

## New Books 2006-2007

### Straken (High Druid of Shanara)

Terry Brooks

In bestseller Brooks's satisfactory conclusion to his High Druid of Shannara trilogy (after 2004's *Tanequil*), young Pen Ohmsford retrieves the "darkwand," whose magic will allow him to enter the Forbidding and find his aunt Grianne Ohmsford, the Ard Rhys of the lawful Druids and the Straken queen. Meanwhile, though the elven army has been defeated, Pied Sanderling leads a desperate (and well-depicted) commando-style operation to destroy a secret superweapon of the Federation. Pen's parents are simply trying to find their son. While the author may not equal the wit of his earlier Magic Kingdom of Landover series, his characterization has grown substantially more sophisticated over the years, and both his optimism about the triumph of virtue and his avoidance of graphic sex and slaughter make this series an excellent starting place for younger readers wishing to explore high fantasy.

### Electric Girl (Vols. 1, 2, and 3)

Michael Brennan

This is writer/artist Brennan's second collection of comic-book stories involving Virginia, a teen endowed with electrical powers who has a mild invisible gremlin on her back. The gremlin sometimes prods Virginia to higher levels of achievement but generally does not. The basic story line revolves around Virginia's attempts to minimize the impact of the gremlin in her life, while the electrical powers serve as a subplot. The book parodies the conventions of superhero comics and comic-book culture (in one installment, Virginia and a friend attend a comic-book convention, where Virginia has her photo taken with "Electric Girl") while scratching the surface of some of the difficulties that teens often experience. The black-and-white drawings serviceably move the story along.

### American Born Chinese

Gene Luen Yang and Gene Yang

As alienated kids go, Jin Wang is fairly run-of-the-mill: he eats lunch by himself in a corner of the schoolyard, gets picked on by bullies and jocks and develops a sweat-inducing crush on a pretty classmate. And, oh, yes, his parents are from Taiwan. This much-anticipated, affecting story about growing up different is more than just the story of a Chinese-American childhood; it's a fable for every kid born into a body and a life they wished they could escape. The fable is filtered through some very specific cultural icons: the much-beloved Monkey King, a figure familiar to Chinese kids the world over, and a buck-toothed amalgamation of racist stereotypes named Chin-Kee. Jin's hopes and humiliations might be mirrored in Chin-Kee's destructive glee or the Monkey King's struggle to come to terms with himself, but each character's expressions and actions

## New Books 2006-2007

are always perfectly familiar. True to its origin as a Web comic, this story's clear, concise lines and expert coloring are deceptively simple yet expressive.

### We Are on Our Own

Miriam Katin

This moving WWII memoir is the debut graphic novel from Katin, an animator for Disney and MTV. It tells the story of toddler Katin—here called Lisa—and her mother, Esther Levy, Hungarian Jews who must flee Nazi persecution. With her husband off fighting in the Hungarian army, Esther is forced to abandon all their belongings and take on the identity of a servant girl with a bastard child. She survives however she can—whether making alterations on the bloodstained uniforms of dead soldiers or surrendering her body to an adulterous German officer. Katin shows Esther's harrowing experiences with an objective eye, but her own experience of the time is the fragmented memory of a child; unable to understand the vast tragedy unfolding around her, she focuses on the loss of a pet dog. The story flashes forward to the '70s and even later to show the long-term effects on Katin and her family's faith. Katin's art is an impressionistic swirl; early scenes in sophisticated Budapest recall the elegance of Helen Hokinson, while the chaos of war is captured in dark, chaotic compositions reminiscent of Kathe Kollwitz.

