

Booklist's 1000 Best
Young Adult Books since 2000

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BOOKLIST'S 1000 BEST YOUNG ADULT BOOKS SINCE 2000

Edited by *Gillian Engberg and Ian Chipman*

Foreword by *Michael Cart*



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Foreword

Michael Cart

The start of the twenty-first century has been a new golden age of young adult, or YA, literature. If you doubt that, take a hard look at the titles reviewed in this important and useful book. In their literary quality, their variety, and their innovative nature, these books are not only the best of a splendid new millennium, they are—compared with other decades—the best of the best.

This remarkable rebirth of YA literature has its roots in the 1990s, which is ironic because—at the beginning of that decade—the genre was being pronounced near death. Fortunately, the diagnosis was premature, and thanks to a surge in the teenage population, an explosion of youth culture, and—more important—the dedication of YA librarians, the field began to recover and the story of the 1990s became one of increasingly robust health.

The first evidence of the renaissance to come was the rise in the mid-'90s of a new, hard-edged realism that reflected both the tenor of the times and an increasingly sophisticated young adult population. Though dismissed by some as “bleak,” this newly gritty literature of realism attracted the kind of older YA audience that had abandoned the genre by the end of the '80s, when it had largely turned into a middle-school literature featuring protagonists aged 12 to 14. By the end of the '90s, however, the typical protagonists were 17, and the books featuring them had a newly sophisticated, adult appearance.

Unlike the problem novels of the late 1970s, these novels were literary in their style and content, so much so that they spurred the creation in 1999 of the Michael L. Printz Award, which is now presented annually to the author of the best YA book of the year—*best* being defined solely in terms of literary merit. Not only did the Printz recognize the newly literary form YA literature was manifesting, but it also encouraged further experiments in style and narrative structure, epitomized by the award's first winner, in the year 2000: Walter Dean Myers' memorable novel *Monster*. In its first decade, the Printz Award put to bed—permanently, one hopes—the claim that *young adult literature* is an oxymoron, like *new classic* or *congressional cooperation*.

The rise of literary fiction is only one of the many trends that have informed and enriched YA literature in the twenty-first century. One need go no further than the list of Printz winners to find some of these trends. Consider that the Printz may be awarded not only to a novel but also to a work of nonfiction, a work of poetry, a graphic novel, an anthology, or a book first published in another country. More about these and other trends in a moment, but first we need to acknowledge additional evidence of the nearly exponential growth of YA literature between 2000 and 2013: the creation of separate YA imprints at North America's publishing houses. Historically, YA books were issued by the publishers' children's divisions, but that began to change in 1999 with the establishment of the first two separate YA imprints: Harper's Tempest and Simon &

Schuster's Pulse. Scarcely a year has gone by in the time since without the establishment of at least one new YA imprint. In addition to Pulse and Tempest, they include Scholastic's PUSH; Tor's Starscape; Penguin's Speak, Firebird, and Razorbill imprints; Houghton Mifflin's Graphia; Abrams' Amulet; Llewellyn's Flux; Aladdin MIX; Harlequin's Kimani TRU; Sourcebooks Fire; Sterling's Splinter; Albert Whitman Teen; and the YA titles from St. Martin's Press.

The growth of these imprints resulted in a corollary growth in the number of YA titles being published each year. Since publishers report children's and young adult book statistics together, it's virtually impossible to determine precisely how many YA books are published each year. A common estimate is 2,500, in which case the annual number has increased tenfold since the early '90s, when it was estimated that only 250 YA titles were published each year.

Further spurring the expanding YA market was a shift from the shrinking institutional market (i.e., libraries and schools) to the growing retail one. This began in the early years of the twenty-first century and has continued apace thanks to several factors. One is that publishing companies now consist of vast international conglomerates that are putting increased pressure on their subsidiary publishers to generate more and more revenue. One means of doing this is simply to publish more and more books. Another more salutary reason is that young adults themselves have become a major market. As early as 2001, the *Los Angeles Times* was reporting that YAs constituted a \$1.5 billion industry for publishers, while *USA Today* noted that teens aged 14 to 17 had purchased 35.6 million books that year, 6 million more than the previous year.

As the YA field has become more expansive and dynamic, it has begun attracting adult authors. In the past decade such stellar names as Joyce Carol Oates, Francine Prose, James Patterson, Carl Hiaasen, Michael Chabon, and too many others to list here have written books targeted at young adults. Publishers have encouraged this not only for the marquee value of the authors' names but also because these authors attract their established adult audiences to YA lit. This crossover phenomenon—adults reading young adult books—works the other way, too, as publishers are issuing more and more adult titles with intrinsic appeal to older YAs, such as Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) and Curtis Sittenfeld's *Prep* (2004).

While all of these factors served to expand the YA field, another eclipsed them all, and that, of course, was the Harry Potter series. Published between 1998 and 2007, J. K. Rowling's books about the boy wizard have sold more than 450 million copies to date, according to the *New York Times*, and the individual volumes have been translated into 70 languages.

The Potter phenomenon has had a profound impact on publishing. It stimulated, for example, the internationalization of YA literature, as more and more books first published in England, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada began appearing here in the United States. It also promoted what is called event publishing. As was the case with the Potter books, many titles now are embargoed until their publication date; no advance reading or review copies are released prior to publication, and bookstores put them on sale at one minute after midnight on the official publication date.

The success of the Potter books also stimulated a vast wave of fantasy titles, which are well represented in this book. For good or for ill, virtually every new fantasy title is

now the first volume in a planned series, and each title is also—or so it seems—500 or more pages in length (the last two Potter books were, respectively, 759 and 870 pages long).

As the Potter phenomenon was approaching its end, publishers began frantically searching for the next Harry Potter. They didn't have far to look: Stephenie Meyer's 498-page novel *Twilight* was published in 2005. The *Twilight* Saga books have now sold 116 million copies worldwide and offer another spectacular success story, which in turn guaranteed that the next trend in YA publishing would be the paranormal romance. This trend featured not only vampires and werewolves à la *Twilight* but also zombies, demons, and fallen angels.

