

Meghan A. Fitzgerald. Young Adult Fantasy Fiction in Recent Years: A Selective Annotated Bibliography. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2008. 68 pages. Advisor: Sandra Hughes-Hassell

This selective annotated bibliography recommends and evaluates young adult fantasy fiction published between 2001 and 2008, with an emphasis on the last three years of that range. It presents the list of books in six subgenre categories. The scope of this work extends to monograph novels in non-graphic formats intended for audiences between grades 6 and 12, inclusively.

This bibliography is primarily a resource for librarians, media specialists, teachers, and others who engage in the selection of books and in readers' advisory for young adults. The fantasy genre for this audience is a popular and rapidly-growing one, and this document is intended to aid in the navigation of this field of literature, as well as to provide an updated and focused look at recent fantasy that has not yet had many years to be tested and establish a place (or not) in pre-existing collections.

Headings:

Fantasy fiction -- Bibliography

Young adult fiction -- Bibliography

YOUNG ADULT FANTASY FICTION IN RECENT YEARS:  
A SELECTIVE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

by  
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Approved by

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## Introduction

The literary genre known to us today as “fantasy” has its origins in many places—mythology, folklore, fairy tales—and yet it has not always been widely accepted as a “legitimate” or positive genre, especially for young people. The American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom announced in January of 2000 that J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series was at the top of the list of challenged books in 1999.<sup>1</sup> Fantasy literature falls under attack by parents, schools, and others for various perceived reasons—it is subversive and encourages imitative villainous behavior, it provides too much escapism and distances young people from reality, it is too violent and full of hostility.

Clearly, however, there are many who find real value in fantasy as a genre. Librarians continue to stock their shelves with the newest titles in the latest fantasy series; film producers continue to make millions of dollars on movies based on fantasy books; and, more telling than anything else, readers continue to read them, often voraciously. If nothing else, one only has to notice that the very same *Harry Potter* series that topped the challenged book list in 1999

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<sup>1</sup> Office of Intellectual Freedom. “Harry Potter Tops ALA’s Most-Challenged Books List.” 31 January, 2000. American Library Association. 2 February, 2008.  
<[http://www.ala.org/al\\_onlineTemplate.cfm?Section=january2000&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=3378](http://www.ala.org/al_onlineTemplate.cfm?Section=january2000&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=3378)>

also topped best-seller lists from 1999 to 2007.<sup>2</sup> Many people purchased each book in the series as it was released for the sole reason that it would be impossible to procure it at any local library—every copy would be checked out for months on end!

What is it, then, about fantasy that makes it so popular? In addition, and perhaps more importantly for the librarian or teacher trying to justify what's on the shelves: what is it about fantasy that makes it appropriate and worthwhile, even *beneficial*, for young people? Why should we have documents like this one that evaluate and recommend fantasy titles for teen readers, and why should librarians collect them? Many authors and scholars have written works that seek to answer just these questions. First, though, it is necessary to identify what is meant by "fantasy literature."

### *Defining fantasy*

At the most basic level, fantasy can be defined as literature which contains elements that do not or cannot exist in reality. There are, however, connotations attached to the genre that must be taken into account when defining it. Most writers agree that fantasy is heavily based on the roots of folklore and

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<sup>2</sup> Blais, Jacqueline and Anthony DeBarros. "'Deathly Hallows' records lively sales; That spells success for first 6 books, too." *USA Today* 25 July, 2007, final ed.: 1D. *LexisNexis*. University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. 2 February 2008. <[http://www.lexisnexis.com/us/lnacademic/results/docview/docview.do?risb=21\\_T3283154966&format=GNBFI&sort=RELEVANCE&startDocNo=26&resultsUrlKey=29\\_T3283154395&cisb=22\\_T3283157438&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=8213&docNo=40](http://www.lexisnexis.com/us/lnacademic/results/docview/docview.do?risb=21_T3283154966&format=GNBFI&sort=RELEVANCE&startDocNo=26&resultsUrlKey=29_T3283154395&cisb=22_T3283157438&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=8213&docNo=40)>

mythology, and contains archetypes that are universal. Quoting author Mollie Hunter, Beth Greenway relates that "'There is only a succession of folk memories filtered through the storyteller's imagination, and since all mankind shares in these memories, they are the common store on which the modern storyteller must draw in his attempts to create fantasy.'"<sup>3</sup> Fantasy is also usually considered to be a genre of quest stories, those stories in which there is a journey being undertaken by the characters in some fashion. It is a genre that is generally concerned with the conflict between good and evil, and with the use and consequences of magic. Most fantasy stories involve heroes, and many of these heroes are those who started from an ordinary or underdog status and have become more. These are all common elements of most fantasy literature, especially fantasy literature written for the young, and are readily associated with the genre even though, of course, there are always exceptions.

#### *Fantasy's appeal and benefits for teenagers*

Concerns about fantasy's effects on teenagers held by parents and other adults are brought about by elements that exist in many forms of literature and media but are emphasized or pervasive in the fantasy genre. Such concerns include the usage of blatant and occasionally overwhelming evil that may trigger

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<sup>3</sup> Greenway, Beth. "The Morphing of Mollie Hunter." *The Alan Review* vol. 23, no.3 (Spring 1996).  
<<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/spring96/greenway.html>>

imitative morality or behavior; the encouragement of escapism that may dull teens' grasp on or make them indifferent to reality; and the often violent and/or otherwise hostile settings that may induce real violence and hostility in teen readers. What follows is a review of authors' and scholars' arguments against these concerns and an attempt to demonstrate that contrary to widespread belief, the elements of fantasy that cause apprehension are in fact supportive of positive adolescent development in many ways.

### *Good versus evil*

The "good versus evil" theme is probably one of the first characteristics of fantasy that comes to mind. Often the evil manifests itself as a malicious villain or group of villains; examples include Rowling's Voldemort, J. R. R. Tolkien's Nazgul, and C. S. Lewis' White Witch. There are also characters who are not villains, but who exhibit villainous behavior, such as Colfer's Artemis Fowl. An argument has been put forth that fantasy is unsuitable for young people because they may be tempted to imitate the behavior that they see in these overtly wicked characters. However, as Donnarae MacCann points out, this argument "ignore[s] or distrust[s] the power of the writer, for an author who has produced strong

characters is certainly capable of directing the sympathy of the reader"<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, the evil present in fantasy serves as a mechanism for highlighting the good. Jane Yolen writes, "...without evil and the knowledge of its possible continuance, there can be no hope for redemption...the working through evil in order to come at last to the light."<sup>5</sup> Evil is the mirror in which the true nature of good is reflected. Yolen goes on to say that providing this mirror serves to give young people a moral reference point—doing just the opposite of encouraging wickedness, it lets the reader see where the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behavior lie, and that when the "acceptable" confronts the "unacceptable," the former will win in the end.

This is especially important for adolescents, as they are in a transitional stage between being told what to believe and how to act, and deciding such things on their own. The Search Institute's *40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents*, a list of "building blocks of healthy development" for youths between the ages of 12 and 18, devotes a full six of its assets to what it calls "positive values," including caring, equity and social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, and restraint.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, "develops sense of values/morality" is given as an important

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<sup>4</sup> MacCann, Donnarae. "Wells of Fancy." *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature*. Ed. Sheila Egoff et al. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969. 139-140.

<sup>5</sup> Yolen, Jane. *Touch Magic: Fantasy, Faerie and Folklore in the Literature of Childhood*. New York: Philomel Books, 1981. 72.

<sup>6</sup> Search Institute. *40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents (ages 12-18)*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2006. <<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/forty.html>>



adolescent milestone for those between the ages of 14 and 16<sup>7</sup>—making fantasy’s moral reference point highly appropriate for that age group.

### *Escapism*

Another prevalent argument against fantasy for young adults is that it is too escapist—that it separates the adolescents from reality in an unhealthy way and presents a “false impression of the world they live in”<sup>8</sup>. Ursula Le Guin notes that this reaction, in America at least, likely originates from a sense of fear—fear of allowing the imagination to run too rampant in a place where the value system is based on Puritan ethics and financial success.<sup>9</sup> MacCann also attributes these arguments to fears, which “result from a confusion of terms: confusion of the word fantasy when it refers to a *literary form* with fantasy as a *psychological illness*.”<sup>10</sup> To alleviate these fears, other writers have put forth the idea that in fact, fantasy may be *more* connected to reality than what is termed “realistic fiction.” The ability to use universal archetypes and symbolism makes fantasy the perfect harbinger of human truths—it “externalize[s] for the listener conflicts

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<sup>7</sup> Jones, Patrick, Michele Gorman, and Tricia Suellentrop. *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*. Third ed. How-To-Do-It Manuals For Librarians 133. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2004. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, C. S. “On Three Ways of Writing for Children.” *Only Connect: Readings on Children’s Literature*. Ed. Sheila Egoff et al. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969. 214.

<sup>9</sup> Le Guin, Ursula. *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*. New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1979. 39-42.

<sup>10</sup> MacCann, 135.

and situations that cannot be spoken of or explained or as yet analyzed”<sup>11</sup>, and presents characters that are in many ways more real than those in realistic children’s stories, as “[t]he fantasist’s characters represent every conceivable human type.”<sup>12</sup> Many writers agree that life issues can be reflected and simplified through this symbolism to make it more accessible for young people, and because of that simplification, deeper truths can be accessed. These truths come partially from the fact that fantasy has folklore as its backdrop, as fantasy is a genre that taps into that ancient source and links its readers to a larger picture of reality. Yolen writes, “Folklore is, in part, the history of humankind...it is the perfect guidebook to the human psyche; it leads us to the understanding of the deepest longings and most daring visions of humankind.”<sup>13</sup> Author Patricia Wrede agrees, as quoted by Cathi MacRae: “In the best tradition of magic mirrors, fantasy reflects not only ourselves and our shadows, but the truth of our hearts. I think this is one of the reasons some people fear fantasy.”<sup>14</sup>

We as providers of books to teens must also remember one very important aspect of reading, one of which the *40 Assets* reminds us: we would like teens to read for *pleasure*. Teens’ lives are often full of stress and worry – peer pressure, pressure to achieve high grades and get into good colleges, pressure to get a job

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<sup>11</sup> Yolen, 50.

<sup>12</sup> MacCann, 138

<sup>13</sup> Yolen, 50.

