

New Books 2005-2006

Specials

The words have sent chills down Tally's spine since her days as a repellent, rebellious ugly. Back then Specials were a sinister rumor -- frighteningly beautiful, dangerously strong, breathtakingly fast. Ordinary pretties might live their whole lives without meeting a Special. But Tally's never been ordinary. And now she's been turned into one of them: a superamped fighting machine, engineered to keep the uglies down and the pretties stupid. The strength, the speed, and the clarity and focus of her thinking feel better than anything Tally can remember. Most of the time. One tiny corner of her heart still remembers something more. Still, it's easy to tune that out -- until Tally's offered a chance to stamp out the rebels of the New Smoke permanently. It all comes down to one last choice: listen to that tiny, faint heartbeat, or carry out the mission she's programmed to complete. Either way, Tally's world will never be the same.

Blood Red Horse

Based on the Third Crusade with England's King Richard I and the Muslim leader Saladin, this novel takes readers from the de Granvilles' Hartslove Castle to the bloody battlefields of the Middle East. It is a story of loyalty, honor, and nobility and centers around the lives of two brothers, Gavin and William; the fair maiden Eleanor whom they leave behind; and Will's beloved red horse. Readers are caught up in the bloody battles, with alternating chapters revealing what is happening on the "home front," and in the Christian and in the Muslim camps. Tying these stories together is the red horse, Hosanna, who is the book's most compelling and empathetic character. The futility of war is a theme throughout and readers will discover that, much like war today, combat in the 12th century had devastating consequences. The historical setting and the vocabulary may challenge younger readers but ensure that older ones will find the book a rewarding adventure, one not soon forgotten and one that lends itself to great discussion.–

Green Jasper

Is it foolish to think that one boy and a blood red horse can save a fair maiden and the throne of England? Will and Gavin de Granville have come back from the crusade older, braver, and definitely wiser. Ellie has been longing for their return. But they've changed. And home is almost as dangerous as the war they've just left. The king is missing. The country is in turmoil. And some men would do anything for power. What will two brothers risk for the woman they both love and the king they have both sworn to protect and serve? In the second book of the de Granville trilogy, Will and Gavin find their family – and all of England – in serious peril.

Peeps

Vampire stories are a staple of the publishing industry. They are usually romantic and sexy, steeped in a dreamy magic. Peeps is none of those—well, maybe a little sexy. Nineteen-year-old Cal, a Texas transplant, lost his virginity—and a lot more—when he first arrived in New York City. He became a parasite-positive, or “peep”—he prefers not to use the “v-word.” Now he works for the Night Watch, a secret branch of city government dedicated to tracking others of his kind. Unlike the rare natural carriers like Cal, who has acquired night vision, superhuman strength, and a craving for lots of protein, most peeps are insane cannibals lurking in darkness. But now the teen has found the young woman who infected him—and learns that something worse than peeps is threatening the city, and he is on the front lines. Cal's voice is genuine—he's a little geeky, as evidenced by the intermittent discussions on parasites, and he laces a dry humor through this immensely reasonable biological vampire story. The evocation of NYC is exactly right, so that even the most fantastic elements of the plot feel believable. Much of the story is concerned with Cal's detective work and growing relationship with Lace, his “Major Revelation Incident” (he tells her his secret); toward the end, the action picks up in a race to reveal the horrors to

New Books 2005-2006

come. This innovative and original vampire story, full of engaging characters and just enough horror without any gore, will appeal to a wide audience.—

Born to Rock

"There are two kinds of people in this world--those who have had a cavity search, and those who haven't. This is the story of how I wound up in the wrong category." After Young Republican Leo Caraway discovers that his biological father is none other than millionaire King Maggot, lead singer of the punk band Purge, he accepts a roadie job on King's tour in the hope of securing sorely needed college tuition. Soon, coke-snorting musicians and on-the-make agents are assaulting Leo's traditional values at every turn. Still, he manages to keep his cool, until he uncovers a shocking truth about his bio-dad that leaves him questioning every principle he holds dear. Leo's journey to punk-rock appreciation is a sharply observed, original take on the tired "outsider looking in" cliché. Though predictable at times and a little too clean (since when are there no expletives in punk?), Korman's rock opus redeems itself with smartly written dialogue and a slow-burning romance between Leo and his best friend, Melinda.

