Clip and File Reviews of New Fiction Hardbacks

Gary M. Salvner and Virginia R. Monseau, editors

Block, Francesca Lia

*Baby Be-Bop*
Reviewed by Kay Parks Bushman
Language Arts Department Chair
Ottawa High School
Ottawa, Kansas

Woodson, Jacqueline

*From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun*
Reviewed by Darien Fisher-Duke
Librarian
Brookland Middle School
Richmond, Virginia

Rodowsky, Colby

*Remembering Mog*
Reviewed by Ruth K.J. Cline
Professor Emerita
University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado

Moore, Martha

*Under the Mermaid Angel*
Reviewed by Judy Beckman
Professor of Education
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa

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**Baby Be-Bop** by Francesca Lia Block

Homosexuality/identity
ISBN: 0-06-024879-3

Dirk McDonald is in conflict with his own identity. He doesn't want to be gay, but he knows that he is. The last person that he wants to hurt is his Grandma Fifi, who has lovingly provided a wonderful home for him in Hollywood. Then, one night, through a magic lamp, ghosts of Dirk's ancestors, including the mother and father he never knew, share tales of his past, present, and future through magical images, setting him free to know that true love in any form is right.

Francesca Lia Block paints another modern-day tale sharing the adventures of friends living in Shangri-L.A. Mature teens who have already enjoyed the tales that began with *Weetzie Bat* should look forward to this continuation.

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**The ALAN Review**
Spring 1996

Kay Parks Bushman
Ottawa High School
"What time is it?" I asked Mama. "Your growing time," she replied. Melanin Sun's family consists of him and Mama alone. Mel finds that "the world turns upside-down when you are thirteen-going-on-fourteen." His notebooks detail anger, confusion, and denial as Mama introduces him to an important person in her life. Mama loves a woman, a white woman from another world, or so it seems to Mel.

Issues of sexual identity and race are presented in a believable and honest manner. The diary entries are interspersed with dream meditations, and the dialogue maintains an engaging pace. Woodson's prose is lyrical; and, with the exception of Mama's friend Kristin, her characters are alive. Teens will respond to Mel's search for himself. This universal search often involves the discovery that you can understand, or at least accept, others as you come to know yourself.

Remembering Mog by Colby Rodowsky

It is two years since Mog was murdered, an unsolved crime in Baltimore, and sister Annie is relating her efforts to cope with the aftereffects. The family is stunned by what happened and each crawls into his or her own shell. Although Annie has friends who try to help her, it is not until she goes to a therapist that she is able to make plans for her future. Her younger brother has Coach Mac at school to whom he can talk; the father and an older cousin who is part of the household are able to work through their grief; but the mother is still in denial about Mog's death.

The author is inside Annie's head to show readers what she is thinking. There is little external action, even though Annie is a summer lifeguard and has a brief romance, but readers can empathize with Annie and see the value of an outsider to talk to.

Under the Mermaid Angel by Martha Moore
Delacorte, 1995. 168 pp. $14.95

Thirteen-year-old Jesse feels rotten about her life. Her dirt-colored hair is thin as a duck's behind. The family is squashed into a rundown trailer where privacy is impossible. Her refusal to pray for her sick brother probably caused his death.

Her life changes suddenly when thirty-year-old Roxanne moves into the trailer park. Jesse's parents object to Roxanne's Liberty Bell chest tattoo, her bizarre clothing, and her age; but Jesse looks more deeply. Roxanne teaches Jesse to see beyond their poverty and to place emphasis on "heart words" and actions. Through Roxanne's own grief-driven search for the son she gave away at birth, Jesse learns that letting go of hurts doesn't mean letting go of love.

Martha Moore's fast-paced novel draws down-home, off-the-shoulder folks with whom middle-school readers will laugh and cry.