<sup>14</sup> MacRae, Cathi Dunn. *Presenting Young Adult Fantasy Fiction*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998. 7.

and conform to standards. They are often rushed and participating in too many things at once, pressed for time and under obligations from many different sources. Add to this the chemical and hormonal changes occurring in their bodies<sup>15</sup>, and it is very little wonder that escapist literature is something they seek! The adolescent milestones agree, as one of them for ages 14-16 is “seeks out ‘adventures.’”<sup>16</sup>

### *Overcoming violence and hostility*

A third reason given for the anti-fantasy sentiment is the concern that it is too violent for the young mind, that the constant battles and conflicts of the genre contain too much hostility. Lewis responds to the concern that fantasy will expose them to too much of the world of suffering and violence by saying that there is nothing to worry about, as sheltering them from the knowledge that the world contains such things “would indeed be to give children a false impression and feed them on escapism in the bad sense...Since it is so likely that they will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage.”<sup>17</sup> What is often neglected by fantasy’s detractors is that it is all about

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<sup>15</sup> Sprenger, Marilee. “Inside Amy’s Brain.” *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 62, no. 7 (April 2005): 28-32. *Academic Search Premier*. University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. August 2007.

<<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=3&hid=9&sid=97f84359-adfb-4cb6-ad6c-f07f0781980e%40sessionmgr103>>

<sup>16</sup> Jones, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, 216-217.

the struggle to *overcome* fear and evil. It is about hope and the empowerment of those to whom bad things happen. Tim Wadham talks about the idea that reading about the defeat of darkness is highly appealing “to the adolescent mind, if you consider the metaphor of the shadow as one that represents the inner demons all young people have to deal with”<sup>18</sup>. Taking this representation one step further, many writers agree that reading such fantastic stories of heroes gives young people the impetus to think of themselves the same way, not least because many fantasy heroes are youths like themselves or other “underdog” types who go through trials and become important in their own right. Author Tamora Pierce writes that “In fantasy, those normally perceived as unimportant are vital players...[the young character] walks in the company of heroes as a very junior partner and, in spite of his errors, becomes one of them, a process with which any YA can identify...Fantasy creates hope and optimism in readers.”<sup>19</sup> That hope and optimism can easily carry over into an adolescent’s real life, as Yolen says: “...this borrowed cup of courage, this acting out in fantasy, frees the reader from the fear of failing, the fear of powerlessness, the fear of fearfulness and shame.”<sup>20</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien agrees: “...it is one of the lessons of fairy stories...that on callow, lumpish, and selfish youth peril, sorrow, and the shadow

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<sup>18</sup> Wadham, Tim. “The Dictionary of Coolness: Why Fantasy Is Cool and Why Ursula K. Le Guin Rules the Roost.” *Children and Libraries* vol. 2, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2004): 31-34.

<sup>19</sup> Pierce, Tamora. “Fantasy: Why Kids Read It, Why Kids Need It.” *School Library Journal* vol. 39 (October 1993): 50-51.

<sup>20</sup> Yolen, 73.

of death can bestow dignity, and even sometimes wisdom.”<sup>21</sup> Developmentally, teens are in the process of creating a “positive identity” which includes a sense of personal power, self-esteem, purpose, and a positive future<sup>22</sup>; they “experiment with self-image” and “view the world idealistically”<sup>23</sup>, and fantasy characters who show valor and resolve in the face of adversity that represents real-life conflict can help them shape that positive, idealistic self-image.

### *Other benefits of fantasy*

Beyond responses to the specific arguments presented above, there are other benefits to fantasy as a genre of young adult literature. As mentioned, fantasy teaches lessons about courage in the face of hardship, but there are other, less gloomy lessons to be had as well. Pierce insists that fantasy, with its “battles for a discernable higher good”, will instill in young people a sense that they can—and, in some cases, perhaps *should*—challenge the status quo when they see injustices in it. It can inspire idealism and passion for a cause.<sup>24</sup> Yolen agrees, referring to fantasy as “Life in Truth”—a somewhat idealized picture of “the world *as it should be*” in which the story “becomes a rehearsal for the reader for

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<sup>21</sup> Tolkien, J.R.R. “Children and Fairy Stories.” *Only Connect: Readings on Children’s Literature*. Ed. Sheila Egoff et al. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969. 120.

<sup>22</sup> Search Institute.

<sup>23</sup> Jones, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Pierce.

life as it *should* be lived”<sup>25</sup>, thus providing an opportunity for adolescents to develop a sense that standing up for one’s values is a good thing, even though the real world does not always adhere to those values. Indeed, all groups of adolescents are reaching milestones that will help them appreciate this idea: a younger adolescent “seeks independence from family” and “displays rebellious/defiant behaviors;” a middle adolescent “makes decisions on own;” and an older adolescent “sets goals” and “seeks to firmly establish independence.”<sup>26</sup>

Yolen also takes note that “A child who can love the oddities of a fantasy book cannot possibly be xenophobic as an adult”, explaining that young people who have accepted the many different races, cultures, and languages of the worlds encountered in fantasy have an easy time accepting such things in life. Later in her book, she mentions that stories about magic—which most fantasies are—often teach the reader that one cannot receive without giving, and that in life one must make choices and accept the consequences for those choices.<sup>27</sup> This gels well with the *40 Assets*, which state that teens should be developing “social competencies” including planning and decision making, interpersonal competence, cultural competence, and resistance to peer pressure.<sup>28</sup> In addition,

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<sup>25</sup> Yolen, 62-70.

<sup>26</sup> Jones, 19.

<sup>27</sup> Yolen, 62-70.

<sup>28</sup> Search Institute.

the advantage that fantasy has over other genres in getting these messages across is that, because of the emphasis on characterization and the unknown, “[a]uthors can make observations about society without indulging in direct preaching”<sup>29</sup>—an advantage that teens are sure to appreciate.

In the end, fantasy literature for young adults seems to provide many more benefits than causes for alarm. Generations and generations of human youth have relied on folklore, mythology, and fairy stories for their enrichment and heart’s education, and today’s young people deserve no less. Just as Wendy Darling slips off to Never Land, young people love to slip off into other worlds by reading fantasy—and those who argue against it should remember that Wendy came back in one piece, and made the decision to grow up after all.

### **Relevance and Scope**

This bibliography is primarily for use by librarians, media specialists, teachers, and others who engage in the selection of books and in readers’ advisory for young adults. It is meant to offer a compilation of fantasy books that includes evaluative annotations. The books presented have been selected and are recommended by the author of this document. Hopefully, those who use it will

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<sup>29</sup> MacCann, 141.

find it valuable in their endeavors to build young adult collections and match the right adolescent to the right book.

The scope of this bibliography is defined by four basic characteristics: format, time period, genre, and appropriate age group/reading level. The former two are fairly straightforward, but the latter two can be nebulous and require further clarification.

Format. This bibliography contains only references and annotations for monograph books in non-graphic formats. While there are many graphic novels and comic books in the fantasy genre, as well as plenty of movies and other media, including them all would be a project far above and beyond the scope of this document. In addition, collections or anthologies of short stories, poems, and other short works have not been included.

Time Period. This bibliography contains only books written between 2001 and the present, in an attempt to provide an updated and focused look at recent fantasy that has not yet had many years to be tested and establish a place (or not) in pre-existing collections. In the interests of keeping this focus intact, no series has been included unless the first book in the series was published in or after 2001, and in that case only the first book in the series has received an annotation. In addition, an effort has been made to focus on the more recent publications



(2006-2008), as fewer review sources and bibliographies will have had a chance to include them.

Genre. This is, of course, a bibliography of young adult fantasy. However, as has been previously discussed, the definition of what constitutes “fantasy” can be vague, especially when subgenres such as “science fantasy” and “dark fantasy” are considered. Fantasy has much in common with science fiction, horror, and other less broad genres, and many works overlap the thresholds between them; it can be difficult to place books firmly within one category or another. For the purposes of this document, books considered to be part of the science fiction, science fantasy, dark fantasy, and/or horror genres have not been included, though ambiguous titles have been considered on a case-by-case basis.

Age group/reading level. Not only is the term “young adult” ambiguous as far as to what age groups it might refer, but reading levels are somewhat problematic because every adolescent’s reading skills develop differently. Thus, some standard must be established in order to maintain guidelines for selection and exclusion. For the purposes of this bibliography, “young adult” is inclusive of ages 12-18. Reading levels range from grades 6-12, not only to account for teens whose reading skills develop at a slower rate, but also to account for reluctant readers who may not want to put in the effort to read at their natural reading levels. Though there are many of them, fantasy books that are written for

adults but read widely by young adults have not been included, in order to keep the scope from becoming unwieldy.

With the above scope in mind, this bibliography sets out to be unique among other selection tools and bibliographies of its kind. Many such works seek to be comprehensive and include various formats including graphic novels, where this work seeks to focus on detailed annotations for a small body of recommended books. Other works address a broad age group—such as Ruth Nadelman Lynn’s *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults: A Comprehensive Guide*<sup>30</sup>—or includes many genres and types of books—such as *Best Books for Young Adults*<sup>31</sup>—while this work concentrates only on books for the young adult population (as specified above) and only on fantasy. Some of the abovementioned bibliographies do contain annotations, but they tend to be only descriptive in nature, not evaluative as is this bibliography. It is the author’s hope that those who use this document find it helpful as a compilation of many professionals’ opinions and recommendations, including the author’s own.

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<sup>30</sup> Lynn, Ruth Nadelman. *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults: A Comprehensive Guide*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Young Adult Library Services Association. *Best Books for Young Adults*. Koelling, Holly, ed. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Chicago: American Library Association, 2007.

## Methods

The books listed in this bibliography were methodically chosen via a variety of selection and evaluation tools, according to the scope outlined above. Sources of recommendations and reviews used in the selection process were as follows (abbreviations used in book entries are noted below):

- *Booklist*. Chicago : The Association, 1969- [Booklist]
- Brown, Charles M. *Locus Index to Science Fiction*. Oakland, Calif. : Locus Magazine, c1999-. Online at <<http://www.locusmag.com/index/>> [Locus]
- Gillespie, John T. and Catherine Barr. *Best Books for High School Readers*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. [Gillespie]
- *Horn Book Magazine*. Boston : Horn Book, Inc., 1945- [Horn]
- Lynn, Ruth Nadelman. *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults: A Comprehensive Guide*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2005. [Lynn]
- *NoveList*, provided by *EbscoHost*. Access provided by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. [NoveList]
- *School Library Journal*. New York : R.R. Bowker Co., Xerox Co. [SLJ]
- *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)*. Metuchen, NJ : Scarecrow Press, Inc. [VOYA]
- Young Adult Library Services Association. *Best Books for Young Adults*. Koelling, Holly, ed. 3rd ed. Chicago: American Library Association, 2007. [YALSA]
- Young Adult Library Services Association. "Best Books for Young Adults 2008." *Young Adult Library Services Association*. American Library Association. 3 March, 2008. <<http://www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/booklistsawards/bestbooksya/08bbya.cfm>> [YALSA08]

Books given more than one negative review were excluded. Also excluded were any books that did not conform to the scope of this bibliography, as

previously specified. Only one book per author was included despite the myriad of authors who have written several books that fall within the scope of the bibliography; users of this document are advised to follow up on entries they find useful to consider other titles by those authors. In addition, this bibliography has attempted to include an even distribution of each of the six chosen subgenres (see below), as well as an even distribution of books with primarily male or female appeal and books with primarily older or younger appeal. These criteria presented an interesting challenge for several reasons. In recent years, trends in fantasy literature have tended toward female protagonists and a slightly younger audience; the older teens and the boys are being plied now with more horror and historical fiction than fantasy. As *Best Books for Young Adults* points out, “[t]he fantasy genre is an area in which teenage girls are clearly center stage...of the novel-length fantasy books that made BBYA lists since 2000, 60 percent feature female protagonists either as the sole primary character or sharing the spotlight with other characters.”<sup>32</sup> In addition, since 2006, fewer highly-lauded fantasy novels have fallen into the High/Epic Fantasy and Adventure Fantasy categories; more and more, authors are writing fantasies that retell or reshape pre-existing stories—particularly fairy tales and, interestingly,

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<sup>32</sup> Young Adult Library Services Association, 38.

