



Barnes, John. tales of the MADMAN underground. Viking, 2009. 532p. 978067006081-8, \$18.99. M.

Tired of his affiliation with the madmen, a group of students bound together during the school year by their shared visits to the school psychologist, Karl Shoemaker starts his senior year by deploying operation "be f***ing normal." Yet try as he may to break from the madmen and distance himself from their shared injustices, he is just too good of a friend. Told over six days in September 1973, tales of the MADMAN underground is an

insightful, poignant and funny novel led by the engaging character of Karl. Popular he is not, but he is quirky, caring, and the hardest working high school senior you've ever met. Secondary characters, especially Karl's alcoholic Mom, are equally well developed, and the dialog is concurrently heartbreaking and hilarious. At more than 500 pages, this novel will not fly off the shelves, but any reader looking for a likeable, believable hero to root for should run, not walk, to get a copy of this book.

-Kelly Keefer, San Leandro Main Library

Carter, Ally. Don't Judge a Girl by Her Cover. Hyperion Books, 2009. 263p. 9781423116387. \$16.99. *

Cammie's vacation with BFF Macey, her classmate at Gallagher Academy for Exceptional Young Women, isn't what either expected. Their first day together ends with an emergency escape off the hotel's roof, landing them both in the hospital. When Macey, daughter of a vice presidential candidate, receives more death threats, Cammie and her classmates go undercover to get to the bottom of the malice. But is Macey the one who really needs protection? Though the beginning drags slightly as Carter spends time catching up those who haven't read the first two books in the series, she quickly speeds things along with a fun, twist-filled plot, questionable romantic relationships, and an intriguing guess at the curriculum of a secret spy school for girls. New readers should enjoy this as much as established fans of the series.

-Kelly Keefer, San Leandro Main Library

Davis, Heather. Never Cry Werewolf. HarperTeen, 2009. 216 p. 9780061349232, \$16.99. H/L

Never Cry Werewolf is a piece of supernatural romance fluff whose title and cover tell you just about everything that you need to know about what you'll find inside: a young girl in the dark

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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woods looking scared but a little excited, pulling her red hoodie (allusion alert!) around herself while cursive writing spells out the terrible pun of the title? You get the idea. Shelby is a slightly rebellious (she has a tendency to get caught making out with boys) whose Evil Stepmother ships her off to brat camp for the summer. There among the cast-off offspring of the rich and famous - the son of a gossip columnist here, an heir to a fashion empire there - she discovers the dreamy Austin Bridges III whose rock-star father has a reputation for crazy stage antics a la Ozzie Osborne. Shelby suspects he's trouble, but as they get closer she realizes, OMG, he's a werewolf!!!

There's really no other plot worth speaking of in this diverting but forgettable book. The characters are all plucked straight from the Cookie-Cutter YA Character Handbook. Shelby works as a basic typical girl YA book heroine, and she has a typical-girl best friend/sidekick whose there when she's needed for the plot and gone when she's not. There are a couple of plot strands that don't go anywhere, and the inevitable werewolf transformation and resultant rampage come and go in a blink. But none of that matters. What matters are the descriptions of Austin's eyes sparkling in the moonlight and the butterflies in Shelby's stomach. If that's what your readers are after, then they'll gobble up this brief book in an instant.

-Jack Baur, Berkeley Public Library

Draper, Sharon M. *Just Another Hero*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2009. 288p. 9781416907008. \$16.99. H/L

Fans of Draper's previous works will remember many of the cast of characters developed in *The Battle of Jericho* and *November Blues*. It's senior year, and African American teens Arielle and Kofi are both struggling against forces larger than themselves. There's a lot going on at school and at home, and perhaps too many characters than ultimately necessary. Despite that, Draper successfully explores a variety of contemporary issues of for Urban Young Adults for an audience of 13+providing a satisfying, believable conclusion.

-Beth Gousman, Student, San Jose State.

