Amelia Anne Is Dead and Gone by Kat Rosenfield
Thriller/Death/Bullying/Small Towns
Dutton Juvenile, 2012, 304 pp., $17.99
Two similar lives and paths intersect briefly but tellingly in this suspense thriller. Small-town girl Becca can't wait to leave for college, but her attachment to her boyfriend James makes it unexpectedly hard for her to go. As his behavior becomes increasingly erratic, Becca procrastinates about her departure. Budding thespian Amelia Anne has been brutally murdered as the book opens, and the subsequent passages describe a woman preparing for a bright future after a romantic beach vacation with her boyfriend Luke. Readers will race through the book's pages to uncover the two women's commonalities, leading to one's death and the other's betrayal. As Becca's suspicions about James, especially one neighbor, escalate, so does the anger of Amelia Anne's boyfriend. Hinting at characters' motivation and omitting details, the author forces readers to draw their own conclusions. In the end, betrayals arise from unexpected places amid life's winding roads and detours.

Barbara A. Ward
Washington State University Pullman, WA

Anything But Ordinary by Lara Avery
Fiction/Romance and Family Drama
At 17, swimming champion Bryce Graham is one dive away from fulfilling her dream of competing in the Olympics. Instead, she plunges into a coma that steals five years of her life. When she finally wakes up, Bryce insists on returning home so that things can go back to normal—against the advice of her doctors. But is a "normal" life still possible? Her once close-knit family has been undone by their grief. Torn between the past and present, Bryce must find a way to make her second chance at life count.

Avery's debut novel poses an interesting question: how does one let go of the past and move on with life after a tragedy? Although it contains some adult subjects—like drinking, sex, and suicide—that may be inappropriate for younger readers, Bryce's story would resonate with older adolescents who enjoy reading poignant dramas about romance, friendship, and family.

Jessica S. Thomas
Nashville, TN

Blood Wounds by Susan Beth Pfeffer
Fiction/Family Drama
Willa's family seems normal and happy. Her mother married Jack when Willa was young, giving Willa a better life away from the repressive small town of "No-where" Texas. But, when Willa's estranged biological father murders his wife and young daughters, this horrific crime churns up buried family secrets that make Willa question who she really is. She returns to the town her mother desperately tried to escape years ago to reopen the wounds of the past so that they can begin to heal.

Pfeffer deals with disturbing but pertinent topics—divorce, mental illness, child abuse, and cutting. While many of these topics—and the brutality of the murder—make this novel unsuitable for younger readers, Blood Wounds would be a compelling independent read for high school students and particularly young women who, like Willa, are coping with a painful life event and trying to establish a stronger sense of self.

Jessica S. Thomas
Nashville, TN

Breaking Point by Lesley Choyce
Fiction/Adventure
Orca, 2012, 124 pp., $9.95
ISBN: 978-1-4598-0128-8
Cameron has almost always been able to run away from consequences. After a previous stay at a traditional juvenile delinquent center, Cameron is given the opportunity to go Camp Mosher, located on the coast of Nova Scotia far from anything else. As he puts to use his previous delinquent center political knowledge, he quickly finds Brianna and falls for her. But Brianna is trouble.

Brianna influences Cameron to steal two kayaks and run away from Camp Mosher to begin their lives again. Despite his better judgment, they escape into the wilderness on the eve of an impending hurricane. As you follow Cameron's fast-paced story, you experience him making choices that will affect the rest of his life, for better or worse.

Aubrey Kuppler
Nashville, TN
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<th>Publisher</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Code Name Verity</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Double</strong></td>
<td>Jenny Valentine</td>
<td>Identity/Psychological Thriller</td>
<td>Hyperion</td>
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<td>Robin Mellom</td>
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<td>$16.99</td>
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<td>Mike Castan</td>
<td>Realistic Fiction/Identity</td>
<td>Holiday House</td>
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<td>$16.95</td>
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**Review of Code Name Verity**

After a plane crashes in France during World War II, two girls are separated. Queenie, a Scottish spy, is captured by the Gestapo and imprisoned at their headquarters. In order to live, Queenie must write a daily account of information she has gathered during her time as a spy that is then... day. The records they leave behind provide the plot for this novel and a new outlook on war and the bonds it creates.

**Review of Double**

Chap, tired of shuffling from place to place, seizes the opportunity to assume the identity of the boy on the flyer. For the first time in years, he experiences the sensation of being wanted, but the lie he tells to his neighbors and the assumption of a new identity prove to be bigger than he can handle. A mysterious stranger holds the key, and Chap learns that sometimes more is at stake than meets the eye.

**Review of Ditched**

When 16-year-old Justina Griffith wakes up in a ditch on the side of the road, she realizes that she has been dumped by her prom date. Unfortunately, her prom date is her best friend, and the boy she is in love with. Justina has spent almost a year trying to overcome a reputation for being a troublemaker. After several close calls, Javier must make decisions for himself to balance his complicated life.

