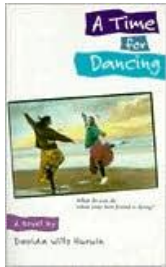


Summer Reading Book Reviews

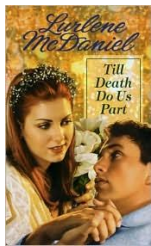
English I

A Time for Dancing by Davida Willis Hurwin



Publishers Weekly: Few YA dramas deal with the issue of terminal illness as intimately as this gripping first novel, which alternates between the points of view of Juliana, at 16 a gifted dancer, and her ``one-and-only'' best friend, Samantha. The girls' initial concerns about boyfriends and dance class seem trivial after Jules is diagnosed with histiocytic lymphoma, a deadly form of cancer. Through graphic depictions of what follows--endless sessions of chemotherapy, emergency runs to the hospital and Jules's periodic escapes into a dream state--readers will feel the young victim's weariness as she fights against the body which has betrayed her. They will also experience Sammie's complex responses as she watches her friend embark on a ``solo journey'' toward death. The dissipation of Jules's hopes, her growing acceptance of the inevitable, and the reactions of peers and family members are hauntingly true to life; they camouflage the less credible episodes (Jules's brilliant performance in a dance concert during the last weeks of her life). Although the subject matter may be too intense for some, others will come away from this book with a deeper respect for mortality. Ages 12-up.

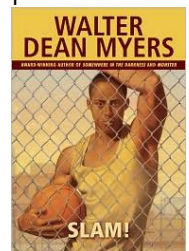
Till Death Do Us Part by Lurlene McDaniel



No reviews available at this time.

Slam! by Walter Dean Myers

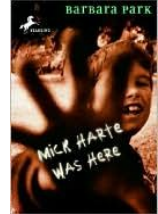
Publishers Weekly: A love of basketball isn't necessary to enjoy this gritty, feelingly told tale, but it would certainly help. Myers (The Glory Field) uses contemporary urban black locutions to relay his narrator's view of the mean streets of Harlem, as well as describe some heart-thumping hoop action in a novel that, like most good sports stories, is about more than just sports. "I can hoop," says Slam. "Case closed.... You can take my game to the bank and wait around for interest." Grandiose fantasies of his future as a millionaire NBA star-or maybe a millionaire movie producer-are about all that he has on his mind, even though he is on his way to flunking out of the magnet high school he just transferred to, his grandmother is dying, his father is out of work and hitting the bottle again and his oldest friend appears to be dealing crack. Only when he is playing basketball does Slam know what moves to make and how to relate to the people around him. The rest of the time he stumbles, alienating his mother, girlfriend, teachers, even his coach and teammates. But, as the plain-speaking assistant coach



tells him, "Everybody is in the game off the court," and Slam finally realizes that it's his attitude, not other people, that holds him back. Enduring truths, winningly presented. Ages 12-up.

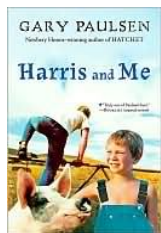
***Mick Harte was Here* by Barbara Park**

Publishers Weekly: "I don't want to make you cry. I just want to tell you about Mick. But I thought you should know right up front that he's not here anymore. I just thought that would be fair." Phoebe, the eighth-grade narrator of Park's (*Buddies*; *Don't Make Me Smile*) heart-wrenching novel, weaves together diverting anecdotes about her endearingly eccentric brother with her reactions, and those of her parents, to his death in a bicycle accident at the age of 12. The genius of this novel is Park's ability to make the events excruciatingly real while entirely avoiding the mawkish; likable Phoebe's frank, at times even funny narration will leave readers feeling as though they've known the girl-and Mick-for a very long time. Park's ability to convey so affectingly both the individual and collective pain of this family's members is remarkable. She focuses on small moments-the father closing the door to Mick's room upon returning from the hospital; the mother covering her ears because she cannot bear Phoebe's talk about her brother. But the novel has another crucial dimension in that it stresses the importance of wearing bike helmets. Midway through the story, in response to Phoebe's misplaced sense of guilt, Phoebe's father introduces the subject: "He heaved a God-awful sigh and whispered, 'If only I had made him wear his helmet.'" The message is skillfully reprised toward the conclusion, in a powerful scene in which Phoebe overcomes her own pain and anger to participate in a school assembly on bicycle safety. An author's note at the end reinforces the message. To Park's great credit, the lesson never dominates-the story reads not as a cautionary tale, but as a full-fledged and fully convincing drama. Ages 8-12.



Harris and Me: A Summer Remembered

The ALAN Review: Harris is one of a kind. His city cousin spends the summer with Harris, and finds farm life holds many surprises when your mentor is eleven years old and primed to try anything from fighting chickens and tackling pigs, to imitating Tarzan. Paulsen has an excellent eye for the slightly off-beat details, from the hired hand who never seems to take a bath and the rooster who lies in ambush for human prey, to Buzzer the killer cat. The life of Harris and his family on the hardscrabble farm could be unmercifully grim if it were not for Harris' exuberance for living life fully. The book contains some swearing, but Paulsen makes this one of Harris' traits that constantly gets him in trouble. This book is guaranteed not to stay on the shelf for long, once junior high boys discover it.



***Eragon* by Chris Paolini**

Midwest Book Review: *Eragon* by science fiction and fantasy enthusiast Christopher Paolini is a vigorously written high fantasy epic of *Eragon*, a young man armed with a mythic red sword, accompanied by a beautiful dragon companion named Saphira, and the recipient of Brom's old storyteller wisdom. Our hero is drawn into a complex, interwoven saga of a fantastic land with a cruel and ruthless king. Legacies etched in stars and dreams guide his steps in this enchanting adventure. *Eragon* is highly recommended for dedicated fantasy enthusiasts.