Korman, Gordon
Something Fishy at McDonald Hall
Reviewed by Wendy H. Bell
English Teacher
Enka High School
Asheville, North Carolina

Plummer, Louise
The Unlikely Romance of Kate Bjorkman
Reviewed by Edna Earl Edwards
**Cooney, Caroline**  
*Flash Fire*  
Reviewed by Jim Brewbaker  
Chair, Curriculum and Instruction  
Columbus College  
Columbus, Georgia

**Meyer, Carolyn**  
*Drummers of Jericho*  
Reviewed by Michaeline Chance-Reay  
Instructor of Education  
Kansas State University  
Manhattan, Kansas

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**Something Fishy at McDonald Hall** by Gordon Korman  
Scholastic, 1995. 198 pp. $14.95  

Fans of Bruno and Boots will welcome the latest in Gordon Korman's series, but for many first-time readers, this is definitely a "No-Brainer." The redoubtable duo faces competition from Boots' younger brother, Edward, who threatens to top every prank and escapade they dream up with better ones of his own. To make matters worse, he also has captured the hearts along with the undivided attention of the girls next door at Miss Scrimmage's Finishing School. Although Korman's fast pace keeps the action moving, the episodes are too often silly and implausible. Easy to read, the book should appeal to early middle graders.

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**The Unlikely Romance of Kate Bjorkman** by Louise Plummer  
Delacorte, 1995. 183 pp. $15.95  

Told in first person by seventeen-year-old Kate Bjorkman, this romance is different because of Plummer's tongue-in-cheek attitude. Throughout the novel, the narrator refers to the characteristics of a romance novel, comments on phrasing in the *Romance Writer's Phrase Book*, and includes segments of revision notes to add possibilities and information.

Protagonist Kate is six feet tall, wears thick glasses, and has an extensive knowledge of linguistics, gained from her professor father. Her story is set in Minnesota at Christmas time when these unexpected guests from California appear for the holidays: her brother, who is in college; his wife; his friend and Kate's hero, Richard, whom she has not seen in four years; and Richard and Bjorn's attractive friend, Fleur St. Germaine.

The story moves rapidly despite the conscious commentaries on it as a romance novel. The reader is aware of both the story and the explanation of a romance including realism, an interesting technique.

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**Flash Fire** by Caroline Cooney  
Scholastic, 1995. 198 pp. $14.95  

*Flash Fire* chronicles two hours of life and death in Pinch Canyon, an affluent cut that everyone (it's hard to tell why) assumes is safely out of the path of a devastating Southern California fire. Flawed in other respects, the narrative -- jumping back and forth as it follows nearly a dozen teenagers, parents, servants, and even tourists -- skilfully captures the unpredictable and deadly power of the fire. Cooney is at her best in descriptive passages detailing its rapid and relentless movement.

She is far less skillful in creating believable characters. Everyone in *Flash Fire* is a caricature: Mark, who gives his life to save his brother's ashes from the blaze; Matt, who thinks the fire is such neato fun; airhead Danna who wouldn't be...
Save his brother’s ashes from the blaze; Matt, who thinks the fire is such neato fun; airhead Danna who wouldn’t be plausible as an extra in *Clueless*; adults who are worse than the kids. This cynical reviewer was tempted to root for the fire. Cooney’s youthful fans, though, will find *Flash Fire* to be a page-turner.

**Drummers of Jericho** by Carolyn Meyer  
Harcourt Brace, 1995. 308 pp. $11.00  
Religious Freedom/Identity  

When Pazit Trujillo moves to the little hamlet of Jericho, after spending a year in Israel, the town undergoes a test of religious freedom. She joins the prize-winning band to play the flute and make new friends but, in an attempt to be true to her beliefs, turns into the focal point of a crisis. Billy Harper, fellow band member and admirer, emerges as the novel’s idealistic, clear-thinking hero when he becomes Pazit’s champion (much to the consternation of his family and friends). In the end, both lives are changed and linked forever by what transpires. Enough issues remain unresolved to warrant a sequel, by the author or student readers, exploring life after high school for these two young people from diverse backgrounds who are so drawn to one another.

Carolyn Meyer illustrates how much children and adults take for granted when they live in a fairly homogeneous community and how defensive they can become when rhetoric collides with reality. Her well-drawn characters and credible dialogue make this story more than a morality play for teens who routinely experience both the mundane and the dramatic in their own school setting.