**Review of Fighting for Dontae**

Javier is a middle school adolescent torn between two worlds. He wants to help his mom at home and secretly loves to read. Yet, he finds himself involved in the neighborhood Mexican American gang, which is more sinister than he imagines. A mysterious stranger holds the key, and Chap learns that sometimes more is at stake than meets the eye.
**Freshman Year & Other Unnatural Disasters** by Meredith Zeitlin
ISBN: 978-0-399-25423-9

Kelsey Finkelstein knows that freshman year is important—no, absolutely crucial. In fact, she plans on upgrading her wardrobe, trying out for left wing on her school’s soccer team, and finally winning over her lifelong crush, Jordan Rothman. What she doesn’t plan for is fights with best friends, tyrannical soccer captains with scary eyebrows, and a mysterious newspaper photographer who always manages to capture her in seriously embarrassing situations. Although freshman year turns out to be slightly more disastrous than she had hoped for, Kelsey remains an optimist. Armed with an indomitable sense of humor and a little help from her friends, she may just have her best year yet. Filled with witty dialogue and realistic situations, Meredith Zeitlin’s clever and heartfelt novel will have readers cheering for Kelsey Finkelstein as she navigates her way through the unnatural disaster that is freshman year.

Diana Liu
Nashville, TN

**Haze** by Erin Thomas
Orca, 2012, 175 pp., $9.95
ISBN: 978-1-4598-0070-0

The swim team at Strathmore Academy has been keeping secrets from the authorities for three years after a hazing incident went horribly wrong, ending a swimmer’s life. Bram is trying out for the renowned swim team for the second year in a row, and he needs to make the team again in order to keep his scholarship to the prestigious school. Jeremy, who was there three years ago when the secret happened, wants to go public with the information and warns Bram not to go to this year’s party. Suddenly, Jeremy is hurt in a hit-and-run accident that results in a coma. Bram is trying to solve the mystery of what happened with Abby, Jeremy’s sister, and prove that his beloved coach is not responsible. Young reluctant readers are sure to enjoy this fast-paced book packed with mystery, cliff hangers, and lots of actions.

Aubrey Kuppler
Nashville, TN

**Ghosts of the Titanic** by Julie Lawson
Holiday House, 2012, 168 pp., $16.95
ISBN: 978-0-8234-2423-8

The trauma of working on the recovery of bodies and belongings after the Titanic catastrophe costs Angus Seaton his future. The young man never shakes the guilt of mistakenly pocketing the small purse of a young woman while he fought off exhaustion during the recovery. A mysterious figure haunts Angus and eventually haunts young Kevin Messenger. It is up to Kevin to unravel a mystery, 100 years in the making, before he suffers the same fate as Angus. How can he get his parents to believe that the voice he hears is not the product of an overactive imagination?

Lawson intertwines the time periods as she sheds interesting insights into the fascinating lore of the great sea tragedy. Readers will want to learn even more about the aftermath.

Greta Williams-Hopper
Nashville, TN

**Immortal City** by Scott Speer
Penguin, 2012, 368 pp., $17.99

Maddy Montgomery is a regular 17-year-old girl living in a city where angels are paid to save people who can afford their protection. By chance, Maddy meets Jackson Godspeed, the most famous guardian angel, but she is unimpressed by his fame and fortune. Still, she finds herself attracted to him. Despite his title in society, Jackson falls for Maddy because she is the only person in the city who sees him for who he is aside from a famous guardian. When a dark force enters angel city, Jackson and Maddy not only fight for their relationship and their safety, but Maddy also discovers that she has family secrets of her own to reconcile.

Libby Byrnes
Alpharetta, GA
Losers in Space
by John Barnes

Viking Juvenile, 2012, 384 pp., $18.99

Sixteen-year-old Susan Tervaille, the daughter of a famous actor, craves fame about as much as anyone else living in 2129. Work has become passé, and Derlock, Susan's new boyfriend, concocts a plan to gain the world's attention by hijacking a spacecraft bound for Mars while supposedly losing contact with Earth. The plot, however, is derailed when the ship crashes, and the story takes an unexpected turn as Susan and her crew become stranded in space. The novel's realistic depiction of space travel and the characters' believable evolution during their space journey are the book's highlights.
\textbf{Rebel McKenzie} by Candice Ransom
\textit{Fiction/Middle School}
ISBN: 978-1-4231-4539-4

This summer, Rebel McKenzie wants to attend the Ice Age Kids' Dig and Safari Camp; in fact, she is willing to run away from home in order to pursue her passion for the Pleistocene era. Unfortunately, a nosy convict and improper footwear foil her hitchhiking plans, and soon, Rebel finds herself babysitting her sleepwalking nephew Rudy in the boring mobile home community of Grandview Estates. Despite her less than ideal situation, Rebel is determined to make it to paleontology camp. Her solution? Win the local beauty pageant and use the prize money for the camp’s registration fee. But as Rebel soon finds out, she might need a little guidance from some unexpected friends if she wants to be crowned as Miss Frog Level. In \textit{Rebel McKenzie}, author Candice Ransom has woven a cast of quirky characters into a charming story about friendship, growing up, and most important, being true to oneself.

