The Adventures of Sir Balin the Ill-Fated by Gerald Morris  
Fantasy  
ISBN: 978-0-547-68085-9

On the day of Balin’s christening, he was pronounced ill-fated. He would be the noblest knight in England who would also bring misfortune and calamity to all. He would also bring down two kingdoms and destroy the knight he loves the most. Young Balin lived by the prophecy, avoiding contact with King Arthur or his brother Sir Balan, only to find fate helping him in defeating the evil and saving the good. In the end, he decided that he would make his way.

This story of a knight is filled with dark and absurdist humor. It features brotherly love between Sir Balin and Sir Balan. It has a warm, happy ending with a surprising twist.

Linda Sun  
Hong Kong

The Ballad of Jesse Pearl by Shannon Hitchcock  
Historical American Fiction  
Namelos, 2012, 140 pp., $9.95  
ISBN: 978-1-608-98142-7

Using a rural dialect of North Carolina, Hitchcock exposes readers to family life and traditions in the early 1920s. Fourteen-year-old Jesse Pearl plans to become a teacher during a time when women are expected to marry. She still hears her deceased mother’s voice encouraging her to continue her education. Unfortunately, Jesse must put her dreams aside to care for an older sister who suddenly comes down with tuberculosis. With that comes the sudden responsibility of caring for all of the males in the family—her father, her sister’s husband, and her sister’s newborn son—and “traditional women’s work” is not Jesse’s forte. To complicate matters, Jesse has real feelings for a local boy who is also interested in her, but who has a nemesis who gets her nose in Jesse’s business in more ways than one. This debut novel is packed with much to think and talk about and is a nice addition to the growing collection of charming Southern YA literature; the author will present at the ALAN Workshop in Boston.

Joan Kaywell  
Tampa, FL

The Bell Bandit by Jacqueline Davis  
Realistic Fiction  

Evan and Jessie always spend their Christmas at their grandma’s and ring the New Year bell with the rest of the town. This year, there has been a fire at grandma’s house and the bell has gone missing. Moreover, grandma is suffering from memory loss and sporadically forgets who Evan and Jessie are. Evan and Jessie struggle to understand her condition, but they realize this holiday season is going to be rough.

The traumatic fire turns out to be a transformational event for this family. When one family member is in trouble, others jump in and help. Evan takes up the job of reconstructing grandma’s house while Jessie solves the mystery of the missing bell. They work together, take care of each other, and restore peace at their grandma’s house.

Linda Sun  
Hong Kong

Brianna on the Brink by Nicole McInnes  
Realistic Fiction/Identity  
Holiday House, 2013, 170 pp., $16.95  

Brianna has never felt like part of a family. Her mother kicked her out on her sixteenth birthday, and now she lives with her sister, who pays more attention to her loser boyfriend than Brianna. At least at school, Brianna feels like she fits in. She has worked hard to be a popular, bad-girl cheerleader who everyone respects. All of this changes when Brianna has a disastrous one-night stand with a man she didn’t know was married to her English teacher.

Left deserted by her family and friends in the wake of her mistake, Brianna learns to accept help from the teacher she hurt so badly. Through this experience, she learns to let down her guard and become a part of a real, loving family. Brianna may teeter on the brink of bad decision making and its consequences, but she learns how to catch herself before she falls.

Laura Cockman  
Fishers, IN
**Eleanor and Park** by Rainbow Rowell  
*Romance/Identity*  
St. Martin's Griffin, 2013, 288 pp., $17.99  

Eleanor is the new girl in 1986 Omaha. Park reluctantly allows her to sit by him on the school bus out of pity and boredom. As they learn more about each other, they become close friends and begin to fall for each other. The story is told from both of their perspectives, providing a unique and engaging narrative. The book explores themes of identity, belonging, and the power of love.

**Enrique's Journey** by Sonia Nazario  
*Nonfiction*  
Delacorte, 2013, 240 pp., $17.99  

Enrique, a young boy from Honduras, leaves his country and sets off on a journey to find his mother, who left to work in the United States. His story is told through a series of letters to his older sister, explaining his motivations and challenges. The book raises important questions about immigration and the human cost of policies that promote illegal immigration.

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**Bruised** by Sarah Skilton  
*Identity/Romance*  
Amulet Books, 2013, 288 pp., $16.95  
ISBN: 978-1-4197-0387-4

Sixteen-year-old Imogen hides under a table at a local diner when an armed robber appears, and a young man huddles nearby. The robbery is suddenly over, but Imogen is left with a black belt in black magic and a host of questions about her identity. Knowing that the police are on her trail, she enlists the help of a black nail polish and a black cat to teach her the art of a physical fight to prove she is no longer a victim. As she embarks on her journey, she discovers hidden family secrets and learns that her past is intertwined with her present.

