

September Books



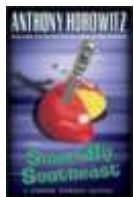
Prairie Whispers Frances Arrington

"Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive" might be the slogan of this taut story set on the South Dakota prairie. Colleen's sister is stillborn, but her mother is too ill to know. Colleen seeks help, and, ironically, the woman in the nearby covered wagon has also given birth. That infant is well, but Mrs. O'Brien knows that she is dying. She tells Colleen that she doesn't trust her husband and begs her to take the baby. One baby without a mother; one mother without a baby. Colleen makes the switch, and though she promises herself that she will tell the truth, the baby brings so much happiness that she keeps the secret. When the baby's suspicious father returns, one lie spins into another. Arrington masterfully tightens the noose in each short chapter as Colleen desperately tries to keep the pledge she made to Mrs. O'Brien, knowing that she brings danger closer as Mr. O'Brien figures out what has transpired. There are a few manipulations, but readers will be caught up in Colleen's story. The book ends as Colleen is about to tell her parents the truth. What will she say? How will her family react? Such questions will make an excellent writing exercise for teachers who use this book in the classroom.



Every Man for Himself – Ten Short Stories About Being a Guy Nancy E. Murcado

This collection provides a refreshing look at the values, decisions, and friendships that ultimately shape a boy into a man. The stories themselves are diverse, ranging from humorous to serious, and include Craig Thompson's comic-strip styled story, Strange Powers. The anthology is full of the angst that many teens will relate to, yet also includes substantive messages; the stories perform the rare feat of being moral without being preachy. David Lubar's Shockers is about a boy who strikes up a friendship with his girlfriend's father and points up the importance of adult mentors. T



South by Southeast Anthony Horowitz

It looks like Tim, the world's worst private detective, and Nick, his brainy kid brother, are in trouble again. They're dead broke. But money is the least of their worries when a mysterious man bursts into their office and offers Tim a wad of cash for his coat. Minutes later, the stranger is dead and Nick and Tim are left to puzzle over his final words. What could he have meant by "suff bee suff-iss"? Or was it "south by southeast"? Neither one seems to make much sense, but the Diamond brothers will have to figure it out, and fast! Whoever killed the stranger is now after Nick and Tim!



Red Kayak Priscilla Cummings

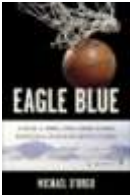
In this satisfying crime and coming-of-age drama, a toddler drowns in a kayak accident after friends of teenage Brady, the victim's neighbor, vent some anger against the child's dad by drilling holes in the bottom of his craft. It was a mean-spirited prank--but no one was supposed to die. What happens now? Revealing the terrible secret would implicate Brady's friends in the drowning, and it clouds his whole world with guilt and fear. Cummings works plot and characterizations skillfully, building suspense as the evidence unfolds and as Brady wrestles with his decision and tries to come to terms with his own responsibility. Brady's eastern-Maryland surroundings and heritage (his father, a waterman, struggles to make a living from crabbing) are also vividly evoked. Brady's ultimate decision is both anguished and well reasoned, making for a realistic conclusion.



Grist

Heather Waldorf

"Was it normal to know precisely who I wasn't, but not have a clue who I was?" Sixteen-year-old Charlena, "Charlie," definitely knows that she doesn't want to spend the summer with her father and his girlfriend, so she escapes to Gram's cottage on Lake Ringrose, where she hopes to explore her deceased mother's roots and lick her wounds over her creative-writing teacher's stinging words at the close of the school year. Interesting characters and a strong sense of setting bring the small northern Ontario community to life. Charlie doesn't realize that her gram's warnings against getting romantically involved with handsome local boy Kerry are founded not just on over protectiveness but on a family secret dealing with Charlie's true paternity.



Eagle Blue

Michael D'Orso

Eagle Blue follows the Fort Yukon Eagles, winners of six regional championships in a row, through the course of an entire 28-game season, from their first day of practice in late November to the Alaska State Championship Tournament in March. With insight, frankness, and compassion, Michael D'Orso climbs into the lives of these fourteen boys, their families, and their coach, shadowing them through an Arctic winter of fifty-below-zero temperatures and near-round-the-clock darkness as the Eagles criss-cross Alaska in pursuit of their—and their village's—dream.



