

Young Adult fiction (YA)  
for kids who read at a middle school level

Title: [\*Snatched\*](#)  
Author: Hautman, Pete and Logue, Mary  
Number of pages: 200  
Location at the library: YA HAU

Summary: Roni is a reporter for her high school newspaper and is determined to write an article about the kidnapping of a classmate. She strong-arms Brian (a freshman she met outside the principal's office) into figuring out how and why Alicia was abducted. Alicia recently moved into a mansion at the edge of town that's rumored to be cursed. Roni and Brian's investigation leads them to consider many suspects, including Alicia's ex-boyfriend, her stepfather and a vagabond named Driftwood Doug.

Melissa's opinion: This entertaining mystery is written in a much more breezy style than some Hautman's previous work, i.e. [\*Godless\*](#). I think it's much more accessible to a casual reader because of a well-paced plot and because it doesn't raise existential questions like the definition of God. I really enjoyed the book and all the quirky characters and hope that *Snatched* is the first book in a series.

Title: [\*Runaway Princess\*](#)  
Author: Coombs, Kate  
Number of pages: 279  
Location at the library: YA COO

Summary: Princess Margaret is very independent and is frequently at odds with her more traditional father. To her great surprise, the king announces a contest in which the winner will have the honor of marrying Margaret. Princes from across the land compete to rid the kingdom of a witch, a dragon and a band of thieves. Princess Margaret doesn't believe the contest is fair and sets off to rescue or warn the witch, dragon and thieves of the impending danger.

Melissa's opinion: Coombs wrote a fairy tale that turns fairy tale conventions on its head. Princess Margaret can save herself; the witch isn't evil; dragons are cute; the bandits take from the rich and give to the poor. It's a very funny book with references to the Wizard of Oz and Monty Python. Delightful!

Title: [\*Out of Patience\*](#)  
Author: Meehl, Brian  
Number of pages: 292  
Location at the library: YA MEE

Summary: Jake Waters desperately wants to leave the small town of Patience, Kansas. His father collects antique bathroom fixtures and wants to open the world's first toilet museum. Jake simply wants to play baseball and to ignore the stench from the nearby manure factory. There's a curse on the town, which

predicts the destruction of Patience when the Plunger (yes, a toilet plunger) of Destiny is returned. The storm of the century is looming on the horizon. Is it because Jake's father bought the Plunger of Destiny on eBay?

Melissa's opinion: This book has it all - humor, suspense, natural disasters, greed, curses, baseball and even some potty humor. There are many secondary plots in the book and each one is brought to a satisfying conclusion. My favorite character was Sira, who can recite trivia about Kansas at the drop of a hat. I enjoyed reading it and watching the characters develop throughout the book.

Title: [\*Fairest\*](#)  
Author: Levine, Gail Carson  
Number of pages: 326  
Location at the library: YA LEV

Summary: Aza was abandoned as an infant, but fortunately was adopted by a loving family. She is very self-conscious of the fact that she is ugly in a world that values beauty. However Aza has an incredibly beautiful singing voice and develops the unique ability to throw it, which she calls "illusing." The new queen manipulates Aza into "illusing" for her, which forces Aza to live a double life. Aza has to flee from the castle in order to save her life, finds an unusual ally, and learns of her true heritage.

Melissa's opinion: Levine wrote an absorbing story that is set in the same land as *Ella Enchanted*. This is a fairy tale with familiar stock characters like a wicked queen, a magic mirror, dwarves, and ogres. And, of course, there's a happy ending for Aza. The author's message of staying true to oneself wasn't subtle, but I liked the book nonetheless.

Other new YA fiction (not reviewed):

[\*Artemis Fowl: The Lost Colony\*](#) by Eoin Colfer

[\*Boy Book: A Study of Habits and Behaviors, Plus Techniques for Taming Them\*](#)  
by E. Lockhart

[\*Gideon the Cutpurse\*](#) by Linda Buckley-Archer

[\*Heart and Salsa\*](#) (Students Across The Seven Seas) by Suzanne Nelson

[\*How to Be Popular\*](#) by Meg Cabot

[\*It's a Mall World After All\*](#) by Janette Rallison

[\*Legend of Bass Reeves: Being the True and Fictional Account of the Most Valiant Marshal in the West\*](#) by Gary Paulsen