### The Ranger's Apprentice (Books 1, 2, and 3)

John Flanagan

A strong debut in a new fantasy series. Will hopes to become a knight; instead, he winds up as a Ranger's apprentice, joining the secretive corps that uses stealth, woodcraft, and courage to protect the kingdom. His aptitude and bravery gradually earn the respect of his gruff but good-hearted master. When the kingdom is attacked by evil magic forces, Will helps track down and defeat a couple of particularly nasty beasts. This closing episode sets the stage for a good-versus-evil war that will likely be at the heart of future volumes. In this opener, though, most of the story focuses on the learning process that Will goes through as an apprentice. Descriptions of Ranger craft are fascinating. Exciting confrontations with bullies and wild boars help to establish the boy's emerging character. Side stories involving a rival Battleschool apprentice and the identity of Will's father are woven in smoothly. The author occasionally spells things out more than is needed when actions demonstrate them clearly enough. However, the well-paced plot moves effortlessly toward the climax, letting readers get to know the world and the characters gradually as excitement builds.

### Good-bye, Chunky Rice

Craig Thompson

Chunky Rice is an anthropomorphic turtle who follows his urge to move on, leaving behind lovesick Dandele, a bug-eyed mouse, and a dreamy longshoreman. Chunky

## New Books 2006-2007

books passage on a barely seaworthy craft piloted by a shady skipper. Conjoined twins Ruth and Livonia are also on board. Back on shore, Dandele sends bottled missives out to sea and the longshoreman's injured pet bird, Merle, heals and regains flight.

Thompson presents this bittersweet and engaging story in black-and-white panels that flow and tip into one another, giving the story motion that is reminiscent of the ocean against Chunky's boat and at Dandele's feet. The narrative intersperses past and present so that each character's motives become clear. Solid storytelling is expanded by the images, resulting in a fully realized literary work. The sea captain's posturing is fittingly retrograde and the twins are, by turns, self-exploitive and just plain folks.

Chunky, Dandele, the longshoreman, and Merle, however, are unremitting winners.

### Stormbreaker: The Graphic Novel

Anthony Horowitz

An ode to rampant commercialism, this is not exactly based on Anthony Horowitz's thrill-a-second novel about 14-year-old Alex Rider, who discovers that his deceased uncle was a superspy and that Alex himself must face an evil businessman and his multitude of gruesome killers. No, this graphic novel springs from the screenplay for the recent movie, which is based on the novel--which, itself, is a clever compilation of James Bond movies. If it's possible, this is even more rapidly paced than the novel. Alex remains an appealing hero here, and the idea of a heroic teen up against insidious adults continues to be an extremely powerful draw for readers. The female art team casts the action in exciting manga style, and the digital colors produce an anime-like sense of depth and motion.

### Alphabet of Dreams

Susan Fletcher

Mitra and her younger brother, Babak, are refugees in ancient Persia, living in a labyrinth of caves, scraping by with the food they can steal in the nearby marketplace. Disguised as a boy for safety and mobility, Mitra dreams of returning to her former life of opulence before her father's plot against a despotic king scattered the family. When it is discovered that Babak possesses the ability of prophetic dreaming, he comes to the attention of a local magus, Melchior, who takes the children under his protection as he travels westward, following signs in the stars. Joined by two more scholars, each with his own gifts, the caravan continues on a harrowing journey that leads them into the Roman territories, and eventually to the tiny village of Bethlehem. While the focus is always on Mitra, readers experience a growing awareness of who these three wise men actually are and what portentous events Babak is dreaming for them. Fletcher explains in detailed author's notes her long-standing fascination with the story of the Magi and provides insight into the research process.

### George Washington: Spymaster

## New Books 2006-2007

Thomas Allen

Codes and ciphers, invisible ink and secret messages, spies and counterspies! Covert operations win the Revolutionary War under mastermind Washington in this intriguing take on early American history. Allen presents the facts with a gleeful edge, clearly enjoying his subject and writing with vigor. The author relates the main events of the Revolution chronologically, consistently revealing the shadowy role of intelligence and counterintelligence. Members of the Culper Ring, the "mole" in the Sons of Liberty, and daring women worked as spies, fighting on the secret front where Patriots and Tories looked and sounded alike. Washington's role as spymaster adds a fascinating and fresh perspective on the life of this revered founding father who did far more than cross the Delaware. This small-format book looks like a publication from the 1700s. Set in an antique typeface, it is well illustrated with black-and-white reproductions of archival art and Harness's charming pen-and-ink sketches. Messages written in the Talmadge code (1783) appear throughout, with a key in the appendix.