***Among the Hidden* by Margaret Peterson Haddix**

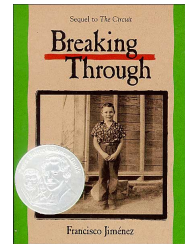
VOYA: Luke is the youngest of three brothers. When his parents married, they dreamed of having four children: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, to labor on the family farm. That was before the

government enacted the Population Law, which allowed families only two children. Before the penalties became severe, Luke's mother found she was unexpectedly pregnant and decided to keep the baby. Now the family is trapped: the government has purchased the woodlands surrounding the farm and is cutting down trees to make room for houses. To keep from being seen, Luke is forced to hide in the attic where he becomes a pale, depressed recluse. Luke views the outside world through a small attic air vent, and one day detects another "shadow child" in a neighboring house. He breaks into the seemingly deserted home and meets Jen, who acts tough and fearless and introduces Luke to a chat room of hidden children on the Internet. When Luke and Jen discover a rally planned to protest the Population Law, Jen is determined to attend but Luke is afraid, and stays home. Luke breaks into Jen's house again and learns she was killed in the protest. Jen's father then offers Luke a fake ID, and this bleak allegorical tale ends with Luke leaving to attend school, then rejoin the outside world. This is an easily understood, younger reader's 1984 or Brave New World, presenting a chilling vision of a possibly not-too-distant future. Haddix's other books include Don't You Dare Read This, Mrs. Dunphrey (Simon & Schuster, 1996/VOYA December 1996). VOYA Codes: 3Q 4P M J (Readable without serious defects, Broad general YA appeal, Middle School-defined as grades 6 to 8 and Junior High-defined as grades 7 to 9).



***Breaking Through* by Francisco Jimenez**

Publishers Weekly: Francisco Jimenez continues the moving tale of his early youth begun with a dozen autobiographical short stories in *The Circuit*. *Breaking Through* chronicles the author's teenage years. At the age of 14, Francisco and his family are caught by la migra (immigration officers) and forced to leave their California home, but soon find their way back. The author explores the prejudice and challenges they face while also relaying universal adolescent experiences of school, dances and romances. (Aug.) Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information.



English II

***Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson**

Alan Review: This is a story about silence--the causes and effects, the costs and benefits, but mostly the breaching of it. Late summer before her freshman year in high school, Melinda calls 911 ending a party and becoming a pariah. The first day of class a few weeks later, she is left to talk with Heather, a new girl, while everyone else snickers or ignores her. Melinda's parents are not getting along, Heather deserts her for the Martha's, girls who dress, act, and try to think as one, and IT appears in Melinda's dreams and around every corner. When day-to-day existence becomes too much to bear she takes refuge in a janitor's closet, to which she adds some posters and a comforter. But even there she's not safe from Andy Evans, the boy who raped her at the party and who is now dating the girl who used to be her best friend. Anderson provides the reader with hints of what happened at the party throughout the text, as Melinda attempts to break her silence and explain why she had to call 911. As the story unfolds some readers will react like the accepting, available art teacher; Mr. Freeman, some will respond like the critical, absent parents; and some will recognize the adolescent, self-absorbed students at her high school. The wonderfully descriptive language, along with the suspense, capture



and propel the reader through this tale. *Speak* was a National Book Award finalist in 1999. Genre: Coming of Age/Rape. 1999, Farrar Straus Giroux, Ages 13 up. Reviewer: Katherine Barr

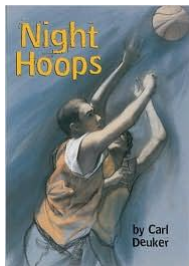
***Someone Like You* by Sarah Dessen**

VOYA: At the beginning of their junior year of high school, Halley's best friend's boyfriend dies in a motorcycle accident. Unaccustomed to being the strong one in their friendship, Halley nonetheless struggles to provide emotional support for Scarlett. When Scarlett discovers she is pregnant, she depends on Halley even more. At the same time as Halley works to adjust to their changing circumstances, she must also deal with the shifting relationship she has with her controlling mother and she falls in love for the first time. Halley's relationship with Macon Faulkner, the "Boy with a Reputation," serves to distance her from her parents as it helps Halley discover herself and her own set of values. The story is told from Halley's point of view. She is an engaging character and her maturing perspective over the course of the year rings true. Although the focus is on Halley, as minor characters her boyfriend, mother, and Scarlett are well presented. The overall tone of *Someone Like You* is funny, heartwarming, and appealing—a fine follow-up to Dessen's first novel, *That Summer* (Orchard, 1996/VOYA December 1996), a 1997 ALA Best Book for Young Adults. VOYA Codes: 4Q 4P J (Better than most, marred only by occasional lapses, Broad general YA appeal, Junior High—defined as grades 7 to 9).



***Night Hoops* by Carl Deuker**

VOYA: No one would expect Nick Abbott to befriend Trent Dawson. An outsider and misfit, Trent and his family are not the kind of neighbors one would want living across the street, let alone hanging around the house shooting baskets. Trent is on welfare with no father in sight, his older brother is always in trouble with the law, his mother parties long and hard, and his house and yard have fallen to ruin. Yet on Nick's backyard court, the boys find a common thread that weaves their lives together—their skills and love of the game make them an unbeatable pair. When both earn spots on the varsity team, the court becomes their whole world and every play is from the heart. Deuker, award-winning author of young adult sports stories, including *On the Devil's Court* (Little, Brown, 1989/VOYA April 1989), *Painting the Black* (Houghton Mifflin, 1997/VOYA August 1997), and *Heart of a Champion* (Little, Brown, 1993/VOYA June 1993), again has written a fast-paced novel that will appeal to the teen reader—even those not interested in the game of basketball. The issues of teens painfully adjusting to the separation of parents, maturely accepting punishment for bad decisions, defending someone against all others' accusations, and realizing the importance of commitment to a team are addressed. As deftly as Nick and Trent move the ball around the court, they reveal more than just the desire to win a game. When faced with unfavorable odds in the game of life, one person can make a difference. As Nick learned, "When you know somebody, everything changes." Establishing a rewarding friendship is not limited by superficial boundaries. VOYA CODES: 5Q 4P M J S (Hard to imagine it being any better written; Broadgeneral YA appeal; Middle School, defined as grades 6 to 8; Junior High, defined as grades 7 to 9; Senior High, defined as grades 10 to 12). 2000, Houghton Mifflin, Ages 12 to 18, 256p, \$15. Reviewer: Cheryl Karp Ward



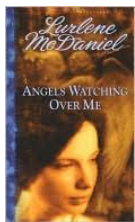
***You Don't Know Me* by David Klass**

Publishers Weekly: John, the 14-year-old narrator of Klass's (Screen Test; Danger Zone) well-conceived novel, deals with not only universal teenage problems (escaping his algebra teacher's questions, working up the nerve to ask out his dream girl, whom he calls "Glory Hallelujah," fighting with a friend), he also must deal with his mother's boyfriend, whom John calls "the man who is not my father." The tyrant verbally and physically abuses him when his mother is not around, and John experiences a "meltdown" when he learns that the man plans to marry his mother. While people do care about JohnDa rather stereotypically sensitive music teacher and a likable girl from his band class, whom John calls "Violent" Hayes "because she appears to be trying to strangle her saxophone before it kills her" Deven they cannot convince John to reveal what's happening at home. John's narrative often addresses various characters directly (his mother's boyfriend, the music teacher, etc.) with wry internal thoughts; this approach plays up the alienation John feels and also conveys the teen's sardonic humor and intelligence. A few scenes are so outrageous and comical that they clash with the book's overall tone (e.g., when Glory Hallelujah's father hunts John and the girl down in the basement of her home). But most, such as when John first asks out Glory Hallelujah via note, instructing her to check either the "yes" or "no" box, are very grounded in the high school experience. The hero's underlying sense of isolation and thread of hope will strike a chord with nearly every adolescent. Ages 12-up. (Mar.) Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information.