[\*Now and Zen\*](#) (Students Across The Seven Seas) by Linda Gerber

[\*River Secrets\*](#) by Shannon Hale

[\*Ruler of the Realm\*](#) (Faerie Wars, book 3) by Herbie Brennan

[\*Slawter\*](#) (Demonata, book 3) by Darren Shan

[\*Sons of Destiny\*](#) (Cirque du Freak, book 12) by Darren Shan

Juvenile Fiction (JF)  
for kids who read at an elementary school level

Title: [Escape from the Carnivale: A Neverland Book](#)  
Author: Barry, Dave and Pearson, Ridley  
Number of pages: 134  
Location at the library: J BAR

Summary: Have you ever wondered what happens on Neverland while Peter Pan is off on an adventure? Barry and Pearson team up to write about the permanent residents of the island. Little Scallop disobeys her father and, late at night, swims past the reef with her mermaid friends, Surf and Aqua. Surf is captured by pirates who collect sea oddities for a carnival sideshow. Meanwhile, Captain Hook decides to capture the ship for himself and sail away from the island forever. Will Little Scallop be able to save Surf? Will Captain Hook once again roam the high seas?

Melissa's opinion: This is the first book in the Neverland series that is geared towards younger readers than the target audience for [Peter and the Starcatchers](#) (which the authors also wrote). The plot was fairly straightforward without too many surprises, but was full of action and colorful characters. I did like the book and enjoyed reading it.

Title: [Winnie at Her Best](#)  
Author: Jacobson, Jennifer  
Number of pages: 84  
Location at the library: J JAC

Summary: Winnie is envious that two best friends have clear discernable talents because she can't figure out what her own talent is. Occasionally she thinks bad things about Zoe and Vanessa, but then feels confused because she also likes them a lot. Winnie thinks she might be a good artist and enters a city-wide art contest without telling anyone. Is Winnie the best artist in the city or does she possess another quality that makes her unique?

Melissa's opinion: Winnie is a likeable and sincere character who wrestles with jealousy, loyalty, and grief in less than 100 pages. The book is certainly not all doom and gloom, but is rather a realistic portrayal of a girl who's learning to be herself. I liked Jacobson's sweet story about Winnie.

Title: [Clementine](#)  
Author: Pennypacker, Sara  
Number of pages: 133  
Location at the library: J PEN

Summary: Clementine is an exuberant and vivacious third-grader who gets in trouble frequently. She doesn't understand why she was named after a fruit, but her brother got a normal name. After her best friend gets glue stuck in her hair, Clementine helps by cutting off the rest of Margaret's hair. Then Clementine

decides to chop off all her hair, so Margaret won't be the only one on the bus with a weird haircut. Clementine realizes that she's a handful and becomes suspicious that her parents want to trade her in for an easier child.

Melissa's opinion: Pennypacker portrays Clementine as a sweet child who simply has a different perspective on the world than most people. She is also funny, caring and clever. I enjoyed Clementine's story and hope the author will write more about her.

Title: [My Haunted House](#)  
Author: Sage, Angie  
Number of pages: 132  
Location at the library: J SAG

Summary: Araminta lives with her aunt and uncle in a house that's too big for them. Aunt Tabby is tired of fixing the temperamental boiler and decides to put the house up for sale. Araminta loves the house and decides to scare away all potential buyers. Her sabotage attempts start out small, but her last ditch effort, which she calls an Awful Ambush, is rather elaborate. Instead of being spooked, the latest buyers are actually intrigued by the ghost, a walking suit of armor, and big, hairy spiders.

Melissa's opinion: Araminta is a spunky child with a vivid imagination. Sage wrote a cute book with a fast-paced plot. The illustrations perfectly complement the story by portraying the characters as endearingly unusual. If you liked this book, please also read [Sword in the Grotto](#), the second book in the Araminta Spookie series.

Other new JF Books (not reviewed):

[Beatrice Letters](#) (Series of Unfortunate Events) by Lemony Snicket  
[Captain Underpants and the Preposterous Plight of the Purple Potty People](#) by Dav Pilkey  
[Cinderella Ballet Mystery](#) (Nancy Drew and the Clue Crew, #4) by Carolyn Keene  
[Creature in Ogopogo Lake](#) (Boxcar Children Mysteries #108) by Gertrude Warner  
[Drooling and Dangerous: The Riot Brothers Return](#) by Mary Amato  
[End](#) (Series of Unfortunate Events #13) by Lemony Snicket  
[Framed](#) by Frank Cottrell Boyce  
[Feud](#) (Lady Grace Mysteries #6) by Grace Cavendish  
[Fly by Night](#) by Frances Hardinge  
[Grampa's Zombie BBQ](#) (Wiley & Grampa's Creature Features #2) by Kirk Scroggs  
[Hurricane Joe](#) (Hardy Boys Undercover Brothers #11) by Frank Dixon  
[Ivy & Bean and the Ghost that Had to Go](#) by Annie Barrows  
[Keeker and the Horse Show Show-Off](#) (Sneaky Pony series #2) by Hadley Higginson  
[Keeker and the Sugar Shack](#) (Sneaky Pony series #3) by Hadley Higginson  
[Miss Holly is Too Jolly!](#) (My Weird School #14) by Dan Gutman  
[Monster Fish Frenzy](#) (Wiley & Grampa's Creature Features #3) by Kirk Scroggs  
[Orchid Thief](#) (Nancy Drew Girl Detective #19) by Carolyn Keene