**Lynch, Chris**  
*Slot Machine*  
Reviewed by Alan M. McLeod  
Professor of English Education  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Richmond, Virginia

**Bennett, James**  
*The Squared Circle*  
Reviewed by James E. Davis  
Professor of English  
Ohio University  
Athens, Ohio

**Cheripko, Jan**  
*Imitate the Tiger*  
Reviewed by Ted Hipple  
Professor of Education  
University of Tennessee  
Knoxville, Tennessee

**Klass, David**  
*Danger Zone*  
Reviewed by John H. Bushman  
Professor of English Education  
University of Kansas  
Ottawa, Kansas
What's three weeks of summer camp for incoming high-school freshmen like with your two best buddies? Elvin Bishop soon learns the
Brothers are trying to determine which athletic team (slot) each camper will best fit. He is moved from football to baseball, wrestling
(which he likes) to golf, while buddies Mikie and Frankie may have found their respective slots in basketball and golf. Peer pressure,
following the rules, discovering oneself, and "things are not always what they seem" are key elements of the story.
The book should appeal to younger adolescents interested in sports, camp, and high school. In some ways this reader
was reminded of the quest in Lipsyte's *One Fat Summer*. Gaining self-respect is a major theme and handled well by a
gifted author.

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<th>The ALAN Review</th>
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<td>Spring 1996</td>
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<th>The Squared Circle by James Bennett</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scholastic, 1995. 247 pp. $14.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basketball/Family Problems</td>
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When college freshman Sonny Youngblood, who lives and breathes basketball, gets caught up in a college recruitment scandal, he is
forced into the nightmare of an identity crisis. Painful memories, which could destroy the player he is, emerge when he reunites with a
feminist cousin. Bennett uses real names and places (Southern Illinois University) but goes to great length to emphasize that the work
is fiction. He does, however, capture the corruption of college athletics and the fraternity scene so well that the book sometimes reads
like nonfiction. Strong plotting (with a shocker ending), clearly drawn characters, realistic setting, and finely-honed language will be
appealing to readers. Although some readers may be offended by sexual content and the unusual cousin relationship, that should not
keep them from reading this novel, which treats coming to terms with self in all of its complexity.

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<th>The ALAN Review</th>
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<tr>
<th>Imitate the Tiger by Jan Cheripko</th>
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<td>Boyds Mills Press, 1996. 221 pp. $14.95</td>
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<td>Football/Alcoholism</td>
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High school senior Chris Serbo plays football -- a lot -- and drinks -- a lot. Through Cheripko's brilliant use of flashback techniques
from the detox clinic to which he has finally been sent, readers learn about Chris's life of despair, self-delusion, and, were it not for a
savs teacher, probable self-destruction. Far from being the enviable hero we find in most athletic novels, Chris whines, blames others
for his own failings, loses his girl friend, flunks his schoolwork, almost forfeits his football position, even alienates himself from his
Aunt Catherine, who, after the death of his mother and the actual and alcoholic withdrawal of his father, tries her best to rear Chris but
without much success. Laudable Chris may not be, but he certainly is real.

This novel deals intelligently with significant issues in adolescent life. And it does so with considerable excitement
and grace, the kind we find in the novels of Chris Crutcher. I highly recommend it.

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<th>Danger Zone by David Klass</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scholastic, 1996. 233 pp. $16.95</td>
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<td>Sports/Racism/Politics</td>
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Klass has created a most suspenseful novel that brings together elements of sports, racism, and international politics. Jimmy Doyle, an
accomplished basketball player from a very small town, finds himself faced with hate and racist views as he accepts the honor to play
for an American Dream Team in international competition in Italy. In addition to his own self doubt -- can he really compete at this
level? -- Jimmy meets Augustus LeMay, a teammate who sees Jimmy as a white boy instead of a basketball player. The growth of
Jimmy, as he interacts with Augustus, faces imminent danger from people with nationalist views, and understands his own abilities and
how they can contribute to the team, makes for a strong, powerful work of literature. A wonderful read for sports enthusiasts as well as
for those who like suspense.