Uglies

Fifteen-year-old Tally's eerily harmonious, postapocalyptic society gives extreme makeovers to teens on their sixteenth birthdays, supposedly conferring equivalent evolutionary advantages to all. When a top-secret agency threatens to leave Tally ugly forever unless she spies on runaway teens, she agrees to infiltrate the Smoke, a shadowy colony of refugees from the "tyranny of physical perfection." At first baffled and revolted by the rebels' choices, Tally eventually bonds with one of their leaders and begins to question the validity of institutionalized mutilation--especially as it becomes clear that the government's surgeons may be doing more than cosmetic nipping and tucking. Although the narrative's brisk pace is more successful in scenes of hover-boarding action than in convincingly developing Tally's key relationships, teens will sink their teeth into the provocative questions about invasive technology, image-obsessed society, and the ethical quandaries of a mole-turned-ally. These elements, along with the obvious connections to reality programs such as *Miami Slice*, will surely cause this ingenious series debut to cement Westerfeld's reputation for high-concept YA fiction that has wide appeal. Suggest M. T. Anderson's *Feed* (2002) and Westerfeld's own *So Yesterday* (2004) to readers antsy for the next installment.

Pretties

This sequel to *Uglies* (S & S, 2005) continues to provide a gripping look at a dystopian future, but does not stand on its own. Tally, the protagonist of the first book, has forgotten all that she did as an Ugly and has completely embraced the mindless life of a New Pretty, going to parties, drinking heavily, and thinking of nothing more than the next bit of entertainment. It is not until one of the Uglies from New Smoke comes and delivers a message for her that leads her to two pills, that she begins to remember the real reason she is Pretty: to see if the cure will work. Tally and her new boyfriend, Zane, each take one of the pills and both begin to stay focused for longer periods of time. Then he has a bad reaction to the pill, and Tally has to make a desperate attempt to get him to the only doctors who can help him—the ones outside the city. Westerfeld has built a masterfully complex and vivid civilization. His characters are multidimensional, especially Tally, who wrestles with what she has done in the past and what she will be forced to do in the future. *Uglies* and *Pretties* are both nearly impossible to put down. If you don't have the first one, make sure to purchase them both.

Ptolemy's Gate (Bartimaeus Trilogy)

The final volume in the Bartimaeus trilogy reveals more backstory and exposes greater complexity in the characters, even as the plot thunders along toward its colossal climax. The narrative alternates between first-person chapters from the djinni Bartimaeus' point of view to third-person chapters focused on Nathaniel, the magician, and Kitty, the commoner. Although Bartimaeus has lost none of his caustic wit,

New Books 2005-2006

another side of his character is revealed through scenes in ancient Egypt and in the spirit world. A cabinet minister, Nathaniel sees the traditional power structure crumble around him, feels his own moral compass grow stronger, and takes actions that once would have been impossible for him. Now they seem inevitable. Kitty, after secretly studying magic, takes a challenge that few magicians would have dared: entering the spirit world and returning. Stroud's picture of this alternate world is one of the most remarkable scenes in recent fantasies. It leads readers' imaginations outside the realm of physical reality and offers an awareness of that reality as seen from the outside. For fans of Bartimaeus, Nathaniel, and Kitty, this will be the most satisfying volume of the three, as questions are answered and hidden depths are revealed. For readers who loved the earlier volumes for the sheer adventure, this, with its battles, magic, and great crashing conclusion, will not disappoint. A worthy ending to an exceptional saga.