Meanwhile, a more traditional kind of romance—human boy meets human girl, but with a twist—had also become a hot area of publishing. This is the phenomenon known as chick lit. Often told in the form of a diary, chick lit typically consists of a humorous story of a young girl in pursuit—with mixed success—of love. The first YA example of this type of romance was Louise Rennison's antic *Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging*, which was published in 2000 and copped a Printz Honor Book citation. Countless chick-lit romances have followed, even as a new and related trend appeared in 2002 with the publication of Cecily von Ziegesar's *Gossip Girl*, which soon sparked a series about “poor little rich girls, throbbing to shop,” as the *New York Times* memorably put it. These girls were less interested in loving boys than in loving designer labels. The *Gossip Girl* series spawned numerous others, such as the *A-List*, the *Carlyles*, the *Au Pairs*, *Privilege*, and more. Most—though not all—of these series have been created not by publishers but, instead, by book packagers who develop projects, hire authors, design the books, and present a ready-to-publish package to publishers. This is hardly a new phenomenon—it dates back to the turn of the twentieth century and the Stratemeyer Syndicate (think Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys)—but it has become one of the major success stories of the first decade of the 2000s.

Another major success story is the rise of the dystopian novel—the story of a future world ruined, often, by present or threatened societal ills such as global warming, wars and rumors of wars, nuclear weaponry, and unbridled consumerism, all of which haunt M. T. Anderson's *Feed* (2002). The novel that truly jump-started this genre, however, is Suzanne Collins' hugely successful *The Hunger Games* (2008), which has rivaled *Twilight* and even the Harry Potter books in popularity and influence. That the titles in this particular genre are often well written is evidenced by Paolo Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker* receiving the 2011 Printz Award.

Another genre, historical fiction, is at the leading edge of one more trend informing the first years of the 2000s: what is called genre bending (or blending), in which two or more genres are mixed, as in the case of paranormal romance or science fiction and fantasy. As *Booklist* columnist Joyce Saricks recently observed, “Blending with other genres is the most conspicuous trend in historical fiction.” Thus there are historical romances, historical mysteries, historical adventures, and even, in the case of alternative histories, historical fantasies. Another interesting phenomenon is the book that combines historical elements with a contemporary story—for example, Aidan Chambers' Printz Award-winning *Postcards from No Man's Land* (2002), which is set both in the present and the past, during WWII.

Clearly, genre fiction has ruled the roost of YA fiction in the twenty-first century. Not that there haven't been other success stories. One of these is often mistakenly called a genre, but it is, instead, a literary form. I refer, of course, to the graphic novel. Once sniffily dismissed as mere comic books, the form began to come of age artistically in the mid-1980s with the publication of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen*. The graphic novel (the term was popularized by legendary comics artist Will Eisner) continued to evolve through the 1990s, but it wasn't until the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) devoted an ALA preconference to the form in 2002 that libraries began to acquire graphic novels in significant numbers. That same year, YALSA launched its Great Graphic Novels for Teens list and chose "Get Graphic @ your library" as the theme for Teen Read Week. More recognition of the artistry of the graphic novel came in 2007, when Gene Luen Yang received the Printz Award for his groundbreaking graphic novel *American Born Chinese*, which was also the first graphic novel to be short-listed for the National Book Award.

Another form of the graphic novel, Japanese comics called *manga*, started appearing in significant numbers in the mid-1990s and became a major phenomenon in the first decade of the 2000s. Many of these manga are part of seemingly endless series (evoking, it might be suggested, television soap operas). In his 2007 book *Manga: The Complete Guide*, Jason Thompson identifies 900 such series! More recently, graphic novels from Korea—called *manhwa*—have also become popular.

The leading YA publisher of graphic novels is Macmillan's First Second imprint, though virtually every publisher of series nonfiction—Rosen, Capstone, World Almanac, ABDO, and others—has been releasing titles in the graphic-novel format. It should be noted here that though the form is called *graphic novel*, it also clearly includes nonfiction.

Speaking of nonfiction, this is another form that came of age starting in the 1990s and remains popular in the 2000s. The new type of informational book is often called narrative nonfiction because it borrows some of the tools of fiction to generate something that reads like a novel but respects the integrity of the factual content. Another hallmark of this new nonfiction is its illustrative content. Much like Dorling Kindersley's Eyewitness books, these titles often have the appearance of photo essays. An example of this is Elizabeth Partridge's *John Lennon: All I Want Is the Truth* (2005), which received a Printz Honor Book citation in 2006. Further recognizing the artistry of the new nonfiction, YALSA created in 2009 the Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults. In the past several years, the number of nonfiction books for older teens has waned a bit; however, nonfiction for middle-school readers continues to grow apace.

Another type of nonfiction—poetry—has had mixed success. Though it receives universal respect, it seldom commands a large readership. An exception is the novel in verse, a form pioneered by Mel Glenn with titles such as *Who Killed Mr. Chippendale?* (1996) and which came of age in 1999 with the publication of Sonya Sones' *Stop Pretending*. In the years since, such distinguished poets as Ron Koertge, Nikki Grimes, Helen Frost, and Marilyn Nelson have also contributed to the genre. Both Frost's and Nelson's titles were named Printz Honor Books, as was Stephanie Hemphill's *Your Own, Sylvia* (2007), a biography in verse.

The first years of the 2000s have also been a period of growth in novels for and about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teens. Though there have been YA novels with gay

content since John Donovan's *I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip* was published in 1969, the numbers of such books were meager (only 8 appeared in the entire decade of the 1970s and 40 in the 1980s) until the 1990s, when 75 were published. The numbers have continued to increase in the first decade of the 2000s, with 34 such titles published in 2009 alone. Even more important is the literary quality of these works, never more clearly manifested than in 2003, when Aidan Chambers received the Printz Award for *Postcards from No Man's Land*, a novel with gay content, and Nancy Garden received the Margaret A. Edwards Award for her body of work, including her pioneering lesbian novel *Annie on My Mind* (1982).

It was not until 2004, however, that the first YA novel to feature a transgender character—Julie Anne Peters' *Luna*—appeared. In the years since, only a scant handful of others have been published, including Ellen Wittlinger's *Parrotfish* (2007) and Brian Katcher's *Almost Perfect* (2009). The few others that have appeared as of this writing are sufficient at least to suggest that this once invisible minority will finally begin to find faces in YA literature.

On a less positive note, the years between 2000 and 2013 have in common with the decades preceding them a paucity of titles featuring minorities more generally. The Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin–Madison has been tracking the publication of multicultural titles since 1985. The staff there reports that though they have seen the numbers ebb and flow since then, they have yet to see multicultural literature make up more than 10 percent of the children's and YA books published in a given year. When the titles are limited to books written and illustrated by persons from within the culture being portrayed, that number drops to 5 percent. This is clearly one area of YA publishing that urgently requires remedial action. One hopes that—as America's minority populations continue to gain visibility and prominence—YA literature will reflect their stories in even greater numbers.

