

## **NOVELS OF 1999**

Compiled by Peggy M. Johnsen

Almond, David. *Skellig*. Dlacourte Press, 1998. ISBN 0-385-32655

A haunting, beautiful story of pain, faith, and acceptance of death. The Skellig is presented as a mysterious creature..... is he an angel,... a new creature along the evolutionary path? ... What ever he is, he deeply effects the lives of two young people as they wait through the pain of the possible death of an infant girl. The relationship of the two children, the relationship between family members is artfully written. A must read. Be ready for grand discussions!

Barrett, Tracy. *Anna of Byzantium*. Delacorte Press. 1999. ISBN 0-385-32626-2.

Realistic, historical account of Anna Comnea, who was born in the "royal chamber" and expected to become the chosen successor of the vast Byzantine Empire. The story is told in flashbacks as we find Anna in a convent, where she has been banished by her brother, who is now the Emperor of Byzantine. We learn of Anna's intelligence, charm, and her faied plot to kill her brother. Strong point of view from Anna. Would make an excellent companion to the study of this history in a school setting.

Bauer, Marion Dane. *An Early Winter*. Clarion Books. 1999. ISBN 0-395-90372-6.

Another outstanding book by Bauer for third grade and up. Ten-year-old Tim refuses to accept that the strong, steady man who helped raise him has Alzheimer's disease. Tim persuades his grandfather that going with him on a secret fishing trip will prove to the rest of the family that he is still the man he always was. Marion Dane Bauer skillfully deals with the emotional turmoil that accompanies the slow deterioration of a loved one.

Bernier-Grand, Carmen T. *In the Shade of the Nispero Tree*. Orchard Books, 1999, ISBN 0-531- 30154-0

This is the story of nine-year-old Teresa who is pushed by her mother to be part of the world of high society in their native Puerto Rico...starting with her leaving her neighborhood school and best friend. As the story unfolds, we discover the racial prejudice within this family...against the blacks of Puerto Rice. This should be a powerful addition to literature used to examine our prejudices and fears of people of diversity.

Blacklock, Dyan. *Pankration, The Ultimate Game*. Albert Whitman & Co., 1999.

Nicasylus, a young boy living in 430 B.C., is sent by his wealthy family to live with an uncle in order to flee from the deadly plague in Athens. Before he can safely find his uncle, he is captured by pirates and sold into a merciless life as a slave. After escaping slavery, Nic travels to Olympia to find his friend Gellius, who will fight in the Pankration, the most ruthless and brutal bare-fisted event in the Games. This story reads quickly and is quite accurate historically.

Bodfett, Tom. *Williwaw!* Alfred A. Knopf, 1999. ISBN 0-679-89030-0.

Powerful, realistic, and honest examination of island life in wilderness Alaska through the lives of two siblings, 13 and 12 year-old Ivan and September Crane. The descriptions of the land and the wildlife is beautifully present. They are left alone in their Alaskan wilderness home while their father, a fisherman, is at sea. A series of bad decisions by the two lead them deeper and deeper into trouble, ending finally in a life and death struggle with a furious autumn storm known as a williwaw. The appearance of a rogue orka after the drowning of their mother in a williwaw and then its appearance again during the siblings' encounter with a williwaw, provide a wonderful element of mystery, sense of eternity, and love.

Brooks, Bruce. *Vanishing*. HarperCollins Pub., 1999. ISBN 0-06-028236-3.

When a bout with bronchitis lands Alice in the hospital, she decides she just can't face going home again... ever...home to her drinking mom and her stepfather, who doesn't like her at all. Her hunger strike and relationship with Rex, who is dying of cancer, give us a glimpse into the chaotic, but truthful world of seriously ill and troubled pre-teens. Very realistic and extremely well written about the issue of taking charge of one's own life.

Bunting, Eve. *Blackwater*. HarperCollins Pub., 1999. ISBN 0-06-027838-2.