### Dairy Queen

Catharine Murdock

After her father is injured, 15-year-old D.J. Schwenk takes over the lion's share of work on her family's small Wisconsin dairy farm. Between milking cows, mucking out the barn, and mowing clover, this erstwhile jock takes on training Brian, the rival high school's quarterback. A monster crush and a tryout for her own school's football team ensue. D.J., a charming if slightly unreliable narrator, does a good deal of soul-searching while juggling her grinding work schedule, an uncommunicative family, and a best friend who turns out to be gay. Savvy readers will anticipate plot turns, but the fun is in seeing each twist through D.J.'s eyes as she struggles with whether she really is, as Brian puts it, like a cow headed unquestioningly down the cattle shoot of life. Wry narration and brisk sports scenes bolster the pacing, and D.J.'s tongue-tied nature and self-deprecating inner monologues contribute to the novel's many belly laughs.

### Marie Antoinette: Queen of Fashion

Caroline Weber

Plenty of proof here, from an associate professor of French at Barnard (and author of *Terror and its Discontents*, 2003), that clothes did indeed make the woman. Weber's thesis, made clear at the outset, is that the dauphine-soon-turned-queen's costumes became an accurate symbol of her individuality and personality versus political unrest. No minutiae is left unnoticed; for example, Marie Antoinette's struggles with the strictly mandated whalebone corset was the epitome of her initial lack of acceptance by the French court, whereas her creation of the three-foot-high pouffed hair-dress was emblematic of her preoccupation with fashion. One revolution in women's accoutrements, unfortunately, was swapped for another more deadly revolution in politics and freedom. Tales of intrigue dot every page (for instance, the long-standing

## New Books 2006-2007

feud with Louis XV's mistress, Comtesse du Barry), as do the foibles of commoners and royalty.

### Blind Faith

Ellen Wittlinger

Fifteen-year-old Elizabeth has always envied the bond that her distracted, artistic mother shared with Elizabeth's grandmother, Bunny, and wonders, "How come I wasn't part of this chain of mother-daughter best friends too?" Then Bunny dies, and Elizabeth feels even more shut out as her mother sinks into a consuming grief. Only visits to a nearby spiritualist church, where members claim to channel the dead, seem to cheer Liz's mom, but the church brings increasing friction with Liz's atheist dad. A fragile romance with Nathan, her new 16-year-old neighbor, helps Liz begin to talk about her complicated feelings. Once again, Wittlinger brings readers right into a teen's roiling emotional life with sensitive, skillful descriptions, written in Liz's voice, of how feelings register: Liz understands Nathan's sadness in his "low-key, no-wattage, half smile" and her mother's grief in the lost energy that leaks "like air from a knifed tire."

### Smashed

Koren Zalickas

Zalickas, 24, charts her relationship with alcohol from first taste at 14 to eventual abstinence at 23. Her cast of supporting drinkers reveals that her alcohol abuse—"highlights" of which include alcohol poisoning at 16 and a blackout with possible loss of virginity in college—is not uncommon. These women drink as a method of socializing and as a seeming means to deal with rage, self-doubt, and depression. Alcohol was the author's preferred conduit of bonding with other women, yet it prevented her from forming meaningful relationships. While Zalickas's writing lacks the humor of Augusten Burroughs's *Dry*, her rather poetic prose works to reveal a problem that goes beyond the personal. However, her own story remains the strongest and most moving aspect of the book, despite tiresome rants against the alcohol industry's glamorization of drinking and the government's and colleges' lame campaigns against problem drinking.

