



Amblard, Odile. *Privacy, Please!: Gaining Independence from Your Parents*. Amulet Books, 2009. 112p. 9780810983571. \$10.95.

*Privacy, Please!* covers an important topic but is disorganized and poorly executed. For example, Amblard writes, "Have you really explained why you need a regular amount of money you can spend or save?" without giving teens concrete advice for the conversation (i.e., offering to do chores in return for allowance) and doesn't touch on the possibility that a teen could get an after-school job to help achieve some financial independence. *Privacy, Please!* glosses over how the diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds can deeply effect how parents and teen negotiate independence, and it doesn't spend enough time on the crucial interrelationship of independence, responsibility and trust.

-Nicole Pasini, San Mateo County Library

Brewer, Heather. *The Chronicles of Vladimir Tod: Tenth Grade Bleeds*. Dutton Children's Books, 2009. 292p. 9780525421351. \$16.99. Y\*

In the third installment of Brewer's popular vampire series, Vlad, half-human half-vampire, is now in high school still struggling to fit into a human world and at the same time suppress the urge to feed on live human blood. Meanwhile, vampires from the Elysian council are again on the hunt for him and a boy from school is intent on exposing his secret. Scenes of high school drama – bullying, tested friendships and young love – are mixed in with vampire brawls and moments of emotional depth. Fans of the previous two books will not be disappointed, or bored, with this installment.

-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Click: *The Ultimate Photography Guide for Generation Now*. Amphoto Books, 2009. 144p. 9780823092376. \$18.95 \*

"For teens, by teens." This accessible, eye-catching, instructional book is bound to get most anyone excited about taking pictures. The fact that all the photos featured are by teens seems like a great resource for "generation now" looking for something to relate to. I appreciate that this isn't an extremely technical book. There are chapters dedicated to how to approach different types of shots such as portraits or action shots, with a few examples of styles that could work for each type. This book is energetic and encouraging, an inspiration for young adults to share their world, the way they see it.

- Dana Aleshire, Contra Costa 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](http://baya.org/guidelines.html)

Conrad, Lauren. *L.A. Candy*. HarperCollins, 2009. 336p. 9780061767586. \$17.99.

Reality television star Lauren Conrad delivers her first novel, *L.A. Candy*. *L.A. Candy* is about Jane, 19, a plain and innocent newbie to Los Angeles who is discovered and cast in a reality television show. At first things seem fabulous—swank apartments, promotions, and dates with cute guys come freely. But as the line between real life and reality television life begin to blur, Jane finds herself questioning it all. The writing is too formulaic and simple for readers who are looking for any kind of sophistication or depth, but fans of Conrad's glossy reality show will enjoy this quick, fluffy read. Although it has a lot of teen appeal, the casual use of adult language and situations are not for the more conservative reader.

-Laura Calverley, San Mateo County Library.

Crutcher, Chris. *Angry Management*. Greenwillow Books, 2009. 245p. 978-0-06-050247-8. \$16.99. \*M

Fans of Sarah Byrnes, Angus Bethune, Matt Miller, and Montana West will welcome this reunion. Crutcher has taken characters from previous books and created new short stories, repackaged as three novellas. Unfortunately, uniting the three stories through an anger management group feels contrived. The stories are engaging if not particularly memorable, and the first contains a scene where both characters lose their virginity and fail to use birth control without consequences. Crutcher provides enough background so as not to require familiarity with his previous work to enjoy. While the novel approach is commendable, the final result is less than the sum of the parts.

-Beth Gousman, Student, SJSU

Dessen, Sarah. *Along for the Ride*. Viking, 2009. 383p. 9780670011940. \$19.99. M\*

When her parent's divorce, Auden retreats into her studies, away from friends and also has trouble sleeping. The summer before college she escapes from an overbearing mother to live with her father, his new wife and baby at their beach house. In a nocturnal sojourn she meets Eli, a competitive biker, who has troubles of his own. The two embark on a quest to teach Auden how to ride a bike, and other adventures. Dessen fans and those new to her work won't be disappointed with the depth and story in her latest novel. As Auden struggles with romance, a new set of friends she's not sure she wants and often difficult parents, her motivations are never left unclear.