**Call Me Oklahoma!** by Miriam Glassman  
*Realistic Fiction/Humor*  
Holiday House, 2013, 123 pp., $16.95  
ISBN: 978-0-8234-2742-0

At the beginning of the year, Paige decides that she doesn’t want to feel like a little mouse anymore. She is going to be Oklahoma. As her name catches on, she decides that she is happy being Paige and is determined to prove that she can do anything. The book explores themes of identity, self-acceptance, and the power of a good name.

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**Amulet Books**  
2013, $16.95  
ISBN: 978-1-4197-0387-4

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**Holiday House**  
2013, $16.95  
ISBN: 978-0-8234-2742-0
**The 5th Wave** by Rick Yancey  
Science Fiction/Identity  
Putnam, 2013, pp. 480, $18.99  
ISBN: 978-1-399-16241-1

Yancey delivers a dystopian, post-apocalyptic thriller featuring a kick-butt heroine. Aliens have come to destroy Earth’s inhabitants through a series of ever-worsening Waves. Once an ordinary high school girl with a crush on a guy who doesn’t know she is alive, Cassie Sullivan is now struggling for her own survival while seeking her younger brother, who vanished when children were transported out of a refugee camp. Packing a Luger and M-16, she dodges her relentless pursuers, including unyielding drones and ruthless snipers. Evan Walker rescues her from freezing to death after she is shot, and the two experience moments of closeness. Five-year-old Sammy is imprisoned at Camp Haven, a massive concentration facility designed to winnow out the weak, convert the inmates, and train killing machines. Who can she rely on when the Others are us and we are them? Will her obsession with a boy from the past doom or save her?

Judith A. Hayn  
Little Rock, AR

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**Hereville: How Mirka Met a Meteorite** by Barry Deutsch  
Graphic Novel/Adventure  
Amulet Books, 2012, 128 pp., $16.95  
ISBN: 978-1-4197-0398-0

Mirka Herschberg, the eleven-year-old Orthodox Jewish heroine, is back and she’s still marching to the beat of her own drum. After being un-grounded for sneaking out at night, fighting a troll, and talking to a witch, Mirka finds herself in trouble again. When a troll summons a destructive meteorite toward the Earth, a witch uses a few strands of Mirka’s hair to transform the meteorite into Metty. Mirka’s doppelganger Metty is not only clever, intelligent, and better at basketball, but also determined to replace Mirka. As Mirka plans to get rid of Metty, she starts to understand that being yourself—even if you are silly, goofy, or clumsy—is better than having a perfect copy of yourself.

Deutsch’s story is colorful and captivating in the way that it incorporates Jewish culture and faith. *Hereville* places great emphasis on the importance of understanding that everyone is special in their own way.

David Chang  
Chicago, IL

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**Frostbite** by Richelle Mead, adapted by Leigh Dragoon  
Graphic Novel / Supernatural  
ISBN: 978-1-59514-430-0

Like other teens, Rose Hathaway goes to school, has a crush, and deals with her embarrassing mom. But unlike most other teens, Rose is a dhampir—a half-human, half-vampire training to become a guardian in the battle between good and evil. Rose’s main goal is to protect her best friend Lissa, a vampire princess with the special power to control the spirit element.

Protecting Lissa is not always easy for Rose as she navigates relationships with boys, family, and friends. However, when some students leave their safe haven to attack the Strigoi, a group of evil vampires, Rose learns how far she will go to protect her loved ones and how she can use her intellect and powers to fight for good. This graphic adaptation of Richelle Mead’s original series tells Rose’s action-packed story in both words and stunningly bright pictures for a comprehensive story experience.

Laura Cockman  
Fishers, IN

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**Hunter Moran Saves the Universe** by Patricia Reilly Giff  
Mystery  
Holiday House, 2012, 125 pp., $16.95  
ISBN: 978-0-8234-1949-4

Hunter and Zach Moran might have been the twins who originated the phrase “Double Trouble.” Armed with only their wits and good intentions, Hunter and Zach must find a way to intervene before a sinister dentist, Dr. Digilo, sets off a bomb in their town—blowing the whole place to smithereens. The boys juggle nosy parents, tag-along siblings, and the preparations for their town’s “Lester Tinwitty Day,” all while attempting to save the universe. Everything comes down to last seconds—either before the town’s celebration, or before the town will meet its end.