Totally Joe

Joe's teacher asks his seventh-grade class to write an alphabiography throughout the year, presenting themselves and their lives in entries from A to Z. Joe's essays begin and end with friends, from Addie, a long-time pal and confidant, to Zachary, a new student who, like Joe, has a unique approach to life. Throughout, Joe demonstrates that he truly is a one-of-a-kind kid, mostly comfortable with himself but still struggling with common adolescent issues. It's difficult for him to relate to his athletic brother, and he misses his much-loved Aunt Pam, who moves to New York City. He also comes to grips with his sexuality, questioning gender expectations and traditional roles as he realizes he is gay. Because he is different, he is tormented by Kevin, who calls him a girl and faggot and falsely accuses him of kissing his friend Colin (a jock not yet ready to come out). Joe's narration always feels honest if not entirely credible. He and his family accept his emerging sexuality rather easily. While a range of responses is depicted, the characters seem to come around too quickly. For example, when the principal is informed of Kevin's actions, he, too, handles the situation expeditiously, and the troublemaker conveniently transfers to another school. Though idealized and contrived, the approach is novel and the conclusion optimistic.

Not the End of the World

McCaughrean moves far beyond cozy picture-book images of arks and animals to what life onboard might really have been like for Noah and family. The monstrous tidal wave that crashes in the first pages sets the scene and puts the huge boat afloat. Although McCaughrean allows both human and animal narrators to offer their perspectives on the ordeal, the main storyteller is Noah's daughter, Timna. Despite Noah's warnings that demons might seek a place onboard, she helps rescue a young boy and his baby sister from drowning. Japheth and his reluctant wife help her care for the children but devote most of their attention to the animals. Shem, convinced of his own righteousness, cares only for his own unborn child and the future glory of his line. The foul air, rotting food, and continuing crises take their toll on all of the creatures trapped in the huge boat. Yet Noah never doubts God's plan or the persistence of miracles. Only his wife, in the presence of the other women, ultimately questions God's reasons and figures out a way to save Timna and the stowaways. Vivid descriptions help readers hear the cries of the drowning and experience the claustrophobia of shipboard life. Distinct voices for humans and animals add to the textual richness. The novel, which won the Whitbread Children's Book Award, raises thought-provoking questions in its expansion and exploration of an ancient tale.

The Secret Life of Bees

Lily Owens, 14, is an emotionally abused white girl living with her cold, uncaring father on a peach farm in rural South Carolina. The memory of her mother, who was accidentally killed in Lily's presence when she was four, haunts her constantly. She has one of her mother's few possessions, a picture of a black Madonna with the words, Tiburon, South Carolina, written on the back. Lily's companion during her sad childhood has been Rosaleen, the black woman hired to care for her. Rosaleen, in a euphoric mood after the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, goes to town to register to vote and insults one of the town's most racist residents. After she is beaten up and hospitalized, Lily decides to rescue her and they go to Tiburon to search for memories of her mother. There they are taken in by three black sisters who are beekeepers producing a line of honey with the Black Madonna label. While racial tensions simmer around

New Books 2005-2006

them, the women help Lily accept her loss and learn the power of forgiveness. There is a wonderful sense of the strength of female friendship and love throughout the story.

Kissing Kate

The kisser is best-friend-since-seventh-grade Lissa. The kiss is no peck on the cheek, and therein lies the rub. Since the fateful event, Kate has been cold to her friend. In this first-person narrative, Lissa, hurt and confused, details her present state of inner turmoil, with frequent flashbacks to the girls' blissful (pre-kiss) days. To complicate matters, Lissa and her younger sister are being raised by an uncle (their parents died in a plane crash), and lack the emotional rudder a maternal figure might have provided. At first Lissa misses Kate dearly, but gradually, through personal insights derived from some new and unexpected friendships (and forays into new-age dream therapy), she finds the strength to confront both Kate and her own sexual identity. While the message is sound, the delivery is seriously flawed. The friendship between Lissa and Kate, the linchpin of the story, is unconvincing. The girls are defined from the get-go by their differences in appearance and personality, but Myracle fails to make the case that opposites truly attract. It seems ungenerous that Lissa and Kate are painted as such stark contrasts, with Lissa being the brave one and Kate in denial of her sexuality; they are, after all, only 16, an age when sexual conflict is the norm.