-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Forks, Brittany. *Kilobyte Couture: Geek Chic jewelry to make from easy-to-find computer components*. Crown Publishing Group, 2009. 128p. 9780823099023. \$18.95 \*

"Geek chic is a movement that focuses on taking uncool or 'nerdy' things and making them 100% cute." Author Brittany Forks claims her geekdom while claiming that she grew up reading *Seventeen* as well. She has provided a range of easy to hard projects, with thoughtful names and descriptions, in a beautifully arranged, easy to digest book. Included is a parts breakdown, a section on tips for finding components for creations, and suggestions for how to make each project your own. I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in jewelry, crafts, do-it-yourself, and most definitely to computer nerds who want to represent.

- Dana Aleshire, Contra Costa County Library

Gill, David Macinnis. *Soul Enchilada*. Greenwillow. 2009. 356p. 978-0061673016. \$16.99.

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In his debut novel, Macinnis creates an appealingly strong and sassy female protagonist. Trying to escape a contract on her soul, Eunice "Bug" Smoot defies devils with her verbal bluster, mad basketball skills, and aggressive driving techniques. A Tejana-African American teen, Bug sprinkles her conversation with Spanish. *Soul Enchilada* straddles genres, combining fantasy, sporting action, gross-out maggots and mucus, and a bit of romance. The book's strengths lie in the humorous elements and in Bug's narrative voice. Despite thin character development and some incredulous plot twists, this novel offers a wild, amusing story.

-Joy Shiohita, Berkeley Public Library

Griffin, Paul. *The Orange Houses*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2009. 147p. 9780803733466. \$16.99. M\*

An unlikely hero, Jimmi, a 19-year-old crack addicted war veteran, brings together two teenage girls struggling with their own inner turmoil on the city streets of New York: Tamika, deaf and struggling to gain the respect of her high school classmates and Fatima, alone in a new country after illegally immigrating from a refugee camp in Africa. In a poetic narrative, Griffin shows how each of the trio live in their own world as a way to deal with feelings society doesn't understand, but come out of their shells for each other in beautiful poetry and art. The tragic ending of this book may be too much for tender hearted readers, but the poetic writing and perspectives not usually seen in teen literature make this a touching and enlightening book.

-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Gutman, Dan. *Return of the Homework Machine*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2009. 162 p. 9781416954163. \$15.99.

Reject. It's too young for teens. I would recommend for 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grades

-Chris Selig, San Leandro Public Library

Han, Jenny. *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. Simon and Shuster, 2009. 276p. 978416968238. \$16.99. Y\*

Belly and her family have spent almost every summer at a beach house with her mother's best friend and her two sons. Every year she pines over the sullen, older brother Conrad, but this year it seems he's noticed her budding sexuality. Amidst days at the pool, walks on the beach and local parties, Belly yearns for reciprocation. But things aren't right with her mother's friend and a love triangle develops with Jeremiah, the friendly younger brother. Told in alternating chapters that give the reader glimpses of the past, Belly's transformation from giggling girl to young woman is well portrayed. The "does he like me?" factor makes this book a page turner that girls addicted to romance novels won't be able to put down.

-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Harding, Robyn. *My Parents are Sex Maniacs: A High School Horror Story*. Annick Press, 2009. 236p. 9781554511792. \$19.95.\*

When Louise's brother walks in on their father and her best friend Sienna's mother fooling around, everything in Louise's life changes – her father moves out, her mother becomes a recluse, and, worst of all, Sienna stops talking to her. As Louise starts to rebuild her life, she becomes stronger, more independent, and an increasingly interesting character to read about. Despite the naughty title, it's a comparatively chaste

read. *My Parents are Sex Maniacs* focuses on what teenagers can and can't control in their lives, and does it in a funny, sincere way.