The Rules of Survival

Nancy Werlin

Werlin tackles the topic of child abuse with grace and insight. Narrated by 17-year-old Matt as a letter to his youngest sister, Emmy, *The Rules of Survival* is his effort to come to terms with the vicious treatment he and his two sisters suffered at the hands of Nikki, their beautiful and unpredictable mother. One of Matt's early memories involves getting up during the night to sneak a cookie back to bed and being caught by his mother. Giggling and yelling Cookie thief, she holds a knife to his throat, cutting him just a little bit to teach him not to steal. As much as he fears her manic highs and lows, his greater concern as he grows older is for the safety of his sisters. He and Callie shield Emmy as much as possible from Nikkis volatile moods. Compounding the problem are the adults in their lives—their father and their aunt—who recognize Nikkis instability but find it easier to look the other way. When Nikkis ex-boyfriend Murdoch befriends the children, they want to believe that a more normal future is possible, but are afraid of being disappointed by an adult yet again.



Beka Cooper

Tamora Pierce

Orphaned Beka Cooper, 16, is a trainee—a "Puppy"—in the Provost's Guard. Having spent the first half of her life in Tortall's slums, she is driven by the need to do what is right and see justice done. Paired with two of the best Guards, or "Dogs," in the organization and aided by her own gifts of magic, Beka learns her job, makes friends with two mages and a thief, and uncovers two serial killers who prey on the poor and unnoticed. With Terrier, Pierce tries out a new style of storytelling and succeeds admirably. Beka, the ancestor of George Cooper from the "Song of the Lioness" series (S & S), tells her story through journal entries, making for a thoroughly engaging read. The characters are recognizable types, but all have their own personalities. Readers will enjoy meeting the Lady Knight Sabine of Macayhill, Alanna's precursor in profession and temperament; Rosto the Piper; and Beka's friends. The level of violence is comparable to that found in "The Circle Opens" series (Scholastic) but isn't as gratuitous. This seems mostly to be due to the journal format, which gives readers only Beka's thoughts and feelings as opposed to those of the killers as well. With its rollicking adventure, appealing characters, and inclusion of Tortall's history, Terrier will be in strong demand by Pierce's fans. It will keep readers on the edge of their seats.



Skinny
Ibi Kaslik

In her first year of med school, 22-year-old Giselle Vasco seems to have it all together. But a lifetime of bitter relations with her deceased father is slowly catching up, and she falls into a downward spiral that her mother and her younger sister, Holly, are powerless to stop. *Skinny*, though, is much more than a study of one young woman's battle with anorexia. What starts as Giselle's story quickly develops into a rich and powerful tapestry of a whole family. When Thomas and Vesla Vasco emigrated from Hungary in the 1970s to escape communism's rigid caste system, Vesla was already pregnant, and Thomas had always questioned whether the baby was his. His doubts color his whole relationship with his older daughter, and when Holly is born eight years later, the divide becomes more apparent. Holly, a natural athlete, struggles to understand and avert her sister's self-loathing.



Make Me Over: Eleven Stories of Transformation
Marilyn Singer

A collection of short stories by notable authors. In René Saldaña, Jr.'s Not Much to It, Becky spent her high school years on the fringes of the popular group. Encouraged by one of the in girls to go to beautician school and capitalize on her hairstyling gifts, she claims her vocation, but when the fickle girl reappears, the tension builds as Becky faces resurgent feelings of mockery and degradation. Marilyn Singers Bedhead Red, Peekaboo Pink is about the budding romance between a boy who thinks hes ugly and a beautiful blind girl who doesnt want pity. Marina Budhoss The Plan is a complex story of a teen living the life of a chameleon, yo-yoing between lifestyles, names, and towns at the whim of his superficial mother obsessed with looking forever-young. In Evelyn Colemans Lucky Six, a teen assumes the role of surrogate mother to her siblings, living in a shelter, going to high school by day, and working as an exotic dancer by night. She hides her earnings from her drug-addict mother and plots her getaway from this scene. Sweet and spicy, tough and raw, these well-written stories will make a lasting impression.



M or F?
Lisa Papademetriou and Christopher Tebbetts

The moment flamboyant Marcus meets fashion-forward Frannie, they become brain twins. They do everything together, even chat online with Frannie's crush, Jeffrey. However, Marcus crosses the line when he pretends to be Frannie, chats with Jeffrey on his own—and falls head over heels. Poor Jeffrey remains a cardboard character, but Marcus and Frannie are well drawn, and the story is engaging and fun. Most teen fiction with gay characters tends toward heavy, issue-driven stories.



Storky: How I Lost the Nickname but Won the Girl
D. L. Garfinkle

High-school freshman Mike Pomerantz is tall and too skinny, with bird legs and wiry hair. He has an unrequited crush on fellow smart-kid--beautiful, popular Gina--who scorns him. Mike confides his troubles to his computer journal, with wry humor and deliciously bitter caricatures. As the school year progresses, Mike makes new friends (including an ancient Scrabble genius at a retirement home), grows in self-confidence, and, yes, wins the girl--though not the one he originally thought he wanted. Laugh-out-loud embarrassing situations leaven what could have been just another problem novel. Garfinkle perfectly captures teen boys' preoccupation with sex; Mike has dubbed his penis "Rex," and an ill-timed erection in Spanish class ("Down, Rex! Down!") is one of the funniest scenes in the book.