In the meantime, the start of the 2000s has witnessed abundant and salutary growth in YA literature, as the books reviewed in this volume amply demonstrate. May you enjoy confirming this assertion for yourself.

Preface

Gillian Engberg and Ian Chipman

The years 2000 to 2013 saw an unprecedented growth in young adult publishing, as author and *Booklist* contributor Michael Cart has demonstrated in his foreword to this retrospective volume. In fact, YA publishing has exploded in the twenty-first century, bringing a thrilling expansion of genres, subjects, and narrative forms, as well as a reputation as one of the most robust sectors in the volatile world of contemporary publishing.

Throughout it all, *Booklist* magazine has tracked this exciting growth, page by page, book by book. In this volume we offer a compendium of reviews that represent the most noteworthy fiction and nonfiction titles reviewed in *Booklist* between January 2000 and August 2013. Stars appearing next to individual titles indicate our choices of the top 50 books published for young adults during this time period (see the appendix for the full list).

As with any such project, our compilation is a subjective one, and we've relied on the expertise of our staff editors—Ilene Cooper, Daniel Kraus, and Ann Kelley—and freelancers, with close attention paid to the winners of the Michael L. Printz Award, which is sponsored by Booklist Publications, as well as the Young Adult Library Services Association's additional book award winners and best-of lists. Our intention is that this volume will serve as both a useful tool for readers' advisory with teens (and adult fans of teen literature) and a comprehensive overview of the influential trends and milestones that continue to shape the extraordinary growth of YA literature as we continue into our second decade of this new century.

We hope that these pages offer valuable support to librarians, teachers, curriculum specialists, professors, authors, publishers, and all others who, in their daily work, share our mission: to help teens develop a lifelong love of reading by connecting them with the best books written just for them.

YOUNG ADULT FICTION 2000–2013

Going Batty Over *Going Bovine*

Ian Chipman

It was a pretty massive task to select the best YA books published between 2000 and the first half of 2013, but it turns out that was only half the battle. We had a zoo with no cages. What we needed now was a way to divvy up all these reviews in an accurate, meaningful, and, most of all, helpful way.

Our first thought was to fall back on the established categories of romance, fantasy, general fiction, science fiction, mystery, historical fiction, westerns, horror, and so forth. This seemed to be a meaningful, straightforward approach. But a single thought pretty much crushed this plan: where do you put Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005)? Does it fall under romance or fantasy? Then there was Scott Westerfeld's *Leviathan* (2009). Should we slip it into historical fiction or science fiction? And, for that matter, are there really that many YA novels that *aren't* romances at some level? Does one consider John Green a writer of romances because his books deal with matters of the heart as much as matters of the brain, funny bone, and soul? You'd need an impossibly calibrated meter to figure out just when a work of general fiction tips into outright romance, or when a Victorian whodunit falls under either historical fiction or mystery.

Genres are obviously meant to be bent, and books—especially the best of them—resist attempts at easy categorization. One of the greatest features of our online counterpart, *Booklist Online*, is the ability to assign multiple taxonomies to any one book. But here on the printed page, we're allowed no such luxurious dynamism. We floated the idea of repeating reviews in each applicable genre grouping, but that would have given this volume shelf-long proportions. Even setting up an elaborate cross-referencing scheme seemed problematic, and not particularly helpful in any case.

So we rethought the genre approach. There were two directions we could have gone: simplicity or specificity. In the case of the latter, introducing more narrowly defined classifications seemed appealing. You can solve the *Twilight* problem by introducing the category of paranormal romance. You solve the *Leviathan* problem by tossing it into steampunk.

But in the end, this wound up creating more problems than it solved and threatened to turn the book into something of a chaotic mess of increasingly drilled-down and still-subjective subgenres.

So we pivoted and went with the simple approach. And it was good.

We set up a broad parameter that answered the question, where does this book take place? The *where* doesn't refer to any setting, but rather the established reality in which it occurs. We came up with three big groups. Books that happen in our world today would be contemporary fiction. Books that happen in our world in the past would be historical fiction. Books that happen in pretty much anything else (our world as it may be in the future, our world as it might have been in the past, our world today as it isn't, or an entirely imagined world) would be speculative fiction.

This idea clicked. *Twilight* takes place in what is ostensibly our present world, except with vampires, and *Leviathan* takes place in WWI-era Europe, except with flying whales, so they both belong in speculative fiction. And we didn't have to worry about how much romance was in John Green's *Looking for Alaska* (2005) because it sat right where it should in contemporary fiction.

A bit of tinkering was necessary. We added the mystery and suspense category to place books in which the mystery or suspense is clearly paramount to what kind of a world they take place in. And we pulled graphic novels into their own home as a format distinct from prose novels. But the general plan seemed right, and it looked like figuring out where everything else would go would be a snap.

Alas, the best laid plans . . .

Take, for example, Terry Pratchett's *Nation*, a 2009 Printz Honor Book. At first blush, it seems to be technically a work of historical fiction that takes place on a remote island sometime in the nineteenth century. But the ocean is called the Pelagic, not the Pacific; heroine Ermintrude is from somewhere very much like Britain but perhaps not exactly Britain; and Pratchett himself explains in an endnote that the story "is in fact set in a parallel universe. . . . Different things happened, some people lived at different times, some bits of history have been changed, some things are made up out of real pieces." Isn't that pretty much exactly what historical fiction is? If there wasn't a little bit of make-believe, it would be nonfiction. The question remains, where, exactly, does alternative history cross the line from historical fiction into speculative fiction? Do a certain percentage of details need to be historically true (assuming there's any way to actually know such a thing)? In the end, we decided that *Nation* is a work of speculative fiction according to our rules, even if we couldn't defend the position in a court of law.

And what do you do with books based on Arthurian lore? Depends on the book, it turns out. We sent Jane Yolen's *Sword of the Rightful King* (2003) to speculative fiction because there's outright magic in the book, whereas Philip Reeve's *Here Lies Arthur* (2008) goes to historical fiction because Merlin's so-called "magic" is in fact nothing more than cheap parlor tricks used to dupe the oafish masses, and is thus not "real." Even so, Yolen's novel, for the most part, follows the traditional legend as we accept it, and therefore is part of our "real" world, whereas Reeve reimagines the whole thing from the foundation up, and therefore dreams up an entirely new "reality" for the Arthurian story that is, in fact, plausibly historical. Confused yet?