Thirteen-year-old Brodie Lynch was ready for the perfect summer of adventure along the awesome Blackwater River. His troubled twelve-year-old cousin Alex comes to stay and Brodie knows his plans are ruined. When a harmless prank goes too far, one teen is drowned; another, missing. One lie is told to cover it up- more follow and make Brodie a

hero, but inside his guilt tears at him like the river's treacherous current. Once again Eve Bunting explores complex moral issues. Wonderful read-aloud novel with middle age students.

Ciencin, Scott. *Dinoverse*. Random House, 1999. ISBN 0-679-88842-X

Well written story with both authentic science and knowledge of adolescent behaviors. Bertram's science project sends himself and three of his junior high classmates back to the Cretaceous period, the Age of Dinosaurs. Each of the teenagers' minds inhabits the brain of a dinosaur: ankylosaurus, leptoceratops, quetzalcoatlus (flying reptile), and Tyrannosaurus rex. Ciencin cleverly unveils the believable adventure these four 15 year-olds have in order to return to their own time. While in the bodies so foreign to what they actually are as humans, they are forced to truly listen to each others' feelings and needs; and in doing so, discover their "true" selves and those of the others. Great friendships are built that bind them together even when they return to the reality of their time.

Cooney, Caroline B. *Burning Up*. Delacorte Press, 1999. ISBN 0-385-32318-2.

WOW! This a powerful young adult novel that takes the reader on a journey of Macey Clare's self-discovery of her bigotry and racism in 1997. Fifteen-year-old Macey's choice of investigating a 1959 barn burning in her quiet, beautiful Connecticut hometown for a history project for school, becomes not only a mystery to solve, but disrupts the idealistic view she has had of her home and adored grandparents and parents. Macey is profoundly affected when caught in a inner city church fire set by an arson and the death of one of the young black teens that she met during the incident. Macey and Austin (her new found love and the grandson of lifelong neighbors of her grandparents) painfully recognize the unfairness and bigotry of their privileged social standing and discover their own personal role in accepting responsibility for moving toward true brotherhood and understanding of racism. This coming-of-age story examines and explores the difficulty in releasing the guilt and blame of parents' and grandparents' past decisions and accepting one's own role in the present and the future.

Cooper, Susan. *King of Shadows*. Simon & Schuster 1999. ISBN 0-689-82817-9

Deftly written with time and destiny taking young Nat Field from *The Globe* of 1999 to the original *Globe* with William Shakespeare. Susan Cooper not only draws us into the backdrop of the timeless magic of theater, but tells a vivid story of the painful business of growing up. Once again Cooper adds ability to make us believe in the absolute possibility and necessity for time travel. A must read!

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Bud, Not Buddy*. Delacorte Press. 1999. ISBN 0-385-32306-9.

Once again this author weaves a story that invites the reader to enter a world rich with history and human drama. This time we meet young ten-year-old Bud, Not Buddy during the Great Depression of Michigan, 1936. Bud Caldwell is a motherless boy on the lam from a foster home in Flint, Michigan. His mamma never told him who his father was, but she left a clue: poster of Herman E. Calloway and famous band. He is sure these will lead him to his father. Wonderful characters, deep focus of the Depression which includes views of the jazz musician's life, the Red Caps of the Pullmans, and the beginning of labor unions for the common worker.

DePaola, Tomie. *26 Fairmount Avenue*. G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1999 ISBN 0-399-23246-x

Readers of Tomie dePaola are going to love this longer look into his world. This is a rollicking glimpse into life in the Thirties and his own childhood. The writing is vivid and clear to the emerging reader; the story warmly and beautifully told (Pat Reilly Giff) Great combination of dePaola's writing and art.....and so reader friendly to the early elementary student!

De Young, C. Coco. *A Letter to Mrs. Roosevelt*. Delacorte Press. 1999. ISBN 0-385-32633-5.