The Road of Bones
Anne Fine

In school, Yuri is taught that the revolution liberated his country. He learns how the new leaders are always working for the greater good. But the truth is that life for his family and those around him is a brutal, poverty-stricken struggle. The government does nothing except punish those who protest. And one day, to his shock and horror, Yuri himself is branded an "enemy of the state" simply for dropping a few careless words.



Madapple

Christina Meldrum

THE SECRETS OF the past meet the shocks of the present. Aslaug is an unusual young woman. Her mother has brought her up in near isolation, teaching her about plants and nature and language—but not about life. Especially not how she came to have her own life, and who her father might be.

When Aslaug's mother dies unexpectedly, everything changes. For Aslaug is a suspect in her mother's death. And the more her story unravels, the more questions unfold. About the nature of Aslaug's birth. About what she should do next.

About whether divine miracles have truly happened. And whether, when all other explanations are impossible, they might still happen this very day.

Addictive, thought-provoking, and shocking, *Madapple* is a page-turning exploration of human nature and divine intervention—and of the darkest corners of the human soul.



The Winter War

William Durbin

When the Soviet Union invades its tiny neighbor Finland in November 1939, Marko volunteers to help the war effort. Even though his leg was weakened by polio, he can ski well, and he becomes a messenger on the front line, skiing in white camouflage through the forests at night. The dark forest is terrifying, and so are the odds against the Finns: the Russians have 4 times as many soldiers and 30 times as many planes. They have 3000 tanks, while the Finns have 30. But a tank is no help in the snowy forest—a boy on skis is. And the Russians don't know winter the way the Finns do, or what tough guerrilla warriors the Finns are. Marko teams up with another messenger, Karl. Gradually Marko learns that Karl's whole family was killed by the Russians. And Karl has a secret—he's really Kaari, a girl who joined up to get revenge for her family's deaths.



Shift

Jennifer Bradbury

Some friends fade away....Others disappear.

Imagine you and your best friend head out West on a cross-country bike trek.

Imagine that the two of you get into a fight -- and stop riding together.

Imagine you reach Seattle, go back home, start college.

Imagine you think your former best friend does too.

Imagine he doesn't.

Imagine your world shifting....

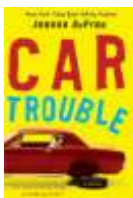
Shift is a tour de force -- a literary debut that'll knock the wind out of you as it explores the depths of loyalty, the depths of friendship, and the unknowable depths of another person.



Memoirs of a Teenage Amnesiac

Gabrielle Zevin

Contemporary realism, set askew, is the silver streak of Zevin, whose *Elsewhere* (2005) depicted a teen's experiences in the afterlife. This equally sensitive, joyful novel, her second for YAs, tackles the slippery nature of human identity, deceptively tucked within a plot familiar from TV soaps. After high-school junior Naomi conks her head, she can't remember anything that happened since sixth grade. She is by turns mystified and startled by evidence of her present life, from the birth-control pills in her bedside table to her parents' astonishing, rancorous split. Eventually, the memories return, leaving Naomi questioning the basis of a new, intense romance, and wondering which of her two lives, present or former, represents her most authentic self.



Car Trouble

Jeanne DuPrau

Recent high-school grad and computer-whiz Duff Pringle is on a cross-country road trip, headed from home in Richmond, Virginia, to a California job designing the next-generation something or other for a company that modestly calls itself "Incredibility, Inc." Alas, real life doesn't run as smoothly as a computer program, and, in short order, Duff's battered old Ford breaks down, he meets a fast-talking hitchhiker in a wild shirt, loses his wallet in a scary biker restaurant, finds himself stranded in St. Louis, and, well, that's just the tip of an iceberg of troubles.



Breaking Dawn
Stephenie Meyer

It might seem redundant to dismiss the fourth and final Twilight novel as escapist fantasy--but how else could anyone look at a romance about an ordinary, even clumsy teenager torn between a vampire and a werewolf, both of whom are willing to sacrifice their happiness for hers? Flaws and all, however, Meyer's first three novels touched on something powerful in their weird refraction of our culture's paradoxical messages about sex and sexuality. The conclusion is much thinner, despite its interminable length. Everygirl Bella achieves her wishes quickly (marriage and sex, in that order, are two, and becoming an immortal is another), and once she becomes a vampire it's almost impossible to identify with her. But that's not the main problem. Essentially, everyone gets everything they want, even if their desires necessitate an about-face in characterization or the messy introduction of some back story. Nobody has to renounce anything or suffer more than temporarily--in other words, grandeur is out. This isn't about happy endings; it's about gratification.