Shakespeare's plays—or that use alternate versions of our own world, either past or present, as the basis for the story.

The six subgenres of fantasy chosen for this bibliography are as follows:

- **Adventure Fantasy (Adv)** – fantasy in the tradition of Peter Pan, usually on a smaller scale than high/epic fantasy, usually action- and/or character-focused.
- **Alternate History/Historical Fantasy (AHH)** – fantasy which takes places in a historical or quasi-historical setting, either another world similar to our own in the past, or our own world's past with fantastical elements; written in a significantly later time period than its setting.
- **High/Epic Fantasy (HE)** – fantasy in the tradition of Tolkien, taking place entirely in worlds other than our own and usually concerned with worldwide (or larger) consequences.
- **Humorous Fantasy (Hum)** – fantasy with comedy as a primary purpose or aspect.
- **Mythology/Fairy Tales/Folklore (MFF)** – fantasy based on or comprised of any of these three types of stories, including parodies and retellings.
- **Urban/Contemporary Fantasy (UC)** – fantasy which takes place entirely or partially in our own modern world or in one with many similarities, written in the same time period as its setting.

While, of course, many of the books mentioned here fall into multiple of these subgenres, they have been placed into sections of the bibliography according to what the author has perceived to be their primary subgenres.

## Entry Format

Entries are organized alphabetically by author within each subgenre category. Each entry in this bibliography contains the following components, as applicable:

**Author:**  
**Title:**  
**Imprint:**  
**Series Information:**  
**Recommended Grade Level:**  
**Subgenre(s):**  
**Recommendation/Review Sources:**  
**Plot Summary:**  
**Awards:**  
**Subjects:**

Series information is given in the following format: [Series name (# of books currently in series): subsequent titles]. Recommended grade levels were determined by averaging or approximating those given by the various recommendation/review sources. In some cases, a note has been added to the annotation for a book if the author of this bibliography disagrees with the recommended grade levels or if there is inconsistency between sources. All plot summaries are quoted from *NoveList*<sup>33</sup> unless otherwise specified.

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<sup>33</sup> *NoveList*, provided by *EbscoHost*. Access provided by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

After the annotations for each subgenre is presented a list of “Titles for Further Reading,” which represents additional recommended titles in the same subgenre.

*A note about Spotlight books*

The six books chosen for Spotlight entries were chosen for their status as popular and/or highly-rated books which fall within the scope of this bibliography and which should not be overlooked by any collection of young adult fantasy. They hail from a variety of subgenres and address a variety of subject matter, and are as representative as possible of both male and female interests, and both older and younger interests.

## Selected Bibliography & Annotations

### *Adventure Fantasy*

### *Spotlight: Peter and the Starcatchers*

**Author:** Barry, Dave & Ridley Pearson.

**Title:** *Peter and the Starcatchers*.

**Imprint:** New York: Disney Editions/Hyperion Books for Children 2004. 464 p.

**Series Information:** Peter and the Starcatchers (3): *Peter and the Shadow Thieves*; *Peter and the Secret of Rundoon*.

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** Adv; AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** “Soon after Peter, an orphan, sets sail from England on the ship Never Land, he befriends and assists Molly, a young Starcatcher, whose mission is to guard a trunk of magical stardust from a greedy pirate and the native inhabitants of a remote island.”

**Awards:** Grand Canyon Reader Award; Sunshine State Young Reader's Award

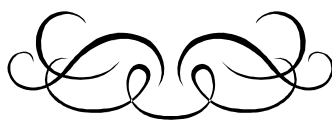
**Subjects:** Barrie, J. M.; orphans; Peter Pan; pirates

Yes, the first author listed is *the* Dave Barry, so already we have some expectations of this wonderfully crafted Peter Pan origin story—like all good Peter Pan stories, it is full of swashbuckling, flying, and boys who outperform adults on a regular basis, but thanks to its authorship it also contains a healthy dose of humor. Peter Pan veterans and newcomers alike will appreciate this fast-paced adventure novel which explains not only how Peter himself came to Never Land, but indeed where Never Land came from, how the notorious Captain Black Stache became the even more notorious Captain Hook, and how fairy dust *really* works. In addition, a few new characters enter the scene, including the usual girl-amidst-the-Lost-Boys; not Wendy Darling here, but Molly Aster. Far from the mother figure we see in Wendy, Molly is a rather adventurous sort herself: she is a Starcatcher, one of a small group of people entrusted with the task of keeping the magical substance called starstuff (what we know as fairy dust) away from malicious villains who seek to use it for their own ends. Molly is commanding and confident, compassionate but independent and mindful of her duty, and she suits a modern adventure story well. Boys and girls alike should appreciate this book that contains a little bit of everything—action, comedy, magic, pirates, friendship, talking dolphins and even a bit of romance. Those with a previous knowledge of and love for



Peter Pan will adore the way this story weaves together its bits and pieces to finally form a picture of Never Land as we know it, appealing powerfully to nostalgic fancy; those more unfamiliar with the classic will find it a newcomer-friendly introduction to the world of the boy who never grows up.

Though it will be difficult to convince older teens to read a book about Peter Pan, the humor and nostalgia factors make *Peter and the Starcatchers* thoroughly enjoyable to all ages even with its simple style and language. Reluctant readers from grades 6-9 especially might take to this book because the chapters and scenes are very short—a few of them are no longer than one page—and the action moves swiftly. One interesting thing to note is that it reads more like a film than a novel, reminiscent in tone to the movie *Hook*. The timing is more cinematic than narrative and descriptions appeal strongly to the senses. This could be a positive for reluctant readers or those who like a more modern feel to their literature; those who are expecting something more along the lines of Barrie's original should be warned ahead of time that this book is quite different in order to avoid disappointment.



**Author:** Fletcher, Charlie.

**Title:** *Stoneheart*.

**Imprint:** New York: Hyperion Books for Children 2007. 464 p.

**Series Information:** (3): *Ironhand* (not yet published); [untitled] (not yet published)

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** Adv; UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "When twelve-year-old George accidentally decapitates a stone statue in London, England, he falls into a parallel dimension where he must battle ancient 'live' statues and solve a dangerous riddle."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** London; parallel worlds; statues

For any young person who's ever found stone gargoyles creepy and relished the thought, this book is sure to appeal. With its nonstop action and *Indiana Jones*-esque clues to unravel and riddles to solve, this book reads like a movie, and boys especially will be able to appreciate not only this filmlike quality but also the journey of the young protagonist from immature outsider to heroic victor in an atmosphere of danger and desperation. Teens who like pulp adventure, mysteries, or stonework and architecture may find elements in this fantasy to draw them into the genre.

**Author:** Oppel, Kenneth.

**Title:** *Airborn*.

**Imprint:** New York: Eos, 2004. 368 p.

**Series Information:** (2): *Skybreaker*.

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-10

**Subgenre(s):** Adv; AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Matt, a young cabin boy aboard an airship, and Kate, a wealthy young girl traveling with her chaperone, team up to search for the existence of mysterious winged creatures reportedly living hundreds of feet above the Earth's surface."

**Awards:** Ruth and Sylvia Schwartz Children's Book Award; Forest of Reading Award; Governor General's Literary Award; Michael L. Printz Honor Book.

**Subjects:** airships; imaginary creatures; pirates

Reminiscent of pulp-style adventure stories and set in an alternate Victorian era, *Airborn* is an action-packed voyage into the world of the skies. Boys especially will appreciate the pirate-fueled thrills as well as the details of airship life as lived by the fifteen-year-old male protagonist, and fans of such comics as *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* should take well to the story's backdrop. The fantastical elements are kept to a minimum once the suspension of disbelief in the alternate setting is complete, and readers of historical fiction may appreciate this book as an introduction to the fantasy genre. In addition, teens with an interest in airplanes, ships and the nautical, and steampunk-esque technology will like the way Oppel fleshes out these aspects of the setting.

**Author:** Stroud, Jonathan.

**Title:** *The Amulet of Samarkand*.

**Imprint:** New York: Hyperion Books For Children 2003. 464 p.

**Series Information:** Bartimaeus Trilogy (3): *The Golem's Eye*; *Ptolemy's Gate*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-10

**Subgenre(s):** Adv; UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Gillespie; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA

**Plot Summary:** "Nathaniel, a magician's apprentice, summons up the djinni Bartimaeus and instructs him to steal the Amulet of Samarkand from the powerful magician Simon Lovelace."

**Awards:** Mythopoeic Award

**Subjects:** conspiracies; djinni; London; wizards

Part *Aladdin*, part *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, and part compelling mystery tale, this book has elements that should endear it to several different kinds of teen readers. Its "shades of gray" approach to morality may give it some appeal to readers older than the sources' recommended age range; Nathaniel is an arrogant and revenge-driven

protagonist, Bartimaeus is a subversive and indignant sidekick of sorts, and with the unsympathetic and conspiratorial magicians of Parliament as their antagonists, the reader's sense of who to root for is intriguingly uncertain. Male teens will likely be this novel's largest set of fans, drawn to the air of suspicion and danger that surrounds the events of the story.

**Author:** Ward, James M.

**Title:** *Midshipwizard Halcyon Blithe*.

**Imprint:** New York: Tor 2005. 288 p.

**Series Information:** Halcyon Blithe (2): *Dragonfrigate Wizard Halcyon Blithe*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 9-12

**Subgenre(s):** Adv

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Possessing latent magical abilities that he hopes will enable him to fulfill his potential, Halcyon Blithe takes on the duties of Midshipwizard aboard a nautical juggernaut, a vessel that harnesses a dragon with seafaring technology."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** dragons; sailors; wizards

This fantasy adventure on the high seas is the story of sixteen-year-old Halcyon Blithe, who is learning to be a magic-wielding naval officer aboard a warship. The book's focus on Halcyon's training makes its status as something of a coming-of-age story obvious, while the action centered around battle and treachery will catch and hold the attention of teen readers, especially boys. Fans of nautical voyages and intrigue such as those found in *Pirates of the Caribbean* or *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* will find much in *Midshipwizard* to like—despite the lack of pirates.