Two-time Newbery Honor medalist Reilly Giff writes characters that charm readers who are thrilled to be along on their adventures. Her latest novel lands right in the middle of mountains of mischief and will not leave her audience disappointed.

Rachel Marie Morris  
Brooklyn, New York

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**Clip & File**  
YA Book Reviews
Hurricane Heat by Steven Barwin  Realistic/Athletics
It's been five years since Travis's parents died in a car crash and he was separated from his sister Amanda. After Amanda moved away, Travis tries to keep his head on straight and make good decisions with the help of his baseball coach. He uses his experiences to make decisions about the right thing to do, and if he should tell someone about the game.

Hurricane Heat does a sufficient job in establishing the value of responsibility and familial importance.

Island of Thieves by Josh Lacey  Action/Adventure
Two things come easily to Tom Trelawney: getting bored and getting in trouble. When his parents need somebody to take care of his younger brother, he finds himself on an adventure on the island of Thieves. Along the way, he learns about history and teaches the Trelawneys about the island.

Island of Thieves links historical theory with action-packed adventure in a way that leads readers to speculate about how what they have learned about the past may impact their present and how they can discover secrets about their own histories.

Lauren Yanofsky Hates the Holocaust by Leanne Lieberman  Teen/Romance
Lauren Yanofsky, as the name suggests, loathes the Holocaust, despite her Jewish background. With a father who studies history and a family history affected by the Holocaust, Lauren embraces her heritage with a new appreciation for the history and literature of the Holocaust. Despite her Jewish background, she still has the same struggles, like the other characters, in her personal life.

Lauren Yanofsky Hates the Holocaust by Leanne Lieberman

In Too Deep by Norah McClintock  Mystery/Juvenile Delinquency
Robyn moves to a sleepy town up north with her friend Morgan. The town seems pretty safe when they first arrive, but it becomes clear that the town is not safe after some threatening events. McClintock keeps her narrative and sentence structure simple and straightforward, making it accessible to less skilled readers.

In Too Deep by Norah McClintock

Lauren Cockman
Nashville, TN
Laura Cockman
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<tr>
<th><strong>The Lives We Lost</strong> by Megan Crewe</th>
<th>Adventure/Teen Fiction</th>
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<td>Crewe’s suspenseful second novel in The Fallen World series opens with heroine Kae-lyn discovering a potentially lifesaving vaccine developed by her deceased father, a renowned scientist in their island community. As a deadly pandemic sweeps across North America, she rallies her friends on a journey to the mainland in search of researchers who can reproduce the healing medicine and rid their world of devastation once and for all. Their harrowing adventure brings them face to face with violence, desperation, and their worst fears, and reveals the tension between morality and survival in apocalyptic times. Kae-lyn displays courage and incredible selflessness in the midst of overwhelming danger, all the while struggling with what to think about the crumbling world around her. The Lives We Lost blends many elements of a great story—secret romance, anticipation, and characters with depth.</td>
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<td>Rebekah Capps</td>
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<td>Nashville, TN</td>
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<th><strong>Maybe I Will</strong> by Laurie Gray</th>
<th>Teen Fiction</th>
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<td>Is an act of sexual violence more traumatizing for a female victim than a male? Maybe I Will shares the story of a teenager who is the object of a nonconsensual sexual act. Sandy’s two closest friends turn away when they are needed the most. Other adults do not seem to care or do not believe. Lost, confused, and violated, Sandy turns to alcohol as a numbing agent and best friend. All the childhood dreams and ambitions are diluted. Not only does this story tell one victim’s response to sexual assault, it questions the meaning, or lack thereof, of gender roles as Sandy’s gender is never revealed. Readers can directly relate to Sandy as they are able to make him/her relevant to their personal experiences. Sandy deals with the assault the same way—the same trauma, the same betrayal, and the same substance abuse—regardless of her/his gender.</td>
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<td>Anna Lee</td>
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<td>Minnestrista, MN</td>
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<th><strong>The Morning Star</strong> by Robin Bridges</th>
<th>Fantasy</th>
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<td>Katerina Alexandrova, the young Duchess of Oldenburg, dreams of becoming a doctor, not a necromancer. Tsar Alexander will not allow her to attend medical school, so she continues her studies with Tibetan medic Dr. Badmaev. Her love for the Tsar’s son, the ailing George Alexandrovich, is threatened by her desire to learn how to cure him. Vampires, werewolves, shape shifters, and wizards populate the Kremlin of Romanov Russia as Katerina’s former fiancé Crown Prince Danilo returns. The illicit tsar Konstantin has inhabited Danilo’s soul and now seeks the Morning Star, an ancient sword that will enable a necromancer to command a magical army. He also intends to marry Katerina and gain the throne. Kidnapped by Danilo, Katerina seeks the sword in Egypt. Will she wield the Morning Star to save Russia, and will her love for George win out over evil in the final volume of the Katerina trilogy?</td>
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<td>Judith A. Hayn</td>
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<td>Little Rock, AR</td>
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<th><strong>My Summer of Pink &amp; Green</strong> by Lisa Greenwald</th>
<th>Realistic Fiction / Relationships</th>
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<td>In this sequel to My Life in Pink &amp; Green, 13-year-old Lucy Desberg is ready to spend the summer helping out with the eco-spa her family is building. But her summer doesn’t turn out as she had planned. The adults don’t need her around to help with the spa, and her sister and best friend always seem busy with their boyfriends. The only person left to spend time with Lucy is Bevin, the spa investor’s immature daughter. When even Bevin gets mad at Lucy for trying to give her a life makeover, Lucy realizes that maybe instead of always trying to makeover other people, she should makeover her own attitude. Lucy learns the importance of appreciating other people for who they are. As she strives to be a better friend, sister, and daughter, she offers tips to readers so that they can become the best versions of themselves, too.</td>
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<td>Laura Cockman</td>
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<td>Fishers, IN</td>
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Nantucket Blue
by Leila Howland
Young Adult Fiction/Summer Romance
Hyperion, 2013, 304 pp., $16.99
ISBN: 978-1-4231-7919-1

