

Crawford, Brent CARTER FINALLY GETS IT AD Grades 8-12

Carter is a freshmen in high school with a few things on his mind: girls and how to fit in. A year in the life of a 14-year-old, the book is sexual, full of bathroom humor and embarrassing moments, and occasionally funny. More often than not, though, I was just sort of disturbed by the objectification of women, the stereotypes (mean girls, drunk jocks, weird theater kids, etc.), and his stupidity (are teenage boys really that dumb?). Carter's character is sort of endearing and thankfully by the end seems to actually learn something, but I didn't always believe his voice, which sounded a little like the author was trying too hard to capture a teenage boy's inner monologue.

Fagan, Cary JACOB TWO-TWO ON THE HIGH SEAS AD+ Grades 3rd-7th

This book is about the comically absurd adventures of Jacob Two-Two, who is heading to his father's native Canada on the SS Spring-a-Leak. Fun, silly characters such as the self-absorbed, handsome Captain Sparkletooth (who knows about looking at himself in the mirror, but nothing about steering a ship), the sinister first mate Mr. Scrounger, the giant and gentle Morgenbesser (much like the giant in *The Princess Bride*), and the young, brave daughter of a snooty family, Cindy Snootcastle, bring this book to life, with some jokes and references that might appeal to adults more than children at times. The almost seven-year-old Jacob and Cindy get put to work by the nefarious Mr. Scrounger unbeknownst to their parents, but luckily are helped out by the friendly giant Morgenbesser. After the boat gets taken over by pirates and their families are sent to a deserted island, Jacob and Cindy must help save the day. A short novel based on the character created by Mordecai Richler, the style is somewhat reminiscent of Roald Dahl in its absurdity, foolish parents, and evil villains, although it does not quite live up to Dahl's brilliance. Those with a sense of silliness and adventure will enjoy this book.

George, Madeleine LOOKS R Grades 7th-12th

Meghan Ball feels invisible, despite her massive size and cruel jokes played on her. But when Meghan observes and then befriends anorexic Aimee, they discover a kindred spirit in each other and gather the strength to get revenge against all those who were cruel to them. While the plot is your basic underdog story in a middle/high school setting, the character depth and writing make this book stand out from the average. The description of Meghan being both invisible and incredibly visible at the same time is beautiful, the tenuous relationship Aimee has with her mother who does not know how to deal with her daughter's eating disorder is tender and apt, and the misunderstandings and cruelty of middle school explored with honesty and truth make this book come alive. The ending might feel abrupt to some because there are some things left unresolved, but overall the story connects with and draws the reader in. An ALA Best Book for Young Adults.

Moss, Jenny WINNIE'S WAR AD+/R Grades 5th-9th

Set in 1918 in a small Texan town at the time of the Spanish Influenza, Winnie is a spirited, feisty young girl who lives with two younger sisters, a gentle carpenter father, a sad and distant mother, and a grandmother who drives Winnie crazy. Despite the world being at war and young soldiers getting killed, Winnie feels safe playing chess with her elderly friend Mr. Levy and going fishing with her romantic

interest Nolan, until the Spanish Influenza hits the town. Winnie is determined to keep her family safe and becomes the nurse of the town. A wonderful historical book that deals with prejudices common in World War I against Germans and Jews and an epidemic that is not often written about, the book has profoundly sad moments but also really tender moments. Might be a bit slow-moving for some, but Winnie's pluck and sense of adventure will have others want to keep reading.

Potter, Ellen SLOB R Grades 6th-10th

12-year-old Owen is 57% fatter than the national average for his age, but he's also significantly smarter. He is a genius inventor who is determined to create a TV that can display the past--specifically an event from two years ago in the past. However, he is not so clever at figuring out certain things: why his feisty younger sister insists on being called by a boy's name, who exactly has been stealing his oreos every day, and why a scar-faced and potentially dangerous new kid seems out to get him. The mystery behind the story unravels beautifully, capturing middle school in all of its self-obsession, changing friendships, and cruelty perfectly from the point of view of an endearing, geeky, and often oblivious kid. Owen might not discover exactly what he was looking for, but by the end, he will have learned more about himself, his family, and friends than he expected.

Willis, Jeanne THE BOG BABY R Grades 1-3

Two sisters go exploring and find a bog baby in a nearby pond, but decide not to tell their mother for fear they won't approve. But even though they try to take care of the small, blue winged creature, he starts to get sick. When they finally tell their mother, she tells them that sometimes if you love something, you have to let it go where it can be free. A whimsical book about exploring, magical creatures, and learning to let go with illustrations that capture the essence of magic with soft colors and expressive faces.

Yang, Gene Luen THE ETERNAL SMILE R* Grades 7th-12th

The author of the notable American Born Chinese does it again with this graphic novel of three stories. While the stories are not related, they are connected by a message of hope and a clever twist. In the first story, a young boy fights a frog prince to win the heart of his love but cannot get the image of a sad woman out of his head and in the end has to fight himself to overcome despair. In the second story, a greedy frog has a goal to make so much money that he could dive to the bottom of his ever-growing piles of coins without touching bottom--but at what expense? In the third story, a shy, withdrawn girl who has worked in an office for many years with little recognition gets involved in a Nigerian scam but ends up making a friend and learning about herself in unexpected ways. The book is appropriate for older elementary school kids and above despite some cartoonish violence, but kids may find that some of the book goes over their head. Recommended for adults as well as children, if not more so.

Clare, Cassandra CITY OF GLASS R Grades 7th-12th

In the final book in the Mortal Instruments trilogy, Clary must travel to the City of Glass, the ancient home of the Shadowhunters to save her mother's life and the lives of Shadowhunters, Downworlders, and humans everywhere. With the help of familiar characters from the first two books and a new, mysterious (and handsome) ally, Sebastian, she must use her newfound rune-making powers to defeat her father and nemesis Valentine by bringing together Shadowhunters and Downworlders. But will uncovered secrets about her family's ominous past defeat her? While the ending drags on so as to tie all the loose pieces together, readers will enjoy this fast-paced conclusion of love, war, and complicated friendships. A great Twilight read-a-like.

Giff, Patricia Reilly WILD GIRL R Grades 5th-9th

Lidie loves riding horses in Brazil with her aunt and uncle, but she misses her father and brother who moved to the United States five years ago. When she finally goes to live with them in the United States at age 12 where her brother is training to be a jockey at the famous race track her father runs, she realizes they think she is still the little girl they left behind. Each chapter also begins with the viewpoint of a wild filly that Lidie eventually learns to ride, which was one of the weaker aspects of the story, but which kids might love. The story of being a foreigner to family as well as a new country, Lidie faces challenges with grit and determination.

Larson, Hope CHIGGERS AD/AD+ Grades 5th-10th

Abby is back at her camp she goes to every summer, except that all her friends have changed—Rose is a busy cabin assistant who never seems to have enough time for her, her friend Beth is too cool for her, and her other friends have become mean girls. When she befriends the new girl Shasta, who everything else thinks is totally annoying because of her tendency to say things that don't always seem believable (that she was struck by lightning, has an internet boyfriend who is a senior in high school, and who has various mysterious ailments), she learns about the true meaning of friendship. This graphic novel has bold black-and-white illustrations that make the girls sometimes difficult to tell apart, which is a major downside in a book about mean girls and friendships. While the story is cute and many girls will relate to both the camp and mean girls scenarios, the ending leaves a lot of details unresolved.