Diana Liu
Nashville, TN

\textbf{Small Damages} by Beth Kephart
\textit{Pregnancy/Relationships/Travel Abroad}
Philomel, 2012, 304 pp., $17.99
ISBN: 978-0-39925-748-3

After her father’s unexpected death, things fall apart for 18-year-old Kenzie Spitzer. While her mother moves on with a new catering business, Kenzie relies on her boyfriend Kevin to help her cope. But reliable Kevin isn’t so reliable once Kenzie becomes pregnant, and her mother arranges a flight to Spain where a wealthy couple will adopt the child. As no word of rescue arrives from Kevin, and Kenzie languishes in Spain feeling banished and miserable, she bonds with the life that is growing inside her as well as with those around her, including Estela, the grumpy cook whose secrets influence Kenzie’s own decisions about her unborn child. Memorable language evokes Seville’s heat and flavors as Kenzie explores its architectural treasures and learns to prepare the same savory dishes prepared by Estela. While not surprising, the book’s ending will prompt much discussion among teens about choices easily made and sometimes regretted.

Barbara A. Ward
Pullman, WA

\textbf{Riot Act} by Diane Tullson
\textit{Realistic Fiction}
Orca, 2012, 128 pp., $9.95
ISBN: 978-1-4598-0139-4

After the local team loses a hockey game, 17-year-olds Nick and Daniel, along with other fans, begin torching cars and destroying buildings in a riot throughout the town. Nick finds an incriminating photograph on the Internet and decides to turn himself in to the authorities; however, Daniel finds himself in an unexpected position that “earns” him the title of “hero.” How? Daniel breaks a store window, attempting to escape the riot, but winds up helping a young girl.

Because this book is very short, it is perfect for reluctant readers who judge a book by its size. This fast read has well-developed characters and plot. While the reading level is very low, the content of the book makes it appropriate for older middle school and high school students.

Deanna Velazquez
Nashville, TN

\textbf{Splendors and Gloom} by Laura Amy Schlitz
\textit{Fantasy/Adventure}
ISBN 978-0-7636-5380-4

Cassandra, a dying witch in a secluded castle, possesses a portentous fire opal. An evil Italian puppeteer, Gaspare Grisini, commandeers two orphans to perform a puppet show with him in the London streets of 1860. Clara, the only daughter of a wealthy doctor and his wife, sees the performance and wants the trio to entertain at her 12th birthday party. The tension builds when Clara disappears after the show along with Grisini and the two orphans.

They all converge at Strachan’s Ghyll where Clara has been transformed into a marionette by the diabolical Grisini. Grisini covets the witch’s gemstone, and he must steal it from Cassandra in order to get her destructive powers, which will also save her from a fiery death. He magically summons his two wards so they can steal the fire opal for him. The period is outlined in realistic detail as the story unfolds. A complex, convoluted tale, the novel is worth the astute reader’s attention.

Judith A. Hayn
Little Rock, AR
<table>
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<th>Genre</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
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<td>Survive</td>
<td>Alex Morel</td>
<td>Survival Stories/Depression/Suicide/Romance</td>
<td>Razorbill</td>
<td>259</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Disenchantments</td>
<td>Nina LaCour</td>
<td>Fiction/Summer Road Trips</td>
<td>Dutton Books</td>
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<td>The Fine Art of Truth or Dare</td>
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<td>The Infects</td>
<td>Sean Beaudoin</td>
<td>Zombies/Relationships/Science Fiction</td>
<td>Candlewick</td>
<td>384</td>
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After a violent confrontation with a rival gang, Azael wakes up in a juvenile detention center, an environment that he knows well. The familiarity of these surroundings, however, belies something much stranger and more profound than Azael could ever expect from this experience—he isn’t allowed to call anyone, hasn’t met with a lawyer, and is made to observe a fellow inmate, Lexi, through one-way glass for hours at a time. Azael’s caseworker, Gabe, cryptically insists that there isn’t much time left for Azael to accomplish what he is supposed to do. As Azael pieces Lexi’s life together, he is struck by how familiar they both are with loss—home, family, friends, safety, and stability. Perez gives the reader sympathetic yet critical insight into the world of gangs in Houston, Texas, and is careful to show the narratives of loss that drive so many young people to join them.