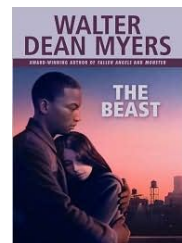
***Angels Watching Over Me* by Lurlene McDaniel**

School Library Journal: Gr 8-10 Young romance is difficult at the best of times, but when you're dealing with a life-threatening illness as well as the problems that can arise from a cross-cultural relationship, it can seem downright impossible. Such are the trials facing 16-year-old Leah Lewis-Hall. Left alone right before Christmas (by her mother who has just been married for the fifth time), Leah is admitted to the hospital for treatment of a broken finger. Further tests indicate bone cancer. During her stay, she meets Ethan, a handsome Amish boy, and is drawn to him despite the difficulties she has understanding his culture. Factor in the mysterious nurse Gabriella, who may or may not be an angel, and you have a story that is an interesting blend of romance, mystery, and problem novel. The characters are captivating and sensitively drawn and the plot is fast paced. There are strong religious themes but the author avoids being preachy. A satisfying book that also provides insight into the Amish way of life. Robyn Ryan Vandenbroek, formerly at Otterville Public School, Ontario



***The Beast* by Walter Dean Myers**

Publishers Weekly: Myers (Monster) sketches a provocative picture of an intelligent, likable 16-year-old straddling two worlds: his neighborhood on 145th Street in Harlem and the privileged world of Wallingford, the boarding school where he is spending his senior year. Anthony Witherspoon (or Spoon, as his friends call him) comes from a loving home and has an aspiring-poet girlfriend, Gabi-introduced in the opening chapter, as Spoon departs for Wallingford. In the next chapter, Spoon and his fellow students make plans to return home for Christmas break, and it quickly becomes clear that Chanelle, an Upper East Side New Yorker, fancies him. In a first-person account, Spoon describes the myriad ways things have changed in the three months that he's been away. A close friend has dropped out of school, Gabi's younger brother has been "gang banging" (trying to get into a gang) and Spoon finds a hypodermic needle on Gabi's dresser. Readers glimpse Spoon's complex



universe as he enters a drug den to retrieve Gabi and gets snubbed by Chanelle's doorman when he arrives at her home for a party. Such scenes are tantalizing, yet the ideas introduced seem only partially developed (the chapter about finding the drug den is titled "the labyrinth," and implies that addiction is "the beast," yet Spoon refers to his purposeless childhood buddies in a similar fashion: "They seem as if they're wandering around in some monster maze"). Readers will recognize that Spoon's surroundings have changed but may be left to wonder how those changes have affected him. Ages 14-up. (Oct.) Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.

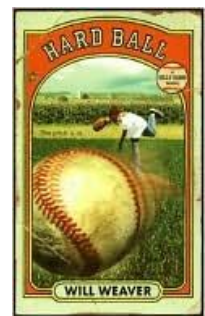
***The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold**



Library Journal: Sebold, whose previous book, *Lucky*, told of her own rape and the subsequent trial of her attacker, here offers a powerful first novel, narrated by Susie Salmon, in heaven. Brutally raped and murdered by a deceptively mild-mannered neighbor, Susie begins with a compelling description of her death. During the next ten years, she watches over her family and friends as they struggle to cope with her murder. She observes their disintegrating lives with compassion and occasionally attempts, sometimes successfully, to communicate her love to them. Although the lives of all who knew her well are shaped by her tragic death, eventually her family and friends survive their pain and grief. In Sebold's heaven, Susie continues to grow emotionally. She learns that human existence is "the helplessness of being alive, the dark bright pity of being human feeling as you went, groping in corners and opening your arms to light all of it part of navigating the unknown." Sebold's compelling and sometimes poetic prose style and unsparing vision transform Susie's tragedy into an ultimately rewarding novel. Highly recommended for academic and public libraries. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 3/15/02.] Cheryl L. Conway, Univ. of Arkansas Lib., Fayetteville Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information.

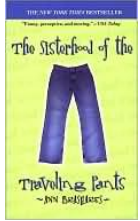
***Hard Ball* by Will Weaver**

School Library Journal: "Hard Ball" can stand on its own, although it's bound to be most popular with readers of "Farm Team" (1995) and "Striking Out" (1993, both HarperCollins). It's August as Billy Baggs steams into the final game of the 1971 summer season. His farm teammates, the skinny-dipping Erickson girls, are as sassy and saucy as ever. Suzy Langen, who has been coming to the games all summer, is too perfectly beautiful for words, but willing to take some risks. And King Kenwood, the privileged star pitcher for the town team, is competitive, hostile, and determined to keep his eye on her. Billy, yanked from the game in the third inning, accompanies Suzy to the loft of the barn, where they tentatively make out. King surprises them and he and Billy explode into a fight. An old farmer dismissively comments, "Just a couple of young bucks locking horns over a doe." Their school's baseball coach, who can see his spring season going down the tubes, takes the fight a bit more seriously. He negotiates a deal with the respective parents to have each boy stay half the week at the other's house. Predictably, they begin to see and understand one another, but the process is largely believable and satisfying. The action moves quickly and the characters are worth knowing. Engaging language is occasionally lyrical. There are loose ends enough to guarantee a sequel, which, like spring baseball, is something to look forward to. Joel Shoemaker, Southeast Jr. High School, Iowa City, IA



***Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* by Ann Brashares**

Publishers Weekly: First novelist Brashares successfully creates four distinct characters, each with her own story line, and ties them together with a creative device: a pair of pants purchased in a thrift shop. As four lifelong friends prepare to split up for the summer, they discover that the second-hand jeans look good on all of them, despite their different physiques. They promise to rotate the jeans among them and, upon their reunion at summer's end, record their favorite adventures on the pant



legs. These magical pants serve as a substitute friend for each girl as she is tested that summer, from Carmen, who goes to visit her father only to find out he's engaged to a woman with two teenage kids, to Tibby, who befriends a precocious 12-year-old cancer victim. Even though they are separated for most of the summer, the friends communicate their love and understanding for one another (Tibby writes to Lena, "Don't torture yourself, Len. We love you too much," to console her friend for mistakenly accusing a cute neighbor boy of spying on her while she skinny dips in Greece). Their bonds, combined with a realistic portrayal of teen emotions (Tibby is embarrassed by the smock she has to wear to work at Wallman's, while Carmen boils with rage when the seamstress fitting her bridesmaid dress disparages her curvy figure), make for an outstanding and vivid book that will stay with readers for a long time. Readers will hope that Brashares chronicles the sisterhood for volumes to come. Ages 12-up. (Sept). Copyright 1999 Cahners Business Information.