### Bloody Jack (series)

L.A. Meyer

Life as a ship's boy aboard HMS "Dolphin" is a dream come true for Jacky Faber. Gone are the days of scavenging for food and fighting for survival on the streets of eighteenth-century London. Instead, Jacky is becoming a skilled and respected sailor as the crew pursues pirates on the high seas. There's only one problem: Jacky is a "girl." And she must use every bit of her spirit, wit, and courage to keep the crew from discovering her secret.

## New Books 2006-2007

### Midnighters: Blue Noon and Touching Darkness

Scott Westerfield

Touching Darkness: The Midnighters are unprepared for a new threat that stalks them in the daylight. This time, Jessica Day is not the only Midnighiter in danger in this second volume of Westerfeld's mesmerizing trilogy.

Blue Noon: There is something evil brewing in Bixby, and the teens from the previous Midnighters titles must save the world from the darklings. The monsters have found a way to expand midnight so that all humans will enter the blue time and become prey. Complicating the crisis is Rex's residual darkling characteristics that leave him with the unsettling notion that other humans are food, Jonathan's secret desire that the midnight hour could last forever so that he would always be free of the confining flatland gravity, and the fact that no one has yet figured out why the darklings wish to dispose of Jessica Day.

### How to Be Popular

Meg Cabot

Steph Landry is tired of being unpopular ("If anyone in school does anything remotely crack-headed or dorky, people are all, 'Don't pull a Steph!' "). After she discovers an old guide to popularity, she resolves to improve her status. She buys a new wardrobe, organizes a school fundraiser and smiles a lot. The plot is entertaining, if predictable: Steph quickly rises to the top, even forming a friendship with her cute crush. But along the way she strains her relationship with her best friend and neighbor, Jason—and slowly sees that life at the pinnacle is not all it seems.

### The Wrong Hands

Nigel Richardson

British teen Graham Sinclair, 14, was born with large, strange hands that have folds between the fingers like the inside of a closed umbrella. He endures the accompanying shame and ridicule because he has an amazing secret: he can make his hands grow even more and then use them to fly. The one time he attempts to share this fact with someone, she thinks he's trying to molest her, and he pays dearly: he becomes a registered sex offender, and his already unstable mother descends further into mental illness. Needing a break, his parents send him to London to work for his manipulative Uncle George. The boy is less conspicuous there, until a plane crashes right in front of him, and he's hailed as a hero for rescuing a baby. Then he gets a cryptic e-mail from a woman who witnessed the rescue, which involved his flying. She demands an explanation. Can he trust this stranger with the truth? There's a lot of British slang but no glossary. This novel, with its elements of magical realism, is more introspective than action packed, and has an ambiguous ending.

## New Books 2006-2007

### Dreamhunter

Elizabeth Knox

Laura Hame and her cousin Rose, 14, live in a recognizable early-20th-century society, realistically portrayed but for one thing: the Place, discovered about 20 years earlier by Lauras father. It lies outside geographical boundaries, and only select people are able to enter and experience dreams there. These dreamhunters then perform their received dreams for large theater audiences, and those in attendance go to sleep and experience them. At the time of this story, dreams have become big business and are embroiled in issues of social control (especially the control of prisoners) and power politics. When Lauras father disappears, the girl takes enormous risks first to try to find him, and then to complete his mission

### The Hidden Diary of Marie Antoinette

Carolly Erickson

Best known for her highly readable biographies of European nobility, Erickson tries her hand at historical fiction. She approaches the life of one of France's most notorious queens from a first-person perspective, which allows her cleverly to blend fact and fiction. The diary spans 24 years, from Marie's childhood in Vienna to the eve of her execution. She is married to Crown Prince Louis at age 14 to form a political alliance. Her husband is shy and reclusive, given to escaping to the woods to catalog plants, and has little interest in women, including his wife. Even after he becomes Louis XVI, his eccentricities keep him cut off from the world. Marie Antoinette, meanwhile, hides her loneliness in extravagant parties and frivolous expenditures. No wonder that as the years progress both sovereigns are more and more out of touch with the populace. Erickson's picture of the queen is much different from the uncaring, Let them eat cake persona that is popularly evoked. There is no attempt to hide her tragic flaws, but her generosity, good intentions, and deep love for her children humanize her and make her more of a three-dimensional character.