**Author:** Wilce, Ysabeau S.

**Title:** *Flora Segunda: Being the Magickal Mishaps of a Girl of Spirit, Her Glass-Gazing Sidekick, Two Ominous Butlers (One Blue), a House with Eleven Thousand Rooms, and a Red Dog*.

**Imprint:** Orlando: Harcourt 2006. 448 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 7-9

**Subgenre(s):** Adv; Hum

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Fourteen-year-old Flora Fyrdraaca, whose mother is the Warlord's Commanding General and whose father is mad, kindly helps her house's magical--and long-banished--butler, unaware that he draws strength from the Fyrdraaca will."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** butlers; mansions; military

The most appropriate word to describe this book might be “wacky,” as one can easily see even by looking only at the title—any story containing ominous butlers is going to appeal to a certain kind of audience. Girls who share this bizarre sense of humor and adventure will delight in joining Flora on her quest to grow up and take charge in a gigantic self-rearranging house, while boys might appreciate the quirky intrigue and action if they can get past the female protagonist. *Flora Segunda* is a coming-of-age story with healthy doses of politics, magic, family issues, and eccentricity.

*Alternate History/Historical Fantasy*

*Spotlight: Dreamhunter*

**Author:** Knox, Elizabeth.

**Title:** *Dreamhunter*.

**Imprint:** New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2006. 384 p.

**Series Information:** Dreamhunter Duet (2): *Dreamquake*.

**Recommended Grade Level:** 8-12

**Subgenre(s):** AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA

**Plot Summary:** "In a world where select people can enter 'The Place' and find dreams of every kind to share with others for a fee, a fifteen-year-old girl is training to be a dreamhunter when her father disappears, leaving her to carry on his mysterious mission."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** conspiracies; dreams; family

This strange tale revolves around the capture and dissemination of dreams, and the book at times is itself rather dreamlike. Transitions are missing, characters act in illogical ways, scenes are described from a character's narrow or distorted point of view. This dreamlike quality inhabits perhaps a third of the book—just enough to make its reading a vaguely surreal experience but not enough to confuse overmuch. Young readers of historical fiction might welcome this book as an introduction to the world of more fantastical literature, as it takes place in the early 1900s and takes its supernatural elements somewhat for granted. Dreamhunters—individuals who can enter an otherwise forbidden land called only the Place and collect dreams which they can then share with others—make a career out of their odd talents and there is a government regulatory body that makes laws pertaining to this unique business; the practical applications of the otherworldly may put those who are unfamiliar with fantasy at their ease.

Perhaps it is the century that separates readers from the characters which makes them seem distant and unreal, or perhaps it is simply the nature of the story; either way, it may be difficult for readers to relate to protagonist Laura Hame and her family on several levels. That said, the compelling way that the haunting story draws the reader in will make such concerns irrelevant—the Hame family history, the mystery behind the Place, the lingering and recurring imagery of the dreamworld convicts, the political conspiracy, all of these things keep the reader's attention riveted. Girls especially will enjoy the female-heavy cast and the distinctly turn-of-the-century intimacy between the characters, such as cousins Laura and Rose; the male characters are often characterized as their female counterparts see them, and there is a lot of emotion strewn onto the

pages of this novel. The journey of the main character from a small, shy teenager who always followed in her cousin's footsteps to a solitary and independent girl carrying on a legacy given to her by her equally solitary father will appeal to adolescents finding their own legacies to carry through the world.

Some sources give a recommended reading level as low as grade 5 for *Dreamhunter*, but those considering adding it to a collection or recommending it should be aware that the book does contain several rather graphic passages and scenes, including a vivid and disturbing description of a man's experience being buried alive, and several detailed accounts of serious injuries—some self-inflicted.



**Author:** Bruchac, Joseph.

**Title:** *Wabi: A Hero's Tale*.

**Imprint:** New York: Dial Books 2006. 208 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-10

**Subgenre(s):** AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "After falling in love with an Abenaki Indian woman, a white great horned owl named Wabi transforms into a human being and has several trials and adventures while learning to adapt to his new life."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** Native Americans; owls; wolves

This Native American story has very strong folkloric overtones, down to the presence of a cocky and somewhat self-centered young main character; a wise old family member with secrets and advice; and dealings with animals, including owls, wolves, and animal-human transformation. Male teens in particular will sympathize with Wabi's untested love from afar, his desire to become more than he is, and his quest to forge an identity for himself, while female teens may also be drawn into the world of the owls and the wolves, as well as the romance-driven plot.

**Author:** Duey, Kathleen.

**Title:** *Skin Hunger*.

**Imprint:** New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers 2007. 368 p.

**Series Information:** A Resurrection of Magic (3): [2 untitled] (not yet published)

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-12

**Subgenre(s):** AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** “In alternate chapters, Sadima travels from her farm home to the city and becomes assistant to a heartless man who is trying to restore knowledge of magic to the world, and a group of boys fights to survive in the academy that has resulted from his efforts.”

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** schools; slaves; telepathy; wizards

Duey’s book, the first in an upcoming trilogy depicting the return of magic to a world long bereft, is a fascinating look at the lives of two teens separated by several generations of time whose stories seem disjointed at first but later begin to come together in fascinating ways. The situation of the world and its people is uncovered at a steady pace, and watching the historical events unfold in Sadima’s time just before Hahp (the protagonist in the “future”) reads an edited version of them years later is a very interesting process. However, the large-scale events of the world are, in this first volume at least, secondary to the development of the characters and their relationships with each other, making the story a very personal and compelling one.

Due to the dual protagonist structure, both boys and girls will enjoy this book equally. Hahp undergoes many of the trials and harbors many of the worries of modern male teens, including a harsh and hateful relationship with his indifferent and uncaring father; the feeling of finding a place in the world and a future for himself; working out a sense of personal ethics—are the other boys at the academy friends or bitter rivals?—and discovering his own strengths and weaknesses. Meanwhile, Sadima will be an easy character to whom modern female teens can relate, as she yearns for a life outside her father’s home and discover what her secret talents mean. Then, once she’s found that life, she struggles to earn money, be with the man she loves, adjust to city life, and do what’s right in the face of a domineering and selfish employer who holds the life of her would-be lover in the palm of his hand and cares for nothing but his work.

Those who plan to add this to a young adult collection should be sure to plan for acquiring the rest of the trilogy as it is published, since *Skin Hunger* ends smack in the middle of its arresting story—though it manages to be less unsatisfactory and more suspense-building than one might think.

**Author:** Hale, Shannon.

**Title:** *Princess Academy*.

**Imprint:** New York: Bloomsbury Children's Books 2005. 250 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "While attending a strict academy for potential princesses with the other girls from her mountain village, fourteen-year-old Miri discovers unexpected talents and connections to her homeland."

**Awards:** Newbery Medal; Beehive Award

**Subjects:** friendship; mountains; princesses; schools; telepathy

From the title, one might expect this book to be something like fluff—perhaps a romance, or a glorified fairy tale. However, as early as page one it becomes clear that there is much more to this book than the title suggests. Hale's style is one of imagery and sensory vibrancy; she makes it easy for even the most urban of us to imagine life in a tiny, isolated mountain village. While the plot of the novel revolves around teenage girls preparing to meet a prince and competing for the right to be his bride, the meat of the story lies in Miri's maturation process and discovery of her own identity. It is a coming-of-age story in which the protagonist—a fourteen-year-old girl with sharp wits and an easy rapport with people as well as hidden fears and insecurities—learns to find her place in the world, in the village, in her family, and in the heart of her childhood friend-turned-sweetheart.

Female readers will find it easy to relate to the myriad of familiar day-to-day troubles and developmental issues that confront Miri, including her loving but worrisome relationship with her father; her exciting and confusing budding romance with Peder; her inner feelings of loneliness and being an outsider that in the end she learns were unfounded; and her realistic friendships and rivalries with the other girls of the village. Her personal quest for a purpose in life will resonate with adolescents who are beginning to think about future careers and the possibility of attending college and leaving home. The low-fantasy nature of this book will invite young readers who are not already acquainted with the fantasy genre to ease their way into it, especially those who like historical fiction.



**Author:** Leavitt, Martine.

**Title:** *Keturah and Lord Death*.

**Imprint:** Asheville, NC: Front Street 2006. 176 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 7-10

**Subgenre(s):** AHH; MFF

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "When Lord Death comes to claim sixteen-year-old Keturah while she is lost in the King's Forest, she charms him with her story and is granted a twenty-four hour reprieve in which to seek her one true love."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** death; Gothic fantasy; Scheherazade; stories

This haunting and beautiful love story recollects the tale of Scheherazade, as Keturah is a storyteller who uses her gifts to prolong one day into three while she tries to find true love before Death claims her. Teenage girls will appreciate this vaguely Gothic account of romance and fantasy, as well as the dark but alluring figure of Lord Death who both attracts and repels Keturah in a *Phantom of the Opera*-style fashion. Keturah's self-discovery throughout the novel will ring true with adolescent readers, and she is not the only character who develops; the residents of her peasant village are drawn into the tale as well, and they and their relationships with Keturah change and grow with her.

**Author:** Vande Velde, Vivian.

**Title:** *The Book of Mordred*.

**Imprint:** Boston: Houghton Mifflin 2005. 342 p.:

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 8-11

**Subgenre(s):** AHH; MFF

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "As the peaceful King Arthur reigns, the five-year-old daughter of Lady Alayna, newly widowed of the village-wizard Toland, is abducted by knights who leave their barn burning and their only servant dead."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** Arthurian legend; knights; Mordred

One of many modern retellings of ancient stories, *The Book of Mordred* follows in the footsteps of Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* as a novel that takes Arthurian legend and recounts it from the female perspective. In this case it is the story of Arthur's traitorous son Mordred and the fall of Camelot that is examined through the eyes of three women, and Vande Velde manages to dig deeply to present a Mordred that has much more depth and many more facets than the legends portray. Teen girls will appreciate the chance to delve into myth from the point of view of protagonists to whom

they can directly relate, and the novel can serve as a jumping-off point to get adolescents interested in the more classic Arthurian literature such as *Le Morte D'Arthur* and *The Once and Future King*. This book may also be appealing to those who are already fans of Arthurian legend and/or historical fiction.

