

younger readers

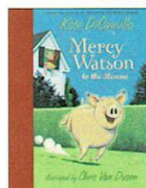
For Kids, Young Adults, and Children of All Ages



Ages 4–8

MERCY WATSON TO THE RESCUE

By Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Chris Van Dusen

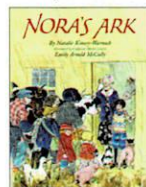


DiCamillo has already won a Newbery Honor for *Because of Winn-Dixie* and a Newbery Medal for *The Tale of Despereaux*. Now she

lends her talent to a younger audience with this picture/chapter-book series for beginning readers. After Mercy the pig jumps into bed with the rest of her (human) family, the bed starts to fall through the floor. So it's Mercy to the rescue—if she doesn't get distracted by a craving for buttered toast.

NORA'S ARK

By Natalie Kinsey-Warnock, illustrated by Emily Arnold McCully

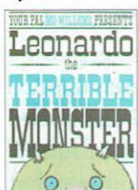


This book resonated with us after the hurricane devastation on the Gulf Coast, since Kinsey-Warnock and McCully base their story on the Vermont Flood of 1927.

During the flood, the young Wren takes refuge with her grandparents in a house that quickly fills with over 20 people, 3 horses, a cow, 5 pigs, a duck, 4 cats, and many chickens. There is destruction here—houses are shown floating away on a strong current—but a happy rescue as well.

LEONARDO, THE TERRIBLE MONSTER

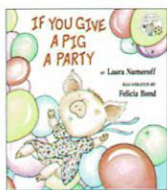
By Mo Willems



Though we enjoyed Willems's pigeon series, starting with *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* (2003), we are happy to see him continue to chart new territory here. Leonardo is terrible at being a monster because he can't scare anybody—so he looks for the most “scaredy-cat kid” in the hopes of succeeding. But maybe being a friend to that timid boy is more important than being a scary monster.

IF YOU GIVE A PIG A PARTY

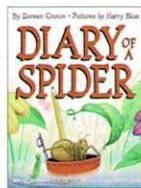
By Laura Numeroff, illustrated by Felicia Bond



The pig from *If You Give a Pig a Pancake* is ready to party! Consider the book's title a temporary break from Numeroff's time-tested, alliterative animal/food approach. But have no fear: we've been assured that the moose and its muffin will be joined in the future by a dog and its donut and, for Halloween, the pig will be given a pumpkin.

DIARY OF A SPIDER

By Doreen Cronin, illustrated by Harry Bliss



Even if there are no new Olivia books this year (you'll have to wait until October 2006 for *Olivia Does Christmas*), you can still find some new

takes on the familiar. Here, Cronin and semiregular *New Yorker* artist Bliss team up for a sequel to *Diary of a Worm* (2003). Worm makes a guest appearance in Spider's diary entries, as does a new friend, Fly (the object of some six-legged prejudice by Spider's Grampa).

TERRIFIC

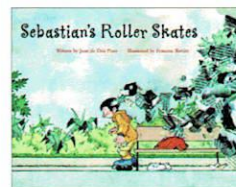
By Jon Agee



Who doesn't love a curmudgeon? No matter what happens to Eugene Mudge, he responds with a sarcastic “terrific.” As in, “Terrific, I'll probably get a really nasty sunburn,” when he wins a free trip to Bermuda. Indeed, nothing seems to go right for him until, after being shipwrecked, he meets a talking parrot on a deserted island.

SEBASTIAN'S ROLLER SKATES

By Joan de Déu Prats, illustrated by Francesc Rovira



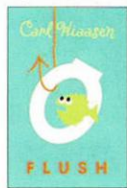
Here's a story close to our hearts—one for shy children. Sebastian is scared to talk;

he can't tell the barber how he wants his hair cut, nor can he approach potential friends in school. But when he successfully learns to roller-skate, and performs a minor act of heroism in the process, his triumph leads to newfound self-confidence.