It all started to make sense after we gave it some dedicated thought, and we were still pretty happy with our strategy. But then, with a shudder, we wondered about Libba Bray's 2010 Printz Award winner, *Going Bovine*. We invite you to try to figure out whether it's a realistic story of a kid going crazy with mad cow disease or a fantastical, kaleidoscopic look, through the mind of that same kid, at a world that has itself gone crazy. We don't know. We just know it's an extraordinary novel that explodes any attempts at classification.

So, organizing this volume has been a difficult, quixotic endeavor riddled with fascinating problems. And it has reminded us all that books, especially the best of them, cannot with certainty and clarity be penned into rickety cages of categorization. It's kind of what makes them great.

Contemporary Fiction

Abdel-Fattah, Randa. *Does My Head Look Big in This?* 2007. 342p. Scholastic/Orchard (9780439919470). Gr. 7–10.

Like the author of this breakthrough debut novel, Amal is an Australian-born, Muslim Palestinian “whacked with some seriously confusing identity hyphens.” At 16, she loves shopping, watches *Sex and the City*, and IMs her friends about her crush on a classmate. She also wants to wear the hijab, to be strong enough to show a badge of her deeply held faith, even if she confronts insults from some at her snotty prep school, and she is refused a part-time job in the food court (she is “not hygienic”). Her open-minded, observant physician parents support her and so do her friends, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, secular. Her favorite teacher finds her a private space to pray. The first-person present-tense narrative is hilarious about the diversity, and sometimes heartbreaking. For her uncle who wants to assimilate, “foreign” is the word, and his overdone Aussie slang and flag-waving is a total embarrassment. On the other hand, her friend Leila nearly breaks down when her ignorant Turkish mom wants only to marry her daughter off (“Why study?”) and does not know that it is Leila’s Islamic duty “to seek knowledge, to gain an education.” Without heavy preaching, the issues of faith and culture are part of the story, from fasting at Ramadan to refusing sex before marriage. More than the usual story of the immigrant teen’s conflict with her traditional parents, the funny, touching contemporary narrative will grab teens everywhere. —Hazel Rochman

★ Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. 2007. 256p. Little, Brown (9780316013680). Gr. 7–10.

Arnold Spirit, a goofy-looking dork with a decent jump shot, spends his time lamenting life on the “poor-ass” Spokane Indian reservation, drawing cartoons (which accompany, and often provide more insight than, the narrative), and, along with his aptly named

pal Rowdy, laughing those laughs over anything and nothing that affix best friends so intricately together. When a teacher pleads with Arnold to want more, to escape the hopelessness of the rez, Arnold switches to a rich white school and immediately becomes as much an outcast in his own community as he is a curiosity in his new one. He weathers the typical teenage indignations and triumphs like a champ but soon faces far more trying ordeals as his home life begins to crumble and decay amidst the suffocating mire of alcoholism on the reservation. Alexie’s humor and prose are easy-going and well suited to his young audience, and he doesn’t pull many punches as he levels his eye at stereotypes both warranted and inapt. A few of the plot-lines fade to gray by the end, but this ultimately affirms the incredible power of best friends to hurt and heal in equal measure. Younger teens looking for the strength to lift themselves out of rough situations would do well to start here. —Ian Chipman

Almond, David. *Raven Summer*. 2009. 240p. Delacorte (9780385738064). Gr. 7–12.

Big issues are front and center in Almond’s gripping new novel, told in the present-tense voice of teenage Liam and set in contemporary northern England. War rages in Iraq and elsewhere, and army jets fly low over where he lives. “All of us are beasts at heart. . . . We have to help the angel in us to overcome the beast.” Yes, the messages are spelled out, but readers will want to talk and argue about them, sparked by the authentic characters and the searing drama of their lives. In spare, stirring words, Liam tells of his tenderness for a foundling baby that his family takes in; his fear and rage about his bullying classmate, Natrass; and his friendship with a young Liberian asylum seeker, Oliver, who saw soldiers slaughter his family, soldiers who said that God was on their side. Natrass calls Oliver a terrorist and thinks he should be sent back, as do the immigration officials. Always there is the pull of violence, felt by both children and adults, including tourists who visit ancient castles and other remnants of

past wars. Is God a war criminal? The tension builds to a shocking and totally believable ending. Readers will recognize that “the murderer in all of us is just below the skin,” but the kindness in every chapter is heart-breaking too. A haunting story, perfect for group discussion. —Hazel Rochman

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Prom*. 2005. 224p. Viking (9780670059744). Gr. 9–12.

Ashley understands that the senior prom at her Philadelphia school is a big deal to her close friends even though she thinks it’s “stupid.” So imagine her shock at finding herself the most likely candidate to save the prom after a troubled math teacher makes off with the funds. Many of Anderson’s previous novels have been heart-wrenching accounts of teen survivors, such as the date-rape victim in *Speak* (1999) and the yellow fever survivor in *Fever 1793* (2000). Here, though, Anderson’s bright, witty narrator is a self-professed “ordinary kid,” whose problems, while intensely felt, are as common as a burger and fries. Ashley’s as ambivalent about her gorgeous but undependable boyfriend as she is about her college prospects; her part-time job serving pizza in a rat costume is far from fulfilling; and her family, which she calls “no-extra-money-for-nuthin’-poor,” mortifies her (her pregnant mother’s belly “screams to the world” that her parents have sex), even as they offer love and support. In clipped chapters (some just a sentence long), Ashley tells her story in an authentic, sympathetic voice that combines gum-snapping, tell-it-like-it-is humor with honest questions about her future. The dramatic ending may be a bit over the top, but teens will love Ashley’s clear view of high-school hypocrisies, dating, and the fierce bonds of friendship. —Gillian Engberg

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Twisted*. 2007. 256p. Viking (9780670061013). Gr. 9–12.