### New Moon

Stephenie Meyer

Recovered from the vampire attack that hospitalized her in the conclusion of *Twilight* (Little, Brown, 2005), Bella celebrates her birthday with her boyfriend Edward and his family, a unique clan of vampires that has sworn off human blood. But the celebration abruptly ends when the teen accidentally cuts her arm on broken glass. The sight and smell of her blood trickling away forces the Cullen family to retreat lest they be tempted to make a meal of her. After all is mended, Edward, realizing the danger that he and his family create for Bella, sees no option for her safety but to leave. Mourning his departure, she slips into a downward spiral of depression that penetrates and lingers over her every step. Vampire fans will appreciate the subsequently dour mood that

## New Books 2006-2007

permeates the novel, and it's not until Bella befriends Jacob, a sophomore from her school with a penchant for motorcycles, that both the pace and her disposition begin to take off. Their adventures are wild, dare-devilish, and teeter on the brink of romance, but memories of Edward pervade Bella's emotions, and soon their fun quickly morphs into danger, especially when she uncovers the true identities of Jacob and his pack of friends.

### Blue Bloods

Melissa de la Cruz

De la Cruz has revamped traditional vampire lore in this story featuring a group of attractive, privileged Manhattan teens who attend a prestigious private school. Schuyler Van Alen, 15, the last of the line in a distinguished family, is being raised by her distant and forbidding grandmother. Schuyler, her friend Oliver, and their new friend Dylan are treated like outsiders by the clique of popular, athletic, and beautiful teens made up of Mimi Force, her twin brother, and her best friend. What they have in common is the fact that they are all Blue Bloods, or vampires. They don't realize that they aren't normal until they reach age 15. Then the symptoms manifest themselves and they begin to crave raw meat, have nightmares about events in history, and get prominent blue veins in their arms. Their immortality and way of life are threatened after Blue Blood teens start getting murdered by a splinter group called the Silver Bloods.

### The End

Lemony Snicket

Lost at sea, the Baudelaire orphans, along with the evil Count Olaf, wash up on the shore of an island populated by an oddly placid group of inhabitants, and they try to decide whether or not they are truly safe.

### Bad Kitty

Michelle Jaffe

Jasmine Callihan, her father, and stepmother are vacationing in Las Vegas at the posh Venetian Hotel. All the 17-year-old really wants to do is sunbathe by the pool, write in her journal, and attempt to be a Model Hallmark Card daughter, all the while avoiding her perfect cousin Alyson and her Evil Hench Twin, Veronique. Her plans go awry, however, when a small boy and his cat make Jas a central character in a murder investigation. Soon Jass best friends come from LA to join her adventure and all attempt to solve the murder of Len Phillips, business manager of world-famous photographer Red Early.

### Fake I.D.

## New Books 2006-2007

Walter Sorrells

In this fast-paced mystery, 16-year-old Chass has just six days to find out why her mother disappeared. The authorities in High Hopes, AL, want to put the teen in foster care. Several threatening men seem to want her dead. Chass knows little about her mother and their past; she isn't even sure of her real name. All she knows for certain is that they have been on the run for as long as she can remember, moving from town to town and adopting new aliases in each place. Sorrells weaves an entertaining tale with a sympathetic heroine. Several subplots add interest to the story, from Chass's first romantic feelings for the boy who was formerly her best friend to her dreams of a career as a musician.