***Eldest* by Christopher Paolini**

Robyn Gioia - Children's Literature: There is something remarkable about the Inheritance trilogy, aside from the intricate plot and meticulously built fantasy world. It's the age of the creator. Paolini became a New York Times bestselling author at nineteen when he wrote the first book in the series "Eragon." His home schooling has served him well and his parents deserve a big thumbs-up.

In this second installment of the series, Eragon and his dragon, Saphira, travel to the elven city Ellesmera where both must train in the ways of the dragon riders, a group on the brink of extinction. A reign of evil threatens to dominate the region and life as it has existed. Politics and romance lay at the forefront of events, as Eragon comes to grips with his future and the heavy burdens he must bear. Eragon goes through a major transition on his way to maturity, a necessity to survive an overwhelming foe in the finale's epic battle. The story is richly detailed in parts, logically laying down elements of magic and folklore. This weaving of old world history and modern fantasy works well, allowing us to see Paolini's personal grasp of literary elements and how nature works. This is a series worth reading but it is important to begin with the first book in the series. The linear plot unfolds one section at a time, like the layers of an onion, leaving the reader wanting to know more. 2005, Random House Children's Books, Ages 12 up.

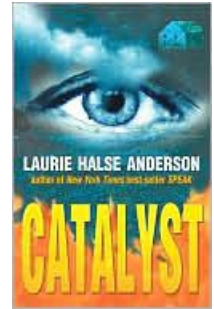


English III

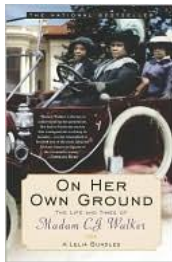
***Catalyst* by Laurie Halse Anderson**

Publishers Weekly: Like its cross-country-running heroine, Anderson's (Speak) latest novel starts off promisingly, then loses its pacing about midway through. The narrator, 18-year-old Kate Malone, has placed all of her eggs in one basket: she has applied only to her late mother's alma mater, MIT. Calculus is a cinch, chemistry is her favorite subject, even physics comes easily to her, but when her MIT rejection arrives, it acts as catalyst for the slow unraveling of her delicately balanced life. A

preacher's daughter, she struggles between "Good Kate" and "Bad Kate" as she singlehandedly keeps the household running (her mother died nine years ago). Anderson excels in conveying Kate's anxieties and her concomitant insomnia, and frequently intersperses evidence of Kate's sharp humor (she calls Mitchell A. Pangborn III "my friend, my enemy, my lust"). But Kate's relationships with others remain hazy. While this seems to reflect Kate's state of mind, since she slowly shuts everyone out as her MIT-less fate becomes clear, her detachment may create a similar effect for readers. This aloofness becomes most problematic in the dynamics of her relationship with Teri Litch, who once beat her up habitually. After Teri's house burns down, she and toddler Mikey Litch come to live with the Malones, and the action escalates to the point of melodrama. Yet another tragic event spurs a reconciliation between Kate and Teri, but the underlying changes in the individuals that lead up to this event remain unclear. Teens will take to Kate instantly, but as the novel continues, they may be confused about what makes her tick. Still, the universal obstacles she faces and the realistic outcome will likely hold readers' attention. Ages 12-up. (Sept.) Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information.

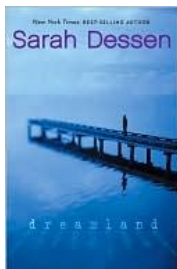


***On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madame CJ Walker* by A'Leia Bundles**



Library Journal: TV journalist Bundles (ABC News) delivers the first comprehensive adult biography of Madame C.J. Walker, her great-great-grandmother, who was born Sarah Breedlove on a Louisiana plantation in 1867 and whose name subsequently became synonymous with hair straightening and black wealth. The author dispels the myth that Walker invented the hair-straightening comb and made her money from hair-straightening products for black women, a highly political issue in Walker's time as well as our own. Bundles instead focuses on Walker's impressive philanthropy, her business savvy, and the personal and political motivations that propelled her from washerwoman to cosmetics industry pioneer and legendary African American businesswoman. Walker employed thousands of black women nationwide, zealously donated to organizations that served the black community, and was actively involved in anti-lynching and racial equality campaigns. The book is a solidly researched and well-written historical account of a rags-to-riches experience that exemplifies the American dream. Recommended for all African American history collections. Sherri L. Barnes, Univ. of California Lib., Santa Barbara Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information.

***Dreamland* by Sarah Dessen**



Publishers Weekly: Caitlin O'Koren has always had to follow in the footsteps of her perfect older sister, Cassandra (homecoming queen, soccer star, student body president, soup kitchen volunteer). When Cassandra runs away from home, Caitlin finds herself trying to fill the gap Cass's absence creates. Shortly after, when she meets mysterious Rogerson Biscoe (a bad boy of the type Dessen hinted at in *Someone Like You*), Caitlin sees a way to forge a path for herself, away from Cass's shadow and the expectations weighing on her. Rogerson seems vaguely ominous, but Caitlin is taken by surprise when he first gets violent with her. Unwilling to give up the freedom she thinks her relationship gives her, she withdraws from her friends, starts failing in school and drifts into confusion. Her parents, the stereotypically meddling mom and stiff, emotionally distant father, and her close neighbors, two touchy-feely ex-hippies, are so caught up in their own concerns, and particularly in Cassandra's disappearance, that they fail to notice the difference in

Caitlin (including what seems to be alarming physical evidence), pushing the limits of plausibility. For all these shortcuts, however, the characterizations have an unmistakable depth; readers may grow impatient with Caitlin and the obliviousness of her nearest and dearest, but they will believe she is real. Ages 12-up. (Sept.) Copyright 2000 Cahners Business Information.]