Efaw, Amy. *After*. Viking, 2009. 350p. 9780670011834 \$17.99 *

Devon is supposed to be the girl who has her life together. She excels at school and is a star soccer player. But after becoming pregnant at 15 her life falls apart. She hides her pregnancy from everyone and then throws the newborn into a dumpster. When the baby is found she is charged with attempted murder. The book follows Devon as she moves through the juvenile justice system. Devon is in denial and without insight into her thought process the reader is often left in the dark about her motivations and what actually happened. However, side characters fill in the plot and help move along this heart wrenching, deep book that will inspire teens to think about actions and consequences.

-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Gardner, Sally. *The Red Necklace*. Speak, 2007. 378p. 9780142414880 \$8.99 *

Yann Margoza, an orphaned magician's apprentice with gypsy roots, first meets Sido the night his boss is murdered. This fateful meeting sets into motion a series of intrigues, romance and magic set against the backdrop of Paris during the time of the French Revolution. Yann has special powers and the murderer, Count Kalliovski, a friend of Sido's father, wants them too. The count would also like to marry Sido. Yann and Sido must use cunning to escape the count. This fast paced and engrossing novel deserves all the good reviews it has earned to date. Now in paperback it is highly recommended to teens who enjoy romance, murder mystery, adventure, fantasy or magic.

-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Gardner, Sally. *The Silver Blade*. Dial Books, 2009. 362p. 9780803733770 \$17.99 *

In this sequel to *The Red Necklace*, the French Revolution is full blown and Yann, the hero from the first book, is helping aristocrats escape to England. His beloved Sido is safely ensconced there, but the villainous Count Kalliovski has gained more power and is still after her. A secret hangs in the air and Yann begins to question his gypsy roots and love for Sido. This book doesn't move as quickly as the first but is still satisfying with even darker characters and more fantasy. Readers who loved the first book will certainly want to read this one to find out what happens to the young love birds.

-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Horowitz, Anthony. *Return to Groosham Grange: The Unholy Grail*. Philomel Books, 2009. 214 p. 9780399250637. \$16.99 Y

In his second year at Groosham Grange, we find David competing for the coveted Unholy Grail. At first a reluctant student, David is ranked first in his class and sure to win until a series of mysterious mishaps jeopardize his standing in the competition. David discovers that the outcome of the contest will determine the future survival of his school.

The prequel to this book, *Groosham Grange*, came out in 1988, almost 10 years before the first Harry Potter book. David and his schoolmates all have special powers, several are seventh sons/daughters of seventh sons/daughters. The headmaster has 2 heads, the teachers are vampires, werewolves, or some other fantastic creature. Reading this reissued edition with new cover art in 2009, post Harry Potter readers may find it a bit derivative although it was actually published first. Horowitz does not disappoint in writing a story full of suspenseful moments. As in his Alex Rider series, David must find answers and get himself out of tight spots. This is a quick, engaging read for those who love being taken to a magical place where the unexpected happens regularly.

-Elsie Tep, Contra Costa County Library

Kleid, Neil and Cinquegrani, Nicolas. *The Big Kahn*. Comics Lit, 2009. 176 p. 9781561635610, \$13.95. BA

At the funeral for Rabbi David Khan, a terrible secret comes out: he was not actually Jewish, but

rather a Gentile grifter, who infiltrated the Jewish community as part of a con until he fell in love and decided to devote himself to the Jewish faith. This revelation impacts both the community in the synagogue who begin to question their former Rabbi's intentions and leadership (and by extension those of his son Avi who hopes to take over as Rabbi), and Khan's wife and children who all feel both the loss and the deception in their own ways. *The Big Khan* is a complex story of faith, grief, and family, written by Neil Klide and told through beautifully simple comics by Nicolas Cinquegrani. It offers a rich view of contemporary Jewish life and faith (make sure you use the handy glossary in the back) that makes the finely balanced stories of each member of the Khan family feel all the more real and moving. The book is suggested for mature readers and contains some four-letter words, drinking (including the onset of alcoholism in Rabbi Khan's wife) and a little bit of sex. I don't think that there's any content here that a mature teen wouldn't be able to handle, but the quiet conflict will probably resonate more strongly with an adult audience.