C.Coco De Young's tale is based on the true story of her own father's family home and a letter to Mrs. Roosevelt. Margo Bandini finds that the Depression visits her small town in Pennsylvania and her own family in 1933. One day the impossible happens: Papa cannot make the payments for their house, and the Sheriff Sale sign goes up on their front door. This book poignantly tells of the despair, challenges, and the hope of families caught in the grip of the Depression throughout the United States. Winner of the Marguerite De Angeli Prize.

Durrant, Lynda. *Turtle Clan Journey*. Clarion Books. 1999 ISBN 0-395-90369-6

This is the sequel to *Echohawk*, the historical tale of a four-year-old white captive learning to live and love the life of a Mohican. In this novel, the three remaining survivors of the Turtle clan to epidemic disease, are fleeing from their home in the Hudson Valley to the Ohio Territory. The risk of betrayal and capture hangs over Echohawk as he and his father, Glickihigan, and his little brother, Bamaineo, begin a long and difficult journey to flee the New York colonial

governemnt who has offerend ransom for the return of white captives. Equally troubling are the extreme dangers of traveling through Iroquois territory, the Mohican mortal enemies. Echohawk fears being seized at any moment to be returned to a life he can barely remember. This is an honest look, and an action-packed adventure, that vividly evokes the interplay of cultures and the deeply held loyalties of eighteenth-century America.

Durrin, William. *Wintering*. Delacorte. 1999. ISBN 0-385-32598-3

In *The Broken Blade*, thirteen-year-old Pierre was seasoned by his first trip as a *voyageur*, spending the summer of 1800 paddling and portaging a canoe twenty-four hundred miles into the French Canadian wilderness. Now he's fourteen, ready to become an *hivernant*, to "winter over," trapping and trading furs with a crew in the north. The story is quite accurate, historically, as to the challenges and dangers of these trappers, but the writing is labored at times. Durrin's first book in this series recieved two Canadian awards and a Bank Street College Children's Book of the Year. Both of his books are good conming-of age tales; readers who enjoy adventurous historical novels would enjoy these books.

Durrell, Gerald. *The Battle for Castle Cockatrice*. Harper Trophy, 1999. ISBN 0064407802

Four young children stumble upon the imaginary country of Mythologia, created by Jengist Hannibal Junketberry, the wizard, to provide a safe country for the world's mythological creatures, that people don't seem to believe in any more. A wonderful adventure to save Mythologia from the evil and cruel Cocatrices is delightfully told. Lots of strange mythological creatures abound. Investigating mythology and its creatures would be a must companion to reading this book. Great read-a-loud for third and fourth graders.

Epoch, Chris. *The Well of Scarifice*. Clarion Books, 1999. ISBN 0-395-90374-2.

This exciting, fast-paced tale, narrated by an an amazingly courageous and convincing heroine, fourteen-year-old Eveningstar Macaw, is rich with details of ninth-century Mayan life and replete with drama and suspense. There are too few novels available to middle-school readers on early civilizations of Central and South America. This should definitely be added to school libraries. Sometimes the details of Mayan life "fill up the pages" too heavily and seem a little forced, but what an intertaining way to learn more about this fasinating ninth century culture. The protaganist and her adventures are quite believable, also.

Ferris, Jean. *Love Among the Walnuts*. Harcourt Brace & Co., 1998. ISBN 0-15-201590-6.

Quick witted and funny yarn of a wealthy family consisting of two scheming uncles attempting to bump off their brother, his wife, and son. The characters in the story range from the quintessential butler, the naive and sensitive son, a charming, wacky yet wise nurse, and the house next door filled with crazy and eccentric wealthy patrons ...called Walnut House. Both a fast and quirky read.

George, Twig. *Swimming with Sharks*. HarperCollins Children's Books. 1999. ISBN 0-06- 027757-2.

The author's fascination with sharks produced this story. Lots of well researched information concerning the need to protect sharks. Even though the author's grandfather is Frank George, Sr. the famous naturalist, her story skills are weak. Too much information about sharks is packed into a shallow story line. However, I must admit that I came away with a new respect and interest in sharks.

