is shot. Fleeing the scene, he ducks into an abandoned building hoping to make a quick escape through the roof. On his way up, however, he encounters Kelly, a shadowy figure who possesses a magic television that projects a picture of the street as if it is attached to a camera outside. Lil J is curious. Kelly asks Lil J if he could take back one thing he's done in life what it would be and prompts him for an answer by showing him glimpses of his past and future on the television. Their discussion becomes a catharsis for Lil J as he comes to terms with incidents in his life that may have led him to this point. In this short book Meyers, brings a unique science fiction element to the typical urban fiction tale with the television as time machine. This device gives Lil J a chance to reflect back on his own life without anyone having to tell him to do it. Readers will wonder what Lil J will change if anything, and whether or not he'll escape from the police.

- Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Stork, Francisco X. *Marcelo in the Real World*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2008. 312 p. 9780545054744. \$17.99. *

Marcelo (pronounced Mar-SELL-o) Sandoval is a seventeen year-old with an autism-like condition and a "special interest" in classical music and religion. He is looking forward to spending the summer working with the horses at the special school he attends. However, his father, a high-powered corporate lawyer, thinks that it's time Marcelo learned about the "real world" and gives him an ultimatum: Marcelo will spend the summer working in the mailroom at his law firm learning the rules of the "real world" or be sent to public school the following year. Over the course of the summer, Marcelo learns about responsibility, justice, romance, and that, while the "real world" is far more complex than he ever imagined, he may just have a place in it after all. I enjoyed *Marcelo in the Real World* for its interesting characters and its big heart, even if the plot twists are a bit far-fetched (including Marcelo discovering that the firm has been covering up for a windshield manufacturer selling dangerously defective products) and wrapped up too cleanly. Marcelo's voice and characterization are believable and I enjoyed his unique perspective on the world. He is entirely literal-minded and his attempts to decode the strange behaviors of those around him are handled in a way that is both humorous and compassionate. I also appreciated the fact that, though Marcelo is a boy of great faith and a deep interest in religion, the book never got preachy, nor did it advocate a single religious tradition. A good book for grades 7 to 11.

-Jack Baur, Berkeley Public Library

Tan, Shaun. *Tales From Outer Suburbia*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2008. 96 p. 9780545055871. \$19.99. *

In his last book, the silent graphic novel *The Arrival*, Shaun Tan brought the immigrant experience to life through surreal imagery, making the feeling of being alone in a strange land timeless and universal. In his latest work Tan visits an even stranger place: Suburbia. *Tales From Outer Suburbia* is a collection of fantastic illustrated short stories and comics, fully bringing to bear Tan's power to mystify. Each piece seamlessly blends the whimsical with the ominous and the familiar with the strange, giving even the shortest pieces a depth that invites close reading. Add to that the book's stunning design and the wide variety of styles that Tan seemingly effortlessly employs and you have a bona fide work of art that simply begs you to get lost in it. My favorite pieces are a poem/collage in which all of the ripped-up and abandoned poems in the world come together to form a great ball that hovers over the suburbs at night; and an account of bizarre marriage rites wherein a newlywed couple must venture on a quest "past the

factories and landfills and beyond all the signs and roads" to find who-knows-what armed with only cryptic riddles and their traditional wedding boots. Every reader, young or old, will find something here -- something to love, to puzzle over, and to be spellbound by... probably all at once.

-Jack Baur, Berkeley Public Library

Williams-Garcia, Rita. ***Jumped***. HarperTeen, 2009. 169 p. 9780060780915. \$16.99. HL

This book tells a tale of one eventful day in the lives of 3 girls in an urban high school. Leticia overhears Dominique boasting that she is going to beat up Trina. Leticia must decide what to do with this information. The outcome will affect them all.

Through the voice of each girl we see the world through three very different perspectives. All three are very believable characters: Dominique, the angry bully, Trina, the clueless exuberant artiste, Leticia, the self-centered teen just trying to make it through the day. Williams-Garcia paints a realistic picture of an all too common occurrence. She hints at opportunities throughout the narrative where some action could change the outcome. A quick, easy, engaging read.

-Elsie Tep, Contra Costa County Library

Vivian, Siobahn. ***Same Difference***. Push. 2009. 287p. 9780545004077. \$17.99. *

It's the summer before Emily's senior year and she is about to attend a summer art program in Philadelphia. While she sees it as a fun and exciting opportunity to practice a newly discovered talent for drawing, it also means that she will have to spend a summer separate from her joined-at-the-hip best friend and across-the-street neighbor, Meg. Suburban girl in the big city, Emily comes into a new realization of self, which puts strain on their relationship. Meanwhile, Emily finds a new friendship with an eccentric Fiona, but may be too naïve to realize the girl's true motivations. With a little romance thrown in, this coming of age story will be a hit with girls who long to break away from mundane lives in the suburbs. The book nicely conveys Emily's feeling that self-reinvention is possible, while it touches on issues of economic class and the inner workings of friendships with a little art education mixed in.

- Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Volponi, Paul. ***Response***. Viking. 2009. 145p. 9780670062836. \$15.99. M

Noah works at McDonalds, but the money he makes isn't enough to satisfy his baby's mama. A group of his friends suggest they steal a Lexus from a neighboring white suburb for easy cash and he goes along with the plan. Their attempt to steal the car is foiled, but while hanging out they are mobbed by a group of white men. Noah trips and is beaten up in an apparent hate crime. With references to the true story of the young African American man killed 20 years ago in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood, the book follows the hate crime trial and the community reaction from Noah's point of view with snippets of dialogue from the suspect. Like others of Volponi's novels, this story deals with shades of grey. The African American teenagers were in the neighborhood to steal a car, but they didn't. Did the white boys have a right to protect their neighborhood by beating them up? While the questions are intriguing, the plot of the story is bland and plods along with no real climax. Noah comes off as a bit too sure of himself for a teen, so much so you wonder why he would get involved in such a crime in the first place.

- Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Yee, Lisa. ***Absolutely Maybe***. Arthur A. Levine Books. 2009. 274p. 9780439838443. \$16.95. *

Maybelline "Mabye" Chestnut grew up not knowing her father and never feeling quite good enough for her mother, Chessy, former pageant queen turned charm-school owner who doesn't approve a Maybe's Kool-Aid died hair and baggy clothes. So when her mother decides to marry for the sixth time, Maybe's skeptical things will work out. When her mother takes her fiancé's side after he tries to rape her, Maybe decides to leave her small Florida town and head for L.A. in search of her biological father. Good for her she's got two solid best friends in Ted, a short, spunky Thai teen with devoted adopted parents, and Hollywood, who's headed to southern California himself to start film school at USC. Maybe doesn't know what she'll encounter when she gets to LA, but thinks she can handle whatever's thrown her way. As the story tests her resolve, Maybe learns more about herself. Yee has created a story that will keep teens eager to find out what happens to Maybe. Additionally, the characters of Ted and Hollywood are just as interesting as they each find new experiences in L.A. Besides running away, Maybe's emotional reaction to her rape doesn't seem strong enough, but as the story continues, it makes sense for her character.

- Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library