[Teacher from Heck](#) (Rotten School series) by R. L. Stine

[Vive La Paris](#) by Esme Raji Codell

[Weakened Heart](#) (W.I.T.C.H. #21) by Alice Alfonsi

## Juvenile Non-Fiction

Title: [\*Insider's Guide to Action Sports\*](#)  
Author: Higgins, Matt  
Number of pages: 159  
Location at the library: J 796 HIG

Summary: *Sports Illustrated* compiled a book that offers in-depth profiles of nine different action sports. The action sports are BMX, in-line skating, motocross, skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, surfing and wakeboarding. It describes the history and evolution, the current and past stars, and the best places to play each sport.

Melissa's opinion: The book is well formatted and contains lots of pictures. The best ones are a series of action shots showing an athlete in action, i.e., a BMX rider doing double backflip. I think it's well researched & well written. Recommended!

Title: [\*Hurricane Hunters! Riders on the Storm\*](#)  
Author: Demarest, Chris  
Number of pages: 40  
Location at the library: J 551.552 DEM

Summary: Demarest describes a day in the life of the Air Force's weather squad that tracks hurricanes. The team actually flies into a hurricane in order to better predict how strong it is and where it will land. The book opens with a tranquil beach scene and ends with squad returning home from a successful mission. The text is rather straightforward with a heavy emphasis on fact, which allows the reader to focus on the striking illustrations.

Melissa's opinion: I think the illustrations are the best part of the book. Each is a double-page spread that vividly portrays the hurricane or the actual aircraft that's flown into the storm itself. It's a great book for sharing with younger kids and could even serve strictly as a picture book.

Title: [\*A Million Dots\*](#)  
Author: Clements, Andrew  
Number of pages: 47  
Location at the library: J 513.211 CLE

Summary: Clements came up with a clever way of conveying just how large the number million is. There is an illustration on each page, which is superimposed on a background of dots. One of those dots is highlighted and is used to represent a random number between one and one million. Clements describes a fact that relates to the specific number. For example, dot 24,901 corresponds to the number of miles around the earth at the equator.

Melissa's opinion: Clements succeeds in making the concept of a million accessible to kids. The illustrations are nice and some of the facts are really interesting, i.e. a

mosquito's wings beat 600 times per second. I think Clements's book is a novel approach to explaining such a difficult concept.

Title: [Barack Obama: Working to Make a Difference](#)  
Author: Brill, Marlene Targ  
Number of pages: 48  
Location at the library: J 921 OBA

Summary: Brill provides a lot of information about Obama's life in this short book. The author starts with a brief discussion of his parents, but quickly moves into his atypical childhood. Obama grew up in Hawaii, Cambodia and Kansas. Brill then describes how he became interested in social justice and eventually entered public service. She ends with Obama's current position as a famous freshman senator from Illinois.

Melissa's opinion: I found this to be a very evenhanded portrayal of Obama's life to date. The author didn't seem to embellish any aspect of his life or downplay any choices he's made. I do recommend the book because of its comprehensive coverage of Obama's life, but feel that the writing is of average quality.

Other new JNF Books (not reviewed):