George, Jean Craighead. *Frightful's Mountain*. Penguin Putnam. 1999. ISBN 0-525-46166-3.

This story follows Frightful's life (Sam's peregrine from *My Side of the Mountain*) as an endangered species, the peregrine falcon. It seems that George's main purpose for this short novel is to present the plight of peregrine falcons in civilization. It reads well, but is certainly not her best writing.

Goodman, Joan Elizabeth. *Hope's Crossing*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998. ISBN 0-395-86195-0

Great historical novel based on one of the incidents during the Revolutionary War along the coast of Connecticut. During June of 1777, Long Island loyalists raided and burned the home of William Palmer of Mill River. They took Palmer's daughter, Mary, when they departed, but Captain Amos Perry, Palmer's neighbor, overtook the raiders before they reached New York, rescued Mary and captured their vessel. This is the story of Hope Wakeman, who was not so fortunate, and her adventure in the struggle to escape the loyalists and return to her family.

Gordon, Amy. *When JFK was my Father*. Houghton Mifflin. 1999. ISBN 0-395-91364-0

Well written young adult novel in which thirteen-year-old Georgia Hughes decides that when her preoccupied and self-centered parents place her in a boarding school, she will “adopt” JFK as her father. We witness the growing up pains and insights from first-person point of view as Georgia learns what and where “family and home” really exists. Really quite powerful, fast reading. Young adolescent girls will appreciate the insightful inner dialogue as Georgia becomes less egocentric as she opens her heart and mind to the possibilities surrounding her.

Haas, Jessie. *Unbroken*. Greenwillow Books, 1999. ISBN 0-688-16260-6.

It is 1910, and Harriet's world comes to an end the day her mother tries to make their mare face an oncoming Model T. Harry and the mare's two-year-old colt are now orphans and go to live with Aunt Sarah and Uncle Clayton on the Vermont hill farm where Harry's father grew up. Wonderful story of how a young, headstrong, girl learns to accept the peculiarities of her relative, learns to give to get, and learns that love is expressed by different people in quite different ways. A definite recommendation for ages 10 and up.

Harrison, Barbara. *Theo*. Clarion Books. 1999 ISBN 0-899-19959-3

This is a creative, moving, realistic and dramatic story about the indomitable spirit of the Greek resistance fighters during the German occupation. When the Nazis post an edict announcing that all orphans are to be rounded up and sent to Germany, Theo and his older brother leave Athens and travel across the bleak countryside to join resistance fighters Patir Alex and his wife. Theo assists in saving Jewish families and learns the human struggle in discovering the meaning of heroism, fear, and courage. Not only do we see the historical accuracy and the human drama of W.W. II through Theo's character growth, but are privy to the art and craft of Greek shadow theater, for Theo is on his way to becoming a master puppeteer. These puppeteer-created stories came from current political events, history, and myth. The roots of the Greek Karagiozis theater can be found in the Ottoman Empire; the roots of the Turkish shadow theater can be traced to the Far East. This Karagiozis is known as a trickster, a fool, a mischief maker, a comic hero, an everyman, everywoman. The feisty little man puppet is full of cunning and bravado and can finagle his way out of the most difficult situations. Theo learns to use his beloved Karagiozis to discover his own courage during a horrific period in history.

Hertenstein, Jane. *Beyond Paradise*. Morrow Junior Books. 1999. ISBN 0-688-16381-5

Louise Keller, a fourteen-year-old daughter of missionaries, arrives in the Philippines on the eve of Pearl Harbor. Powerful novel about human strength, pain and weakness living in forced internment camps. We follow Louise's life during the four years of imprisonment. This novel is based on true accounts of the imprisonment of Americans and Europeans in Japanese detention camps.

