

CURRENT 1998 NOVELS
Compiled by Peggy M. Johnsen

Defelice, Cynthia. The Ghost of Fossil Glen. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc. 1998. 0-374-31787-9.

A good mystery that middle grades will enjoy, especially fifth and sixth graders. Journal writes assist us in solving the murder along with the heroine, Allie.

Fleischman, Paul. Seedfolks. HarperCollins Children's Books. 0060274719.

Outstanding story of the community garden that grows in the center of inner city. A must for a multicultural unit. Hearing the eleven different voices that grow in their acceptance of different others in their community as they participate in the growing of the garden. All ages.

Fleischman, Paul. Whirligig. Henry Holt. 1998. 0-8050-5582-7.

Powerful story of Brent Bishop who is charged to make and leave wind toys in the four corners of the U.S. by the mother of the girl he accidentally kills with his car as he is trying to commit suicide. As he travels the country on a \$99 Greyhound bus ticket, he slowly becomes "reborn." This is simultaneously a story of redemption and of karass...a term for a disparate group of people linked together without their knowledge. The four individuals that are affected by the Whirligigs left by Brent also present powerful themes. This could be a strong book to use with 10th-12th graders. Potentially, outstanding opportunity for a lively discussion/dialogue.

Gradley, Kiberly Brubaker. Ruthie's Gift. Delacorte Press. 1998. 0-385-32525-8.

Charming and heart wrenching story of a young girl's struggle to grow up in an Indiana farming community at the start of W.W. I. The story was inspired by the author's own grandmother's history. A strong memory book.

Giff, Patricia Reilly. Lily's Crossing. Delacorte Press. 1997.

Lily's summer in Rockaway during the summer of 1944 provides tough lessons in maturing when she befriends a young boy, a war refugee from Hungary. Middle Grades

Hardman, Ric Lynden. Sunshine Rider: The First Vegetarian Western. Delacorte Press. 1998. 0-385-32543-6.

A charming story...almost a "tall saga" of a seventeen year old Wylie Jackson who has the responsibility of a cattalo...the result of breeding a longhorn cow with a buffalo. Adventures along the way on his first cattle drive, plus unforeseen comedy of errors. Could be a fun read-aloud. Great character development.

Hesse, Karen. Out of the Dust. New York: Scholastic Press. 1997.

The Newberry Award winner for 1998. Powerful visual and textual look of life during the dust bowl era through the eyes of young adolescent, struggling to heal after her mother's death and seeking to understand her father.

Hesse, Karen. The Music of Dolphins. Apple Signature. 1996. PB 0-590-8978-5.

The story of a fourteen year girl, found in the ocean after living her entire life with dolphins. What makes it possible for humans to learn a language is beautifully explored and addressed in the passage of the girl learning the "human language." Too good to leave out:

Holmes, Barbara Ware. Letters to Julia. HarperCollins Publishers. 1997.

A coming of age book for coming of age writers. Powerful look at divorce in families and struggles that adolescents experience in achieving their dreams and aspirations. YA

Johnson, Angela. Songs of Faith. Orchard Books. 1998. 0-531-30023-4.

Another novel dealing with families with separation...this time a black family...lots of dealings with extended family and neighborhood influence.

Konigsburg, E.L. The View From Saturday. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Newberry Award winner that deals with the relationships of four sixth graders training for the Academic bowl team. Not only do they assist each other, but they, as a team, assist their coach, Mrs. Olinski, in gaining confidence and success. Celebrates the brilliance of being different, while at the same time the bonding in love and belonging as a team.....teacher included!

McKinley, Robin. Rose Daughter. Greenwillow Books. 1997.

Another version of Beauty and the Beast. Characters are rich, full, and definitely exhibit human frailties. Beauty not only has the power to use her love to transform those around her, but there is a hint of magic within her, also. YA

Platt, Randall Beth. Honor Bright. Delacorte Press. 1997.

A twin story... summer of 1944 with an estranged Grandmother from single parent mom. Fourteen-year-old Teddy begins the journey of healing the resentments involving the entire family: her twin, grandmother & mom. YA

Rinaldi, Ann. Cast Two Shadows. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co. 1998.

