



Avi. **Iron Thunder**. Hyperion Books For Children. September 2007. 224 p. 1-4231-0446-9. \$15.99

\* Teens will be fascinated by this tale of metal monsters with human hearts. The monsters are the iron-skinned ships that battled for supremacy in the Civil War. The human hearts are the sailors within the ships and the young boy placed in the pivotal role of witness to the events. Avi mixes fact and fiction with exciting results. There is little blood but a good degree of tension following the desperate and dangerous journey from shipyard to battle ground for the most famous ship in the Union fleet. Real photographs and headlines are mixed with powerful illustrations.

-Will Marston, Berkeley Public Library

Bray, Libba. **The Sweet Far Thing**. Delacorte, 2007. 819 p. 978-0-385-73030-3. \$17.99

\* In *The Sweet Far Thing*, Libba Bray's conclusion to Gemma Doyle trilogy, the magic of the realms has been bound to Gemma, and she alone can decide what to do with it: unite its inhabitants, secure it for the Order, or keep it for herself. Those who want the magic, from the obvious Rakshana and the Order to the surprising Pippa and her new following, haunt Gemma as she struggles with what it means to wield such power. The book is necessarily long as Bray ties up past plots points and weaves together stories from Gemma's two worlds: Spence Academy boarding school, complete with secret doors to the magical Realms, and life in an oppressive Victorian society, including her forthcoming debut. Bray does a skillful job of drawing Gemma's growing power and confidence, including a masterful chess scene with Lord Denby, and her writing captures the Victorian time and setting perfectly ("...it's a particularly lovely day. We set up camp along the mossy bank beside the river. We are allowed to take off our stockings and boots and run barefoot over the cool grass, and that alone is heaven" (p.593)). Readers of the first two books will eagerly turn pages to learn the fates of Gemma and her cohorts, but this novel is riveting enough to be read on its own.

-Kelly Keefer, San Leandro Public Library

Cheva, Cherry. **She's So Money**. HarperTeen, 2008. 290p. TR 9780061288524. \$16.99.

\* Maya is a typical, although not stereotypical, Asian-American teen: she works at her parents' Thai restaurant, tries to maintain an A average and tutors on the side, hoping to get into Stanford. When she needs \$10,000 quick she devises a scheme to do homework for the slacker rich kids and gets help from her straight-A friends. Cheva is a writer for the animated TV series "Family Guy," and her first novel contains a lot of snappy one-liners and funny scenes. There is some swearing but no sex scenes so even middle schoolers can appreciate this somewhat implausible but entertaining story, and the strong Asian-American main characters are a big plus for our Bay Area readers. One small glitch is that Maya needs the money to pay a Health Dept. fine given to the restaurant – usually the Health Dept. gives you a memo outlining what you need to fix, and only if it is not fixed would you have to pay the fine. But most teens won't mind this lapse of logic, unless they happen to work in a restaurant.

-Penny Peck, San Leandro 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](http://baya.org/guidelines.html)

Dickens, Charles, adapted by Richard Geary. **Great Expectations**. (Classics Illustrated series) unpagged 1-59707-097-1 \$9.95

\* Graphic novelist Rick Geary (Treasury of Victorian Murder series) lends his unique, easily identifiable style to a Victorian classic in this adaptation. It's a skillful reduction which preserves the tone as well as the plot of the story, and Geary's distinctively misanthropic drawings suit the dark tone of the story quite well. Unusual for this artist, the work is in full color, and those used to Geary's trademark black and white may be taken aback initially by the very pink cheeks of many characters. Personally, I found the tiny, crammed text boxes very difficult to read; this may deter a few readers, but somehow it fits with both Dickens' wordiness and his delight in words.

-Debbie Carton, Berkeley Public Library

Malley, Gemma. **The Declaration**. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007. 301 p. 9781599901190. \$16.95.

**M** Anna is a Surplus, born into a world that no longer welcomes new members, since Longevity drugs were discovered. Longevity drugs allow you to live indefinitely, as long as you sign the Declaration agreeing not to have children. Anna lives at a boarding facility with other Surpluses, from Smalls (babies) to Pendings (teenagers ready to be dispatched to serve Legals), where she is learning to be a Valuable Asset to a society that shuns her. But when she meets Peter, a most unwilling Surplus, she starts to question the role she's been burdened with. Author Gemma Malley has crafted a fast-paced story that's both heartbreaking and heartening, and her dystopic novel will grip readers to start to finish with its engaging writing and disturbing, thought-provoking premise. The Declaration will make an excellent book for group discussion, with its exploration of human rights, society vs. individual, and disenfranchisement.

-Kelly Keefer, San Leandro Public Library

Mazer, Norma Fox. **The Missing Girl**. HarperCollins, 2007. 288 p. 978-0-06-623776-3. \$17.89

**M** Do you know your neighbor? In this fast paced thriller, five distinctively different Herbert sisters are stalked by an obsessive child predator from their neighborhood. The man carefully observes the girls from a distance, unnoticed. He meticulously calculates their coming and going, movements, and style of each girl on her way to school in an effort to choose the one that would fulfill his craving for attention and control. Finally, he chooses the one with the most beautiful hair, the youngest of the five sisters. Mazer's masterful characterizations and suspenseful plot unfold with a dramatic yet tender thread which reveals the love of a family despite their shortcomings, poverty, and tragedy. Without stating the obvious, Mazer's underlying theme of the story helps older teens recognize the important wisdom in the saying, "there is safety in numbers."