Hobbs, Will. *Jason's Gold*. Morrow Junior Books, 1999. ISBN 0-688-15093-4

Fifteen-year-old Jason Hawthorn experiences typical Hobbs adventures while racing to catch up to his brothers in the Klondike gold-fields. He meets an adventurous girl, Jamie, and the not-yet-famous Jack London. The authenticity of the setting and events are presented in a somewhat gripping survival genre. Real details from the Klondike gold rush, maps, and author's notes provide historical realism. Fifth graders and on up who enjoy historical adventure will again read and enjoy this new Hobbs novel.

Holm, Jennifer T. *Our Only May Amelia*. Harper Collins Pub., 1999. ISBN 0060278226.

Beautiful, authentic story of a Finnish community, in which only one girl has been born: May Amelia. Charming and true accounts of possible interactions of a large family and the challenges of the times and of being the only young girl in a tight Finnish community.

Johnson, Angela. *Heaven*. Simon & Schuster. 1998. ISBN 0-689-82229-4

Strong, poignant story of a young girl, Marley, discovering that her parents are really her aunt and uncle, and endlessly roaming Uncle Jack is actually her father. Now Marley's got questions. Who is she? Where does she belong? Great read-aloud book to stimulate questions of the role and feelings of love and belonging in regard to birth, adoptive, and foster parents?

Johnson, Angela. *Monkeys on Magnolia Street*. Alfred A. Knopf. 1998. ISBN 0-679-89053-X

Seven short chapters for newly independent readers interconnect the wonderful and believable happenings to Charlie (short for Charlene) as she moves on to Magnolia Street. Angela Johnson consistently takes the small, but pertinent events of people's lives and makes them meaningful. “The Pumpkin Box” chapter is especially touching. Would make a great writing prompt.

Koss, Amy Goldman. *The Ashwater Experiment*. Dial Books for Young People. 1999. ISBN 0-8037-2391-1.

A must read for middle school and up young girls. Hillary Siegal's life is moving with her footloose parents who move throughout the year in their camper selling their homemade gadgets. It is easy for Hillary to hide and escape any kind of commitment or friendship in school, until they spend nine months in the California town of Ashwater. Hillary has a sudden inspiration that her life is really an experiment and that she is only the *real* thing in it. Hillary learns not to run away from relationships during this "experiment time" in Ashwater. With humor and sensitivity Amy Koss's imaginative novel cuts through stereotypes to explore the boundaries of our realities and the connections that make up the heart of friendship.

Kirkpatrick, Katherine. *Trouble's Daughter*. Delacorte Press, 1998. ISBN 0-385-32600-9

This historical fiction novel is based on the actual story of Susanna Hutchinson's capture by Lenape's warriors in 1633. Susanna Hutchinson was the daughter of Anne Hutchinson, the historical figure who was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Company by the Puritan clergy and John Winthrop. Katherine Kirkpatrick seems to have researched well both the event of massacre and capture and also the years of captivity and adoption into the tribe... This is a believable, rich story of the years of captivity in the life of Susanna Hutchinson. Kirkpatrick presents the beliefs, dignity, and conflicts of two cultures fairly within a rich story.

Keehn, Sally M. *The First Horse I See*. Philomel Books, 1999. ISBN 0-399-23351-2

Much more than a good horse story, and it a good horse story! Middle school readers will enjoy the authentic telling of training a feisty ex-racehorse who has been mistreated by a previous owner. This is also the story of relationships: relationship building of a young girl with her alcoholic father, who are both dealing with the recent death of mother/wife; the relationship of best friends; the relationship of budding young love; and the witnessing of a deteriorating relationship.

King-Smith, Dick. *Charlie Muffin's Miracle Mouse*. Crown Books, 1999. ISBN 0-517-800033-0.

Again King-Smith combines his love of animals and his quirky wit and charm to tell a believable, but predictable tale about Charlie, who raises mice: long-haired mice, curly-coated mice, slate-blue mice, any kind you can imagine. Then Merry walks into his life, a rather attractive customer who wishes for a green mouse..... impossible feat! But this is where the yarn begins. Great for third graders...they can predict what's coming, but what's coming is still quite charming and with slight twists!