*Titles for Further Reading: Alternate History/Historical Fantasy*

**Author:** Avi.

**Title:** *The Book Without Words: A Fable of Medieval Magic.*

**Imprint:** New York: Hyperion Books for Children c2005. 203 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subgenre(s):** AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "The Book Without Words appears to be a volume of blank parchment pages. But for a green-eyed reader filled with great desire, it may reveal the forgotten magical arts of making gold and achieving immortality. For generations, its magic has been protected from those who would exploit it. But on a terrible day of death and destruction, the Book Without Words falls into the hands of a desperate person."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** alchemy; books; immortality

**Author:** Cooney, Caroline B.

**Title:** *Enter Three Witches: a Story of Macbeth.*

**Imprint:** New York: Scholastic Press 2007. 288 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 8-10

**Subgenre(s):** AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "When her father betrays the Scottish king and is hung as a traitor, Lady Mary's future is bleak after she loses her only true protector and ends up locked away in the tower by the powerful and deadly Lord and [L]ady Macbeth."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** kings; Macbeth; Shakespeare, William; witches

**Author:** Lake, A. J.

**Title:** *The Coming of Dragons.*

**Imprint:** New York: Bloomsbury Children's Books 2006. 239 p.

**Series Information:** The Darkest Age (3): *The Book of the Sword; The Circle of Stone.*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subgenre(s):** AHH; HE

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** NoveList; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Two eleven-year-olds named Edmund and Elspeth discover that they have been given fantastic gifts to use against the ancient and evil forces that have been awakened by powerful magic during the Dark Ages in Great Britain."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** bards; dragons; swords; wizards

**Author:** Tiffany, Grace.

**Title:** *Ariel*.

**Imprint:** New York: Harper Collins 2005. 232 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 9-12

**Subgenre(s):** AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "A retelling of William Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' from the point of view of Ariel, the mischievous air spirit."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** Shakespeare, William; spirits; *The Tempest*

## High/Epic Fantasy

### *Spotlight: The Naming*

**Author:** Croggon, Alison.

**Title:** *The Naming*.

**Imprint:** Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press 2005. xv, 492 p.

**Series Information:** Pellinor (3): *The Riddle; The Crow*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 7-12

**Subgenre(s):** HE; AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "A manuscript from the lost civilization of Edil-Amarandah chronicles the experiences of sixteen-year-old Maerad, an orphan gifted in the magic and power of the Bards, as she escapes from slavery and begins to learn how to use her Gift to stave off the evil Darkness that threatens to consume her world."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** bards; language; prophecy

Avid readers of classic fantasy will recognize most of the elements found in this book. Those who have read Tolkien will instantly identify the epic quest archetype of the story, down to visits with mysterious forest queens, battles with dark undead creatures that hunt and pursue the protagonist and her guardian, and the One True Evil that rises from the ashes of the past and is thought unbeatable. Readers of Mercedes Lackey will find familiar the strongly feminine protagonist and the intimate exploration of teenage female development through her eyes—the occurrence of Maerad's first period is both humorous to and supportive of female readers—and, like many Lackey books, *The Naming* features an underdog main character unleashing as-yet unknown powers to vanquish what the wise and experienced could not. Le Guin fans will nod knowingly at the importance of language and names to the magic of this world, and the idea of a young and unlikely protagonist fulfilling an important world-shattering prophecy is hardly a new concept to fantasy. Good and evil, dark and light, are clear-cut concepts and there is very little in the way of shades of gray. With all of its archetypal and, unfortunately, rather predictable elements, one might wonder whether *The Naming* is too clichéd to be worthwhile.

The key, however, is that without this classical fantasy background, the book is significantly less predictable, and many budding fantasy fans will appreciate this introduction to the archetypes that are less accessible to modern young readers in the form of a Tolkien or a Le Guin. The latter authors can be somewhat dense and intimidating for a teenager of the twenty-first century; let them whet their appetites for epic classical fantasy with something written in their own language, and move on to the masters later.

*The Naming* has strong characters of both genders, but female teens in particular will appreciate Maerad's journey from insignificant slave to destined world-rescuing heroine. The book is a coming-of-age story as much as anything else, and Maerad is a strong-willed, intelligent, talented girl who serves as a fitting role model for female readers. Girls will also appreciate the mysterious and charming—yet hauntingly vulnerable—Cadvan, and may sympathize with Maerad's first encounter with family responsibility when she is reunited with her younger brother Kai.

This book may be suitable for readers slightly below the recommended reading level for the sole reason that the author seems to expect the reader to have trouble remembering minor character details. Croggon employs beautiful and poetic language that flows well and might be tricky for those at a 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, but she has a tendency to repeat information that was only just given a chapter or two before—unnecessary and potentially slightly irritating for older readers, but for a younger reader this repetition may be perfect for building reading comprehension skills.



**Author:** Bell, Hilari.

**Title:** *The Prophecy*.

**Imprint:** New York: Eos 2006. 208 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** HE

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Guided by the words of a prophecy, Prince Perryndon, who loves books more than swords, sets out to slay the black dragon that is destroying his kingdom."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** bards; dragons; princes; prophecy; swords; unicorns

*The Prophecy* is a coming-of-age story that is faintly reminiscent of fairy tales but encapsulates much of the best of high fantasy: mythical creatures, thoughtfully developed characters, plenty of action and suspense, and a dash of humor. Protagonist Perryn deals with family issues very familiar to teens of today—his father disagrees with his choice of pursuit in life and plans to force him to become a warrior. Book-loving fantasy fans will cheer when they discover that Perryn would rather read and study than fight—and they will cheer harder when this self-proclaimed scholar sets off on a quest to become a hero in his own right, using the knowledge he prizes to save the kingdom. However, this novel is not just for book-lovers. Its style is accessible and flows smoothly, and even reluctant readers may find that they easily identify with the genuinely portrayed characters.

**Author:** Bowling, Drew C.

**Title:** *The Tower of Shadows*.

**Imprint:** New York: Del Rey/Ballantine Books 2006. 304 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 8-12

**Subgenre(s):** HE

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Locus; NoveList; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "The lives of three teenagers and those of the adults charged to protect them intertwine as a great evil from the past engulfs the land of Elynnrie, forcing a former mercenary to take up his sword, and transforming a young student of magic into an untried wizard."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** brothers; revenge; wizards

What might draw some teens most to this story about two long-lost brothers is the fact that its author was in high school when the book was begun and in college when it was published. Aspiring young writers will gain much inspiration from this fantasy tale of sibling treachery, generational gaps, and growing up in a dangerous world. This book is also one of the few places in fantasy literature to find a character who is physically disabled; be careful to know your audience, however, as the character in question is specifically targeted as the recipient of other characters' protection.

**Author:** Haydon, Elizabeth.

**Title:** *The Floating Island*.

**Imprint:** New York: Starscape 2006. 368 p.

**Series Information:** The Lost Journals of Ven Polypheme (3): *The Thief Queen's Daughter*; *The Dragon's Lair*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** HE; Adv

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Through the discovery of a journal, retells the adventures of a Nain explorer named Ven Polypheme who traveled throughout the world during the Second Age of history and experienced pirate attacks, prison, treasure, and magic."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** journals; little people; pirates; sailors

*The Floating Island* is a nautical high fantasy novel involving Ven, who is a member of a vaguely hobbit-esque race called the Nain, and his escapades after surviving a pirate attack. This book is a fun and fast-moving adventure story that is likely to have something for everyone—mystery, humor, fuzzy feelings and action. Ven's journal

entries throughout serve to give the story a bit of a personal touch, while the titular island itself calls to mind ancient wonders and magics of old. Boys and girls alike should find aspects of this story to enjoy, and its whimsical nature makes it a potential candidate for a read-aloud to a younger audience.

**Author:** Nicholson, William.

**Title:** *Seeker*.

**Imprint:** Orlando: Harcourt 2006. 432 p.

**Series Information:** Noble Warriors (3): *Jango; Noman*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** HE

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Having been rejected by the Nomana--the revered warrior-monk order they long to join--sixteen-year-olds Seeker and Morning Star, along with a curious pirate named Wildman, attempt to prove that they are worthy of joining the community, after all."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** friendship; monks; religion

This inspiring story about faith, courage, and friendship will draw readers of many types. Teens with an interest in religion may appreciate the strong dedication that Seeker has toward his own faith; fantasy readers looking for something a little different from the usual sword-and-sorcery will find a dramatic and suspenseful plot with well-defined characters and a new twist on the fantastical elements of the genre; and fans of historical fiction who like tales of knights and other religious warriors of the past may find enjoyment here as well. Three protagonists promise something for everyone, boys and girls alike, and Nicholson's background as a screenplay writer makes this book filmlike in its pacing and unity of plot.



**Author:** Paolini, Christopher.

**Title:** *Eragon*.

**Imprint:** New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2003. 528 p.

**Series Information:** Inheritance (3): *Eldest*; *Brisingsr*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-12

**Subgenre(s):** HE

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Gillespie; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "In Aagaesia, a fifteen-year-old boy of unknown lineage called Eragon finds a mysterious stone that weaves his life into an intricate tapestry of destiny, magic, and power, peopled with dragons, elves, and monsters."

**Awards:** Book Sense Book of the Year; Rebecca Caudill Young Reader's Book Award; Virginia Readers' Choice Award; Beehive Award; Grand Canyon Reader Award; Sequoyah Young Adult Book Award; Young Reader's Choice Award

**Subjects:** dragons

Paolini is famous for having published such a well-received book at the age of 19. His young age shows a bit in the somewhat derivative nature of the novel, but fantasy fans probably won't mind much; Eragon the protagonist is a zero-to-hero character who forms a genuinely-written bond with a dragon and gets caught up in a whirlwind of danger and adventure, learning quickly the skills and knowledge he needs to survive. Teens will sympathize with his sudden envelopment in the confusing and often dangerous adult world outside his front door, as well as his reliance on the friendship of Saphira to carry him through the trials that await him.

*Titles for Further Reading: High/Epic Fantasy*

**Author:** Constable, Kate.

**Title:** *The Singer of All Songs*.

**Imprint:** New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books 2004. 297 p.

**Series Information:** Chanters of Tremaris (3): *The Waterless Sea; The Tenth Power*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 7-10

**Subgenre(s):** HE

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Calwyn, a young priestess of ice magic, or 'chantment,' joins with other chanters who have different magical skills to fight a sorcerer who wants to claim all powers for his own."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** music; religion; wizards

**Author:** Dickinson, John.

**Title:** *The Cup of the World*.

**Imprint:** Oxford; New York: David Fickling Books 2004. 432 p.

**Series Information:** (2): *The Widow and the King*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 9-12

**Subgenre(s):** HE

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "When Phaedra, a willful daughter of a baron, decides to marry for love, she sets off an unforeseeable chain of events and a battle between good and evil."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** knights; marriage; war

**Author:** Kaaberbol, Lene.

**Title:** *The Shamer's Daughter*.

**Imprint:** New York: Henry Holt 2004. 235 p.

**Series Information:** Shamer Chronicles (4): *The Shamer's Signet; The Serpent Gift; The Shamer's War*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** HE

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "After her mother, a Shamer, is summoned to Dunark for a mission, ten-year-old Dina is forced to use her own special powers as she is caught up in an adventure of political intrigue and survival."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** dragons; murder; shame

**Author:** Le Guin, Ursula.

**Title:** *Gifts*.

**Imprint:** Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt 2004. 288 p.

**Series Information:** Western Shore (3): *Voices; Powers*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-10

**Subgenre(s):** HE

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "When a young man in the Uplands blinds himself rather than use his gift of 'unmaking'—a violent talent shared by members of his family—he upsets the precarious balance of power among rival, feuding families, each of which has a strange and deadly talent of its own."