Jesse Gray
Nashville, TN


Thirteen-year-old Tucker’s life changes the day his father, Reverend Feye, is fixing a shingle on the roof and disappears. An hour later, he returns, looking worn and older, with a young girl. Then his father loses his faith and his mother descends into depression, making life intolerable for Tucker. After both parents mysteriously vanish, Tucker moves in with his estranged Uncle Kosh. Tucker begins to think that these bizarre happenings might somehow be related to floating disks that glow and fade, often over the house. He even wonders if these disks teleport captives to different periods in history and the future! Tucker enters one in hopes of finding his parents.

Hautman creates a complex, spellbinding plot along with a charming, compelling hero. The genre fan will end up with more questions than answers in this first volume of a trilogy; those who devour science fiction and time travel will await the next adventure impatiently.

Judith A. Hayn
Little Rock, AR


Election to their Iowa high school homecoming court has always been the goal for popular Paige Sheridan and her best friends Nikki and Lacey, but after being involved in a drunk-driving accident at the end of junior year, Paige’s priorities change. A spot on the homecoming court loses its promised luster. As she examines her goals and identity, Paige recognizes almost insurmountable disparities between what she wants and her friends’ motivations. Along with Paige, teen readers realize that outer appearances have little to do with inner happiness.

The author deftly and honestly describes the changes in this popular senior’s life, as well as how easily she has distanced herself from her own accountability. This is a thoughtful book about family dynamics, the price of popularity, and the need to take a stand for the things that really matter. The multifaceted characters are likely to remind readers of their own classmates.

Barbara A. Ward
Pullman, WA


Jane McAllister has been the responsible one in the family ever since her older brother Ethan left for college. She reconciles the bills, cleans the house, and makes excuses for her mother’s alcoholism. Leaving one type of disaster-in-the-making at home, she spends the summer chasing a natural kind of disaster, tornadoes, across the Midwest with her brother and a crew who collect data and take photographs. Ethan’s crew tries to get as close as they can to the twisters without being injured.

The author effectively portrays the lives of the siblings, chasing after one form of destruction while avoiding the chaos at home. The descriptions clearly show just how powerful twisters can be, prompting Jane to realize that her mother’s own self-destructive choices spell ruin for anyone in her path. Despite being perched on the edge of disaster, Jane chooses a possibly brighter future for herself, no longer enabling her mother.

Barbara A. Ward
Pullman, WA
**The White Zone**

by Carolyn Marsden

Realistic Fiction/Ethnicity

Lerner, 2012, 192 pp., $17.95

ISBN: 978-0761373834

Nouri, a Shiite Muslim, and Talib, a half-Sunni/half-Shiite, are cousins who have spent their childhoods together. But as war rages in Baghdad, divisions between the Shiites and Sunnis grow stronger. When Nouri's uncle is murdered in a Sunni attack, Nouri begins to resent all Sunnis, including Talib. As the battle for Baghdad escalates, Nouri and Talib are forced to navigate the treacherous landscape of war, faith, and family. In this novel, Marsden explores the complexities of religious identity and the importance of understanding and compassion.

*Marlowe Brant*

Nashville, TN

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**What's Left of Me**

by Kat Zhang

Dystopian/Identity


ISBN: 978-0-06-211487-7

Eva and Addie began their lives the way they were supposed to—two souls working together in one body. One soul was supposed to become dominant, but Eva is still there in Addie's thoughts, even though she's supposed to be gone. As they struggle to find their place in a world that doesn't recognize what they are, they must decide whether to fight for control or let the other soul take over. Zhang's novel is a thought-provoking exploration of identity and the boundaries between self and other.

*Marlowe Brant*

Nashville, TN

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**Trafficked**

by Kim Purcell

Fiction/Trafficking

Penguin Group, 2012, 384 pp., $11.98


After both of her parents are killed in a tragic bombing accident, Hannah is presented with an opportunity to leave her home in Moldova to start a new life in the United States of America. She envisions a brighter future for herself and her family, but her dreams are shattered when she is forced into a life of servitude. Purcell's novel is a powerful and harrowing portrayal of the realities of trafficking and the struggles of those who are caught in its grasp.

*Libby Byrnes*

Alpharetta, GA

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Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy of the book to:

Melanie Hundley

1021 Delmas Ave.

Nashville, TN 37216-3630

To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Melanie Hundley at melanie.hundley@Vanderbilt.edu.
Book reviews of fiction, novels, and nonfiction. The US Review of Books is a leading book review publication. Don't pay $500 or even $300 for a professional book review. “But if the stimulus to Socrates’ adoption of his philosophical perspectives and procedures was the woman who first taught him all about love, we should recognise that Aspasia was not just a dynamic and unusually clever woman in her own right...” To the western world, Socrates is most often seen as an aging philosopher.