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Chicago Blues
Reviewed by Hazel Davis
Athens, Ohio

The Tinker's Daughter
Reviewed by Hannah Pickworth
Lower School Librarian
Friends School of Baltimore
Baltimore, Maryland

Ferris, Jean
All That Glitters
Reviewed by Connie S. Zitlow
Associate Professor of Education
Ohio Wesleyan University
Delaware, Ohio

Mahy, Margaret
The Other Side of Silence
Reviewed by Margaret J. Ford
Librarian/Media Specialist
Memorial High School
Campbell, Ohio

Chicago Blues by Julie Reece Deaver
ISBN: 0-06-024675-8

Seventeen-year-old Lissa Hastings, at her alcoholic mother's request, takes her eleven-year-old sister, Marnie, to live with her in Chicago where Lissa attends art school. In her spare time Lissa makes miniature rooms and occasionally sells them to supplement her meager income from her singer father and his new wife. Lissa manages to solve all the problems of responsibility for her sister until her father tries to take Marnie on the road as a part of his musical act. Next she is faced with her newly-cured mother who comes to take Marnie away. Lissa's unbelievable maturity cannot be explained away by her childhood role in the family. Had Deaver cast Lissa as 19 or 20, the novel would be far more believable. However, young readers will probably enjoy this one.

The ALAN Review
Spring 1996

The Tinker's Daughter by Sheila Hayes
ISBN: 0-525-67497-7

Although accepted in her hometown of Old MacIntosh, Holly Gerard is still embarrassed that she knows nothing of her father and that her hippie mother, Paisley, runs a shop of sixties "collectibles." Holly's desire for a "normal" life becomes more important when two new girls, Maddie and Camille, move into town and both want to be Holly's friends. Maddie is an actress that Holly wants to impress, but Camille's father is in jail and Holly wants to avoid her. As the story unfolds, the reader joins Holly as she becomes more mature about the nature of family, friends, trust, and place. This fast-paced novel will appeal to middle-school girls looking for an entertaining story. The plot is easy to get into and moves quickly. Readers can relate to the story's events, which provide an opportunity for self-reflection and insight at the conclusion without being preachy. The conflict and its resolution are realistic, and the main characters are likeable without being perfect. (Nostalgic adults from the sixties will enjoy this one, too.)

The ALAN Review
Spring 1996

All That Glitters by Jean Ferris
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996. 184 pp. $16.00
ISBN: 0-374-30204-9

Father-Son Relationships
How can Brian stand to leave Chicago and spend six weeks in the Florida Keys with his father, Leo? The usual summer visit of two weeks is hard enough, but this year Brian's mother is on her honeymoon with "the Guy." Brian yearns for a father, not like sloppy, distant Leo, but more like Leo's neighbor Nathan, who is a loving, concerned father to his sullen, difficult step-daughter, Tia. Nathan teaches Brian to scuba dive; and, with Leo and Tia, they join an underwater archaeologist in his search for the Nueva Cádiz, a vessel that sank in 1648. Brian soon becomes the expert photographer, even taking underwater pictures of illegal treasure thieves. He's not sure, however, if he can become a friend to the beautiful, but angry, dark Tia. After riding out a hurricane with Leo and learning the secret of Leo's childhood, Brian comes to terms with his father in the pleasant, but not unexpected, ending. Readers of Richard Peck's Father Figure will see similarities in the two books. With its combination of adventure and romance, All That Glitters will interest individual young adult readers. It does not, however, have the literary merit to be recommended for whole-class reading.

The Other Side of Silence by Margaret Mahy
Family Problems/Self-Realization

Hero Rapper is an elective mute, one who chooses not to speak, in a non-traditional, intellectually gifted family. She escapes into her silent world -- away from mother, Annie, a university professor who wrote the cult book on raising children, Average-Wonderful, and father, Mike, a house husband. Add to the familial mix Ginevra, mathematical whiz and demolition derby driver; Athol, metaphysical genius and closet soap opera writer; and Sapphira, a student of weird words -- the antithesis of "average-anything." As Hero searches for her place in this family and explores the difference between what is real, outer reality, and what is true, inner knowledge, she falls into the existence of Miss Credence, the reclusive post mistress, who hides a terrible secret in her mysterious Victorian mansion.