[An Apple for Harriet Tubman](#) by Glenette Turner  
[Atlas of the United States](#) by Harm De Blij  
[Big Fun Christmas Crafts & Activities](#) by Sarah Cole  
[Bill of Rights](#) by Judith Yero  
[Butterfly Eyes and Other Secrets of the Meadow](#) by Joyce Sidman  
[Can You Feel the Force?](#) by Richard Hammond  
[Country](#) (A History of American Music) by Chris Handyside  
[Cranes](#) by Lisa Bullard  
[Dazzling Science Projects with Light and Color](#) by Robert Gardner  
[Fear This Book: Your Guide to Fright, Horror, and Things That Go Bump in the Night](#) by Jeff Szpirglas  
[Folk](#) (A History of American Music) by Chris Handyside  
[Frankenstein Makes a Sandwich](#) by Adam Rex  
[Franklin Delano Roosevelt: The New Deal President](#) by Brenda Haugen  
[Gingerbread Cowboy](#) by Janet Squires  
[Green Sea Turtle](#) by Marty Fletcher  
[How Nearly Everything Was Invented](#) by Jilly MacLeod  
[Hurricanes, Tsunamis, and Other Natural Disasters](#) by Andrew Langley  
[Jackie Robinson: Hero of Baseball](#) by Carin Ford  
[John Madden's Heroes of Football](#) by John Madden  
[Little Lost Bat](#) by Sandra Markle  
[Oh Rats! The Story of Rats and People](#) by Albert Marrin  
[Our Seasons](#) by Grace Lin  
[Positively ADD](#) by Catherine Corman  
[Puberty Boy](#) by Geoff Price  
[Pumpkins](#) by Ken Robbins  
[Rock](#) (A History of American Music) by Chris Handyside  
[Sing! Play! Create! Hands-On Learning for 3- to 7-Year Olds](#) by Lisa Boston

[Survival Guide for Kids with ADD or ADHD](#) by John Taylor  
[Thanksgiving](#) by Ann Heinrichs

## Picture Books and Easy Readers

### Caldecott Corner Honor Book 2001

Title: [Click Clack Moo: Cows That Type](#)  
Author: Cronin, Doreen  
Illustrator: Lewin, Betsy  
Number of pages: 32  
Location at the library: E CRO

Summary: Farmer Brown starts hearing strange noises from the barn. But it's when he starts receiving typed notes from the cows that his trouble really begins.

Debbie's opinion: Cronin's nonsensical text is hilarious. When coupled with Lewin's appropriately bold, seemingly slapdash illustrations, a winning package is the result. Should make the children think about the power of communication!

This month's picks:

### Ready-to-Read

Title: [My Robot](#)  
Author: Bunting, Eve  
Illustrator: Salerno, Steven  
Number of pages: 24  
Location at the library: E BUN

Summary: This book features a boy and his robot, Cecil. Cecil can do a lot of things: play tag at school, clean up the boy's bedroom and lead the school band. But most of all, Cecil is the best at being the boy's friend.

Debbie's opinion: The theme of this book, (having your own robot), is an attractive one for kids. Add to that the bright, appealing illustrations that are formatted in sort of a 'robot cam' viewpoint and you come up winner a winner that will be read over and over. Extras include a craft project on making your own robot puppet and helpful hints for parents on how to help your child be a better reader.

### Ready-to-Read

Title: [Dancing Dinos](#)  
Author: Lucas, Sally  
Illustrator: Lucas, Margeaux  
Number of pages: 30  
Location at the library: E LUC

Summary: A young boy is reading a book about dinos dancing on a stage when they dance right off the page!

Debbie's opinion: The pictures and the rhyming text will make this story easy for beginning readers. Part of the "Road to Reading" series, this is the first level, for kids who know the alphabet and are just beginning to read. The book starts with guidance for parents when choosing the level at which their child is reading. Follow this up with *Dancing Dinos Go to School*, another fun read.

### Picture Book

Title: [I Love Tools](#)  
Author: Sturges, Philemon  
Illustrator: Halpern, Shari  
Number of pages: 28  
Location at the library: E STU

Summary: In this colorfully illustrated book, a family works together to build a simple birdhouse for a bluebird.

Debbie's opinion: As the family labors, each task is accompanied by a tool (and one that youngsters can use under adult supervision.) Aided by the simple, rhyming text which explains each tool's function, Halpern's illustrations are also simple and crisp. If your preschooler loves tools, they will love this book. PS: The endpapers are an added bonus, giving little known but interesting facts about tools.

### Picture Book

Title: [Wolves](#)  
Author: Gravett, Emily  
Illustrator: Gravett, Emily  
Number of pages: 32  
Location at the library: E GRA

Summary: Contrary to public opinion, Wolves do not eat little girls in red cloaks. A rabbit takes a book about wolves from the library to find out for himself.

Debbie's opinion: Like David Weisner's classic, The Three Little Pigs, Gravett creates a story, although simple in text, which is more sophisticated than it originally seems to the reader. As the rabbit reads the book, he fails to notice a wolf stepping out of the book, even larger and more menacing. The wolf continues to creep up on the unsuspecting rabbit until he reads that wolves like to eat rabbits! With a look of surprise, the rabbit is gone and the library book is torn to shreds! Fear not...for those more meek at heart, (me being one of them), there is an alternative ending in which the wolf is a vegetarian. The illustrations are mixed media...highlighting again the mixed messages in the text. A brilliant book, albeit perhaps not for little ones.