Lee, Tanith. *Voyage of the Basset, Islands in the Sky*. Random House. 1999. ISBN 0-679-89127-7

James C. Christensen, author of *Voyage of the Basset*, has invited fellow fantasy writers to tell their particular story concerning the Basset. This is Tanith Lee's version and is full of two mistreated and misunderstood young, brave, imaginative people (Hope and Apollo) who believe in magic and mythical creatures. This story involves a war between centaurs and winged horses, and even the legendary box of Pandora. "By believing, one sees," is the quote that is gifted to Hope from the original voyagers on The Basset. Great adventure story where goodness triumphs over evil.

Levin, Betty. *The Banished*. Greenwillow Books. 1999. ISBN 0-688-166602-4

This is Levin's account of the events that take place before the action in *The Ice Bear*, an earlier book (1986). Siri's people live in the Land of the White Falcons, the frozen settlement where her people were banished more than 100 years before. Siri finds herself forced into disguise and hustled aboard the departing ship along with its crew and precious cargo, the captive ice bear and her cubs. These ice bears may buy freedom for her people. We sense the Furfolk are the people of the Arctic, and Siri's people, folk of Scandinavia. Great reading, strong and believable heroine. One will want to definitely read Lavin's first novel in this series and hope for more to follow.

Lobel, Anita. *No Pretty Pictures, A Child of War*. Greenwillow, 1998. ISBN 0-688-15935-4.

This autobiography of Anita Lobel's early years in Nazi-occupied Poland resonates with truth, pain, fear, faith, and hope. Anita Lobel was barely five when the war began and sixteen by the time she came to America from Sweden, where she was sent to recover from tuberculosis. One hears both the voice of Hanusia (Anita) as a naive child, and the voice of Anita, the adult, overlaying the pouring-out of the story of terrible destruction of people's lives. I would recommend this HIGHLY for middle school and young adult readers when looking to add to the growing library for this age on war, prejudice, and the holocaust.

Maguire, Gregory. *The Good Liar*. Clarion Books. 1999. ISBN 0-395-90697-0

A short, but powerful story of how war impact the everyday lives of the very young and innocent. The year is 1940 and France has fallen to the German army. Three brothers, Pierre, Rene', and Fat Marcel enjoy an idyllic childhood, stealing berry tarts, playing soldiers, and holding contests to determine who is the biggest and wickedest liar. The story unfolds realistically, exposing the reader to all the intrigue and horror of the German occupation in France, yet the everyday interaction and interplay of family is artfully maintained.

McKay, Hilary. *Dolphin Luck*. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1998. ISBN 0-689-82376-2

A delightful, funny telling of the misadventures of an English family consisting of four children and their harassed parents. When Mr. Robinson takes Mrs. Robinson to Barbados to recover from pneumonia, the hilarious, but touching events of the four siblings unfold at a fast pace. The hint of possible magic from a found Viking sword seem to assist the children in solving their fears and mishaps. Reading more from this author would be recommended for middle grade students. Would also make a good read-a-loud.

Mc Daniel, Lurlene. *The Girl Death Left Behind*. Bantam Books, 1999. ISBN 0-553-57091-9.

Beth's entire world is torn away from her when a car accident claims the life of every other member of her family. What follows is a realistic and honest examination of how a young adolescent learns to blend into the family of her mother's aunt and to confront the guilt of being a survivor.

Marsden, John. *Checkers*. Houghton Mifflin, 1998, ISBN 0-395-85754-6

This is a powerful story for young adults that draws the reader into the fractured and mentally imbalance life of the protagonist. The first person narration moves quickly between flashbacks and reporting the events of life in a psychiatric hospital. We discover that the breakdown of the female protagonist ( we never know her name) occurs around the criminal acts of her father, his company, and The Premier of Australia. Checkers is the name of the dog that is the key to the discovery of the crime, plus the protagonist's mental breakdown. GREAT story telling by the author. Included is a small glossary to interpret Aussie terminology.