-Nicole Pasini, San Mateo County Library

Kent, Brittany. *Jonas Brothers: Inside Their World*. Penguin, 2009. 182p. 9780425229392. \$16.99 \*

I know nothing about the Jonas Brothers, other than the fact that they appeared on what seemed like five (probably more) magazine covers a couple months ago and that they came out with a movie, in addition to their music. This book is colorful and covers all the bases. It has profiles of Nick, Joe, and Kevin, has quizzes and maps for fans to see how they relate to their lives, set-lists from shows, photo spreads, and a history section thoughtfully compiled from many different interview sources. The ultimate fan guide and an interesting book for those new to this pop sensation.

- Dana Aleshire, Contra Costa County Library

Millidge, Gary Spencer. *Comic Book Design: The Essential Guide to Creating Great Comics and Graphic Novels*. Watson-Guipill Publications, 2009. 160p. 9780823097968, \$24.95. \*

It's fitting that Gary Spencer Millidge's book *Comic Book Design* is itself exquisitely designed. Millidge uses a diverse selection of full color examples from the history of comic books to teach budding comics artists important concepts like page layouts, cover design, and coloring technique. The variety of beautiful examples and the informative historical commentary alone makes this an interesting read. But what makes this book stand out is Millidge's grasp of the uniqueness of comics as a storytelling form, as well as his ability to articulate what it is that makes great comics great. This book is comparable to Scott McCloud's classic *Understanding Comics* for the way it demystifies the magic that happens between the page and the reader's imagination, while also providing excellent advice for comic artists-in-training. It should be noted that this is not a drawing book, but an instruction manual to help artists understand visual storytelling. Essential for collections serving young people that are truly interested in becoming comic book artists.

-Jack Baur, Berkeley Public Library

Morrison, Angela. *Taken by Storm*. Razorbill, 2009. 304p. 978-1595142382, \$16.99 \*

High school senior Michael's world has been devastated, a result of the hurricane that capsized his boat, drowning his parents and friends. Now living with his grandmother in a rainy Oregon town, far from his beloved ocean and diving routine, he's just going through the motions of life, trying to make the nightmares stop. Leesie is bright and motivated, likely headed to Brigham Young in the fall. Nothing stands in her way, except her surprising relationship with Michael, which tests her will and her faith. Told through Leesie's poems and Michael's dive log, *Taken By Storm* is an interesting romantic drama. Readers for whom staying true to their faith is paramount will identify with Leesie's decisions, while Michael's personal struggles and related baggage makes for compelling reading. Though the ending is too neat, this book offers strong characters, a unique narrative format and a not-quite-forbidden romance that will satisfy many teen readers.

-Kelly Keefer, San Leandro Main Library

Morrison, Grant et.al. Final Crisis. DC Comics, 2009. 352p. 9781401222819, \$29.99. \*

Here's the basics:

- Final Crisis was last year's massive DC Comics crossover event in which every DC character of note (Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, etc.) was pulled into an apocalyptic battle against Darkseid.
- It was written by Grant Morrison, a major figure on the comic book landscape for more than a decade who is known for his wild, reality-bending plots and encyclopedic knowledge of superhero history.
- Batman dies. For real. (Well, we see him get hit by some super-bullet, and we see charred body, but maybe he just got transported back in time. Regardless, everyone is acting like he's dead, so let's just say he's dead. At least for a little while.)