***On the Devil's Court* by Carl Deuker**

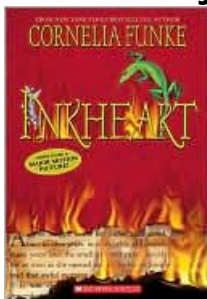
No review available at this time.

***Welcome to the World, Baby Girl!* by Fannie Flagg**

Kirkus Reviews: The author of Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe returns with another engaging paean to the joys of down-home southern life. Gorgeous, ambitious Dena Nordstrom is doing very well in '70s Manhattan. She's the popular star of a network morning show, poised to rise as the ratings-driven TV industry promotes appealing women to make palatable the increasingly nasty interviews that are turning the news into scandal mongering 'entertainment.' Dena barely remembers Elmwood Springs, Missouri, where she spent four happy years before her mysterious mother abruptly left town and embarked on a decade of wandering before vanishing from 15-year-old Dena's life altogether in 1959. But the folks back in Elmwood Springs remember Baby Girl, daughter of a local boy killed in WWII, and Flagg has some obvious but effective fun with the contrast between the townspeople's homey-to-the-verge-of-caricature existence and Dena's high-powered urban-professional lifestyle. Of course, she's not really happy: she drinks too much and has bleeding ulcers that send her, acting reluctantly on doctor's orders, to a handsome psychiatrist (who falls in love with her at first sight, natch) and then back to Elmwood Springs to recuperate from overwork. Readers may share Dena's initial reaction to the relentlessly folksy locals ('Get me out of here,' she commands her agent), but the New York cast of characters is just as cliched: noble, Walter Cronkite-like anchorman; sleazy network executive; sleazier 'researcher'/'dirt-digger. The author does, however, know how to spin a rattling good yarn. Even those who gag at the way she holds up 'Neighbor Dorothy' and her hokey 1940s radio show as the epitome of small-town goodness will probably find themselves flipping pages rapidly to discover what happened to Dena's mother. The denouement has a clever twist, and if the happy ending is not exactly a surprise, it taps into enough classic American fantasies about getting out of the rat race to be quite moving. Shamelessly corny and extremely enjoyable.



***Inkheart* by Cornelia Caroline Funke**

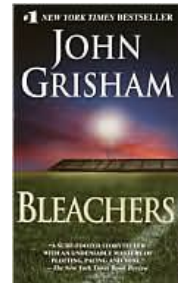


Publishers Weekly: Tackling Funke's (The Thief Lord) meaty, intricately plotted tale of magic and books, Redgrave colors her reading with appropriately varying degrees of suspense, revelation and drama. Twelve-year-old Meggie, a self-proclaimed bookworm, finds it odd that her bookbinder father, Mo, has never read aloud to her. But when a mysterious man named Dustfinger appears in the rainy shadows of the garden one night, Meggie begins to unravel the secret her father has kept all her life: when Mo reads aloud from books, the characters come to life and appear before him. This magical power proves dangerous, as characters from a certain book-Inkheart-are on the loose and after Mo. Many twists and turns that will particularly

intrigue those who love books unfold before Meggie ultimately learns that she and her father have something in common when it comes to magic. Redgrave's voice takes on growling, sometimes whispery qualities as she portrays villains; a brighter inquisitive tone prevails as Meggie makes observations and interacts with the other characters. The end result is a satisfying listen, perfect for long winter evenings by the fire. Ages 11-up. (Oct.) Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.

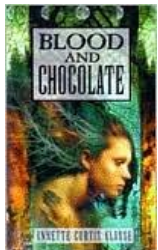
***Bleachers* by John Grisham**

School Library Journal: Adult/High School-A small klatch of players on Messina High School's 1987 football team assembles on the bleachers of Rake Field, home of the winning Spartans, and named after their controversial coach. Eddie Rake was the bane and bounty of three decades of athletes, and now he is dying. His personality comes to life as his team members recollect what it was like to play for him. As they come to roost on the bleachers, they all have a story from the coach's school of hard knocks. This is especially true of all-American quarterback, Neely Crenshaw. Coping with setbacks, longing for an old flame, and trying to make sense of the impending passing of the man who pushed him to the brink but whom he ultimately eulogizes is Neely's lot, and, readers can hope, the beginning of better luck. Teens will jeer and cheer in the appropriate places as they keep turning the pages, and, like the flavorful characters, will gain understanding from the perspective of the stands.-Karen Sokol, Fairfax County Public Schools, VA Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.



***Blood and Chocolate* by Annette Curtis Klause**

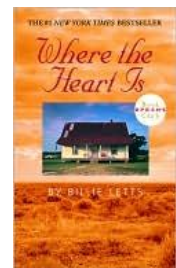
Publishers Weekly: Sixteen-year-old Vivian isn't fiction's most likable heroine, and not only because she's a werewolf. She's preoccupied with admiring her own "full breasts, small waist [and] tawny hair." She's viciously competitive with other girls, gloating, "Look at me.... I've got him. You don't. Too bad."



Her pack, temporary leaderless and dislocated after the death of her father, is living in some low-rent Maryland suburbs. Expected to mate with one of the rowdy, blood-hungry werewolves her own age, Vivian rejects them as well as 24-year-old Gabriel, who flirts with her aggressively as he prepares to assume leadership of the pack. Instead, she nourishes a crush on a "meat boy" (human) from school, a retro-hippie poet-type who professes a yen for the supernatural. With the darkly sexy prose and suspenseful storytelling that gave such luster to *The Silver Kiss*, Klause lures readers into the politics of the pack, their forbidden desire for human flesh and the coming of age of their future queen. Though some readers may be alienated by Vivian's self-absorption, and others shocked by her eventual union with Gabriel, most will find this sometimes bloody tale as addictive as chocolate. Ages 14-up. (Sept.)