The violent nature of the American Revolution in the South is depicted through ordinary people facing extraordinary circumstances. Caroline, the heroine, casts two shadows: one from her "negra" heritage and the other from her white plantation owner father. The civil war nature of the South's social, family and fundamental rights during the Revolutionary War is seen as this particular family is split with conflicting patriot and loyalists beliefs and the struggle for Caroline to accept her mixed heritage.

Ryan, Pam Munoz. Riding Freedom. Scholastic Press.1998. 0-590-95766-x

Based on the true life of Charlotte Parkhurst, who lived in the mid-1800's. The sequence of and events of her life are accurate, but lots of liberty appears to have taken place in the narration. It reads a little stilted, but is quite appropriate for middle grades, especially fourth and fifth grades. Opens up discussion why many women masqueraded as men during early wars and early pioneer times. Perhaps tie in with Spokane's own musician that masqueraded as a man in order to be accepted in the jazz world?

Seago, Kate. Matthew Unstrung. Dial Books. 1998. 0-8037-2230-3.

Powerful story of the emotional toll upon the youngest son of a pious and demanding minister. Matthew falls into mental illness and slowly is brought back to interacting in the world by his loving older brother, Zach. YA

Seidler, Tor. Mean Margaret. HarperCollins Publishers. 1997.

Light story concerning the love and devotion of two newlywed woodchucks with the added addition of a tyrannical toddler named Margaret.

Singer, Marilyn. Stay True. Scholastic Press., 1998. 0-590-36031-0.

Outstanding collection of short stories dealing with the theme of young girls staying true to their dreams and needs. Eleven disguised authors provide varied and thought provoking stories. There is even a fractured Cinderella motif, and a charming "fairy tale" by the editor. C. Drew Lamm's story is perhaps my favorite....the wars girls must fight: "fighting the alien girls living inside our heads and racing around in our guts." A must read-aloud and discussion for young adults

Smith, Roland. Thunder Cave. Hyperion Paperbacks for Children. 1995. 0-7868-1159-5.

Jacob Lansa travels to Kenya in search of his father, a field biologist tracking elephant herds, following his mother's sudden death. He crosses miles of bush on a bicycle, meets Supeet, a Masai. The two assist each other in equally important quests. Good writing, and excellent feel of Kenya and mysticism.

Snyder, Zilpha Keatley. Gib Rides Home. Delacorte Press. 1998. 0-385-35567-4.

The story of adoption in the early 1900's. Gib becomes a farm-out to a troubled family, full of tensions and secrets. Snyder draws us into Gib's inner world of calm determination, good humor, and desire to belong to someone or somewhere! Middle to YA.

Wilson, Diane Lee, I Rode a Horse of Milk White Jade. Orchard Books. 1998. 0-531-30024-2.

Strong story of a young girl who faces growing up on the steppes during the time of Kublai Khan. This girl child with a cripple foot has named her pet cat Bator; unheard of to name an animal. She finally succeeds in becoming an owner of a white mare...also crippled, for she heard the mare cry out for help. It seems she possesses special powers to hear animals and the land, just like her strange grandmother, Genma, a great spiritual leader. Lots of adventure, but the true message is to follow one's own visions

and make them happen for yourself. One does not rely on fate... but makes it happen! A must for sixth graders on up.

Wilson, Jacqueline. The Suitcase Kid. Delacorte Press. 1997. 0-385-32311-5.

Andrea lives one week with her mother and stepfamily and the next with her father and stepfamily. The hurt, confusion, love, and frustrations of not belong in either place...only in a "suitcase" would speak to many children of separated and blended families. Well written and appropriate for middle grades 3rd and up.

Wood, Frances M. Becoming Rosemary. Delacorte Press. 1997. 0-385-32248-8.

Haunting story of a family living in the wilderness...struggling with the differences they possess in a world filled with fear of persons with special talents. Witchcraft is hinted. There is the "touch of magic" in this book, but speaks mainly to listening to the artistic side of oneself. YA