**Awards:** Parents' Choice Silver Award

**Subjects:** family; power

**Author:** Sage, Angie.

**Title:** *Magyk*.

**Imprint:** New York: Katherine Tegen Books 2005. 564 p.

**Series Information:** Septimus Heap (4): *Flyte; Physik; Queste*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subgenre(s):** HE; Adv

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "After learning that she is the Princess, Jenna is whisked from her home and carried toward safety by the Extraordinary Wizard, those she always believed were her father and brother, and a young guard known only as Boy 412--pursued by agents of those who killed her mother ten years earlier."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** princesses; wizards

*Humorous Fantasy*

*Spotlight: Artemis Fowl*

**Author:** Colfer, Eoin.

**Title:** *Artemis Fowl*.

**Imprint:** New York: Talk Miramax Books/Hyperion Books For Children 2001. 277 p.

**Series Information:** *Artemis Fowl* (7): *Artemis Fowl: the Arctic Incident*; *Artemis Fowl: the Eternity Code*; *Artemis Fowl: the Opal Deception*; *Artemis Fowl: the Lost Colony*; *The Artemis Fowl Files*; *Artemis Fowl: the Seventh Dwarf*.

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subgenre(s):** Hum; MFF; UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "When a twelve-year-old evil genius tries to restore his family fortune by capturing a fairy and demanding a ransom in gold, the fairies fight back with magic, technology, and a particularly nasty troll."

**Awards:** British Book Award; Blue Hen Book Award; Garden State Teen Book Award; Young Reader's Choice Award

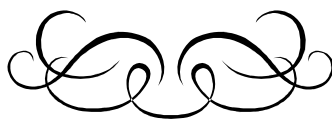
**Subjects:** crime; fairies; kidnapping

Like most good humorous fantasy, *Artemis Fowl* has both moments of hilarity and moments of seriousness—it is funny, but it is also touching, sinister, and triumphant in turns. Artemis himself is an utterly likable protagonist, despite his criminal ways; NoveList in its summary calls him an "evil genius," but this is misleading. Colfer gives his title character much more depth than such an archetypal description suggests, and in fact whether or not he is evil is up for debate. Artemis displays plenty of cold and calculating behavior, but he also shows rare moments of sympathy or insecurity that give the reader enticement to find out more about him.

It is questionable whether Artemis can truly be called the sole protagonist of the story; other characters often take point-of-view status, and the spunky underdog Holly is arguably a second main character. Because of this duality, *Artemis Fowl* appeals to boys and girls alike, though it is likely that more boys will appreciate the modern, almost James Bond-esque feel and occasional low-brow humor of this adventure story. (The dwarves of Colfer's world dig tunnels in the ground by eating the dirt in large quantities, and there is an actual plot point made of the method in which said dirt is expelled from the body.)

Reviewers and selection tools agree that *Artemis Fowl* is appropriate for grade levels 5 or 6 through 8, but it should be noted that it may appeal also to older readers due to its particular style of humor—aside from the dwarves and their ilk, the clever and witty timing of the jokes is akin to British comedy television in its dryness, and situational irony plays a large role as well. In addition, the fantasy element stems mostly

from Celtic mythology—faeries, leprechauns, etc.—and those with previous knowledge of this mythology will get a kick out of the modern twist Colfer puts on it.



**Author:** Anderson, John David.

**Title:** *Standard Hero Behavior*.

**Imprint:** New York: Clarion Books 2007. 288 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-10

**Subgenre(s):** Hum; HE

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; NoveList; SLJ

**Plot Summary:** “When fifteen-year-old Mason Quayle finds out that their town of Darlington is about to be attacked by orcs, goblins, ogres, and trolls, he goes in search of some heroes to save the day.”

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** bards; heroes

What do you get when you take the classic tale of an ordinary youngster who sets off into danger to become a hero and turn it upside down? You get *Standard Hero Behavior*, a lighthearted fantasy story that good-naturedly makes fun of its own genre and invites fans to participate. What’s nice is that the archetypes used for this parody are universal and simple enough that even those unfamiliar with fantasy will understand the joke, thus making this a prime candidate for an introduction to the genre for someone who likes a fun read—especially with its anachronistic modern language in a quasi-medieval setting. In addition, the story of the young bard sent to find real heroes is not all fluff. It carries satisfying undertones about the nature of heroism, the roles people play when danger strikes, and teens finding their places in the world.

**Author:** Landy, Derek.

**Title:** *Skulduggery Pleasant*.

**Imprint:** New York: Harper Collins Publishers 2007. 400 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subgenre(s):** Hum; Adv; UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA08

**Plot Summary:** “When twelve-year-old Stephanie inherits her weird uncle's estate, she must join forces with Skulduggery Pleasant, a skeleton mage, to save the world from the Faceless Ones.”

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** crime; detectives; skeletons; wizards

Fans of fantasy, humor, and the macabre alike will enjoy this unique and quirky book. Full of fast-paced action, strange characters, and clever dialogue, *Skulduggery Pleasant* is likely to attract teen readers with all sorts of interests. Of special note is the witty banter between the two main characters, touted by several sources as the best part of the read. The cartoonish cover may attract readers younger than the target audience, but beware: the book contains quite a bit of violence and may not be appropriate for those readers.

**Author:** Pratchett, Terry.

**Title:** *The Wee Free Men*.

**Imprint:** New York: Harper Collins Publishers 2003. 263 p.

**Series Information:** Discworld - Tiffany Aching Adventures (3): *A Hat Full of Sky*; *Wintersmith*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-10

**Subgenre(s):** Hum; HE; Adv

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Gillespie; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA

**Plot Summary:** "A young witch-to-be named Tiffany teams up with the Wee Free Men, a clan of six-inch-high blue men, to rescue her baby brother and ward off a sinister invasion from Fairyland."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** dreams; fairies; kidnapping; little people; witches

Many teenagers may already be fans of Pratchett's Discworld series for adults; the Tiffany Aching subseries is aimed particularly at teens, but it loses none of Pratchett's characteristic British humor and clever storytelling for the change of target audience. *The Wee Free Men* provides not only laughs, but also a bit of everything else—chills, action, and even some drama. The book addresses several issues with which adolescent readers may sympathize, including dealing with siblings and facing obstacles alone. Those who acquire this book for their collections should not be surprised if it appeals to teens older than the sources' recommended range simply due to its being a Discworld novel.

**Author:** Sanderson, Brandon.

**Title:** *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians*.

**Imprint:** New York: Scholastic 2007. 320 p.

**Series Information:** Alcatraz Smedry Adventures (?): (not yet published)

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** Hum; UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Horn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** “On his thirteenth birthday, foster child Alcatraz Smedry receives a bag of sand which is immediately stolen by the evil Librarians who are trying to take over the world, and Alcatraz is introduced to his grandfather and his own special talent, and told that he must use it to save civilization.”

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** clumsiness; foster children; grandfathers; librarians; parallel worlds

The title alone gives away the sort of humor that this crazy fantasy novel employs. Teens who will enjoy this book are those who love Monty Python, Nickelodeon cartoons, or Douglas Adams; from beginning to end it is hilariously insubordinate and silly, bordering on the ridiculous. The narration itself is anarchic, with protagonist Alcatraz addressing the reader directly, mocking his own book along with others and occasionally flat-out lying to the reader. Certainly, it doesn’t take itself very seriously, and young adults who often seem not to take much of *anything* seriously may really get a kick out of this book. However, in reading it they will find that they’ve inadvertently been given food for thought, including ideas about censorship and freedom of information, family, and finding it within oneself to triumph no matter what one’s strengths and weaknesses might be.

**Author:** Shipton, Paul.

**Title:** *The Pig Scrolls by Gryllus the Pig.*

**Imprint:** Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press 2005. 288 p.

**Series Information:** (2): *The Pig Who Saved the World.*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** Hum; MFF

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** “A translation of an ancient Greek manuscript written by Gryllus, a talking pig who was once a man, which describes the many adventures that he and his companions--a junior prophetess named Sybil and a bumbling goatherd--experience while traveling to Delphi to try to prevent the universe from coming to an end.”

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** Greek mythology; Odysseus; pigs

Animal stories are nothing new in the fantasy genre, but rarely does a book with an animal protagonist appeal to children over the age of ten. Shipton’s farcical blend of modern language and slapstick humor with Greek mythology and epic action, however, has the potential to keep adolescent readers entertained while introducing them—if through a much-interpreted back door—to such classical stories as the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. Boys will find the crude and sarcastic style of comedy especially alluring, though the book is not good for humor alone; questions of life, death, and the plight of humanity plague the pig protagonist and provide points for potential pondering. (Puns and jokes abound in this book; a little alliteration never hurt anyone!)

Mythology/Fairy Tales/Folklore

*Spotlight: Summerland*

**Author:** Chabon, Michael.

**Title:** *Summerland*.

**Imprint:** New York: Talk Miramax Books/Hyperion Books for Children 2002. 512 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-10

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Gillespie; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Ethan Feld, the worst baseball player in the history of the game, finds himself recruited by a 100-year-old scout to help a band of fairies triumph over an ancient enemy."

**Awards:** Mythopoeic Award

**Subjects:** baseball; Coyote; fairies; Native Americans; parallel worlds

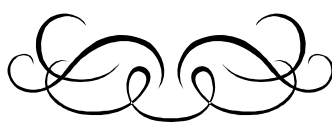
This fantasy, written from the point of view of an ever-present but rarely-noticed narrator who claims that the story is one-hundred percent true, is filled to the brim with a dreamy American mythology that brings to mind idyllic pictures of undisturbed summer afternoons and blue skies. *Summerland* mixes a hefty dose of Native American folklore with a few tall tales and a bowlful of America's national pastime, and does it with likeable characters who suffer only a little from being a bit gimmicky. Fortunately, the two characters who *aren't* gimmicky are the most important: the protagonist, Ethan Feld, and the villain, Coyote. Those who are familiar with Coyote tales will recognize the not-quite-evil trickster and his selfish, clever ways, but Chabon gives this version of Coyote enough individuality and flair that he doesn't come across as the least bit derivative. Young readers who do have that background will delight in the familiar yet fresh face, and those who don't will get a fascinating first look at this iconic deceiver.