Hawksong: The Kiesha'ra: Volume One

In this engaging fantasy, Danica Shardae is an avian shapeshifter. She is a princess of her people who, like the birds they become, is reserved and disciplined, yet full of passion. Her people have been at war with the serpiente, a people who shapeshift into serpent forms, for so many years that no one remembers how it all started. The hatred and bloodshed have taken a heavy toll on both sides, and Danica and Zane Cobriana, a prince among the serpiente, are determined to stop it, at any cost. He is the last of his line as is Danica and so he proposes that the avian and serpiente royalty meet at a neutral place and seek mediation to end the war. The mediator proposal-that Danica and Zane marry-is so crazy and repugnant a plan that both parties leave immediately. The young people, however, consider it in spite of the apparent lunacy, for it would mean an end to the fighting. But can they pull it off? And can they keep the dissenters among them from destroying this shred of a chance for peace? This book takes the Romeo and Juliet angle to new heights and is dealt with in a completely original way. It's a love story and a plea for peace, and an intriguing look at a world that is teeming with tension and danger and beauty. Atwater-Rhodes has created a stunning adventure that draws readers in and leaves them begging for more.

Absolutely, Positively Not

Sixteen-year-old Steven relishes square dancing, drools over his male health teacher's musculature, and keeps a stash of International Male catalogs underneath his bed, but is determined that he is absolutely, positively not gay. In an eager crack to prove his heterosexuality, he futilely attempts to buy a Playboy magazine, tries mingling with the meathead jocks at lunch, and embarks on a series of disastrous dates with girls from his class. From the outset, it's obvious that Larochelle's first novel is mostly lighthearted laughs as Steven tries to rid himself of "deviant" sexual behavior (as explained in an ancient teen sexuality book he "borrowed" from the library). When he finally does own up to his shortcomings as a heterosexual, he decides to out himself to his best friend, Rachel, who is relieved that he has finally told her and blabs the news to her entire family while urging him to form a gay-straight alliance in his high school the following day. Even though the good-natured humor does cloud the book's overall sense of reality at times, Larochelle's eye-opening and accurate portrayal of Steven's coming out will ring optimistically true for many teens and their friends who are struggling with sexuality issues. And it's the delivery of his outing, coated in a healthy dose of hilarity, that makes Absolutely, Positively Not a fast-paced, funny, and frivolously frank read.

Elsewhere

What happens when you die? Where do you go? What do you do? Zevin provides answers to these questions in this intriguing novel, centering on the death of Liz Hall, almost 16 years old and looking forward to all that lies ahead: learning to drive, helping her best friend prepare for the prom, going to college, falling in love. Killed in a hit-and-run accident, Liz struggles to understand what has happened to her, grief-stricken at all she has lost, and incapable of seeing the benefits of the Elsewhere in which she

New Books 2005-2006

finds herself. Refusing to participate in this new life, Liz spends her time looking longingly down at the family and friends back on Earth who go on without her. But the new environment pulls her into its own rhythms. Liz meets the grandmother she never knew, makes friends, takes a job, and falls in love as she and the other inhabitants of Elsewhere age backward one year for each year that they are there. Zevin's third-person narrative calmly, but surely guides readers through the bumpy landscape of strongly delineated characters dealing with the most difficult issue that faces all of us. A quiet book that provides much to think about and discuss.