***Where the Heart Is* by Billie Letts**

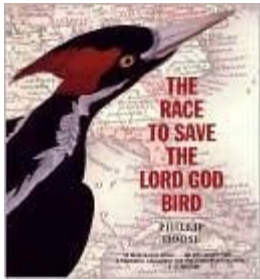
School Library Journal: Novalee Nation, 17 and pregnant, finds herself stranded outside a Wal-Mart in Sequoyah, Oklahoma, with \$7.77 in her pocket and no one to turn to for help. This is an unlikely beginning for a humorous and hopeful novel, but that is just what this is. As she sits outside the store taking stock of her situation, plucky Novalee meets several of the town's more unusual inhabitants: Sister Husband, who presents her with a shop-worn welcome-wagon basket; black photographer Moses Whitecotton, who conveys to her the importance of a name for her unborn child; and Indian Benny Goodluck, who gives her a buckeye tree for good luck. These and other Sequoyah citizens



rally around Novalee when she has her baby on the floor of Wal-Mart, and form the basis for this most enjoyable novel. -- Pamela B. Rearden, Centreville Regional Library, Fairfax County, VA

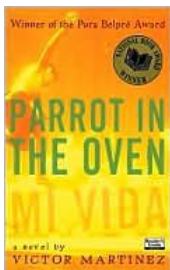
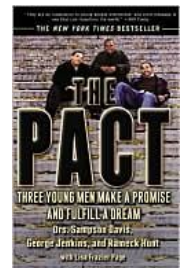
***The Race to Save the Lord God Bird* by Phillip Hoose**

Publishers Weekly: Despite this chronicle's suspenseful title, this particular race seems to be over, and the Ivory-billed woodpecker (whose observers gasped, "Lord God!") appears to have lost. Those who raced to save the Ivory-bill and its Southern U.S. habitat, reports Hoose (*We Were There, Too!*), were neither as swift nor as wealthy as those who raced to shoot it and turn its preferred sweet-gum trees into lumber. Yet Hoose shares a compelling tale of a species' decline and, in the process, gives a history of ornithology, environmentalism and the U.S. With memorable anecdotes from naturalist writers, he tells how researchers such as John James Audubon shot Ivory-bills for study; later, binoculars, cameras and sound equipment changed scientific methods. Hoose also charts pre-Endangered Species Act collecting, when people responded to a rare bird by killing and stuffing it. In 1924, a pair of Ivory-bills were spotted in Florida, but soon vanished; "[collectors] had asked the county sheriff for a permit to hunt them." Further, Hoose explains how wars and the changing economy brought timber companies and the free labor of German POWs to devastate the Ivory-bills' virgin forests. In restrained language, he tells a tragic tale. His liveliest chapters concern James Tanner, the Ivory-bills' champion, who camped in swamps and climbed giant trees to document a few birds in the 1930s. "Can we get smart enough fast enough to save what remains of our biological heritage?" Hoose asks in conclusion. To him, the Ivory-bill represents no less than wilderness itself; readers will sense the urgency that remains, even if the Ivory-bill is gone. Ages 12-up. (Aug.) Copyright 2004 Reed Business Information.



***The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream* by Sampson Davis**

Library Journal: This production is based on the inspiring story of three young, lower-middle-class black friends who live in Newark, NJ, and make a pact to help each other to reach their shared goal of becoming doctors, and they do so despite innumerable daunting experiences. The audiobook presents another theme central to the lives of Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt-giving back. Teens, especially those at risk, who hear this tale of the authors' struggle to make something of their lives in the face of the enormous temptations of the street and to support each other so that all three might succeed will receive a gift: an extraordinary model of self-determination. They will also be moved by the earnest tone of the narration, provided by the men themselves. Highly recommended for all public and secondary school library collections.-Mark Pumphrey, Polk Cty. P.L., Columbus, NC Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information.



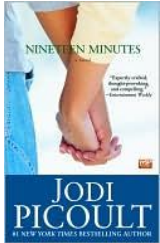
***Parrot in My Oven: Mi Vida* by Victor Martinez**

Children's Literature: "Miracles don't wait for doubters," says Manny Hernandez, this book's main character and a youth worthy of our attention. This account of his life is a miracle of its own-powerful and poignant, stunning in its simplicity. Although it introduces some very heavy issues, including Manny's sister who miscarries her child at home and his father's alcoholism and abusiveness, its approach makes this book

appropriate for even the youngest members of its intended audience. It never slips into the callous tones of a cynical adult; every page resonates with Manny's voice. Given the book's subject matters, it is an excellent resource for classroom discussion on the topics of spousal abuse, gangs, and racism.

English IV

***Nineteen Minutes* by Jody Piccoult**



Publishers Weekly: Bestseller Piccoult (*My Sister's Keeper*) takes on another contemporary hot-button issue in her brilliantly told new thriller, about a high school shooting. Peter Houghton, an alienated teen who has been bullied for years by the popular crowd, brings weapons to his high school in Sterling, N.H., one day and opens fire, killing 10 people. Flashbacks reveal how bullying caused Peter to retreat into a world of violent computer games. Alex Cormier, the judge assigned to Peter's case, tries to maintain her objectivity as she struggles to understand her daughter, Josie, one of the surviving witnesses of the shooting. The author's insights into her characters' deep-seated emotions brings this ripped-from-the-headlines read chillingly alive. (Mar.)

***The Last Juror* by John Grisham**

Publishers Weekly: Longhaired 23-year-old college dropout Willie Traynor purchased a bankrupt Mississippi newspaper, *The Ford County Times*, in the 1970s. With his progressive attitude and his British Spitfire car, he stands out in small town Clanton, where people "don't really trust you unless they trusted your grandfather." As editor and publisher, Willie's eyes are opened to many issues, including corrupt politics, the impact of segregation, the role of religion in a small town and the war in Vietnam. His scoop of a lifetime comes, however, with the brutal rape and murder of a young widow. Danny Padgitt, a member of a secluded family of drug runners and bootleggers notorious for buying the law, receives a life sentence for the crime, but he's released only nine years later. Shortly thereafter, jury members begin to die. Reader Beck has come far since his starring gang leader role in the 1979 film *The Warriors*. Now, he's Grisham's primary reader and for good reason. His southern accent suits the story well, and his flawless first-person telling is utterly convincing. Particularly fun is the voice he lends Clanton's friend Harry Rex; one can almost hear the ever-present unlit cigar moving from side to side as he speaks. Simultaneous release with the Doubleday hardcover (Forecasts, Feb. 2). (Feb.) Copyright 2004 Reed Business Information.