Marsden, John. *Darkness Be My Friend*. Houghton Mifflin, 1999, ISBN 0-395-92274-7

Once again Australian author, John Marsden, challenges the young adult reader to stretch and question their place in the fabric of society. Marsden slowly allows the reader to discover the enormity and deadly role these young adults have in the survival of their country, family, and future as the book unfolds. It forces the reader to commit deeply to the process of moving through the novel.

Marsden, John. *Letters from the Inside* Houghton Mifflin Co., 1994.

First printed in 1991 in Australia... John Marsden is one of Australia's best known writers for children and young adults. His first novel, *So Much to Tell You*, won the 1988 Children's Book of the Year in Australia. It won the Christopher Medal and was an ALA Notable when published in the U.S. He is a former teacher, and this particular novel was his sixth. As was *Checkers*, *Letters from the Inside* is a powerful story for young adults. This riveting story, told in letters, begins innocently, then slowly unravels the horrors of two teenagers' lives, Tracey and Mandy. One hides a dark secret; one is trapped in a violent family situation that she cannot control. I would definitely recommend this book to 12 and up-aged readers. Discussion and dialogue is a must with this novel. Great for a book club or literature circle??

Opdyke, Irene Gut with Jennifer Armstrong. *In My Hands, Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1999. ISBN 0-679-89181-1.

Irene Gut was just a girl when the war began: seventeen, a Polish patriot, a student nurse, a good Catholic girl. As the war progressed, the soldiers of two countries stripped her of all she loved: her family, her home, her innocence. But the degradation's only strengthened her will. "You must understand that I did not become a resistance fighter, a smuggler of Jews, a defier of the SS and the Nazis all at once. One's first steps are always small: I had begun by hiding food under a fence." This a powerful story of how a young woman was determined to deliver her friends from evil. It was a simple and as impossible as that. YA Nonfiction.

Paulsen, Gary. *Brian's Return*. Delacourte Press, 1999. ISBN 0-385-325000-2

The fourth book in the story of Brian (*Hatchet*; *The River*; *Brian's Winter*) is the conclusion of an extraordinary story of a young boy who becomes a man through the influence and anchoring of the wilderness. This book, as many of

Paulsen's, is autobiographical and exhibits his unabashed love and kindred spirit with "wilderness." The story moves quickly and with many details of survival skills and knowledge needed in wilderness conditions.

Pierce, Tamora. *Protector of the Small, First Test*. Random House, 1999. ISBN 0-679-88914-5

Another story set in Tortall, this time with the young girl, Keladry of Mindelan, entering the training for knighthood. Of course many are against a girl being allowed to enter the almost closed ranks of men's only knighthood. Again we are see the wonderful heroine, Alanna the Lioness, now Lady Alanna....one who is quietly watching from the wings as to how Kel will fair in her first year of training. Great development of characters and a realistic treatment of the growth that Kel experiences.

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and The Sorcererr's Stone. Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. Harry Jpotter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* Scholastic Press. 1999 ISBN 0-439-06486-4. (Chamber) ISBN043-13635-0 (Azkaban

Harry Potter's journey to become a wizard is one packed full with adventures, setbacks, and startling discoveries. These two books are full of great language and clear characters who represent goodness and evil: the uncaring and cruel relatives, wise and eccentric professors at Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry and young aspiring wizards. Practice to insure a great read-a-loud... and hope for the next book in the series comes soon.

Rubinstein, Gillian. *Under the Cat's Eye, A Tale of Morph and Mystery*. Simon & Schuster, 1998. ISBN 0- 689-81800-9.