Lovers of baseball will likely get the most out of this book, as the game is tightly wrapped up in the plot and its resolution, as well as the characters' motivations and relevance. Still, one only needs a basic understanding of the game to follow the events of the story, and it might serve to enhance a young reader's appreciation of the sport if he or she is not already a fan. Boys are more liable to enjoy this book given its male protagonist and subject matter, but there are elements here for girls as well: Ethan's companion Jennifer T. is a strong and admirable female character and there are slight undercurrents of motherhood and mother-child relationships as themes to which adolescent girls might relate. In addition, girls who identify as tomboys will see themselves easily in the competent and competitive Jennifer T. On the other side of the coin, boys may relate easily to Ethan's push-and-pull relationship with his eccentric father and his desire to find something at which to excel (since, for a long while, baseball



is most certainly not it despite his father's hopes). Ethan's discovery of the hero inside himself is an adventurous journey that will appeal to male teens, and they will of course also appreciate the competition and triumphant conclusion of the baseball game that decides the fate of the universe.

The suggested reading level of this book as given by various reviewers and selection tools is roughly grade 5 or 6, but the author of this bibliography advises discretion on a case-by-case basis: despite the protagonist's young age of eleven, younger readers may have trouble with the complexity and subtlety of the plot, language and mythological background, while older readers who may at first glance dismiss it as a children's story might end up enjoying it despite its relative simplicity of characterization and theme.



**Author:** Abbott, Tony.

**Title:** *Kringle*.

**Imprint:** New York: Scholastic Press 2005. 338 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; AHH; Adv

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "In the fifth century A.D., as order retreats from Britain with the departing Roman Army, orphaned, twelve-year-old Kringle determines to rescue his beloved guardian from the evil goblins who terrorize the countryside by kidnapping and enslaving humans and, in the process, with the help of elves and others along the way, discovers his true destiny."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** Christmas; elves; goblins; Romans; Santa Claus

The title says it all: this is the origin story of Santa Claus, as imagined by author Abbott. This may sound like a children's story, but the inclusion of slavery and harsh conditions shows that this book means business. Teens with a love for Christmas will delight (even if they don't admit it) in the discovery of how Kringle saved his fellow children and went on to become the mythical figure who lives at the North Pole; fans of history, especially of the fall of the Roman Empire, will appreciate the way myth and fact are woven together; Christian teens may find the blending of the two sides of the holiday interesting; and fantasy fans will simply enjoy the action and the magic. *Kringle* is a good book for getting into the spirit of the holidays with an emphasis on good will toward men and the like.

**Author:** Black, Holly.

**Title:** *Tithe: a Modern Faerie Tale*.

**Imprint:** New York: Simon & Schuster 2002. 310 p.

**Series Information:** [Modern Faerie Tales] (3): *Valiant: a Modern Tale of Faerie*; *Ironside: a Modern Faerie Tale*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 8-12

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Gillespie; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA

**Plot Summary:** "Sixteen-year-old Kaye, who has been visited by faeries since childhood, discovers that she herself is a magical faerie creature with a special destiny."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** elves; fairies; Gothic fantasy; knights

Don't let the whimsical plot summary fool you; this book's dark side is prominent and alluring, both in the wild and grotesque faerie realm and in the harsh, urban world of reality. Teens with a flair for the Gothic or gritty will love this story, especially those who relish a good dark romance with a hauntingly attractive-yet-dangerous elf. The book raises many thought-provoking questions for modern adolescents on topics including love and relationships, sacrifice, trust, and coping. There may not be much here for most boys, but plenty of girls—especially fans of *Twilight* and similar books—will appreciate what *Tithe* has to offer.

**Author:** Bunce, Elizabeth C.

**Title:** *A Curse Dark as Gold*.

**Imprint:** New York, NY : Arthur A. Levine Books 2008. 395 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 9-12

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Horn

**Plot Summary:** "Upon the death of her father, seventeen-year-old Charlotte struggles to keep the family's woolen mill running in the face of an overwhelming mortgage and what the local villagers believe is a curse, but when a man capable of spinning straw into gold appears on the scene she must decide if his help is worth the price." [OCLC]

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** curses; gold; mills; poverty; Rumplestiltskin; sisters

This very recent book is a historical retelling of the Rumplestiltskin story which goes far beyond fairy tale to address issues of parental death, poverty, inheritance, and personal pride in the face of adversity. It would be a good title for any teen who might be suffering from a loss or dealing with financial hardship; despite its rural setting, it could be particularly appropriate for urban adolescents who might face the same sorts of

problems. Girls in particular may sympathize readily with the plight of the two sisters and the efforts they put forth to make things right for themselves and their family mill.

**Author:** Marillier, Juliet.

**Title:** *Wildwood Dancing*.

**Imprint:** New York: Knopf 2007. 416 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 8-12

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA08

**Plot Summary:** "Five sisters who live with their merchant father in Transylvania use a hidden portal in their home to cross over into a magical world, the Wildwood."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** fairies; Gothic fantasy; parallel worlds; sisters; Transylvania

In a haunting combination of fairy tales, Gothic literature, and romance, *Wildwood Dancing* will entrance teenage readers, particularly females. Transylvania is an evocative setting to begin with, and Marillier populates the estate of Piscul Dracului with characters that love and hate and fear with equal passion. Teen girls will find much to ponder in this novel, including questions of both doomed and hidden love, family responsibility, relationships between sisters, and preserving and protecting what one loves. Fantasy fans will like the magic of the Wildwood, but this book may also appeal to fans of romance and historical fiction.

**Author:** Thompson, Kate.

**Title:** *New Policeman, The*.

**Imprint:** New York : Greenwillow Books, 2007. 442 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 7-10

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA08

**Plot Summary:** "Irish teenager JJ Liddy discovers that time is leaking from his world into Tir na Nog, the land of the fairies, and when he attempts to stop the leak he finds out a lot about his family history, the music that he loves, and a crime his great-grandfather may or may not have committed."

**Awards:** Costa Book Award; Parents' Choice Gold Award

**Subjects:** crime; fairies; family; Ireland; music; time

Steeped in Irish culture and folklore, this book is an instant draw for those with an interest in Celtic music, story, and tradition. It even contains sheet music for various songs. Those without knowledge of music will still find this story compelling, full of

vibrant old magic and interesting characters; those without knowledge of Ireland and its language can use the glossary to familiarize themselves. Teen readers will find themselves contemplating along with protagonist J.J. issues of family legacy, religion, pressures of day-to-day life, and past vs. present.

*Titles for Further Reading: Mythology/Fairy Tales/Folklore*

**Author:** Aidinoff, Elsie V.

**Title:** *The Garden*.

**Imprint:** New York: Harper Tempest 2004. 416 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 11-12

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA

**Plot Summary:** "Retells the tale of the Garden of Eden from Eve's point of view, as Serpent teaches her everything from her own name to why she should eat the forbidden fruit, and then leaves her with Adam and the knowledge that her choice has made mankind free." [NoveList]

"There's no doubt this book will upset some people, both in its depiction of God and because of its sexual scenes, which, though not salacious, are intense and uncompromising. Perhaps most disturbing is the scene in which God urges Adam to take Eve against her will. Some readers, however, will find the book liberating--a meditation on the role of humanity in the world and on the compromises people make when they choose freedom instead of obedience." [Booklist]

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** Garden of Eden; God; religion; serpents

**Author:** Bass, L. G.

**Title:** *Sign of the Qin*.

**Imprint:** New York: Hyperion Books for Children 2004. 224 p.

**Series Information:** Outlaws of Moonshadow Marsh (3): [untitled] (not yet published)

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; Adv; AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA

**Plot Summary:** "In long-ago China, Prince Zong, the mortal young Starlord chosen to save humankind from destruction, joins the twin outlaws, White Streak and Black Whirlwind, to fight the Lord of the Dead and his demon hordes."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** China; demons; martial arts; Monkey; princes

**Author:** Carey, Janet Lee.

**Title:** *Dragon's Keep*.

**Imprint:** Orlando, FL: Harcourt 2007. 320 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-10

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA08

**Plot Summary:** "In 1145 A.D., as foretold by Merlin, fourteen-year-old Rosalind, who will be the twenty-first Pendragon Queen of Wilde Island, has much to accomplish to fulfill her destiny, while hiding from her people the dragon's claw she was born with that reflects only one of her mother's dark secrets."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** Arthurian legend; dragons; princesses; prophecy

**Author:** Coombs, Kate.

**Title:** *The Runaway Princess*.

**Imprint:** New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux 2006. 288 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; Adv

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Fifteen-year-old Princess Meg uses magic and her wits to rescue a baby dragon and escape the unwanted attentions of princes hoping to gain her hand in marriage through a contest arranged by her father, the king."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** bandits; dragons; princesses; witches

**Author:** Farmer, Nancy.

**Title:** *The Sea of Trolls*.

**Imprint:** New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers 2004. 480 p.

**Series Information:** Jack the Bard (2): *The Land of the Silver Apples*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; AHH

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA

**Plot Summary:** "After Jack becomes apprenticed to a Druid bard, he and his little sister Lucy are captured by Viking Berserkers and taken to the home of King Ivar the Boneless and his half-troll queen, leading Jack to undertake a vital quest to Jotunheim, home of the trolls."

**Awards:** Virginia Readers' Choice Award; Parents' Choice Gold Award

**Subjects:** bards; Norse mythology; trolls; Vikings

**Author:** Flinn, Alex.

**Title:** *Beastly*.

**Imprint:** New York: HarperTeen 2007. 320 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 8-12

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "A modern retelling of 'Beauty and the Beast' from the point of view of the Beast, a vain Manhattan private school student who is turned into a monster and must find true love before he can return to his human form."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** Beauty and the Beast; New York City; witches

**Author:** Harrison, Mette Ivie.

**Title:** *Mira, Mirror*.

**Imprint:** New York: Viking 2004. 314 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 7-10

**Subgenre(s):** MFF

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Long after the disappearance of Snow White's stepmother, the witch trapped in her mirror manipulates a desperate peasant and a merchant's daughter to seek the magic she needs to gain her freedom, but the girls show her a power far greater."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** mirrors; queens; sisters; Snow White

**Author:** Yolen, Jane and Adam Stemple.

**Title:** *Pay the Piper*.

**Imprint:** New York: Starscape 2005. 176 p.

**Series Information:** Rock 'n Roll Fairy Tales (2): *Troll Bridge*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** MFF; UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "When Callie interviews the band, Brass Rat, for her school newspaper, her feelings are ambivalent, but when all the children of Northampton begin to disappear on Halloween, she knows where the dangerous search must begin."