Tyler Miller was a socially invisible nerd (“Your average piece of drywall who spent too much time playing computer games”) before he sprayed some attention-getting graffiti and became a legend. Sentenced to a summer of physical labor, he enters his senior

year with new muscles that attract popular Bethany Millbury, whose father is Tyler’s dad’s boss. On probation for his graffiti stunt, Tyler struggles to balance his consuming crush with pressure that comes from schoolwork and his explosive father, and after Tyler is implicated in a drunken crime, his balancing act falls apart. The dialogue occasionally has the clichéd feel of a teen movie (“Party’s over.” “We’re just getting started. And I don’t remember inviting you”). What works well here is the frank, on-target humor (“I was a zit on the butt of the student body”), the taut pacing, and the small moments, recounted in Tyler’s first-person voice, that illuminate his emotional anguish. Writing for the first time from a male perspective, Anderson skillfully explores identity and power struggles that all young people will recognize. —Gillian Engberg

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Wintergirls*. 2009. 288p. Viking (9780670011100). Gr. 9–12.

Problem-novel fodder becomes a devastating portrait of the extremes of self-deception in this brutal and poetic deconstruction of how one girl stealthily vanishes into the depths of anorexia. Lia has been down this road before: her competitive relationship with her best friend, Cassie, once landed them both in the hospital, but now not even Cassie’s death can eradicate Lia’s disgust of the “fat cows” who scrutinize her body all day long. Her father (no, “Professor Overbrook”) and her mother (no, “Dr. Marrigan”) are frighteningly easy to dupe—tinkering and sabotage inflate her scale readings as her weight secretly plunges: 101.30, 97.00, 89.00. Anderson illuminates a dark but utterly realistic world where every piece of food is just a caloric number, inner voices scream “NO!” with each swallow, and self-worth is too easily gauged: “I am the space between my thighs, daylight shining through.” Struck-through sentences, incessant repetition, and even blank pages make Lia’s inner turmoil tactile, and gruesome details of her decomposition will test sensitive readers. But this is necessary reading for anyone caught in a feedback loop of weight loss as well as any parent unfamiliar with the scripts teens recite so easily to escape from such deadly situations. —Daniel Kraus

Andrews, Jesse. *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*. 2012. 304p. Abrams/Amulet (9781419701764). Gr. 8–11.

Greg Gaines, 17, would be the first to tell you that his constant “dickhead behavior” makes him the least likely person to befriend a classmate dying of leukemia. But he is pushed into it by his mother and, well, the result is this “horrifyingly inane,” “unstoppable barf-fest” of a book. Greg prefers to keep a low profile at school, instead collaborating with his almost-gangsta pal, Earl, on terrible remakes of classic films: *Apocalypse Later* with Super Soakers, *The Manchurian Cat-idate* with cats. But his knack for cracking jokes keeps the dying girl, Rachel, smiling, and pretty soon the whole school thinks he is some kind of hero. He is even pushed into making a final opus: *Rachel the Film*, aka “the worst film ever made.” One need only look at the chapter titles (“Let’s Just Get This Embarrassing Chapter Out of the Way”) to know that this is one funny book, highlighted by screenplay excerpts and Earl’s pissy wisdom. What’s crazy is how moving it becomes in spite of itself. The characters are neither smart nor precocious. Greg is not suitably moved by Rachel’s struggle. His film sucks. He thinks *bereavement* means “being attacked by beavers.” But it’s this honest lack of profundity, and the struggle to overcome it, that makes Andrews’ debut actually kinda profound. —Daniel Kraus

Asher, Jay. *Thirteen Reasons Why*. 2007. 256p. Penguin/Razorbill (9781595141712). Gr. 8–11.

When Clay Jenson plays the cassette tapes he received in a mysterious package, he’s surprised to hear the voice of dead classmate Hannah Baker. He’s one of 13 people who receive Hannah’s story, which details the circumstances that led to her suicide. Clay spends the rest of the day and long into the night listening to Hannah’s voice and going to the locations she wants him to visit. The text alternates, sometimes quickly, between Hannah’s voice (italicized) and Clay’s thoughts as he listens to her words, which illuminate betrayals and secrets that demonstrate the consequences of even small actions. Hannah, herself, is not free from guilt, her own inaction having played a part in an accidental auto death and a rape. The message about how we

treat one another, although sometimes heavy, makes for compelling reading. Give this to fans of Gail Giles’ psychological thrillers. —Cindy Dobrez

Barnes, John. *Tales of the Madman Underground*. 2009. 544p. Viking (9780670060818). Gr. 9–12.

After a long career in science fiction, Barnes has taken a heroic stab at the Great American Novel. Set over the span of just six days in 1973—but weighing in at more than 500 pages—Barnes’ coming-of-age epic is overlong, tangled with tangents, and takes a kitchen-sink approach when it comes to teenage trauma. Yet rarely will you read something so lovingly vulgar, so fiercely warmhearted, and so exuberantly expansive that even its long-windedness becomes part of its rogue charm. It’s the story of Karl Shoemaker, a senior starting the first week of classes in his blue-collar Ohio town. This year he’s determined to execute Operation Be Fucking Normal, but that isn’t easy when he is working five jobs to pay the bills of his drunkard, star-child mother; wakes up early to clean up the poop from their zillions of cats (and bury the dead ones in their backyard Cat Arlington); and is deeply connected to the other kids forced to take school therapy—aka the Madman Underground. The plot is slight, but Karl’s fellow madmen revel in their wild tales of survival and revenge, and the culmination comes off like a high-school *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. Always ambitious, often caustic, and frequently moving. —Daniel Kraus

Bauer, Joan. *Hope Was Here*. 2000. 192p. Putnam (9780399231421). Gr. 7–9.

Ever since her mother left, Hope has, with her comfort-food-cooking aunt Addie, been serving up the best in diner food from Pensacola to New York City. Moving has been tough, so it comes as a surprise to 16-year-old Hope that rural Wisconsin, where she and her aunt have now settled, offers more excitement, friendship, and even romance (for both Hope and Addie) than the big city. In this story, Bauer has recycled some charming devices from her popular *Rules of the Road* (1998): Jenna’s road rules have become the Best-of-Mom tips for waitressing; the disappearing parent is Hope’s irresponsible mom; and the villains are politicians, not corporate

America. Like Bauer's other heroines, Hope is a typical teenage girl who works hard, excels at her part-time job, and plans for her future. The adults around her, though mostly one-dimensional, together create a microcosm of society—the best and the worst of a teenager's support system. It's Bauer's humor that supplies, in Addie's cooking vernacular, the yeast that makes the story rise above the rest, reinforcing the substantive issues of honesty, humanity, and the importance of political activism. Serve this up to teens—with a dash of hope. —Frances Bradburn

Bauman, Beth Ann. *Rosie and Skate*. 2009. 224p. Random/Wendy Lamb (9780385737357). Gr. 9–12.