### Club Dread

Walter Sorrells

This sequel to the first-rate *Fake ID* (Dutton, 2005) finds 16-year-old Chastity and her mother hoping to make normal lives for themselves in San Francisco. They are still pursued by a powerful, menacing figure from the past who is determined to reclaim a tape recording that proves him guilty of murder. Chass is a talented singer who dreams of having her own band. She witnesses, and is implicated in, the drive-by shooting of a famous young musician. Soon she is drawn into the dark underworld of a secret society that might have something to do with the crime.

### Clay

David Almond

Davie and his friend Geordie are altar boys, but are beginning to doubt the value of their long-held religious beliefs. They live in fear of the bullying Mouldy, a hulking, drunken lout from a neighboring village whom they're sure is out to kill them. Enter Stephen, a slightly older boy whose father is dead, whose mother is mad, and who was reputedly kicked out of priestly training for some kind of trouble related to devil worship and performing a Black Mass. A talented sculptor, he proceeds to scare Davie silly with his talk of creating life, of creating, in fact, a monster that will wreak revenge on Mouldy. Davie sees Stephen's clay figures move. Is it hypnotism, faith, or madness? Whatever, their monster is eventually made real. Mouldy may have been killed by it in a fall from a cliff, and Davie wrestles with his guilt until he ultimately destroys it. This is a Catholic ghost story, a sort of *Secret Life of Boys* with which many readers, should they persevere through the heavily nuanced language, will identify. While the look of the book is deceptively simple, the weighty content of the plot and its accompanying themes are chilling, indeed.

### The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs

Jack Gantos

## New Books 2006-2007

In this bizarre tale entrenched in genetics and human history, familial love is unabashedly and horrifically skewed, twisted, and swathed, reminiscent of the works of Poe, Shelley, and Hawthorne. Readers are introduced to the young woman narrator when she is seven, trapped in a small town and a victim of a family's dark legacy: a maternal obsession so extreme that it preys upon the minds of its maligned descendants, forcing them to pursue any means necessary to keep their mothers with them always. Ivy and her devout mother live across the street from a pair of reclusive, elderly twin brothers who run the pharmacy. Her mother used to work for the Rumbaughs, and, over the years, Ivy comes to understand her connection to the eccentric men, their deep bond with their now-deceased mother, and their fascination with the art of taxidermy, which they share with her. Soon Ivy finds herself engrossed in embalming squirrels, kittens, chickens, and whatever else she can get her hands on. They become her tools and totems to assuage her maternal-loss anxieties. Readers can only fumble and squirm through her distorted yet straightforwardly told horror story with a combination of shock, disbelief, and dread of what no doubt will come. Gantos has written an eerie, nearly perverse gothic tale of love and devotion gone completely and frighteningly haywire. This thought-provoking story about free will and the arguments of nature and nurture will definitely stick with readers, no matter how hard they try to forget it.

### Hattie Big Sky

Kirby Larson

In this engaging historical novel set in 1918, 16-year-old orphan Hattie Brooks leaves Iowa and travels to a Montana homestead inherited from her uncle. In the beautiful but harsh setting, she has less than a year to fence and cultivate the land in order to keep it. Neighbors who welcome Hattie help heal the hurt she has suffered from years of feeling unwanted. Chapters open with short articles that Hattie writes for an Iowa newspaper or her lively letters to a friend and possible beau who is in the military in France. The authentic first-person narrative, full of hope and anxiety, effectively portrays Hattie's struggles as a young woman with limited options, a homesteader facing terrible odds, and a loyal citizen confused about the war and the local anti-German bias that endangers her new friends. Larson, whose great-grandmother homesteaded alone in Montana, read dozens of homesteaders' journals and based scenes in the book on real events. Writing in figurative language that draws on nature and domestic detail to infuse her story with the sounds, smells, and sights of the prairie, she creates a richly textured novel full of memorable characters.