**Awards:** Locus Young Adult Book Award

**Subjects:** fairies; music; Pied Piper of Hamelin

*Urban/Contemporary Fantasy**Spotlight: Inkheart***Author:** Funke, Cornelia.**Title:** *Inkheart*.**Imprint:** New York: Scholastic 2003. 534 p.**Series Information:** (2): *Inkspell*.**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-12**Subgenre(s):** UC**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Gillespie; Horn; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA**Plot Summary:** "Twelve-year-old Meggie learns that her father, who repairs and binds books for a living, can 'read' fictional characters to life when one of those characters abducts them and tries to force him into service."**Awards:** Flicker Tale Children's Book Award**Subjects:** books; kidnapping; stories

This meta-book somehow manages to feel like a true fantasy despite taking place entirely in our world and involving few directly supernatural elements until the last few chapters. *Inkheart* is the story of worlds colliding—protagonist Meggie, her father Mo, and her great-aunt Elinor are regular people from Earth, while the antagonist Capricorn and his men, the trickster antihero Dustfinger with his horned marten Gwin, and his would-be apprentice Farid are all characters from books who have been brought to life by a little-understood power that Mo possesses. Most of the story takes place in a small European village where Capricorn has taken up residence, and while it is entirely modern in its setting (cars play an important role in the action) the characters are generally so removed from the rest of the world that the reader gets a sense of a timeless, placeless backdrop. Fantasy fans looking for a story about fantastical characters bringing swords and sorcery into the real world may be disappointed, since despite its premise, *Inkheart* is mostly concerned with how the book characters are adapting (or not, in Dustfinger's case) to Earth and how the real-world characters thwart Capricorn's evil machinations (which include the use of guns and other modern technology). On the other hand, it may be difficult for those teens who have not been regular readers for some time to relate to *Inkheart*; it calls out for a strong literary background in order to fully appreciate it, not only with many references to classic (mostly fantasy) literature but also simply in its atmosphere and language. Meggie, Mo, and Elinor—as well as several minor characters such as the unfortunate Darius and the author Fenoglio—are all book-lovers; with its lyrical and nostalgically-toned prose and its characters who live and breathe stories as a matter of course, *Inkheart* is not a book for reluctant readers. Those who love reading, however, will be spellbound by the insular, word-driven world



Funke creates and the highly sympathetic characters, in particular the very genuinely-written Dustfinger.

Unfortunately, the story suffers from a bit of repetitiveness—most of the plot points center around one character being abducted or lured by Capricorn with the others following and the subsequent escape of said characters, and this cycle occurs multiple times throughout. In addition, despite being a draw for female readers, Meggie is a rather helpless protagonist, and only becomes truly important to the plot (instead of, frankly, a liability) at the very end when it turns out that she, too, has the power to read characters to life, and does so with the help of Fenoglio to save the day. Younger readers may also be put off by the somewhat unsatisfactory ending: Dustfinger's story has no resolution, and though Meggie and Mo are reunited with Meggie's mother, she has become mute during her previous ordeals and there does not seem to be any hope for recovery. Despite these potential detractions, however, *Inkheart* has enough raw wonder and characterization to please most teen readers, and many of these issues are addressed in the sequel, *Inkspell*.



**Author:** Anderson, M. T.

**Title:** *The Game of Sunken Places*.

**Imprint:** New York: Scholastic 2004. 272 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-9

**Subgenre(s):** UC; Adv

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA

**Plot Summary:** "When two boys stay with an eccentric relative at his mansion in rural Vermont, they discover an old-fashioned board game that draws them into a mysterious adventure."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** games; mansions; uncles; Vermont

This is an incredibly atmospheric story of two best friends who find themselves embroiled in an ominous game and must find a way to escape. Those who enjoy thrills and chills mixed with fantastical creatures and a bit of humor and wit will appreciate the ambiance set by this novel, and teens will recognize their own struggles to take control of their lives in an adult world in the protagonists' plight, as well as the large role that close friends play in their lives in the relationship between the two boys in the book. Boys in particular will relish the adventure-driven storyline. *The Game of Sunken Places* may appeal not only to fantasy audiences but also to fans of horror—the rural New England setting calls vaguely to mind hints of Stephen King—and of psychological thrillers.

**Author:** de Lint, Charles.

**Title:** *Little (Grrl) Lost*.

**Imprint:** New York: Viking 2007. 320 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-10

**Subgenre(s):** UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Fourteen-year-old T.J. and her new friend, sixteen-year-old Elizabeth, a six-inch-high 'Little' with a big chip on her shoulder, help one another as T.J. tries to adjust to her family's move from a farm to the big city and Elizabeth tries to make her own way in the world."

**Awards:**

**Subjects:** friendship; little people; moving

Many young adults have experienced or will experience the awkwardness and grief of moving from their childhood homes to someplace strange and different, having to make new friends and learn new ways, and this book will resonate with those experiences. Protagonists T. J. and Elizabeth are wildly opposite in personality, giving female teen readers ample opportunity to find something in them to which they can relate—one is shy and obedient, and the other is rebellious and sassy—and the way their friendship develops is valuable for any teen to witness. Ultimately a story of two girls, their relationships with one another, and their journeys to maturity and acceptance, *Little (Grrl) Lost* is a great book for any teen who is trying to adjust to new circumstances.

**Author:** McNeal, Laura and Tom McNeal.

**Title:** *The Decoding of Lana Morris*.

**Imprint:** New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2007. 304 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 8-12

**Subgenre(s):** UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "For sixteen-year-old Lana life is often difficult, with a flirtatious foster father, an ice queen foster mother, a houseful of special needs children to care for, and bullies harassing her, until the day she ventures into an antique shop and buys a drawing set that may change her life."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** drawing; foster children; wishes

Teen artists, foster children, and wishmongers will all find something in the story of Lana Morris with which to connect. Lessons about the consequences of one's actions and being careful what one wishes for are not hard to find in this book, as well as issues of acceptance, inappropriate relationships, and kindness versus cruelty. Teens who are

new to fantasy may appreciate the backseat that the fantastical elements take to characterization and themes; teens who are fantasy veterans may in turn appreciate an interesting deviation from the norm, as unlike most novels that are modern references to fairy tales, this one is subtle and refined.

**Author:** Nix, Garth.

**Title:** *Mister Monday*.

**Imprint:** New York: Scholastic 2003. 361 p.

**Series Information:** Keys to the Kingdom (7): *Grim Tuesday*; *Drowned Wednesday*; *Sir Thursday*; *Lady Friday*; *Superior Saturday*; [untitled] (not yet published)

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subgenre(s):** UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Gillespie; Locus; Lynn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Although Arthur Penhaligon is supposed to die, he is saved by a key shaped like the minute hand of a clock, and now some bizarre creatures—including Mister Monday, his avenging messengers, and an army of dog-faced Fetchers--will stop at nothing to get the key."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** asthma; heirs; keys

Protagonist Arthur is unexpectedly thrown head over heels into an adventure for which he never asked, a tried-and-true formula for fantasy that still excites readers despite its pervasiveness, and *Mister Monday* is no exception. Being the only one who can see the strange things that are occurring, Arthur will draw sympathy as he finds that he must triumph without the help of the safe and familiar—a feeling with which teens may sympathize as they learn to navigate the world beyond their childhoods. Also a positive is the obvious series nature of this book: it is the first of seven, one for each day of the week, and this structure will appeal to the teen audience which thrives on familiar characters in succeeding volumes, especially in the fantasy genre.

**Author:** Park, Linda Sue.

**Title:** *Archer's Quest*.

**Imprint:** New York: Clarion Books 2006. 176 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subgenre(s):** UC; Hum

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "Twelve-year-old Kevin Kim helps Chu-mong, a legendary king of ancient Korea, return to his own time."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** archery; Korea; math

Teens will find much to which to relate in protagonist Kevin, in this book that inspires pride and interest in one's own cultural heritage while at the same time exploring the disparities between that heritage and modern America. Wrapped in a blanket of lighthearted modern wit and time travel foolery, this story may help teens—especially Korean-Americans and boys in general—look at their places in their own families in a new light, as well as appreciate the value of the ordinary person alongside the extraordinary. Fans of *The Indian in the Cupboard* will enjoy the similar plight of the historical figure attempting to decode the unfamiliar contemporary setting. In addition, there is much to be learned about archery and Korean history in this book, which may appeal to those with an interest in weaponry and/or the ancient world.

*Titles for Further Reading: Urban/Contemporary Fantasy*

**Author:** Alexander, Alma.

**Title:** *Gift of the Unmage*.

**Imprint:** New York, NY: Eos 2007. 400 p.

**Series Information:** Worldweavers (2): *Spellspam*.

**Recommended Grade Level:** 7-9

**Subgenre(s):** UC; MFF

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "As the seventh child born of the union of two seventh children, fourteen-year-old Thea has not fulfilled her parents' hope of having special magical powers, and they try a last, desperate measure before sending her to a school for those with no magical ability."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** Native Americans; schools

**Author:** Larbalestier, Justine.

**Title:** *Magic or Madness*.

**Imprint:** New York: Razorbill 2005. 288 p.

**Series Information:** Magic or Madness (3): *Magic Lessons; Magic's Child*

**Recommended Grade Level:** 7-11

**Subgenre(s):** UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA

**Plot Summary:** "From the Sydney, Australia home of a grandmother she believes is a witch, fifteen-year-old Reason Cansino is magically transported to New York City, where she discovers that friends and foes can be hard to distinguish."

**Awards:** Andre Norton Award

**Subjects:** Australia; grandmothers; New York City; witches

**Author:** Lowry, Lois.

**Title:** *Gossamer*.

**Imprint:** Boston: Houghton Mifflin 2006. 144 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-8

**Subgenre(s):** UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** Booklist; Horn; Locus; NoveList; SLJ; VOYA

**Plot Summary:** "While learning to bestow dreams, a young dream giver tries to save an eight-year-old boy from the effects of both his abusive past and the nightmares inflicted on him by the frightening Sinisteads."

**Awards:** Parents' Choice Silver Award

**Subjects:** dreams; foster children

**Author:** Miéville, China.

**Title:** *Un Lun Dun*.

**Imprint:** New York: Del Rey 2007. 448 p.

**Series Information:** N/A

**Recommended Grade Level:** 6-10

**Subgenre(s):** UC

**Recommendation/Review Sources:** NoveList; SLJ; VOYA; YALSA08

**Plot Summary:** "Stumbling into an alternate funhouse version of her home city, twelve-year-old Londoner Deeba finds herself trapped in a world of killer giraffes, animated umbrellas, and ghost children, and must take on the role of savior to prevent utter destruction."

**Awards:** N/A

**Subjects:** London; parallel worlds; prophecy

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