-Jack Baur, Berkeley Public Library

Kirkwood, Kyra. *Move Over, Rover*. Clarkson Potter, 2009. 128p. 9780307453570 \$13.99 *

This light book attempts to take puppy naming to another level suggesting readers pick puppy names to match the dog's personality. Is she a diva, a couch potato, or a jock? Find out by taking a quiz at the beginning of the book. Then find a name in corresponding chapter. In between name lists, read advice on how to care for your new dog, take cute pictures and bake homemade treats. Teens used to taking personality quizzes in magazines will find this format humorous. However, suggested names are sometimes unoriginal, like "Carol" for a hard-working pup. Nevertheless, the concept is cute and would most likely appeal to dog lovers.

-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Peterfreund, Diana. *Rampant*. HarperTeen, 2009. 402p. 9780061490002, \$17.99. *

Despite its goofy premise (actual tag line: "Forget everything you ever knew about UNICORNS..." Yeah, scary...) *Rampant* delivers on multiple levels: fun action, great female protagonists, talk about sex that is both realistic and responsible, and a stiff shot of feminist sensibility. Sixteen year-old Astrid has never believed her mom's crazy talk about killer unicorns, but when the boy she's making out in the woods with one night is suddenly gored by one, Astrid has to accept that maybe her mom is right. Before the reader can blink, Astrid is sent off to Rome to fulfill her destiny as part of an ancient secret order of unicorn hunters. Astrid resents being pushed into the order, but all the hunters have to be virgins (they're the only ones who can subdue the unicorns) and when she meets a cute American boy, she thinks she may have found her way out. *Rampant* boasts strong writing and characterizations from Diana Peterfreund, author of the *Secret Society Girl* series. However, the biggest shock of all is that Peterfreund actually manages to make her killer unicorns threatening and spooky. Also, I appreciated the blunt way that all the girls' virginity was addressed without passing judgment on either the girls who haven't had sex for various reasons or other girls that have. Astrid manages to be strong and sexual and a virgin and not a "prude." This kind of straightforward dealing with sex is rare in YA novels for girls, and I think *Rampant* deserves as much credit for that as for delivering action and chills. This will be a hit with fans of Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* series, as

well as readers of urban fantasy.

-Jack Baur, Berkeley Public Library

Tanaka, Hosana. *Ninja Girls Vol. 1*. Del Rey, 2009. 196 p. 9780345512420, \$10.99. M
I grabbed the first volume of the ongoing manga series *Ninja Girls* hoping for a story about some strong and kick-butt female characters. What I got instead was yet another variation of the "harem" story, a popular manga trope in which an awkward and immature young guy is surrounded by beautiful women who are all more powerful than (and inexplicably drawn to) him. Partial nudity, sexual misunderstandings, and hilarity ensue. In this case, the story is about Raizo, a young boy who has meekly lived his life trying to hide the horn growing out of his head (he's horny, get it?). One day he's inexplicably attacked by ninjas and rescued by a group of female warriors who get superpowers when Raizo gazes upon them. They tell him that the horn is proof that he's the long-lost heir to the once-mighty Katana family and they must protect him until he can regain his throne, and spend the rest of the book fighting for his affections. *Ninja Girls* offers nothing to distinguish it from the scads of other similar manga out there. The art is so-so, the storytelling frequently muddled, and the humor is incredibly juvenile. There are some amusing moments of slapstick but the bulk of the book involves the *Ninja Girls* trying to impress Raizo (or flaunting their semi-naked bodies at him) and unintentionally harming him. Put your precious collection money into something better.

-Jack Baur, Berkeley Public Library