Margaret Mahy weaves a wonderfully complex story of family difficulties and Gothic suspense, a sure winner with middle-school/junior-high readers.
Ultimate Sports  
edited by Donald Gallo  
Delacorte, 1995. 334 pp. $15.95  

Finding good sport stories for adolescents is not easy, so this collection is a valuable addition to any library. Don Gallo has put together sixteen stories by such writers as Robert Lipsyte, Norma Fox Mazer, Harry Mazer, and others that offer young readers a smorgasbord of sports: wrestling, basketball, cross country, swimming, boxing, diving, sailing, fishing, and one yet to be played. All of the stories were written specifically for this collection. Six have females as central characters. Each story runs about twenty pages and emphasizes less the actual sport and more the emotions and motivations of the characters engaged in meeting both the internal and external challenges presented by athletics. The collection should appeal to both male and female readers, junior high and beyond.

Lost in Cyberspace by Richard Peck  
ISBN: 0-8037-1931-0

Richard Peck has again written a compelling story, peopled with interesting characters. Josh Lewis, a sixth grader at Huckley School for Boys, has an obnoxious older sister, a mother who worries too much (his parents are conveniently separated), and a computer nerd buddy, Aaron, who has almost perfected traveling through time in cyberspace. As Josh and Aaron travel through time and space, they untangle a confused legacy involving their history teacher and a servant from the 1920s. Despite the gratuitous appearance of Josh’s father and the stereotyped adults, Peck has created young characters who are real and whose very flaws make them more interesting. Peck uses the talk and jargon of surfing the Internet well, giving us insights into how young adults understand cyberspace more realistically than do adults. When your hard drive crashes and your buddy is traveling in cyberspace, a whole new kind of adventure is created, one that young people (perhaps 9 to 13) will enjoy.

The Doom Zone by Paul Zindel  
ISBN: 0-06-024726-6

Capitalizing on the Stine/Pike horror phenomenon, Zindel serves up his own recipe of gore for young teen readers and garnishes it with liberal doses of wish fulfillment.

Aunt Sarah invites her teen nephew Jackson to join her in England at Stonehenge. The army has hired Aunt Sarah to help them solve the mystery of an ever-increasing number of mutilations around the ancient rocks. In no time Jackson has been swept away in a helicopter, seen his first killing, and had the army share with him top secrets.

The killer is an underground hominid who comes out of the tunnels around Stonehenge to mutilate animals and people. When Aunt Sarah is bitten by the creature and it captures her brain, Jackson must face the monster and, with the help of a new-found girlfriend, solve the mystery of how to kill this thing.

In young-Indiana-Jones fashion, Jackson saves his girlfriend, rescues his aunt’s brain, solves the riddle, and kills the monster while the army looks on in wonder. The Doom Zone is fast paced and features a grotesque monster with a propensity for discharging great quantities of mucous fluids from its nostrils. Place this on the book shelf labeled "Fast Food Reading."

The China Garden by Liz Berry  
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995. 284 pp. $18.00  
ISBN: 0-374-31248-6

Clare’s plans to spend a busy summer in London before beginning her studies at the University are abruptly halted when the mother moves to Ravensmere, an English country estate, to care for the aging owner. Once there, Clare feels almost too comfortable, as if she...
moves to Ravensmere, an English country estate, to care for the aging owner. Once there, Clare feels almost too comfortable, as if she has been there before. The people all seem to know her and have been expecting her, especially the dark young man named Mark. In Ravensmere's China Garden, Clare discovers her psychic powers and unlocks the mystery of her family history and her shared destiny with Mark.

The China Garden is an intriguing book of British customs and legends woven into a modern tale of love and duty. Older readers will identify with the conflicts between a teen and her single mother, and the struggle to remain chaste in a loving relationship.