High-school sophomore Rosie and her year-older sister Skate have one unshakable reality in their lives: their father is a drunk, whom Skate calls Old Crow after the booze he drinks. After their father is thrown in jail for petty theft, an older cousin comes to stay in the family's decrepit ocean-front Victorian on the Jersey shore. Skate, though, prefers to live with the mother of her college-freshman boyfriend, Perry. If there's one other reality Skate holds firmly to, it's that she and Perry are in love and will successfully negotiate a long-distance relationship. So you know how that's going to go. Told in alternating chapters by sisters who are very different from one another yet bound by their hardships and their laughter, this is a novel as brisk and refreshing as an ocean breeze. The descriptions are always vivid, whether first-time author Bauman is describing the boardwalk or the ways sex can be used to pacify or agitate a situation. Both sisters write in first person, and their narratives have a scratchy uniqueness, miles apart from the ubiquitous voice so often heard in YA novels. Rosie is dear and hopeful, and Skate, nicknamed for her skateboarding abilities, is knowing and crisp. Bauman's subtle melding of their personalities as life shapes them shows surprising skill from a debut author. —Ilene Cooper

Booth, Coe. *Kendra*. 2008. 292p. Scholastic/Push (9780439925365). Gr. 10–12.

Fans of *Tyrell* (2006) will welcome another tale about a Bronx teen facing big challenges. Fifteen-year-old

Kendra has been raised by her grandmother, Nana, while her 29-year-old mother has been away earning university degrees. Now that her mother's PhD is complete, Kendra is hoping that the family will finally reunite, but her mom chooses to get a studio apartment without her daughter. Kendra's longing for love leads her too quickly into a physical relationship with hot Nashawn. Kendra doesn't want sex, in part because Nana threatens to have her physically "checked" to confirm her virginity, but Nashawn suggests oral and anal sex as alternatives to traditional intercourse. Kendra agrees, and she is guilt ridden over the acts (which are frankly discussed) as well as confused by the passion she feels. Her father, who is in a dead-end job as a snack-food truck driver, rounds out the strong secondary characters. Kendra's talent at architectural drawing and set design will attract artistic teens, while her realistic daily problems with friends, family, and boys will appeal to a wide audience. —Cindy Dobrez

Booth, Coe. *Tyrell*. 2006. 320p. Scholastic (9780439838795). Gr. 9–12.

"You don't hardly get to have no kinda childhood in the hood." At 15, Tyrell is trying to keep his little brother in school and safe in their roach-infested shelter in the Bronx. He has dropped out of school, and Mom wants him to sell drugs to make money. But Tyrell is too smart. He doesn't want to end up in prison like his dad, so he tries to organize a neighborhood party to raise money. His girlfriend, Novisha, isn't happy that Tyrell has dropped out. She loves him, and they make out, but he respects her wish to remain a virgin. Booth, who was born and raised in the Bronx, is now a social worker there, and her first novel is heartbreakingly realistic. There are some plot contrivances—including Tyrell's stumbling upon Novisha's diary—but the immediate first-person narrative is pitch perfect: fast, funny, and anguished (there's also lots of use of the *n*-word, though the term is employed in the colloquial sense, not as an insult). Unlike many books reflecting the contemporary street scene, this one is more than just a pat situation with a glib resolution; it's filled with surprising twists and turns that continue to the end. —Hazel Rochman

Brashares, Ann. *Girls in Pants: The Third Summer of the Sisterhood*. 2005. 352p. Delacorte (9780385729352). Gr. 8–12.

It's the summer before the Septembers go to college, a summer in which old and new boyfriends appear, families grow and change, crises occur and are resolved, and the pants continue their designated rounds. Despite their diverse schedules, the four friends who appeared in the previous *Traveling Pants* books reunite one final weekend before they go off to four different colleges. Readers of the other books won't be disappointed with these new adventures: Carmen's mother is pregnant; Bee is back at soccer camp with her old crush, Eric; Tibby's sister falls from her second-story window; and Lena's parents refuse to pay for art school. Beneath these crisis-ridden plotlines lies an artist at work—an author who encourages her readers to look, feel, trust, and empathize with her characters. It's a strong ending to a series about four fully developed, strikingly different, equally fascinating teenage girls. —Frances Bradburn

Brashares, Ann. *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*. 2001. 294p. Delacorte (9780385729338). Gr. 6–9.

The pants were magic—worn, thrift-shop jeans that made each of the four best friends look absolutely fabulous. Obviously they were life-changing pants. Thus the plan: route them to each of the four at their various summer destinations, with appropriate rules attached, of course, and watch wonderful things happen. Only they don't. Carmen's dad still remarries; Lena's trip to Greece to visit her grandparents is still marred by a terrible misunderstanding with a gorgeous Greek teen; Bridget still does dumb things at a Baja California soccer camp; and Tibby must work at Wallman's. The pants are just pants, and life is just life, full of joys, sorrows, living, and dying. This is the charm of *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*. Carmen, Lena, Bridget, and Tibby are growing to adulthood, and Brashares accurately portrays one glorious, painful summer in their evolution. Young teens will identify with one, or even all four, of these interesting, funny young women, and they'll be on the lookout for their own pair of traveling pants. —Frances Bradburn

Brooks, Bruce. *All That Remains*. 2001. 168p. Atheneum (9780689833519). Gr. 7–12.

In this trio of novellas, Brooks' trademark razor-sharp wit illuminates tales of death and earthly remains. Despite the topic, there is nothing ghoulish or creepy here. Clever wordplay and gallows humor bring a new dimension to death and how we deal with it. In one story, cousins conspire to cremate their beloved aunt (who has just died of AIDS) in a potter's kiln to circumvent laws that would put her in a pauper's grave. The most conventional story follows a slick, hip teen who takes his decidedly uncool cousin under his wing to keep a promise made to a dying uncle. The final story is a gem: a lone girl, laden with backpack, insists on joining a trio of young male golfers and blows them away with her talent. The contents of her backpack, however, are even more surprising than her sudden presence. Touching on AIDS, homophobia, popularity, hockey, and golf, these surprising, clever, and poignant stories show Brooks at his best. —Debbie Carton

Brooks, Martha. *Mistik Lake*. 2007. 224p. Farrar/Melanie Kroupa (9780374349851). Gr. 9–12.