This is a fast-paced tale of traveling between parallel worlds, morphing between animal and human shapes, stealing souls of young students, and the classic fight between good and evil. Ruinstein writes with humor and easily and honest text. There is well placed foreboding, that allows readers to intelligently read and believe this mystery-fantasy novel. Also, the term "the oddity" is nicely introduced and presented as the logic for the events and circumstances that bind the characters. The author dedicates this novel to the authors that she read as a child: John Masefield, C.S. Lewis, Kipling, Needham, and Robert Louis Stevenson; one can recognize these influences when reading. Fun! I think I'd look for other books by Gillian Rubinstein.

Seidler, Tor. *The Silent Spillbills*. Harper Collins, Pub. 1998. ISBN

This strong and interesting story invites us to enter the world of Katerina Farnsworth, whose family consists of her father, an aircraft inventor; her mother, a brilliant , renowned psychiatrist; and her grandfather, the ancient patriarch of the aircraft industry. Middle schooler Katerina finds challenges to stay true to her love of birds and nature. Her father designs and successfully builds an experimental plane that is inspired by the unusual aerodynamics of the Spillbill. Disaster strikes the new aircraft, not because of faulty design, but oddly enough, because of the Spillbill birds. It takes all of Katerina's resolve to confront her grandfather, who desires to destroy the Spillbills. She not only finds success in saving these rare birds, but in conquering her stuttering problem.

Snicket, Lemony. *A Series of Unfortaute Events: The Bad Beginning & The Reptile Room*. Harper Collins, Pub. 1999. ISBN 978-006440767-0.

As the author, Lemony Snicket, tells us, " If you have picked up this book with the hope of finding a simple and cheery tale, I'm afraid you have picked the wrong book altogether.....the Baudelaire children encounter a greedy and repulsive villain, itchy clothing, a disastrous fire, a plot to steal their fortune, a car accident, a deadly serpent, a long knife, and more." The two "stories" are billed as "book the first and book the second." The narrator cleverly tells us up front about all the disastrous events and lets us in on the plans of the evil and dire antagonists. It works quite well. Unusual vocabulary is cleverly and directly explained as one is reading along. As an example: dramatic irony is directly identified as a literary device and tells the reader that it is coming up soon in the story...and when it does, is told so! Great adventure and hilarious events and characters.

Whelan, Gorla. *Miranda's Last Stand*. HarperCollins Pub. 1999. ISBN 0060282517.

Miranda and her Mama are asked to travel with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, where her Mama will illustrate backdrops for the show, posters, and handbills. This is an unfolding of how to go outside of yourself and see others' point of view; within the show are Sitting Bull, who was responsible for Miranda's father death at the Little Big Horn River. Miranda learns to listen with her heart and mind, and accepts the truth of both sides of the terrible diaster with Cusker and the Souix. However, her mother never does, which reads quite true and realistic. It reads a little didactic, but does a fair job in its topic and theme.

Williams, Karen Lynn. *One Thing I'm Good At*. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books. 1999. ISBN 0-688-16846-9

Nothing seems to be going right for Julie Dorinsky. Her best friend, Abby, is hanging out with the gifted crowd, while Julie is struggling to keep up in school. She can't even read the notes Abby passes to her in class accurately. This is a sensitive exploration of how a young at-risk student finds value and worth in being herself and in so doing, finds that "hidden talents" aren't so hidden after all.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Lena*. Delacorte Press, 1999. ISBN 0-385-32308-5

Affecting and beautifully written, *Lena* takes the reader on an unforgettable journey begun in the Coretta Scott King Honor Book, *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This*. Thirteen-year-old Lena and her eight-year-old sister, Dion, run to escape their abusive father. Realistic events occur that will wrench your heart. The journey is realistic, believable; however, the resolution is not quite as strong.... acceptable ending.

Yep, Laurence. *The Case of the Firecrackers*. HarperCollins Children's Books. 1999. ISBN 0-06-024496.

This is a third novel in the Chinatown Mysteries series that involve Auntie Tiger Lil, a once famous movie star and her niece, Lily. Good, medium mystery and light characters, compared to Yep's other work. Fun material for mystery lovers... middle grades.