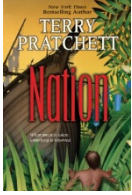


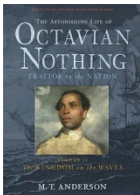
New Books – March 2009



Nation

Terry Pratchett

In this first novel for young people set outside of Discworld, Pratchett again shows his humor and humanity. Worlds are destroyed and cultures collide when a tsunami hits islands in a vast ocean much like the Pacific. Mau, a boy on his way back home from his initiation period and ready for the ritual that will make him a man, is the only one of his people, the Nation, to survive. Ermintrude, a girl from somewhere like Britain in a time like the 19th century, is on her way to meet her father, the governor of the Mothering Sunday islands. She is the sole survivor of her ship (or so she thinks), which is wrecked on Mau's island. She reinvents herself as Daphne, and uses her wits and practical sense to help the straggling refugees from nearby islands who start arriving. When raiders land on the island, they are led by a mutineer from the wrecked ship, and Mau must use all of his ingenuity to outsmart him. Then, just as readers are settling in to thinking that all will be well in the new world that Daphne and Mau are helping to build, Pratchett turns the story on its head.



The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing – Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves

M.T. Anderson

9th Grade Unit 1 and Challenge

Octavian, the 16-year-old slave whose story began in *The Pox Party* (Candlewick, 2006), continues his search for identity in this brilliant, affecting, and philosophical sequel.

Octavian and his tutor escape from Octavian's master to relative safety in Boston where Octavian finds work as a violinist in a military band. After hearing of Lord Dunmore's promise of freedom for slaves, he enlists in the Royal Ethiopian Regiment. Following a loss at Norfolk, they then take up quarters aboard British ships, barely fending off starvation and smallpox. Octavian's uncertainty and doubt are tangible throughout. His detailed first-person narration is written in the richly expansive 18th-century prose introduced in volume one. He records the story while reviewing (and revealing to readers) his diary entries from the past year, so that "none of this shall pass from remembrance." He endures abuse, shame, grief, and humiliation, and comes close to despair; however, he is ultimately hopeful that humanity can aspire to more than warring and despoiling.



Graceling

Kristin Cashore

In this debut fantasy novel, Cashore treats readers to compelling and eminently likable characters and a story that draws them in from the first paragraph. In Katsa's world, the "Graced," those gifted in a particular way, are marked by eyes that are different colors.

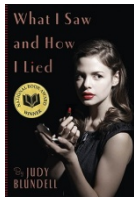
Katsa's Grace is that she is a gifted fighter, and, as such, she is virtually invincible. She is in the service of her tyrannical uncle, king of one of the seven kingdoms, and she is forced to torture people for infractions against him. She has secretly formed the Council, which acts in the service of justice and fairness for those who have been accused and abused. Readers meet her as she is rescuing the father of the Lienid king, who has been abducted. The reasons for his capture are part of a tightening plot that Katsa unravels and resolves, with the help of Prince Po, the captive's grandson. He has his own particular Grace, and he becomes Katsa's lover and partner in what becomes a mortally dangerous mission.



The Hunger Games

Suzanne Collins

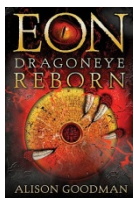
In a not-too-distant future, the United States of America has collapsed, weakened by drought, fire, famine, and war, to be replaced by Panem, a country divided into the Capitol and 12 districts. Each year, two young representatives from each district are selected by lottery to participate in The Hunger Games. Part entertainment, part brutal intimidation of the subjugated districts, the televised games are broadcasted throughout Panem as the 24 participants are forced to eliminate their competitors, literally, with all citizens required to watch. When 16-year-old Katniss's young sister, Prim, is selected as the mining district's female representative, Katniss volunteers to take her place. She and her male counterpart, Peeta, the son of the town baker who seems to have all the fighting skills of a lump of bread dough, will be pitted against bigger, stronger representatives who have trained for this their whole lives.



What I Saw and How I Lied

Judy Blundell

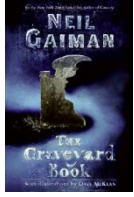
In 1947, 15-year-old Evie, her mother, Bev, and her stepfather, Joe, leave Brooklyn for a vacation in Palm Beach, FL, during the off season. There they meet Arlene and Tom Grayson, who lavish attention on the family and convince Joe to go into the hotel business with them. When Peter, an army acquaintance of Joe's, appears, Evie is smitten by his charm and attention. Her budding interest in romance, while protectively discouraged by her parents, is actually encouraged by Arlene, who helps Evie develop a sense of style. Evie enjoys her outings with Peter and interprets her mother's insinuating presence as protective, when in reality Bev is having an affair with the younger man. Joe's jealous distrust of his wife, established while he was at war in Europe, does not obviate the intimacy between Bev and Peter. Evie's closeness to her mother will not permit her to acknowledge the affair even when it becomes impossible to deny. Meanwhile pervading anti-Semitism sours the hotel deal, and the Graysons are forced out of Palm Beach. When Joe insists on one last boat trip, Peter dies during a storm and Joe is accused of murder. It is during the ensuing hearing that Evie learns that adults, even those closest to her, are not always what they seem.



Eon: Dragoneye Reborn

Alison Goodman

In this Asian-inspired fantasy world, political power belongs to the emperor, but also to the Dragoneyes: men who harness the power of the 12 energy dragons named for animals from the Chinese zodiac. Each year, a new one comes to power, and the dragon itself chooses a new apprentice from a pool of 12-year-old boys. Physically lame Eon is thought least likely to be chosen and also has a secret: Eon is truly Eona, a 16-year-old girl. At the ceremony, the Rat Dragon chooses fellow trainee Dillon for the role of apprentice. Eon thinks that all is lost until she sees a dragon no one has seen in 400 years: the Dragon Dragon—also known as the Mirror Dragon. The Mirror Dragon chooses Eon as an apprentice, and because there is no current Mirror Dragoneye, she must serve on the Dragoneye Council herself. She is thus plunged into the dangerous world of the court, which is sharply divided between the emperor and ruthless Lord Ido, the powerful Rat Dragoneye. Fans of Tamora Pierce will appreciate both the strong female protagonist and the cast of shrewd misfits who support her.



The Graveyard Book

Neil Gaiman

In *The Graveyard Book*, Neil Gaiman has created a charming allegory of childhood.

Although the book opens with a scary scene--a family is stabbed to death by "a man named Jack" --the story quickly moves into more child-friendly storytelling. The sole survivor of the attack--an 18-month-old baby--escapes his crib and his house, and toddles to a nearby graveyard. Quickly recognizing that the baby is orphaned, the graveyard's ghostly residents adopt him, name him Nobody ("Bod"), and allow him to live in their tomb. Taking inspiration from Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, Gaiman describes how the toddler navigates among the headstones, asking a lot of questions and picking up the tricks of the living and the dead. In serial-like episodes, the story follows Bod's progress as he grows from baby to teen, learning life's lessons amid a cadre of the long-dead, ghouls, witches, intermittent human interlopers. A pallid, nocturnal guardian named Silas ensures that Bod receives food, books, and anything else he might need from the human world. Whenever the boy strays from his usual play among the headstones, he finds new dangers, learns his limitations and strengths, and acquires the skills he needs to survive within the confines of the graveyard and in wider world beyond.