Even hardcore comic book fans will agree that Final Crisis makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. Few who know me will disagree that I have a far better-than-average familiarity with comic books. I got hooked on comics as a kid in the early-nineties and have been reading widely in the world of superheroes ever since. However, despite this advantage over most casual readers and the fact that I adore writer Grant Morrison (who one can always count on to deliver something truly weird), I was totally lost while trying to read Final Crisis. The reasons for this are numerous, but largely boil down to the fact that so much time is spent on "epic" fist-fights between hundreds of more-or-less identical second-string characters (many of whom were created by Jack Kirby in the '70s and never really heard from again) that Morrison can't be bothered to slow down and explain what this crisis is all about. Nor is there any room for readers to feel anything for the characters, or for the characters to do anything but spout melodramatic warnings about the end of existence. Galactic fisticuffs are all well-and-good, but readers need a little humanity or else its just... galactic fisticuffs.

All that said, the art in this book is mostly top-notch and exciting, and the production values of the hardcover edition are quite high. Additionally, this is a really big event that is set to change the DC Universe for a long time which means that comic book fans are likely to want to read it. Any serious graphic novel collection should probably go ahead and pick this up. Just be ready to point patrons to one of the many websites offering annotations to the story when they come back scratching their heads.

-Jack Baur, Berkeley Public Library

Rosenberg, Jonathan. Goats: Infinite Typewriters. Del Rey, 2009. 176p. 9780345510921. \$14.00. B/A

This web-comic now published into a book is certainly epic. It was hard for me to get into at first, because it is fairly philosophical, but with humor and nonsense mixed in. Reading three-frame segments were more interesting and fulfilling to me than following the over-arching narratives. The color choices are captivating and the graphic choices for depth and focus draw attention to the characters well. I felt tired after reading this though, perhaps because it felt too infinite?

- Dana Aleshire, Contra Costa County Library

Russell, Rachel Renee. Dork Diaries: Tales from a NOT-SO-Fabulous Life. Aladdin, 2009. 202p. 1416980067 \$12.99. Y

Read the diary of middle schooler Nikki Giovanni as she figures out life at a new school. Nikki learns where her real talents lie and who her real friends are very quickly.

The format of this book makes it look like a Diary of a Wimpy Kid for girls. It's definitely written from a girl's

point of view. Fans of Raisin Rodriguez, another series about a young teen starting up in a new school might enjoy this. Using the diary format allows Nikki to vent over every aspect of her life with abandon without her seeming like a drama queen. This is a very funny, quick read with lots of humorous illustrations of the trials and tribulations of a very believable character on the road to self discovery.

-Elsie Tep, Contra Costa County Library

Scott, Elizabeth. Love You Hate You Miss You. Harper Teen, 2009. 276p. 9780061122835, \$16.99. M\*

Amy's best friend, free-spirited and rebellious Julia, is dead, and Amy doesn't know if she can forgive herself. She has to face life without Julia, alcohol and casual sex to shield her from social anxiety, body image issues, and being ignored by her parents. Amy's story is told in alternating diary entries addressed to Julia and first person narrative chapters. In a style similar to Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*, details of the night of the accident, as well stories of Amy and Julia's friendship and escapades, are revealed to the reader slowly, forming a coherent picture only at the end. The reader learns along with Amy what she refused to see about the nature of her friendship with Julia while consumed with grief and guilt. The book has an emotionally compelling and authentic voice, with great attention to the complex nature of teenage girl friendships. While perhaps not the best work of YA fiction to tackle this subject matter, it's a solid choice for any collection, with a lot to offer young adults living through the issues and situations handled in the story.

-Jill Haris, Marin County Free Library

Smith, Sherri. Flygirl. Putnam, 2009. 256 pgs. 9780399247095. \$16.99 \*

Ida Mae has always wanted to fly, but being a girl in the 1940's, let alone a black girl, doesn't give her many options. When she finds out that the Women's Airforce Service Pilots needs female pilots for non-combat missions, Ida Mae decides to risk life as she knows it to help her country and satisfy her dream of becoming a pilot. She is light skinned enough to "pass" for white and tryout for the program, but the weight of her secret almost crushes her. Smith's narrative nicely combines historic records of the WASP program with a detailed southern setting, intriguing minor characters and a compelling main character in Ida Mae. *Flygirl* is a riveting look at a lesser known aspect of World War II.