When Cricket Thompson's best friend, Jules Clayton, invites her to Nantucket for the summer, she's expecting a story about the fragility of friendship, the excitement of first love, and the importance of standing up for oneself.

Diana Liu
Nashville, TN

Tagged
by Eric Walters
School/Street Art
Orca, 2013, 136 pp., $9.95
ISBN: 978-1-4598-0167-7

Ian Cheevers is enjoying spending his last year of high school with his two best friends, Oswald and Julia. One of his biggest concerns is to be a popular student in his school. Will Ian find a way to make his opinions heard in his AP English class? Will the mysterious Wiz ever reveal his true identity?

Candy Lee
North Brunswick, NJ

Sean Griswold's Head
by Lindsey Leavitt
Young Adult Fiction/Identity
Bloomsbury USA Children's, 2012, 304 pp., $9.99
ISBN: 978-1-59990-911-0

When Payton Gritas's guidance counselor tells her to express her suppressed emotions in a focus journal, she thinks that Leavitt tells the heartbreaking yet hilarious story of a teenage girl navigating the aftermath of a devastating discovery.

Diana Liu
Nashville, TN

Teenboat
by Dave Roman and John Green
Graphic Novel/Humor
ISBN: 978-0-547-63669-6

Teenboat, a high school student with the superpower to turn into a small yacht, wants to be popular so that his crush, Jordan, will notice him. His best friend, Jack, will start a new superhero team. Teenboat is a middle school student with the superpower to turn into a small yacht. As Teenboat navigates choppy waters and the high school social scene, Teenboat takes readers on a brightly colored, pun-filled journey through adolescence.

Laura Cockman
Fishers, IN
A Soldier’s Secret by Marissa Moss
Amulet Books, 2012, 387 pp., $16.95
ISBN: 978-2-4197-0427-7

Private Frank Thomson of the Second Michigan Volunteer Infantry has his work cut out for him in the Union Army during the War between the States: running from battlefield to hospital as a nurse, delivering letters to his fellow soldiers as mail carrier, and gaining critical information from behind enemy lines as a spy. Yet the anxiety Frank feels going into battle is no match for the anxiety he experiences every day: Frank’s real name is Sarah Emma Edmonds. She is masquerading as a man.

Marissa Moss’s moment-by-moment account of the true story of Sarah Emma Edmonds provides an accessible avenue for adolescent readers to understand the Civil War, the rights of women, and the timeless struggle for equality. Blending historical facts, including photographs and character names, with a fresh voice for Sarah Edmonds, Moss breathes life into her story grounded in history.

Laura Cramer
Nashville, TN

Time between Us by Tamara Ireland Stone
Hyperion, 2012, 384 pp., $17.99

Growing up in 1990s suburbia, Anna Greene is a pretty normal teenager. She goes to school, runs cross-country, and works in her family’s bookstore. But one day, everything changes when Anna notices a shaggy-haired boy watching her on an early morning run. One moment, he’s there; the next moment, he’s disappeared into thin air. Anna is perplexed at first, but once she runs into the mysterious boy at school, she quickly realizes that her life will never be the same again, because Bennett Cooper has a secret—a secret that will not only bring them together, but can also tear them apart.