Throughout her childhood, 17-year-old Odella has watched her mother, Sally, “sink deeper into whatever it is that keeps her from us.” As a teen, Sally was the only survivor of a car accident on frozen Mistik Lake, and she seems forever haunted by the trauma, turning to alcohol and, finally, leaving her husband and three daughters for Iceland and another man. Then the news arrives that Sally has died, and Odella tries to hold the family together while swimming in her own complicated grief: “It's hard to be angry at a ghost.” Set in Odella's Winnipeg home and the tiny town of Mistik Lake, where Odella's Icelandic Canadian family has deep roots, Brooks' affecting novel explores the weighty legacy of family secrets and cultural heritage. Many characters believe in the significance of dreams, and the perspectives, which move among Odella, her new boyfriend, and her great-aunt, create a dreamlike collapse of past and present, emphasizing the common themes shared through generations. The many characters' stories threaten to overcrowd the plot, but Brooks skillfully keeps the focus on Odella, whose

chapters are the only ones narrated in a first-person voice. Readers will connect strongly with the teenager's astonished, powerful feelings of first love and her shocked realization that painful family burdens can also be life-changing gifts. —Gillian Engberg

Brooks, Martha. *True Confessions of a Heartless Girl*. 2003. 192p. Farrar/Melanie Kroupa (9780374378066). Gr. 9–12.

Pembina Lake is a tiny town with more than its share of the world weary. After escaping an abusive marriage, Lynda runs a cafe and is raising a young son; middle-aged Del carries the guilt of his brother's drowning; and Dolores is coping with her daughter's death. Then 17-year-old Noreen rides into town in a stolen truck—screwed up, knocked up, and so beaten by life that her scarred psyche wakes even the sleep-walking souls in the Molly Thorvaldson Café. Noreen, who has ruined her relationship with her baby's father, is a sad spirit, who can't catch a break or do the right thing, even on the rare occasions when she wants to. In 10 short days, she nearly kills Lynda's dog, wrecks Del's house, and ruins the restaurant. The writing is plain, with a flatness about it that mirrors the Canadian prairie where the story is set. The style also suits the novel's bleak mood; even the most horrific events seem somehow expected. The characterizations are bare-to-the-bones as well, but the people are so expertly revealed that their pain is palpable. This is particularly true of Noreen, who has not experienced a major tragedy—just the steady erosion of her soul. The baby sparks something in her, but she miscarries. Then, through the alchemy of shared heartache, she begins to reclaim herself. Heartless once; hopeless no more. —Ilene Cooper

Brothers, Meagan. *Debbie Harry Sings in French*. 2008. 240p. Holt (9780805080803). Gr. 8–12.

Debut author Brothers tackles the topic of teenage transvestism in this ode to '80s music. After a stint in rehab where the music of Blondie becomes his recovery touchstone, 16-year-old former alcoholic Johnny is sent to live with his uncle to start anew. School bullies call him "faggot," but eyeliner-wearing Johnny

knows he's not gay because he's smitten with Maria, a Goth chick who shares his love of '80s punk. Maria helps him explore his need to cross-dress by encouraging him to enter a drag contest as Debbie Harry, while Johnny's unconditional love helps her come to terms with past suicidal impulses. With Maria's support and his family's gradual acceptance, Johnny learns to proudly embrace his inner Debbie. Though the story takes time to build momentum and the prose occasionally slides into cliché, this compelling and ultimately uplifting novel fills a niche in the growing body of GLBTQ literature for teens. Offer this to groupies of James St. James' *Freak Show* (2007), Cecil Castellucci's *Beige* (2007), and Ellen Wittlinger's *Parrotfish* (2007). —Jennifer Hubert

Brown, Jennifer. *Hate List*. 2009. 416p. Little, Brown (9780316041447). Gr. 9–12.

It is September, and senior Valerie Leftman is heading back to school. Five months earlier, her boyfriend, Nick, opened fire in the school cafeteria, killing six and wounding others before committing suicide. Despite being wounded herself while trying to stop Nick and save classmates, Val has been the focus of police investigations and rumors due to the Hate List, composed of classmates' names, which she created to vent her frustration about bullies. Struggling with guilt and grief, Val begins school as the ultimate outcast, but she finds one unexpected ally. Most books about school shootings focus on the horrifying event itself, but this debut novel breaks ground by examining the aftermath. Brown uses a creative structure of alternating narratives that incorporate excerpts from newspapers. The characters, including the many adults, are well drawn and become more nuanced as Val heals and gains perspective. Filled with unanswered questions, this compelling novel will leave teens pondering the slippery nature of perception and guilt. —Lynn Rutan

Budhos, Marina. *Ask Me No Questions*. 2006. 176p. (9781416903512). Gr. 8–11.

What is it like to be an illegal alien in New York now? In a moving first-person, present-tense narrative, Nadira, 14, relates how her family left Bangladesh,

came to the U.S. on a tourist visa, and stayed long after the visa expired (“Everyone does it. You buy a fake social security number for a few hundred dollars and then you can work.”). Their illegal status is discovered, however, following 9/11, when immigration regulations are tightened. When the family hurriedly seeks asylum in Canada, they are turned back, and Nadira’s father, Abba, is detained because his passport is no longer valid. The secrets are dramatic (“Go to school. Never let anyone know. Never.”), and so are the family dynamics, especially Nadira’s furious envy of her gifted older sister, Aisha. But Aisha breaks down, and Nadira must take over the struggle to get Abba out of detention and prevent the family’s deportation. The teen voice is wonderfully immediate, revealing Nadira’s mixed-up feelings as well as the diversity in her family and in the Muslim community. There’s also a real drama that builds to a tense climax: Did Abba give funds to a political organization? Where has the money gone? Will Immigration hear his appeal? The answer is a surprise that grows organically from the family’s story. Readers will feel the heartbreak, prejudice, kindness, and fear. —Hazel Rochman

Burd, Nick. *The Vast Fields of Ordinary*. 2009. 320p. Dial (9780803733404). Gr. 9–12.