-Sandy Fouts, Livermore Public Library

McMann, Lisa. **Wake**. Simon Pulse, 2008. 210 p. 1416953574. \$15.99

\* Janie Hannagan is a tough and independent 17 year old, working long hours at a nursing home and keeping up her grades to make a future for herself despite her welfare mother's alcoholism. Her plans are complicated by the fact that she has been pulled into other people's dreams since she was 8 years old. Their fears, fantasies, and darkest secrets – she's seen them all. The recurrent dreams of a loner, Cabel Sturmheller, reliving horrifying child abuse and revenge on the abuser especially distresses Janie. She feels completely out of control until she learns from a resident of the nursing home where she works that she is a dream catcher with the ability to affect the outcome of the dream she enters. At the same time Cabel learns to communicate with Janie through lucid dreaming. Janie and Cabel's friendship leads to romance as they both learn to use their unique abilities to help solve crimes. Janie's discovery of her rare ability is reminiscent of the ability of the Ghost Whisperer to not only see and hear ghosts but to also help them. McMann spins an intriguing, suspenseful tale that will satisfy anyone who loves speculating about the possibilities of Janie's dream catching ability and the science of dreams. This is an entertaining quick read which will appeal to readers of all levels.

-Elsie Tep, Contra Costa County Library

Moore, Perry. **Hero**. Publisher, 2007. 428 p. 9781423101956 \$16.99

\* Thom Creed is keeping secrets from his father; not only does he have a super power, but he is also gay. Thom decides to try out for a Superhero League in which he finds other misfits like himself. Here he learns more about himself and who he wants to be. Teens that can't get enough of comic book characters will enjoy this story. Overall this is a good story that deserves to be on your bookshelf—I mean honestly, who wants to miss a story about a gay teen superhero?

-Sarah La Torra, Redwood City Public Library

Murphy, Pat. **The Wild Girls**. Viking, 2007. 288p. 9780670062206. \$16.99.

Y Twelve-year-old Joan has moved from Connecticut to Danville, California in 1972, where she befriends an unusual girl who calls herself Fox. They win a writing contest, and take a class at UC Berkeley for teen writers. Fox deals with a visit from her mother, who had abandoned Fox and her novelist father some time ago, and Joan deals with her parent's dissolving marriage. The writing class serves as a type of therapy for the girls, and several of the adult characters are unusually well-developed for a book for middle schoolers. Murphy has been awarded the Northern California Independent Booksellers Award and the Christopher Award for *The Wild Girls*, so libraries may receive requests for the book. The UC Berkeley setting adds local interest, but there is one error in the depiction of Danville – there was no BART station there in the 1970's. Still, the memorable plot and validation of writing as a way to find yourself make this a solid choice libraries.

-Penny Peck, San Leandro Public Library

Myers, Walter Dean. **Game**. Harper Teen, 2008. 218p. 9780060582951 \$16.99.

\* Drew is an African-American high school senior in Harlem with dreams of playing for the NBA. It's the second half of the season and he needs to shine on his high school basketball team if he's going to be recruited by a Division 1 college. But the new guy on the team, who's white, is getting all the attention. Drew feels threatened as his coaches challenge him to give up the lime light and become a team player. This story is all basketball with several chapters devoted to suspenseful, game day play-by-play. The terminology used to describe the sport will keep the b-baller enthralled, but it may confuse the novice. A side-story about a former classmate in trouble with the law provides a contrast to Drew's ability to escape a life of crime through basketball. But aside from a few family and classroom scenes and a visit to his classmate's trial, we don't see enough of Drew outside the court to get a sense of the struggle and choices he's made that keep him out of trouble.

-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Napoli, Donna Jo. **Hush: an Irish Princess' Tale**. Publisher, 2007. 308 p. 978-0-6898-6176-5, 0-6898-6176-1, \$16.99

M Melkorka is a princess in medieval Ireland. She has everything a girl could want, until one day a raiding slave ship captures her and her sister. With no weapons to fight her assailants, she decides to remain mute. In her silence she finds power. Her captors find her appealing which adds to her value. Donna Jo Napoli has successfully written another reinterpretation of a classic tale. Some scenes allude to rape which make this book more appropriate for older teens. The descriptive language in this book will draw readers into the medieval world.

-Sarah La Torra, Redwood City Public Library

Rex, Adam. **The True Meaning of Smekday**. Hyperion, 2007. 423 p. 9780786849000. \$16.99.