In her debut novel, Tamara Ireland Stone weaves together a captivating story that addresses the classic question of whether or not love can truly stand the test of time.

Diana Liu
Nashville, TN

Towering by Sarah Skilton
HarperTeen, 2013, 304 pp., $17.99
ISBN: 978-0-06-202417-6

Flinn continues her series of revamped fairy tales in this contemporary version of Rapunzel. As in the original, Rachel with her long golden hair is imprisoned in a tower in the woods, this time rural Slakill, NY. Seventeen-year-old Wyatt has come to the isolated community to recover from the death of his best friend and sister. He stays with his mom’s acquaintance, elderly Mrs. Greenwood, whose daughter Danielle mysteriously disappeared years ago. Wyatt hears Rachel’s heartrending songs and follows her voice; their meeting eventually fulfills a prophecy that will help solve the mystery of Dani’s disappearance. The two lovers are destined to remove a curse grounded in modern society’s drug culture that has threatened the area for years. Enough of the fantastic is coupled with the tenderness of young love amidst the threat of impending violence—a magical read for fans of the genre.

Judith A. Hayn
Little Rock, AR

Whatever Doesn’t Kill You by Elizabeth Wennick
Orca, 2013, 202 pp., $12.95
ISBN: 978-1-4598-0083-0

Jenna Cooper was born into tragedy. A few days after her birth, her father was murdered and her family began a tailspin that ended with her mother locked away in a nursing home, her sister addicted to alcohol, and her brother desperately trying to keep what was left of the family intact.

When Jenna finds a photo of her father’s murderer, Travis Bingham, staring back at her in a newspaper article announcing his release from prison, she becomes determined to find him and give him a piece of her mind. Despite friends and family urging her to move on, Jenna remains unwavering in her pursuit of Travis and begins to discover that the story behind her father’s death contains a bevy of buried secrets that could compromise her relationships with her loved ones.

Rachel Wilkinson
Nashville, TN
### YA Book Reviews

**When You Wish upon a Rat**

by Maureen McCarthy  
**Fiction/Middle School**  
Amulet Books, 2012, 288 pp., $16.95  
ISBN: 978-1-4197-0161-0

For Ruth Craze, an overworked and underappreciated middle school librarian, the three wishes she is given are a chance to improve the library and her life. With her first wish, Craze transforms the library into a place where kids love to read. With the second wish, she gains a new assistant, a cat named Rodney the Rat, who helps her deal with the students and their problems. The third wish allows her to travel to different times and places, allowing her to experience the magic of books and reading.

Diana Liu  
Nashville, TN

**William and the Lost Spirit**

by Gwen de Bonneval & Matthieu Bonhomme  
**Fantasy Fiction/Adventure**  
Graphic Universe, 2013, 160 pp., $9.95  
ISBN: 978-1-4677-0807-4

William de Sonac is unwilling to accept the death of his father. To make matters worse, his sister, Helise, disappears in the middle of the night. William, accompanied by his magical cat, must journey to a parallel universe to find his sister. Along the way, he learns to accept the death of his father and the reality of the world around him.

David Chang  
Chicago, IL

**The Wild Book**

by Margarita Engle  
**Poetry/Historical Fiction**  
ISBN: 978-0-547-58131-6

In Fefa’s small community in the Cuban countryside, reading and writing poetry is the main pastime. But Fefa is diagnosed with tuberculosis at a young age, and her life is forever changed. As she learns to cope with the disease, she finds comfort in the power of words. The novel explores the themes of love, loss, and the importance of storytelling.

Laura Cockman  
Fishers, IN

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Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy to: Melanie Hundley  
1021 Delmas Ave.  
Nashville, TN 37216-3630

To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Melanie Hundley at melanie.hundley@Vanderbilt.edu.
Which book review and book rating sites are worth considering? Here are the best ones.

1. Goodreads. Fantasy Book Review should be high on the list for anyone who is a fan of fantasy works. The site publishes reviews for both children's books and adults' books. It has a book of the month section, a rating system of 0-10 for books it's reviewed, and a continually updated list of must-read books for each year. You can search through the old must-read archives, going right back to 1980.

7. LoveReading. A book review is a form of literary criticism in which a book is merely described (summary review) or analyzed based on content, style, and merit. A book review may be a primary source, opinion piece, summary review or scholarly review. Books can be reviewed for printed periodicals, magazines and newspapers, as school work, or for book web sites on the Internet. A book review's length may vary from a single paragraph to a substantial essay. Such a review may evaluate the book on the basis of personal