Carter, Jimmy
Talking Peace
Reviewed by Jeffrey Kaplan
Visiting Assistant Professor
University of Central Florida
Daytona, Florida

Giblin, James Cross
When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, and AIDS
Reviewed by Gerry McBroom
Assistant Dean, Arts & Sciences
TVI Community College
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Fry, Virginia Lynn
Part of Me Died, Too
Reviewed by Joan F. Kaywell
Associate Professor of English Education
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida

Brooks, Polly Schoyer
Cleopatra: Goddess of Egypt
Reviewed by Joyce A. Litton
Library Associate
Ohio University Library
Athens, Ohio

When I first received Jimmy Carter's book Talking Peace, a tingle went up and down my spine. I have long admired America's "Prince of Peace" and have watched with awe his rise from school board member to President. His tale is the stuff that dreams are made of, but I was unsure if his life and times would make compelling reading to today's teenagers. If you hadn't lived "as an adult" through the signing of the Camp David Peace Accords, why would you care?

But care you do. In plain spoken passages, Carter writes of how he and his associates executed some of America's most daring peace missions, including his recent work in Hati, Korea, Bosnia, and Sudan. Written in a "first-person-I-am-going-to-assume-you-know-nothing" voice, President Carter's book speaks to young adults about what it is like to be President and wage a "war of peace" in a turbulent universe. His behind-the-scenes look and clearly defined vision for a better tomorrow make for absorbing reading and a perfect supplement for a unit on the topic of "war and peace." A must read for political junkies and young people.

Talking Peace by Jimmy Carter
Dutton, 1995. 198 pp. $18.99
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<td>Tracing the “Black Death” from 430 B.C., small pox from 1157 B.C., and AIDS from 1974, Giblin uses extensive research to examine how these pandemic diseases affected civilization. He graphically describes how “every major plague ... seems to have brought out the best as well as the worst in people.” The best is shown in those who have cared for the afflicted despite risks to themselves and those who have brought cures and education to others (like Dr. Edward Jenner and Magic Johnson). The worst is shown in the persecution of disease victims, such as the Christian treatment of Jews who contracted the Black Death, gay bashing, and the ostracizing of Ryan White. As a complement to the teaching of history, medicine, sociology, religion, and even art, this book with woodcuts by David Frampton will be useful for high-school readers who will appreciate an honest look at how humanity reacts to deadly diseases.</td>
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| Part of Me Died, Too by Virginia Lynn Fry                             | Virginia Lynn Fry                                                                      | Dutton               | 218 pp. $16.99 | 0-525-45068-8           | Spring 1996| Gerry McBroom                 | TVI Community College            |
| Facing death is difficult for us all, but it is especially tough for children and teens who don't know how to discuss their feelings or really have the words to say. Virginia Lynn Fry, an artist and bereavement counselor, “breaks the silence” of twenty-two children as they grieve over the death of their loved ones. Eleven stories are included, ranging from the death of a pet through a murder/suicide of parents. In each case, a hospice counselor is able to get these young people to use writing, games of safe aggression, farewell projects, rituals at the time of death, and other creative activities to bring their feelings out into the open. Thirteen-year-old Jesse in her poem "A Choice of Weapons" captures the essence of this powerful book: "Sticks and stones are hard on bones, Aimed with angry art. Words can sting like anything, But silence breaks the heart." A brief epilogue provides a glimpse into how these young people's lives have developed since their tragedies. |

| Cleopatra: Goddess of Egypt, Enemy of Rome by Polly Schoyer Brooks    | Polly Schoyer Brooks                                                                   | HarperCollins         | 151 pp. $15.95 | 0-06-023607-8           | Spring 1996| Joan F. Kaywell               | University of South Florida       |
| Aimed at a middle-school audience, this biography of Cleopatra is well-written, balanced, and entertaining. Brooks does an excellent job of distinguishing between fact and myth. Cleopatra became queen of Egypt at eighteen. Little is known of her earlier years, other than that she received an unusually extensive education. Brooks handles Cleopatra's affairs with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony accurately, but tastefully. Not glossing over her subject's flaws, the author indicates that Cleopatra may have been a woman ahead of her time because of her political acumen, her leadership, and her bravery. The book contains extensive and informative textual endnotes. Unfortunately, since they are at the back of the volume, readers may overlook or ignore them. The book concludes with an excellent bibliography and a fine index. Brooks has made an ancient, controversial queen come alive for young adult readers. |

| Paulsen, Gary                                                        | The Rifle                                                                              | Reviewed by Chris Crowe | |
| Burks, Brian                                                        | Runs with Horses                                                                      | Reviewed by Mike Angelotti | |
The Rifle by Gary Paulsen
Harcourt Brace, 1995. 105 pp. $16.00