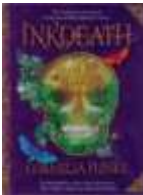


Superior Saturday
Garth Nix

On the sixth day, there was sorcery.

Arthur Penhaligan has wrested five of the Keys from their immortal guardians, the Trustees of the Will. But gaining the Sixth Key poses a greater challenge than any he has faced before. Superior Saturday is not just one of the Trustees – she is also the oldest Denizen and the most powerful and knowledgeable sorcerer within the House. She has tens of thousands of sorcerers at her command, and she has been preparing her forces all along for the Will's escape and the activities of the Rightful Heir.

As Saturday's schemes become evident, Arthur is beset on all sides. The House is being destroyed, and only the power of the Keys can hold back the tide of destruction. Arthur's home city is under attack. His allies are unreliable. He can't even get into the apparently impregnable Upper House . . . and even if he does, finding the Sixth Part of the Will and gaining the Sixth Key might not be enough to counter Saturday's bid for ultimate power.



Ink Death
Cornelia Funke

The Adderhead--his immortality bound in a book by Meggie's father, Mo--has ordered his henchmen to plunder the villages. The peasants' only defense is a band of outlaws led by the Bluejay--Mo's fictitious double, whose identity he has reluctantly adopted. But the Book of Immortality is unraveling, and the Adderhead again fears the White Women of Death. To bring the renegade Bluejay back to repair the book, the Adderhead kidnaps all the children in the kingdom, dooming them to slavery in his silver mines unless Mo surrenders. First Dustfinger, now Mo: Can anyone save this cursed story?



The Magician
Michael Scott

After fleeing Ojai, Nicholas, Sophie, Josh, and Scatty emerge in Paris, the City of Lights. Home for Nicholas Flamel. Only this homecoming is anything but sweet. Perenell is still locked up back in Alcatraz and Paris is teeming with enemies. Nicollo Machiavelli, immortal author and celebrated art collector, is working for Dee. He's after them, and time is running out for Nicholas and Perenell. For every day spent without the Book of Abraham the Mage, they age one year--their magic becoming weaker and their bodies more frail. For Flamel, the Prophecy is becoming more and more clear.

It's time for Sophie to learn the second elemental magic: Fire Magic. And there's only one man who can teach it to her: Flamel's old student, the Comte de Saint-Germain--alchemist, magician, and rock star. Josh and Sophie Newman are the world's only hope--if they don't turn on each other first.



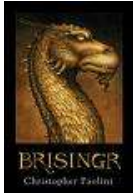
Life as We Knew It
Susan Beth Pfeffer

Pfeffer tones down the terror, but otherwise crafts a frighteningly plausible account of the local effects of a near-future worldwide catastrophe. The prospect of an asteroid hitting the Moon is just a mildly interesting news item to Pennsylvania teenager Miranda, for whom a date for the prom and the personality changes in her born-again friend, Megan, are more immediate concerns. Her priorities undergo a radical change, however, when that collision shifts the Moon into a closer orbit, causing violent earthquakes, massive tsunamis, millions of deaths, and an upsurge in volcanism. Thanks to frantic preparations by her quick-thinking mother, Miranda's family is in better shape than many as utilities and public services break down in stages, wild storms bring extremes of temperature, and outbreaks of disease turn the hospital into a dead zone.



The Time Paradox
Eoin Colfer

Artemis's mother has contracted a deadly disease--and the only cure lies in the brain fluid of African lemurs. Unfortunately, Artemis himself was responsible for making the lemurs extinct five years ago. Now he must enlist the aid of his fairy friends to travel back in time and save them. Not only that, but he must face his deadliest foe yet...his younger self.



Brisingr
Chris Paolini

OATHS SWORN . . . loyalties tested . . . forces collide.

Following the colossal battle against the Empire's warriors on the Burning Plains, Eragon and his dragon, Saphira, have narrowly escaped with their lives. Still there is more at hand for the Rider and his dragon, as Eragon finds himself bound by a tangle of promises he may not be able to keep.

First is Eragon's oath to his cousin Roran: to help rescue Roran's beloved, Katrina, from King Galbatorix's clutches. But Eragon owes his loyalty to others, too. The Varden are in desperate need of his talents and strength - as are the elves and dwarves. When unrest claims the rebels and danger strikes from every corner, Eragon must make choices - choices that take him across the Empire and beyond, choices that may lead to unimagined sacrifice.

Eragon is the greatest hope to rid the land of tyranny. Can this once-simple farm boy unite the rebel forces and defeat the king?