### The Last Days (sequel to Peeps)

Scott Westerfield

Something horrifying is bubbling up from the earth, and vampires stalk the streets of New York--but in this electric sequel to *Peeps* (2005), Moz and his buddy Zahler think only of forming a band. One night Moz, with the help of passerby Pearl, rescues a Fender Stratocaster guitar. Like Moz, Pearl is a musician, and a band is born. Soon the

## New Books 2006-2007

band recruits a singer, a Peep with her parasite mostly under control, and a drummer who literally sees the music and the terrifying things it attracts. Eventually it becomes clear that the new band will play a key role in the coming struggle against the powerful evil. Westerfeld continues his captivating, original vision, improving it in this tightly plotted sequel. The new characters are engaging, and the breezy dialogue is graced with both unique slang and a touch of humor. Teen will savor the picture of a band finding its sound while saving the world. Both new readers and *Peeps* fans will eat this up.

### Chew on This

Eric Schlosser

An adaptation of Schlosser *Fast Food Nation* (Houghton, 2001), *Chew on This* covers the history of the fast-food industry and delves into the agribusiness and animal husbandry methods that support it. From the 37-day life of the pre-McNugget chicken to the appallingly inhumane conditions of slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants, the author lays out the gruesome details behind the tasty burgers and sandwiches. Equally disturbing is his revelation of the way that the fast-food giants have studied childhood behavior and geared their commercials and free toy inclusions to hook the youngest consumers. The text is written in a lively, lay-out-the-facts manner. Occasional photographs add bits of visual interest, but the emphasis here is on the truth about soda pop and obesity, fries and lies. Schlosser is a crusader writing with an obviously strong purpose. While at times veering toward the inflammatory edge, he backs up and documents all of his points, ensuring that his insights will incite.

### The Killer's Tears

Anne-Laure Bondoux

On the afternoon when Angel Alegria arrives at the Poloverdos' farmhouse, he kills the farmer and his wife. But he spares their child, Paolo—a young boy who will claim this as the day on which he was born. Together the killer and the boy begin a new life on this remote and rugged stretch of land in Chile. Then Luis Secunda, a well-to-do and educated fellow from the city descends upon them. Paolo is caught in the paternal rivalry between the two men. But life resumes its course . . . until circumstances force the three to leave the farm. In doing so, Angel and Luis confront their pasts as well as their inevitable destinies—destinies that profoundly shape Paolo's own future.

### Ask Me No Questions

Marina-Tamar Budhos

As part of a U.S. government crackdown on illegal immigration after 9/11, Muslim men were required to register with the government and many were arrested because their visas had long-since expired. Families who had lived and worked in this country were

## New Books 2006-2007

suddenly and forcibly reminded of their illegal status without any likelihood of changing it. For 18-year-old Aisha Hossain, this means the end of her dream of going to college to become a doctor. For 14-year-old Nadira, her younger sister and the story's narrator, it means coming out from behind the shadow of her perfect older sister to reveal her own strength and find a way to reunite her nearly shattered family. Immigrants from Bangladesh, the Hossains have lived illegally in New York for years, their visa requests handled by a series of dishonest or incompetent lawyers and mired in the tortuous process of bureaucratic red tape. Following their father's arrest and detention, the teens put together the documentation and make a case that requires the judges to see them as individuals rather than terror suspects. The author explains their situation well, but the effect is more informational than fiction. Nadira and Aisha are clearly drawn characters, but they don't quite come alive, and their Bangladeshi-American background is more a backdrop than a way of life. Still, this is an important facet of the American immigrant experience, worthy of wider attention.

### Point Blank (Alex Rider)

Anthony Horowitz

When an investigation into a series of mysterious deaths leads agents to an elite prep school for rebellious kids, MI6 assigns Alex Rider, fourteen-year-old reluctant spy, to the case. Before he knows it, Alex is hanging out with the sons of the rich and powerful, and something feels wrong. Very wrong. These former juvenile delinquents have turned well-behaved, studious-and identical-overnight. It's up to Alex to find out who is masterminding this nefarious plot, before they find him. The clock is ticking-is Alex's luck about to run out?