“It is necessary to know this rifle,” begins Paulsen. He then describes the creation in 1768 and early history of a one-of-a-kind muzzle-load rifle. After brief use in the Revolutionary War, the gun is stored in a farmhouse attic where it remains, forgotten for more than 200 years. It is found in 1993 and eventually ends up hanging over the fireplace of a house in a small Missouri town. The next section of the book opens with, “It is necessary to know this boy,” the boy who is killed when the rifle discharges accidentally.

This book is unusual in that an object -- the rifle -- not a character, is the focus of the text. Paulsen describes in minute detail the construction and workings of the rifle and relates its history in a detached voice laced with foreboding and tension. The message of Paulsen's history of the rifle: guns kill people.

The ALAN Review
Spring 1996

Runs with Horses by Brian Burks
Harcourt Brace, 1995. 118 pp. $11.00

Brian Burks attempts to portray the thoughts and feelings of Runs With Horses, a sixteen-year-old Chiracahua Apache brave preparing to become a warrior in Geronimo's last band of free Apaches. Runs With Horses distinguishes himself in the rigorous tests of mind and body only to be denied the final test in battle by Geronimo's surrender to General Miles in 1886. Brian Burks writes a well-researched, credible story, holding back neither the brutality of the Apache in battle nor the dishonor of the white man in treaty. More than that, Runs With Horses is a well-written piece of fiction that will likely capture the imagination and educate the sensitivity of readers young and old. The only criterion is that they are capable of responding to the uncomplicated language and structure of this worthwhile human study. This slim volume also offers a magnetic oral read. I loved it no less than the fourth and seven graders and college students with whom I shared it.

The ALAN Review
Spring 1996

An American Hero: The Story of Charles A. Lindbergh by Barry Denenberg
Scholastic, 1996. 251 pp. $16.95

Highlighting the major events of Lindbergh’s life, An American Hero: The Story of Charles A. Lindbergh reveals his character in relation to the events. Part One, "Ascent," capsulates his rural Minnesota boyhood and early learning-to-fly experiences, leading to the 1927 trans-Atlantic flight that brought him international fame and hero status in the United States. The flight and preparations for it are detailed. Part II, "Descent," explores the crime -- the kidnapping of the Lindberghs' infant son -- and "trial of the century." Attention is also given to Lindbergh's endorsement of Nazi Germany in the pre-World War II years and his leadership in isolationist movements which gradually brought about the plummeting of his popularity and fall from heroic grace. Dynamically meaningful in this well-paced...
gradually brought about the plummeting of his popularity and fall from heroic grace. Dynamically meaningful in this well-paced biography are excerpts from Lindbergh's diaries, particularly his flight log, as well as those of his wife: these express character and state of mind. The detail and social orientation suggest a secondary school audience; however, enough history is included to provide access for advanced middle-school readers.

The ALAN Review
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Nicholas J. Karolides
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Casimir Pulaski: Soldier on Horseback by David R. Collins
Pelican, 1996. 99 pp. $13.95

Biography/War
ISBN: 0-56554-082-4

David R. Collins' quick-paced biography tells the intriguing story of Casimir Pulaski, a little-known Revolutionary War hero from Poland who became General Washington's cavalry chief. Though more than 170 counties, cities, roads, and landmarks bear his name, many of us know almost nothing about the freedom fighter who came to the colonies after Russia effectually swallowed up his homeland. In short, clear chapters, Collins traces Pulaski's privileged boyhood on his father's estate, where he learned to ride and shoot, his family's resistance to the Empress Catherine's encroachments into Polish territory, and his trip to war-racked America. The book builds to an exciting climax of battles and betrayals, with Pulaski mortally wounded while trying to take Savannah from the British.