My Sister's Keeper

Anna was genetically engineered to be a perfect match for her cancer-ridden older sister. Since birth, the 13-year-old has donated platelets, blood, her umbilical cord, and bone marrow as part of her family's struggle to lengthen Kate's life. Anna is now being considered as a kidney donor in a last-ditch attempt to save her 16-year-old sister. As this compelling story opens, Anna has hired a lawyer to represent her in a medical emancipation suit to allow her to have control over her own body. Picoult skillfully relates the ensuing drama from the points of view of the parents; Anna; Cambell, the self-absorbed lawyer; Julia, the court-appointed guardian ad litem; and Jesse, the troubled oldest child in the family. Everyone's quandary is explicated and each of the characters is fully developed. There seems to be no easy answer, and readers are likely to be sympathetic to all sides of the case. This is a real page-turner and frighteningly thought-provoking. The story shows evidence of thorough research and the unexpected twist at the end will surprise almost everyone. The novel does not answer many questions, but it sure raises some and will have teens thinking about possible answers long after they have finished the book.

Blood Red Horse

Based on the Third Crusade with England's King Richard I and the Muslim leader Saladin, this novel takes readers from the de Granvilles' Hartslove Castle to the bloody battlefields of the Middle East. It is a story of loyalty, honor, and nobility and centers around the lives of two brothers, Gavin and William; the fair maiden Eleanor whom they leave behind; and Will's beloved red horse. Readers are caught up in the bloody battles, with alternating chapters revealing what is happening on the "home front," and in the Christian and in the Muslim camps. Tying these stories together is the red horse, Hosanna, who is the book's most compelling and empathetic character. The futility of war is a theme throughout and readers will discover that, much like war today, combat in the 12th century had devastating consequences. The historical setting and the vocabulary may challenge younger readers but ensure that older ones will find the book a rewarding adventure, one not soon forgotten and one that lends itself to great discussion.

Knocked out by My Nunga Nungas

Georgia Nicolson is now the girlfriend of the Sex God (aka Robbie), and things are wonderful. Except her loony parents are dragging her off to Och Aye land (aka Scotland), and the Sex God's band's chance at a record contract has left her something of a "pop widow." Then up rears temptation in the form of old flame Dave the Laugh. Is Georgia about to become a shameless vixen?

Mister Monday (and others)

Arthur Penhaligon's school year is not off to a good start. On his first day, he suffers an asthma attack while running cross country and dreams that a mysterious figure hands him a key shaped like the minute hand of a clock. However, when he wakes up, he still has the key. That's when strange things begin to happen. Mister Monday dispatches terrifying, dog-faced Fetchers to retrieve it, a bizarre sleeping illness sweeps the city, and only Arthur can see the weird new house that appears in his neighborhood. The seventh grader knows it all has something to do with the key, one of seven elusive fragments of the Will to which he has become heir apparent, and a mysterious atlas. When he ventures inside the house, he meets more strange characters than he could have imagined, none of whom are what they seem. And, of course, he must battle Monday, who will do anything to get the key back. With the help of the key, Arthur

New Books 2005-2006

must fight his way out. The first in a seven part series for middle graders is every bit as exciting and suspenseful as the author's previous young adult novels. Readers will eagerly anticipate the sequels.

A Great and Terrible Beauty (and Rebel Angels)

An interesting combination of fantasy, light horror, and historical fiction, with a dash of romance thrown in for good measure. On her 16th birthday, Gemma Doyle fights with her mother. She wants to leave India where her family is living, runs off when her mother refuses to send her to London to school, has a dreadful vision and witnesses her mother's death. Two months later, Gemma is enrolled in London's Spence School, still troubled by visions, and unable to share her grief and guilt over her loss. She gradually learns to control her vision and enter the "realms" where magical powers can make anything happen and where her mother waits to instruct her. Gradually she and her new friends learn about the Order, an ancient group of women who maintained the realms and regulated their power, and how two students unleashed an evil creature from the realms by killing a Gypsy girl. Gemma uncovers her mother's connection to those events and learns what she now must do. The fantasy element is obvious, and the boarding-school setting gives a glimpse into a time when girls were taught gentility and the importance of appearances. The author also makes a point about the position of women in Victorian society. Bray's characters are Felicity, clever and powerful; Ann, plain and timid; Pippa, beautiful and occasionally thoughtless; Gemma, spirited and chafing under society's rules, but not offensively so, and they do change as the story progresses. The ending leaves open the likelihood of a sequel.