### Skeleton Key (Alex Rider)

Anthony Horowitz

Working as a secret agent for Britain's most exclusive agency, 15-year-old Alex Rider is now about to face something more dangerous than he can imagine: a man who has lost everything he cared for and who has a nuclear weapon.

### The Clique (and others)

Lisi Harrison

Kicking off a juicy new series, this book introduces a group of girls who are navigating the social minefields of eighth grade at New York's Westchester County's most exclusive private school.

### Maximum Ride: School's Out Forever

James Patterson

## New Books 2006-2007

In this eagerly awaited follow-up, brave bird-kid Max and her flock are discovered by an FBI agent and forced to go to "school." There is no such thing as an ordinary day as Max deciphers how and when she's supposed to save the world, and she faces her greatest enemy--a clone of herself. Little, Brown and Company

### Eagle Strike (Alex Rider)

Anthony Horowitz

In this "New York Times" bestseller, teen spy Alex Rider faces his most disturbing challenge yet: Sir Damian Cray, the world's most famous pop star, who's actually a madman bent on destruction.

### Maximum Ride: The Angel Experiment

James Patterson

After the mutant Erasers abduct the youngest member of their group, the "bird kids," who are the result of genetic experimentation, take off in pursuit and find themselves struggling to understand their own origins and purpose.

### Ark Angel (Alex Rider)

Anthony Horowitz

Alex Rider is giving it up. Being a teenage secret agent is just too dangerous. He wants his old life back. As he lies in the hospital bed recovering from a gunshot wound, he contemplates the end of his career with MI6, the British secret service. But then he saves the life of Paul Drevin, son of multibillionaire Nikolei Drevin, and once again he is pulled into service. This time his mission involves eco-terrorists, rockets to space, maniacal killers, and a less-than-idyllic tropical island. Is it all in a day's work, or will this truly be Alex Rider's last mission? The action-filled plot develops quickly and keeps readers on the edge of their seats. The over-the-top characters, with their exaggerated quirks and personalities, work well in this James Bond-like novel. Detailed background, technical, and political information, essential for any spy story, is uncomplicated and easy for most readers to understand. Though there are some references to previous missions, this title can certainly stand alone.

### Alex Rider: The Gadgets

Anthony Horowitz

Since Alex Rider is a teenage spy, the gadget inventors must come up with various devices that someone his age would logically have in his possession. The resulting equipment includes a hand-held game console, radio mouth brace, a pizza-delivery assassin kit, etc. Each device is shown in blueprint format, with a brief explanation of its purpose. The cases in which the gadgets appeared are referenced, so readers can now

## New Books 2006-2007

visualize how Alex got out of the scrapes he got into. A glossary explains the key scientific terms used in the explanations

### The Lost Colony (Artemis Fowls, Book 5)

Eoin Colfer

Criminal mastermind Artemis Fowl is back--and so is his brilliant and dangerous enemy, Opal Kobe--in the fourth installment of the bestselling Artemis Fowl series, now available in paperback.

### TTFN

Lauren Myracle

Best friends Angela, Maddie, and Zoe are back for their junior year in this sequel to *ttyl* (Abrams, 2004), also written entirely in text-message format. Zoe has recently started working with Angela's former crush, Doug, at Kidding Around, a daycare. Zoe is not sure how to tell her that she likes Doug, and just when she gets up the courage, Angela drops the bomb that her family is moving to California. Maddie is in love with Clive, who doesn't mind spending time with her and even occasionally making out, but he's in love with someone else. He is witty and charming and DEEP. He is also a pothead. In her efforts to keep him interested, Maddie begins smoking pot. As her friends put up protests, she gets defensive and tension ensues. Angela attempts to make new friends, but misses her old ones fiercely. She also misses having a romantic interest. As a result, on New Years Eve, she drunk dials Doug. He breaks the news that he is now with Zoe, which exacerbates her loneliness and feelings of isolation. Confrontations result but the three friends resolve their differences.