Collins' concise prose and Larry Nolte's action-packed illustrations make this book an entrancing read for middle-school students interested in history and its recurring theme of the struggle to achieve political freedom.

The ALAN Review
Spring 1996

Joyce A. Lackie
University of Northern Colorado

Rinaldi, Ann
The Secret of Sarah Revere
Reviewed by Betty Carter
Associate Professor of Library Science
Texas Woman's University
Denton, Texas

Holland, Isabelle
The Promised Land
Reviewed by Lois Buckman
Librarian
Moorhead Junior High School
Conroe, Texas

Taylor, Theodore
The Bomb
Reviewed by Donald R. Gallo
Professor of English
Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, Connecticut

Curtis, Christopher Paul
The Watsons Go to Birmingham -- 1963
Reviewed by Jeanne Marcum Gerlach
Professor of English Education
West Virginia University
Morgantown, West Virginia
Although the term "unease in Boston" frequently characterizes that city's political turmoil prior to the American Revolution, it could also describe the personal conflicts of Sarah Revere, teenage daughter of Paul Revere. What was Sarah to think of her father's clandestine meetings? of Dr. Joseph Warren's strong bond with her new stepmother, Rachel? and of Rachel's apparent support for her father but obvious friendship with Lady Frankland and Margaret Gage? "What matters?" she asks her father, "The truth? Or what people think?"

Little does Sarah know of truth: she is privy to only a piece of the picture both within her own household and throughout the city. From this limited window she judges others, imagining many "what ifs" rather than recognizing what is. While setting is fully realized, plot suffers. Sarah, the outsider, remains apart from the action -- her personal turmoil is simply less gripping than the political conflict surrounding her.

Maggie and her younger sister, Annie, are very happy with the family in Kansas who gave them a home when the orphan train they were riding passed through Kansas. They never imagined leaving to go back to the horrors that would befall two motherless girls living in New York until, one day, their uncle from Ireland arrives, concerned that they are not being reared in the ways of the Catholic church. Tension arises over religious differences; then, illness brings the family together.

In this sequel to *The Journey Home*, Isabelle Holland captures life on the prairie through the eyes of Maggie and Annie. They appear to be leading a simple life until their uncle arrives and deep prejudices felt during the Civil War are rekindled. Holland skillfully weaves life on the frontier, prejudice, and the sisters' dilemma into an engaging historical novel.

Sorry Rinamu and his family are happy to be rid of the Japanese soldiers who had occupied their small Pacific island in the early 1940s. But in 1946 they learn that their home on beautiful Bikini Atoll will become the testing ground for American atomic bombs. They must leave their peaceful ancestral land, though authorities have promised they will be able to return in two years. When sixteen-year-old Sorry learns about the potential effects of radiation, he feels he must do something to stop the planned testing. Theodore Taylor, who was an officer on one of the U.S. ships that prepared Bikini Atoll for the atomic explosions, has affectionately recreated the tranquility and beauty of that remote place along with the feelings of loss and betrayal that the natives faced. In light of recent French nuclear testing and the protests thereof, this story is particularly poignant.

Curtis introduces the reader to ten-year-old Kenny and his family, the Watsons -- Momma, Dad, Joetta, Kenny, and Byron -- in his first, but unforgettable, novel. We meet the Watsons one super-cold Saturday in their home in Flint, Michigan. We immediately sense the family closeness through the comedic dialogue of the characters. However, we soon travel with the family from their somewhat calm life in the North to Birmingham, Alabama, where the Civil Rights movement was just beginning.

Curtis introduces us to the South of the 1960s -- a place where African Americans couldn't eat in restaurants, use public restrooms, or be seen on the streets after dark. The trip with Kenny and his family is realistic: I felt I was in the car with them. I saw the water fountains with the NO BLACKS signs. I saw the busses where African Americans stood near the rear. And I heard my African-American friends admit that they were afraid to travel in certain areas of our country. Traveling with the Watsons to Birmingham was like looking at a picture from the past. I trust that picture will keep changing for the better. I feel re-awakened. Thank you, Christopher Paul Curtis.
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