Wizard's First Rule (Series)

Millions of readers the world over have been held spellbound by this valiant tale vividly told. Now, enter Terry Goodkind's world, the world of the Sword of Truth. In the aftermath of the brutal murder of his father, a mysterious woman, Kahlan Amnell, appears in Richard Cypher's forest sanctuary seeking help ... and more. His world, his very beliefs, are shattered when ancient debts come due with thundering violence. In their darkest hour, hunted relentlessly, tormented by treachery and loss, Kahlan calls upon Richard to reach beyond his sword-- to invoke within himself something more noble. Neither knows that the rules of battle have just changed ... or that their time has run out. This is the beginning. One book. One Rule. Witness the birth of a legend.

Code Talker

In the measured tones of a Native American storyteller, Bruchac assumes the persona of a Navajo grandfather telling his grandchildren about his World War II experiences. Protagonist Ned Begay starts with his early schooling at an Anglo boarding school, where the Navajo language is forbidden, and continues through his Marine career as a "code talker," explaining his long silence until "de-classified" in 1969. Begay's lifelong journey honors the Navajos and other Native Americans in the military, and fosters respect for their culture. Bruchac's gentle prose presents a clear historical picture of young men in wartime, island hopping across the Pacific, waging war in the hells of Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and Iwo Jima. Nonsensational and accurate, Bruchac's tale is quietly inspiring, even for those who have seen Windtalkers, or who have read such nonfiction works as Nathan Aaseng's Navajo Code Talkers (Walker, 1992), Kenji Kawano's Warriors: Navajo Code Talkers (Northland, 1990), or Deanne Durrett's Unsung Heroes of World War II: The Story of the Navajo Code Talkers (Facts On File, 1998). For those who've read none of the above, this is an eye-opener.

High Rhulain

The Redwall saga continues with a book that can stand entirely on its own. Tiria is a young ottermaid with amazing skill with rock and sling. She lives in Redwall with her father and the entire cast of beloved characters from earlier novels. When she starts to dream of a place called Green Isle and Martin the Warrior, she realizes that she is destined to go on a quest and follow in the steps of the High Rhulain, an otter queen. The book alternates between Tiria's adventures, her friends working on word puzzles back

New Books 2005-2006

home to help her, and the hardships of the otters who live on Green Isle where they are slaves to a group of cats. Jacques combines action, poetry, songs, courage, and vivid descriptions to create a unique style. His characterizations are complex and show multiple sides of both adult and younger personalities. The pacing is well handled, especially in a book with three story lines that entwine. As with the other volumes, there is sacrifice, death, and bloody battles galore. Readers familiar with the series will relish returning to the Abbey. Those new to the Redwall universe will be looking for the previous titles to learn more about Martin the Warrior and Salamandastron.

Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie

Steven Alper is a typical eighth-grader--smarter than some, a better drummer than most, but with the usual girl problems and family trials. Then, on October 7, his five-year-old brother, Jeffrey, falls, has a nosebleed that doesn't stop, and is diagnosed with leukemia. All hell breaks loose. Mrs. Alper's days and nights revolve around getting Jeffrey to his chemotherapy treatments, and Mr. Alper retreats into a shell, coming out only occasionally to weep over the mounting medical bills. Steven becomes the forgotten son, who throws himself into drumming, even as he quits doing his homework and tries to keep his friends from finding out about Jeffrey's illness. A story that could have morphed into melodrama is saved by reality, rawness, and the wit Sonnenblick infuses into Steven's first-person voice. The recriminations, cares, and nightmares that come with a cancer diagnosis are all here, underscored by vomiting, white blood cell counts, and chemotherapy ports. Yet, this is also about regrouping, solidarity, love, and hope. Most important for a middle-grade audience, Sonnenblick shows that even in the midst of tragedy, life goes on, love can flower, and the one thing you can always change is yourself.