Grades 5-8

FLUSH

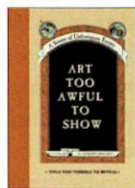
By Carl Hiaasen



Best known to adult readers for his south Florida crime novels (*Skin Tight*, *Skinny Dip*), Hiaasen received a Newbery Honor for his first children's novel *Hoot* (2003). Here he gives the Florida Keys a Hardy Boys twist: when their father is arrested for sinking a casino boat (he alleges he was dumping raw sewage), can Noah and his sister Abbey prove his claim?

[SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS #12]

By Lemony Snicket, illustrated by Brett Helquist



What can we say about a book whose title we won't know until after this magazine is printed? We can only imagine that whatever happens will be terrible—people will be dastardly. So you should just close the cover right now and do something much more pleasant.

REPLAY

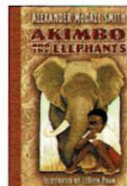
By Sharon Creech



Just as in Creech's Newbery Medal-winning novel *Love That Dog* (2001), a boy matures through his experience with the written word. Leonardo (also known as "sardine" and "fog boy") doesn't write poetry, but he does get a part in the school play. He also discovers the journal that his father kept when he was a 13-year-old. The play, the journal, and Leo's own experience start to converge.

AKIMBO AND THE LIONS and AKIMBO AND THE ELEPHANTS

By Alexander McCall Smith



The Scottish professor behind the *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series and *The Sunday Philosophy Club* books has jump-started his children's series with two books that center on

10-year-old Akimbo. He lives on a game preserve in Africa that his father heads. Helping out around the house can mean anything from helping stop elephant poachers to raising a young, trapped lion cub.

THE SCARECROW AND HIS SERVANT

By Philip Pullman, illustrated Peter Bailey



As the world prepares to be immersed in the films for Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series, the British author offers up a fairy tale. When a lightning bolt brings a scatterbrained scarecrow to life, he leaves his field behind to fulfill his destiny. The scarecrow and his newly acquired servant boy Jack have a run of funny and dangerous adventures. As Michael Rosen wrote in *The Guardian* last year, "The book is a perfectly made gem, full of fun, fireworks and wit. We continue to be lucky to have Pullman writing for us."

THE GAME OF SILENCE

By Louise Erdrich



The author of *Love Medicine*, *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, and other novels about Native American culture offers up a sequel to her young readers' novel, *The Birchbark House* (1999). Omakayas, a Native American girl in the Ojibwe tribe, is now nine years old in 1850, living with her adopted family on an island in Lake Superior. As white settlers try to force her tribe off the island, Omakayas must undergo her own vision quest.

THE VACATION

By Polly Horvath



If you're familiar with Horvath's works (*The Canning Season* won the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and *Everything on a Waffle* was a Newbery Honor Book), you might recognize a pattern: a child is left in the care of wacky adults, and personal growth ensues. Here, 12-year-old Henry's parents decide on

NEW FANTASY BOOKS

INKSPELL

By Cornelia Funke



The author of *The Thief Lord* has published this sequel to *Inkheart* (2003). As you may know from the first installment, Meggie's father Mo can read a book aloud and bring characters to life—literally. Now a year later, one of those characters, the fire-eater Dustfinger, wants to get back inside the book. Soon Meggie and Dustfinger's apprentice, Faird, have been transported inside the book as well.

GREGOR AND THE CURSE OF THE WARBLOODS

The Underland Chronicles, Book 3

By Suzanne Collins



Eleven-year-old Gregor and his little sister Boots must return to the world under New York City to find a cure for a plague threatening the Underland. This time, their mother insists on coming along.

THE RUINS OF GORLAN

Ranger's Apprentice Series, Book 1

By John Flanagan



Fifteen-year-old Will, a ward of Castle Remont, hopes to become a knight. But because he's too small, he's instead selected to become a Ranger. Will's apprenticeship in the Ranger arts—stealth, bravery, woodcraft—takes up much of the book, with plenty of opportunities for danger and heroism. The stage is set for a war that will carry through future installments.