***Turnabout* by Margaret Peterson Haddix**

Children's Literature: Like *Tuck Everlasting* but without the poetry, this futuristic novel imagines the consequences of living a longer than normal lifespan. In 2001, nursing home inhabitants Melly and Anny Beth participate in Project Turnabout. Given a drug to reverse aging, they have proceeded to age backward for nearly 85 years. Now, in 2085, they have discovered that they can't stop the deaging process and so the now teenagers must search for someone to act as a parent when they inevitably hit single digits. Added to this, while they have kept their existence a secret, someone is trying to track them down via computer and the two girls must flee to save their identity from discovery. Told in alternating chapters moving either forward or backward, the story appeals more to



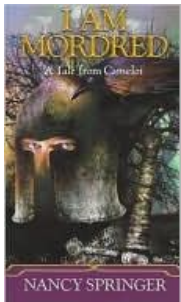
intellect than to emotion as Haddix plays with the notion that these energetic teenagers nonetheless remember much of their previous two centuries so their actions seem more deliberate and their conversation sounds "older". Themes worthy of discussion include, of course, whether one would want to live a longer lifespan, whether the government has a right or responsibility to prohibit genetic manipulation, whether memory is a help or a hindrance, and the nature of friendship and love. As in other futuristic novels, this one imagines universal health care but with a BigBrother price to pay, a near cashless economy, and nature preserves that one needs permits to visit, and readers may speculate on how society could get there from present day. A lively author's note details the science upon which the deaging premise rests. Haddix enjoys a strong reputation among middle schoolers with her book, *Running Out of Time*, and this novel, while not assatisfying a read, will surely attract their attention, as well. 2000, Simon & Schuster, Ages 12 to 16, \$17.00. Reviewer: Susan Hepler

***The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien**

School Library Journal: A series of stories about the Vietnam experience, based on the author's recollections. O'Brien begins by sharing the talismans and treasures his select small band of young soldiers carry into battle. The tales, ranging from a paragraph to 20 or so pages, reveal one truth after another. Sometimes the author tells the same story from different points of view, revealing the lingering, sometimes consuming, effect war leaves on the soul. In the end, readers are left with a mental and emotional sphere of mirrors, each reflecting a speck of truth about the things men carry into and out of war. -- Barbara Hawkins, West Potomac High, Fairfax County, Virginia



***I am Mordred: A Tale from Camelot* by Nancy Springer**

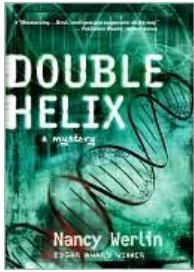


VOYA: In a haunting first-person narrative, Mordred, Arthur's bad seed, his bastard son by his half-sister, looks back on his struggle to free himself from the stigma of his birth and be accepted, even loved, on his own terms. Reminiscent of the redeeming psychological profile of Mary Stewart's *The Wicked Day* (Fawcett, 1984), this book lets readers listen to Mordred's voice and ponder with him the question of whether he is truly an evil, cunning threat to Camelot's peace or a pawn in a powerful game. Condemned to death by Merlin and cast adrift by his noble father, then rescued like Moses from the bullrushes, raised ignorant of his true heritage until the time is right for Arthur to be confronted by his fate, Mordred must come of age by coming to

terms with the love/hate he feels for Arthur, great king and betrayer of his own blood. Can the power of fate be averted? Can one escape doing evil deeds by cultivating a brave and loyal heart? Will the power of love overcome the destiny of a hated name and prophecy? Filled with the stark violence of blood oaths and rivalries, mystical enchantments, and legendary characters, Mordred's story is the timeless tale of the struggle of good and evil and the changing faces of both. Springer's lyrical descriptions and the sword and sorcery will appeal to general fantasy readers as well as diehard Camelot fans. There is some focus on the role of women, both in the more general society of the period and as forces for strength or folly in Mordred's development. Seen in proof, Mordred's youth in the cover art should appeal to young adults also engaged in the journey to discover their place in family and society, struggling with the ties of heritage and their own dreams of possibility. VOYA Codes: 4Q 3P M J (Better than most, marred only by occasional lapses, Will appeal with pushing, Middle School-defined as grades 6 to 8 and Junior High-defined as grades 7 to 9).

***Double Helix* by Nancy Werlin**

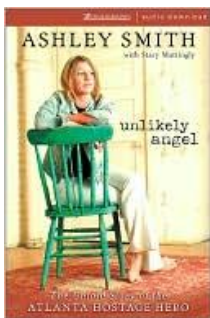
Paula Rohrlick – KLIATT: Eli, just graduating from high school, has been offered a job as a lab assistant at Wyatt Transgenics. It sounds like a great position, but his father doesn't want him to take it and won't explain why. Eli knows that something went on between his parents and Dr. Wyatt in the past, but his father won't talk about it and his mother is too ill with Huntington's disease to communicate at all. Eli decides to take the job in spite of his father, but he discovers that there is more to the place than he had first suspected: a whole secret underground level, in fact. Dr. Wyatt takes a special interest in Eli, and engages him in stimulating conversations about genetics and the existence of free will. He introduces Eli to a beautiful girl named Kayla—and then Eli discovers that Kayla is the spitting image of his mother as a teenager. Together, Eli and Kayla uncover the daring and frightening genetic engineering experiments in which Dr.



Wyatt has been engaged, and learn more about their own unusual heritage. This story about bioethics will appeal to the intellectually curious reader. Werlin, author of the acclaimed YA mysteries *The Killer's Cousin*, *Black Mirror*, and other novels, keeps the suspense high, and she draws convincing portraits of a bright young man, his anguished father, the clever, amoral, Dr. Moreau-like Dr. Wyatt, and the other characters. Lots of food for thought here. KLIATT Codes: SA—Recommended for senior high school students, advanced students, and adults. 2004, Penguin Putnam, Dial, 256p., Ages 15 to adult.

***Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging* by Louise Rennison**

VOYA: Georgia Nicholson, the intrepid heroine of this hysterically funny coming-of-age novel, faces the usual traumas of teendom: pimple outbreaks, chest development (or lack thereof), and embarrassing parents. How she deals with each of these and myriad other problems, though, is what sets this novel apart from the typical and predictable. In episodic entries into her personal journal, readers learn how Georgia manages to attend a school she deems a "stalag," how she learns the techniques of snogging ("kissing" to the uninitiated), and ultimately how she becomes a more assured teen. Georgia is relentless in her journal entries, which come across as comic riffs. She questions all authority, wanting to know WHY and HOW and WHEN. It is Georgia's distinct voice that will capture readers and leave them wanting a sequel so they can find out how Georgia's budding relationship with Robbie pans out. The clever title and catchy cover surely will attract loads of readers. The only element that might keep this book from flying off the shelf is the preponderance of British slang in Georgia's journal entries and in the conversations among the main characters. Although the author includes a glossary at the end of the novel, some teens may not find using it repeatedly "double cool with knobs," but rather "poxy." PLB VOYA CODES: 5Q 4P J S (Hard to imagine it being any better written; Broad general YA appeal; Junior High, defined as grades 7 to 9; Senior High, defined as grades 10 to 12). 2000, HarperCollins, Ages 13 to 18, 256p., \$15.95. PLB \$15.89. Reviewer: Teri Lesesne