It’s Dade’s last summer at home before college and things are looking bleak: his parents’ marriage is disintegrating; his father has a girlfriend; his mother is self-medicating with pills and booze; his sorta boyfriend, Pablo, refuses to acknowledge the nature of their “friendship”; the local media are obsessed with the mysterious disappearance of an autistic little girl; and Dade himself is feeling pretty lost and invisible, too. But then he meets the dangerous yet fascinating (and unapologetically gay) Alex, and things take a turn for the better . . . for a while. Burd’s first novel has some of the trappings of the traditional coming-out-while-coming-of-age story, and his ending seems more willful than artful. Also, some readers may find the subplot about a missing girl more distracting than symbolically resonant. That said, Burd is a terrific writer with a special gift for creating teenage characters who are vital, plausible, and always engaging (even when they’re being mean and menacing). His take on

the complications in Dade’s life is sophisticated and thoughtful, especially on the ambiguities of that “relationship” with Pablo, while his limning of the growing friendship with Alex is deeply satisfying, never striking a discordant emotional note. Clearly, Burd is a new talent to watch. —Michael Cart

Burgess, Melvin. *Doing It*. 2004. 336p. Holt (9780805075656). Gr. 10–12.

Burgess’ third novel follows three best mates as they shag, attempt to shag, try to get out of shagging, masturbate while contemplating shagging, and then shag some more. Ben is sleeping with his obsessive drama teacher; Jon finds himself irresistibly attracted to Deborah, who would be perfect if her pudginess didn’t make him subject to ridicule; and Dino, as handsome as he is horny, just wants to shag the gorgeous Jackie—or, failing that, anyone else. From snogging to shagging to bugging, *Doing It* discusses *it* in a dizzying array of contexts, and it is relentlessly and refreshingly honest: this is certainly the first YA novel to feature two boys who lose their erections while trying to lose their virginity. Scenes like that make the book less erotic than comforting: boys will be pleased to learn they are not alone in their sexual anxieties; and girls will learn that boys want sex, but are also confused and fearful about it. But while the content will raise eyebrows, it’s the writing that’s problematic. Though periodically very funny and excellently plotted, the alternating-voices narration falls flat because the characters sound nearly identical, and the writing is surprisingly undescriptive, a disappointing departure from Burgess’ previous novels (*Smack and Lady*, e.g.). Still, there’s a lot to like here, and to say that *Doing It* will generate interest among readers would be to understate the matter dramatically. —John Green

Cabot, Meg. *The Princess Diaries*. 2000. 224p. HarperCollins (9780380978489). Gr. 7–10.

Teens like novels written in diary format, and you can bet they’ll be lining up for this hilarious story about a gawky 14-year-old New Yorker who learns she’s a princess. Mia spends every available moment pouring her feelings into the journal her mother gave her:

she writes during algebra class, in the ladies' room at the Plaza (much nicer than the one in Tavern on the Green), in her grandmother's limousine. She writes down her thoughts on everything—from algebra and her mother's love life to her jet-setting father's announcement that she's the heir to the throne of the principality of Genovia. Then, of course, she records Grandmother's efforts to turn her into a princess, her dealings with classmates, the press, and a bodyguard, and also her attraction to the most gorgeous guy in school and her attempts to be assertive and happy with her new life. She whines; she gloats; she cheers, worries, rants, and raves. Reading her journal is like reading a note from your best friend. Cabot has a fine grasp of teen dialect (and punctuation), an off-the-wall sense of humor that will have readers laughing out loud, and a knack for creating fully realized teen and adult characters that readers will miss when the story ends. —Chris Sherman

Cameron, Peter. *Someday This Pain Will Be Useful to You*. 2007. 240p. Farrar/Frances Foster (9780374309893). Gr. 9–12.

Though he's been accepted by Brown University, 18-year-old James isn't sure he wants to go to college. What he really wants is to buy a nice house in a small town somewhere in the Midwest—Indiana, perhaps. In the meantime, however, he has a dull, make-work job at his thrice-married mother's Manhattan art gallery, where he finds himself attracted to her assistant, an older man named John. In a clumsy attempt to capture John's attention, James winds up accused of sexual harassment! A critically acclaimed author of adult fiction, Cameron makes a singularly auspicious entry into the world of YA with this beautifully conceived and written coming-of-age novel that is, at turns, funny, sad, tender, and sophisticated. James makes a memorable protagonist, touching in his inability to connect with the world but always entertaining in his first-person account of his New York environment, his fractured family, his disastrous trip to the nation's capital, and his ongoing bouts with psychoanalysis. In the process he dramatizes the ambivalences and uncertainties of adolescence in ways that both teen and adult readers will savor and remember. —Michael Cart

Canales, Viola. *The Tequila Worm*. 2005. 176p. Random/Wendy Lamb (9780385746748). Gr. 6–9.

From an early age, Sofia has watched the *comadres* in her close-knit barrio community, in a small Texas town, and she dreams of becoming “someone who makes people into a family,” as the *comadres* do. The secret, her young self observes, seems to lie in telling stories and “being brave enough to eat a whole tequila worm.” In this warm, entertaining debut novel, Canales follows Sofia from early childhood through her teen years, when she receives a scholarship to attend an exclusive boarding school. Each chapter centers on the vivid particulars of Mexican American traditions—celebrating the Day of the Dead, preparing for a cousin's *quinceanera*. The explanations of cultural traditions never feel too purposeful; they are always rooted in immediate, authentic family emotions, and in Canales' exuberant storytelling, which, like a good anecdote shared between friends, finds both humor and absurdity in sharply observed, painful situations—from weathering slurs and other blatant harassment to learning what it means to leave her community for a privileged, predominately white school. Readers of all backgrounds will easily connect with Sofia as she grows up, becomes a *comadre*, and helps rebuild the powerful, affectionate community that raised her. —Gillian Engberg

Caletti, Deb. *The Fortunes of Indigo Skye*. 2008. 304p. Simon & Schuster (9781416910077). Gr. 10–12.

What would you do if you were to come into two and a half million dollars unexpectedly? That's the question facing Indigo Skye, a high-school senior whose life has consisted primarily of spending time with her boyfriend, navigating her family (Dad has left the family to sell surfboards in Hawaii), and working mornings at Carrera's restaurant in Seattle. Indigo can tell what people are like by what they eat for breakfast, especially the regulars. But when a well-dressed stranger on an orange Vespa comes in and orders only a cup of coffee, Indigo finds him hard to figure out—even after he becomes a semiregular. After the stranger gives her a fortune, Indigo's search for answers takes her to Hawaii to confront her benefactor and also to ritzy Hollywood

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