Y In this clever science fiction novel, Tip is on her own after the Boov take over planet earth and order all humans to reservations in Florida. She is joined by J.Lo, a renegade alien who helps Tip journey across the U.S. to find her mother, who was one of the first humans abducted by the Boov. Can they save earth from both the Boov and their opponents the Gorg? Most readers will get the pop culture references (the aliens Boov and Gorg will remind them of Star Trek's the Borg), and there are scattered cartoon drawings that also add interest. The whole novel is framed as eleven-year-old Tip's school essay on the invasion which is clever and original. Although parts can be slow-going, this is still a science fiction novel

with wide appeal and will be a great summer read.

-Penny Peck, San Leandro Public Library

Schroeder, Lisa. **I Heart You, You Haunt Me**. Publisher, 2008. 240 p. 978-1-4169-5520-7, \$7.99

\* Imagine that your boyfriend just died and you feel responsible. Would you be happy that he is now haunting you? On one hand, you have your boyfriend back; on the other hand, you are not able to really experience life. This love story is a gripping tale that you will want to read in one sitting—a wonderful story of friendships, love, and loss. Written in verse form, this book is accessible to all readers and will especially appeal to reluctant readers.

-Sarah La Torra, Redwood City Public Library

Senning, Cindy Post and Peggy Post. **Teen manners: from malls to meals to messaging and beyond**. Collins, 2007. 134 p. 978-0-06-088199-3 \$16.89

\* Why etiquette? The most trusted name in etiquette, Emily Post, answers that question in Teen Manners. Teen Manners shows that etiquette is really about relationships and the way manners can smooth the way of social interactions. Real life questions are answered. What's the latest on cell phone use? How can you make a good impression at a job interview? What are some tips for handling gossip and cliques? By choosing to use good etiquette a sense of self-respect and self confidence is developed that teens can use to manage social interactions to their advantage.

-Jodie Wiepking, Santa Clara County Library

Tulloch, Richard. **Freaky Stuff**. Walker & Company, 2007. 193 p. 0802796230 \$16.95. Illustrated by Shane Nagle

**Y** In this sequel to the book *Weird Stuff*, we find Brian saddled with the after-school care of his 5-year-old brother, Matthew. That's not cool because now he can't hang out with the girl he likes or watch the new zombie hunter television show that's based on his favorite book by Lance Cummings. Well, he ends up watching the show with his brother anyway. This turns out to be a bad idea because now his brother is imitating a zombie hunter by attacking "real" zombies in the kick-boxing style of the television show. Brian realizes this is a problem and tries to stop his brother's behavior. This story is filled with funny scenes involving fairies and zombies, which would be amusing to younger tween readers. Brian's negative reaction to the violence in the zombie television show and his growing friendship with another five-year-old who insists on dressing like a fairy is enlightening. Towards the end of the book Brian becomes a good role model for the caring older brother. The story is also illustrated with comic drawings drawn so they appear taped into the book and each chapter is a vocabulary lesson with a definition for a new word.

-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library

Yoo, Paula. **Good Enough**. HarperTeen, 2008. 336p. 0-06-079085-7 \$16.99

**BAYA HOT PICK** I had to tear this one away from my part-Asian, academically entrenched, violinist daughter, who shamefacedly read it multiple times before letting me have it to review- which means that Yoo is right on target in her audience of studious "B-tier violin prodigies" who want a slight, but not trashy, romance. High school senior Patti feels the pressure to live up to her Korean parents' expectations to be the PKD (Perfect Korean Daughter) and spends much of her time stressing about getting into HYP (Harvard Yale Princeton). Then she sees Cute Trumpet Guy in her orchestra and discovers a world outside her parents' dreams for her and her desire to please them. It's laugh-out-loud funny, but addresses real, difficult issues such as racism within that humor. "Why does Susan get to be called ... dork or geek but I always get called Jap or Chink or gook?" Patti wonders. "I'd take geek over gook any day." The chapter on perming Asian hair will have both Asians and non-Asians squirming. Clever lists such as "How to make your Korean parents happy" and the occasional recipe involving Spam both defy and illuminate stereotypes, and make for a wonderfully wry tone that makes this first novel a delight to read- and Yoo a writer to watch.

-Debbie Carton, Berkeley Public Library

Zindel, Lizabeth. **Girl of the Moment**. Viking, 2007. 272p. Viking, 0-670-06210-3 \$16.99

\* Celebrity-obsessed teens will clamor for this first novel by famed author Paul Zindel's daughter. After high-school-senior Lily Miles lands a summer internship with teen celebrity Sabrina Snow, she learns firsthand how messed up the lives of the rich and famous can be. Sabrina is manipulative, backstabbing, and unbelievably demanding, and readers will cheer as Lily slowly gets up the nerve to tell her off and do the right thing. With a domineering mother, an eating disorder, and an ever-present cockapoo puppy, Sabrina seems like a collage of real-life teen celebrities (a little Mary-Kate Olsen, a little LiLo). Zindel works as a producer with Maverick Films (Madonna's entertainment company), so it's a safe bet that she knows of what she writes. This is a book of the moment, but for the moment, it offers lots of light fun.--  
Debbie Carton, Berkeley Public Library

## REJECTS

Herman, Charlotte. **My Chocolate Year**. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2008. 163p. 1416933417 \$15.99.

illustrated by LeUyen Pham

Rejected Juvie

- Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library