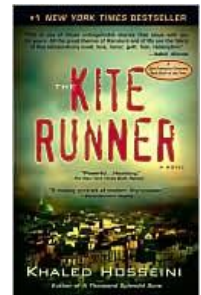
***Unlikely Angel* by Ashley Smith**

Publishers Weekly: This is less the story of a woman being held hostage in her apartment than an inspirational tract that could serve as a companion volume to *The Purpose-Driven Life* and become required reading in rehab clinics. Smith had been weaning herself off of speed, pot and Xanax when, after having been up the previous night snorting "ice" (methamphetamines, or "those drugs," as she frequently says) and setting up her new apartment, Brian Nichols held her hostage

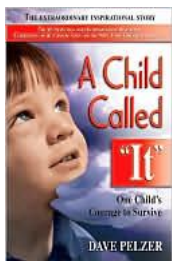
after killing several people while escaping from an Atlanta courthouse. Over the next seven hours, Smith convinced herself that God sent Nichols to straighten her out, and, between her cutting lines of speed for him to snort off her bathroom counter, showing him pictures of her daughter and family, reading him passages of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, helping him ditch a truck he'd stolen, telling him about her murdered husband and cooking Nichols a pancake breakfast, she persuaded him to turn himself in. The pedestrian writing and Smith's moment-by-moment analysis of what's happening make for a frustrating read, but those looking for a simple story about overcoming addiction and persevering in the face of adversity will find this worthwhile. (Sept. 27) Copyright 2005 Reed Business Information.

***Kite Runner* by Khaled Housseini**

School Library Journal: Adult/High School-This beautifully written first novel presents a glimpse of life in Afghanistan before the Russian invasion and introduces richly drawn, memorable characters. Quiet, intellectual Amir craves the attention of his father, a wealthy Kabul businessman. Kind and self-confident Hassan is the son of Amir's father's servant. The motherless boys play together daily, and when Amir wins the annual kite contest, Hassan offers to track down the opponent's runaway kite as a prize. When he finds it, the neighborhood bullies trap and rape him, as Amir stands by too terrified to help. Their lives and their friendship are forever changed, and the memory of his cowardice haunts Amir as he grows into manhood. Hassan and his father return to the village of their ancestors, and later Amir and his father flee to Los Angeles to avoid political persecution. Amir attends college, marries, and fulfills his dream of becoming a writer. When Amir receives word of his former friend's death under the Taliban, he returns to Kabul to learn the fate of Hassan's son. This gripping story of personal redemption will capture readers' interest.-Penny Stevens, Andover College, Portland, ME Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.



***A Child Called It* by Dave Pelzer**



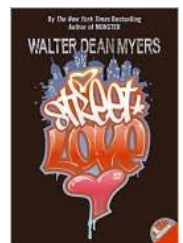
School Library Journal: This autobiographical account charts the abuse of a young boy as his alcoholic mother first isolates him from the rest of the family; then torments him; and finally nearly kills him through starvation, poisoning, and one dramatic stabbing. Pelzer's portrayal of domestic tyranny and eventual escape is unforgettable, but falls short of providing understanding of extreme abuse or how he made his journey from 'Victim to Victor.' It takes some work to get past the poor writing and the self-aggrandizing back matter, but the book tries fervently to provide a much-needed perspective. One of the greater obstacles to healing for males is admitting that they

have been victims, especially if their perpetrator is a woman.

This author has overcome that obstacle and succeeded in life by such masculine norms as joining the Air Force and receiving awards for his volunteerism. However, while personal accounts of child maltreatment provide crucial information about the realities of childhood, youngsters need insight and hope in order to digest the raw material of abuse. -- Carolyn Polese, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA

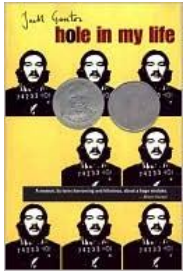
***Street Love* by Walter Dean Myers**

Publishers Weekly: Myers's (Monster) compellingly readable novel in verse unfolds through an array of characters, all linked by Damien Battle and Junice Ambers who both live in Harlem but come from very different worlds. Damien has been accepted to Brown University;



Junice's mother has been sentenced to 25 years for possession and drug dealing. A pair of early rap poems set up a rivalry between Damien and Sledge (whose "crew... wore their colors"), and also Damien's fascination with a "beauty" who "walks darkly, as if her mind weighs down/ Her steps," later revealed to be Junice. Myers crafts some memorable moments here, as when Junice describes her mother ("She gave freely/ To those in need, or to those who, like/ Her, were broken, and needed a fix") or when Miss Ruby, Junice's grandmother, expresses grief for her convicted daughter in a blues poem ("Yeah, it's hard, baby/ It's hard right down to the bone/ I said Oh, it's hard baby/ It's hard right down to the very bone/ It's hard when you're a woman/ And you find yourself all alone") and the banter between Damien and a buddy. Yet some readers may wish for a deeper understanding of what draws Damien to Junice, and why he risks his own family's upheaval and his future at Brown for this new romance. Though both Damien and Junice come off as sympathetic characters, their attraction to each other remains a mystery. Ages 12-up. (Nov.) Copyright 2006 Reed Business Information.

***Hole in My Life* by Jack Gantos**



VOYA: Gantos, successful author of books for children and young adults, ventures outside his accustomed venue with this autobiographical work. At the age of nineteen, Gantos helped to smuggle one ton of hashish from St. Croix to New York City, and as a result of being caught, served two years of imprisonment in a federal penitentiary in Ashland, Kentucky. Throughout the first few chapters, the saga seems an extension of the Jack Henry stories. The tone soon changes, however, from the comical eccentricity of Gantos's later teenage years to the tension and paranoia of drug smuggling, and finally the fear and despair of prison life. The reader suffers through each agonizing and vulnerable moment until Jack is released and starts a new life, fulfilling his dream of becoming a writer. Children of the sixties, whose youthful indiscretions turned, or nearly turned, into more disasters, will read this book cover-to-cover without stopping. Even young readers without relevant experience will find their hearts racing and their blood pressure rising as the frightening events of his story unfold. Gantos's honesty and directness in describing the whole experience make reading this book a gut-wrenching experience. Gritty details make it a better fit for older high school students and adults, and teachers who have used Gantos's previous books will find it especially intriguing. (Hard to imagine it being any better written; Broad general YA appeal). James Blasingame