-Kelly Keefer, San Leandro Main Library

Stork, Francisco X. Marcelo in the Real World. Scholastic, 2009. 312p. 9780545054744, \$17.99. \*

Marcelo is a seventeen year old with an Asperger's-like condition. While self-aware, intelligent and high-functioning, he has lived a somewhat sheltered life, attending a private school and surrounding himself only with people and things that make him comfortable. The summer before his senior year, Marcelo's unsympathetic father Arturo pushes Marcelo to leave his comfort zone and adjust to the "real world" by taking a summer job at his law firm. During his experiences at the firm and beyond, Marcelo is faced with some big decisions and major ethical dilemmas. He learns that not everyone can be trusted, nor are everyone's motivations or intentions noble or good, sometimes even those who he has always trusted absolutely. This book is not your typical coming of age story, offering a look into a very unique young adult perspective. The subject matter is intense and thought provoking, with an uncompromising integrity that many young readers will appreciate. The characters and their perspectives are dynamic, well rendered and highly interesting. Part legal drama, part unlikely misfit love story, this title is highly recommended.

-Jill Haris, Marin County Free Library

## Teen Reviews

Collins, Suzanne. *Catching Fire*. Scholastic Press, 2009. 400p. 978-0439023498 17.99. \*

BEWARE! THIS REVIEW CONTAINS SPOILERS FROM THE FIRST BOOK IN THE SERIES, THE HUNGER GAMES, WHICH EVERYONE SHOULD GO READ RIGHT NOW. OR ELSE. THAT IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH I WILL THREATEN YOU. BUT SERIOUSLY. READ IT.

Katniss Everdeen is back, and in more danger than ever. On the surface, everything is as it should be --better, even. By winning the Hunger Games, she and her co-victor, Peeta Mellark, have guaranteed themselves the comfortable lives of celebrities, as well as security for their families. But Kat's move with the poisonous berries undermined the rules of the Games and struck a blow to the very foundations of Panem. This shift, despite the Capitol's efforts to cover it up, has incited a stirring throughout the districts. Something that could shape up to be rebellion.

Suddenly, the story has become much larger than personal survival: Katniss and her Mockingjay pin are national symbols. To some, she is the face of coming revolution. To the rich and clueless who live in the Capitol, she is a romantic heroine, her Mockingjay a fashion statement. To President Snow, she is wild card he never counted on, a threat that must be tamed. Kat must convince all of Panem that her last act in the Arena was motivated purely by deep love for Peeta, or everyone she cares about will suffer.

But after all the horrors she has witnessed--in the Arena, in the Capitol, and in the mines back home --how can she possibly be a puppet for the President? As she and Peeta take the traditional Victory Tour and wisps of rebellion begin to rise, Kat must choose between protecting those she loves and taking part in the fight for freedom.

Once again, Suzanne Collins has crafted a thrilling work that I was helpless to put down. Having not read *The Hunger Games* in a while, I was shocked anew by the sheer brutality of the Capitol, the Games, and the underlying system. All the adventure, action, romance, and excitement of the first book have carried over here, with plenty surprising turns along the way. I wouldn't say that *Catching Fire* is quite as amazing as its predecessor but, for the most part, it measures up. It isn't as if the quality of story and writing aren't as good. On the contrary, Collins continues to be well-grounded in the world of Panem and quite well-acquainted with her characters. It's just that everything that transpires feels a bit like a bridge between the first and the third books, the setup to lead us to the grand finale. I felt the same about Pullman's *The Subtle Knife*: the book is worthwhile in its own right, but is more of a tool for the author to lead us where we're to be taken than anything else. But then, you can't have a magic trick without the setup.

All in all, *Catching Fire* is a well-crafted and thoroughly enjoyable continuation of Kat's story and I definitely can't wait to read what comes next. Put it at the top of your pile.

-Raechel, Berkeley Public Library