DRIFT HOUSE: THE FIRST VOYAGE

By Dale Peck

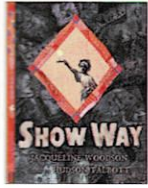


A sister and two brothers are sent to live with their uncle in Canada. A great flood reveals that his house can float on the Sea of Time. With a mural that predicts the future, time travel, and the usual assortment of mermaids, whales, and pirates, the siblings must prevent a plot to stop time altogether.

the spur of the moment to be African missionaries, leaving their son with his eccentric aunts who take him on a rambling cross-country car trip. But there's a fine line between a vacation and what feels like a kidnapping.

SHOW WAY

By Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by Hudson Talbott

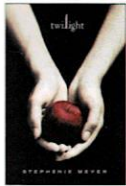


Woodson, twice nominated for the National Book Award, tells of African-American Soonie's great grandmother, who, as a slave on a plantation, sewed Show Ways quilts. The quilts held secret maps for slaves to follow to freedom. Though the quilts are no longer necessary today, Woodson shows how the craft of quilting—and the memory of a tragic past—is handed down from past generations to Soonie and then to Soonie's daughter.

YOUNG ADULT

TWILIGHT

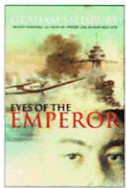
By Stephenie Meyer



Being the new kid in school is hard enough, especially in a small town. But what if the boy you fall in love with, the one who's making life seem not-so-bad, turns out to be a vampire? To make matters more challenging, Bella and Edward have to remain chaste, lest she arouse the blood lust in him (he and his fellow vampires have sworn off human blood). Romance and horror collide in this young adult novel that manages to rise above all of the two genres' limitations.

EYES OF THE EMPEROR

By Graham Salisbury



Sixteen-year-old Japanese-American Eddy Okubo and his friends enlist in the U.S. Army to fight during World War II. The army doesn't trust their good intentions: the "Japs" are set apart from the rest of the soldiers, rid-

iculed, and, in one assignment, used as bait for the training of attack dogs so that the canines can be taught to detect a "Japanese body odor." Based on historical events and interviews with Japanese-American U.S. Army veterans, Salisbury chronicles what happens when patriotism is abused.

13 LITTLE BLUE ENVELOPES

By Maureen Johnson



When 17-year-old Ginny's aunt dies, she leaves behind a gift of 13 blue envelopes. The first one contains \$1,000 and instructs Ginny to buy a plane ticket to London. From there she's only allowed to open the envelopes one at a time. Each one contains new instructions and directs her to a new European destination. There are rules, too: bring only what fits in a backpack, and no guidebooks or phrase books, extra money, or telephone or e-mail allowed. A European adventure awaits! (We've heard many rumors of real live adults picking up and enjoying the book.) ■

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book group *Continued from page 8*

What are some of your group's least favorite books?

The book we most disliked might be a tossup between *Martin Dressler*, the inexplicable Pulitzer Prize-winner by Steven Millhauser, and May Sarton's *Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing*. We can only describe *Martin Dressler* as Theodore Dreiser gone bad. Pulitzer Prize or no, this book, so self-consciously aspiring to be original and stunning, is instead pretentious, disagreeable drivel. After this mess, we no longer trust the Pulitzer committee and look to the Booker Prize. (Besides, whoever thought it a good idea to imitate Dreiser?!) ■

What book prompted your group's best discussion?

We often find that our liveliest discussions revolve around books some of us liked and others hated, such as A.S. Byatt's *Possession*. Half of us found it tedious and contrived, whereas the others were sucked in by the language, the links between the parallel stories, the delicate romances, and the startling literary mystery. ■

What is your group reading next?

Waiting on this year's list are *Fugitive Pieces*, by Anne Michaels; *The Mammoth Cheese*, by Sheri Holman; *Eventide*, by Kent Haruf; *Had a Good Time*, by Robert Olen Butler; and the "other" *Cloud Atlas*. ■