### Ready-to-Read

Title: [Dear Tooth Fairy](#)  
Author: Ruelle, Karen  
Illustrator: Ruelle, Karen  
Number of pages: 32  
Location at the library: E RUE

Summary: Emily has a loose tooth and Harry tells her about the tooth fairy. From that point on, that's all Emily can think about.

Debbie's opinion: This entertaining book reflects the natural curiosity of a child when waiting for the Tooth Fairy. Children will identify with Emily's excitement as

she writes to the Tooth Fairy each day, her valiant efforts to get the tooth to finally fall out, and her attempts at sleep as she waits for the magical visit. Ruelle constructs her characters from ink outlines and simple watercolor washes, toning them down enough so as not to interfere with young readers trying to decode the words.

#### Read Aloud

Title: [Roar of a Snore](#)  
Author: Arnold, Marsha  
Illustrator: Pratt, Pierre  
Number of pages: 32  
Location at the library: E PRA

Summary: Someone is snoring so loudly that Jack can't sleep. He sets off to find the culprit, in hopes of falling back asleep.

Debbie's opinion: Rhythm, rhyme, repetition and a charming surprise ending make this a great read aloud and a winner with the preschool set. Pratt's illustrations are brightly colored and slightly off kilter. Set against a nondescript background, the reader must focus on the action of Jack and his family as they search for the perpetrator of all this noise. You have to read the story, though, if you want to find out who the villain is!

#### Read Aloud

Title: [Just Teenie](#)  
Author: Meddaugh, Susan  
Illustrator: Meddaugh, Susan  
Number of pages: 32  
Location at the library: E MED

Summary: Teenie is so small, that if she should fall out of a chair, it might prove fatal. So when the carnival comes to town, Teenie visits Madame Flora and asks her for her help in growing bigger. Madame Flora gives her small box with a plant in it. When the plant begins to grow out of control, Teenie puts it outside, where it flourishes.

Debbie's opinion: Life is all about perspective and in this tale of a really tiny girl, Meddaugh suggests what it is really like to be so small. When Teenie is carried away by the plant, she sees things differently and her place in the world changes dramatically. She now protects rather than needing protection. All of a sudden everyone else seems small. When it comes to life and the pursuit of happiness, it's all about angle and perspective, (and good planning...for she picks up seeds to plant next year!)

#### Read Aloud

Title: [Dig Dig Digging](#)  
Author: Mayo, Margaret  
Illustrator: Ayliffe, Alex  
Number of pages: 24  
Location at the library: E AYL

Summary: This is a great board book for all those young children who love large trucks, tractors and cranes.

Debbie's opinion: The simple, repetitive rhymes have a thumping rhythm of the machines that they represent when in motion, ("Diggers are good at dig, dig, digging/ scooping up the earth and lifting and tipping./ They make huge holes with their dig, dig, digging.") The verse on every page ends with the refrain, "They can work all day." Created out of cut and torn papers, Ayliffe's vibrant collages fill each double-page spread. Young children, fascinated by sounds, actions, and the sheer enormity of these vehicles will find much to like in these busy scenes.

#### Read Aloud

Title: [The Daddy Goose Treasury](#)  
Author: French, Vivian  
Illustrator: Cantone, Anna; et. al.  
Number of pages: 93  
Location at the library: E FRE

Summary: The stories behind familiar rhymes are told from the perspective of Daddy Goose.

Debbie's opinion: Each section features the traditional rhyme followed by a longer and profusely illustrated original story. For example, Miss Muffet actually befriends the spider that sits down beside her. Although the illustrations are by four different artists, the book presents a unified reading experience. All the pictures are large and colorful. With each story serving as a springboard for creating original stories for other nursery rhymes.

Other new Picture Books (not reviewed):

[Dancing Dinos Go to School](#) by Sally Lucas  
[Baby Bear's Books](#) by Jane Yolen  
[A Girl and Her Gator](#) by Sean Bryan  
[A Particular Cow](#) by Mem Fox  
[The Runaway Dinner](#) by Allan Ahlberg  
[Potty Time!](#) by Parker Sawyer  
[The Featherless Chicken](#) by Zhiyuan Chen  
[Chickens to the Rescue](#) by John Himmelman  
[Can't Catch Me](#) by John Hassett  
[Hungry Beasties](#) by Nancy Twinem  
[Fletcher and the Falling Leaves](#) by Julia Rawlinson