

PSC Reviews

Erin Sterling

3/5/2009

Gonzalez, Julie **IMAGINARY ENEMY** Rating: R Grade Level: 6-12

Jane writes a letter to an imaginary enemy named Bubba every time something goes wrong in her life, usually because of her impetuous and smart-alecky behavior. Told by Jane as a teenager and looking back at growing up with her wacky and fun next-door neighbors, school adventures that occasionally land her in trouble, her voice helps readers connect with her character because she is smart and witty even if occasionally frustrating. As a teenager, she comes across as not caring about what other people think, but in reality, she does care, especially when her imaginary enemy writes her a letter! *Imaginary Enemy* by Julie Gonzalez is about growing up and taking responsibility but also having a good time while doing so.

Elliott, David **JEREMY CABBAGE AND THE LIVING MUSEUM OF HUMAN ODDBALLS AND QUADRUPLED DELIGHTS** Rating: R Grade Level: 5 and up

In a world ruled by an intolerant baron and his horrible wife where people are imprisoned on a daily basis for unreasonable things and real trees are being replaced with plastic trees, Jeremy is stuck at Harpwitch's Home for Mean Dogs, Ugly Cats, and Strey Children, where kids are treated worse than the animals. Luckily, Jeremy is adopted by an extended family of bustling, enthusiastic circus people, or cloons as they're known in the book. However, the baron has something more sinister in mind for this happy-go-lucky book. When Jeremy meets up with the twinkle-eyed, fun-loving baron's daughter, can they help save the cloons and the rest of the world from the baron's nefarious plans? The book is funny and clever and has the winning combination of a fast-moving plot and head-strong, take-charge children and zany characters.

Ephron, Delia **FRANNIE IN PIECES** Rating: R Grade Level: 5 and up

Frannie's father died a week before her birthday two months ago, and she's sad and angry at the world, including even her best friend. When she finds a special birthday puzzle created just for her by her artistic dad that was hidden before he died, she gets consumed by the possibility of uncovering a special meaning that will illuminate why he had to die. The book is written from Frannie's point of view, and is sweet and thoughtful, with a touch of the fantastical. The book is fast-paced, well-written, and hard to put down.

Buffie, Margaret **OUT OF FOCUS** Rating: R Grade Level: 8 and up

16 year old Bernie Dodd's mom is an overly apologetic alcoholic who has trouble enough taking care of her own life, let alone her children's. Just at the moment when Bernie thinks that her mom is on the right path, things seem to fall apart again. With no money, no job except for Bernie's part-time one, and an apartment that's about to evict them, prospects do not look good. That is, until Bernie discovers a

cabin left to her mom in a great aunt's will and has the brilliant inspiration to live there and fix it up as a bed-and-breakfast. Will Bernie's mom pull it together? Will this drastic and daunting endeavor help get their lives into focus, or just tear it apart even more? Bernie is strong, independent, and capable, and her character shines through the whole book such that it's easy to forget she's only 16. This is a book full of raw emotion and issues that may be hard for younger children to grasp.

Jongman, Mariken RITS Rating: R Grade Level: 5 and up

Rits is 13 and has to stay with his boring Uncle Corry indefinitely because his parents left, for reasons unknown to the reader but that will gradually unravel. Written through journal entries, this book is touching, funny, and thoughtful. Rits' voice is sincere and believable as he tries to make sense of his new world through adventures with Rita, a neighbor his age who befriends him. Translated from the Dutch, Rits is a quiet story and a worthwhile read.

Kennedy, James THE ORDER OF ODD-FISH Rating: AD+ Grade Level: 5 and up

Jo is a girl living with her dramatic and flamboyant aunt, Lily Larouche. She knows nothing about her past, except that she was left to Aunt Lily with a note: "This is a dangerous baby." The normal takes a turn for the absurd and fantastical and comical when she and her aunt get flung into a different world, where giant cockroaches are butlers and knights of order of Odd Fish study useless things. But there's a giant secret lurking in Jo's past that her aunt won't let her know anything about. When an evil man known as the Belgian Prankster tries to destroy this fantastical world, can Jo save the day? The book was silly, bizarre, and occasionally hilarious, but at the same time often long-winded and overly detailed. The characters are hard to keep track of and obscure details muddle the plot in the beginning of the book, but the book picks up speed and keeps readers entertained.

Oliver, Lin ATTACK OF THE GROWLING EYEBALLS Rating: R Grade Level: 3-7

This book is silly all the way through. Daniel Funk lives in a house surrounded by women--his mom, three sisters, and two grandmas--who just don't understand him! Well, everyone that is except for his cool grandma who rides around on a motor scooter. When he shrinks to the size of his fourth left toe one day, he discovers something--or someone, rather--very unusual! The first book in a series, it's a zany fun ride that will appeal to boys in particular.

Wilkinson, Carole DRAGON MOON Rating: R Grade Level: 3 - 7

This book is the conclusion to a trilogy about Ping, a young girl in China during the Han Dynasty, who was recognized to be a dragon keeper after living as a poor peasant her entire life. Ping has to protect the dragon Kai, who she helped raise since he was a baby, and try to find his dragon kind. Sometimes lonely, sometimes hopeful, but always persevering, Ping is a strong character. Will she be able to let Kai live his own life after protecting him for so long? The story is engaging and written beautifully. The ending to the trilogy, while somewhat heartbreaking, is fitting.