

Open Shelf

October 2005

This month:

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley
The Giver by Lois Lowry
Frankenstein by Mary Shelley
City of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau
Jurassic Park by Michael Crichton
The Wind Singer by William Nicholson

city of mesa library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

Letter from the editor



October, with its lengthening nights and All Hallows Eve, is supposed to be the domain of ghouls, demons, and sorcerers. Some people are terrified by this hand-in-the-bowl-of-peeled-grapes kind of fright. They are not our kind of people. To us, the future is what's terrifying, with its faceless autocrats, emotionless citizens, and brain eating robots. So, check for Big Brother under the bed, and hope that tomorrow never comes.

Mary Beth Hutchinson
Open Shelf Editor
teens.info@cityofmesa.org

of course (of course!) being descendents of only the most attractive human specimens. Everyone is happy and content (and totally stoned) throughout his entire life until...

The beauty is not in the plot, which may have a thousand twists and turns but can only lead to one of two possible ends. But in the telling of the tale, Huxley's prose is amazing, his tone shifting back and forth from disapproval to awe with remarkably strange fluidity. His characters are as three-dimensional as they can be, given the setting. As for plot twists, there are plenty, enough to keep even an eager reader on his feet. Naturally, someone finds out that everything is corrupt. That's not a surprise, of course, to anyone who's read one of these books before, but even you—yes, *you*, you there, you who doubts you could be impressed by a dystopian book—will enjoy this novel.

- Alyssa Ratledge
★★★★★

about to enter the world as an adult. He is to have a well-defined purpose and place. But it is not to be so. The task he is given will wrench out of place every foundation he thought was solid.

Through Jonah's eyes we see the layers of his world peeled back and laid bare. Even in a world designed to be perfect and peaceful, there is cruelty, sorrow, and anguish. In this world, to live purely peaceful in the present, you must forget the past. With a loss of history, any sense of what is good and right, and even what it is to be human, is also lost.

- Mary Beth Hutchinson
★★★★★

Brave New World

by Aldous Huxley

This is not just your typical old "future" book. This is the *first* future book, written many years before the 1970's negative utopia boom. This was the book that, along with Orwell's *1984*, gave rise to the notion that maybe everything wouldn't be perfect in the future after all.

Here in Huxley's 'brave new world,' the environment is polluted, people take drugs at the first sign of trouble or confusion, and embryos are manufactured to be smart, stupid, or somewhere in between, all of them

The Giver

by Lois Lowry

There are few books that revolutionize your life, few books for which you can demarcate your life as "pre" and "post" your reading of said book. *The Giver* is blissfully one of these works.

Jonah's community is perfectly engineered. Every point in a person's life is structured; every life has a clear objective. The world is tranquil. At twelve, Jonah is



rating system

bad; needs work ★
so-so ★★
average ★★★
good ★★★★
excellent; perfect ★★★★★

Visit the Library's Web Site:
www.mesalibrary.org
and see the Teens page!

DUELING REVIEWS:

Frankenstein

by Mary Shelley

Frankenstein—Everybody knows it, nobody likes it. It's the tragically whiny tale of a tragic little man with a tragic God complex. The only reason you will enjoy this books is if you enjoy watching people tragically spiral into misery, you sick, sick person. Instead, watch one of the thousands of Frankenstein movies and eat some popcorn.

– Luke Lambert

★★

Victor Frankenstein creates a being—it should have been perfect. Victor would be the father, to teach the world to his creation. This didn't happen.

I don't like reading classics. Victorian classics are the worst ever. I've had to read so many classics that I've felt like taking a screwdriver to my skull. However, my tendency to associate "classic" with "gun to the head" was strangely missing when I read **Frankenstein**. The plot was interesting, and way different from any movie version I'd ever seen. It was short, stuck mostly to the point, and wasn't even that bad to read with a study guide due. Not bad. Not bad at all.

– Jenny Knatz

★★★★

City of Ember

by Jeanne DuPrau

Within the reaches of a looming permanent night sits a small flicker—a city. Ember, an alienated stronghold against the mysterious black, is a city that has sustained its population for generation after generation. Lina and Doon, two twelve-year-old citizens of Ember and former best friends, are chosen for jobs as part of their city's annual ritual. This, though not entirely innovative or smooth, sets the story up nicely. Within their two roles—Lina as Messenger and Doon in the underground Pipeworks—much is discovered of Ember's past as well as the corruption of its present citizens. Ember's future is precarious, and the two friends, united by a common theory, piece

together cryptic clues to discover a means to lead their fellow citizens away from the impending darkness.

The City of Ember stays a very stable book once the action is established. Though it does fall victim to some minor clichés, the story's events remain tense and compelling, seeming to be guided by something of an eerie, flickering light bulb, especially during the novel's final chapters. **The City of Ember** does a nice job of providing much-needed dystopian novel for the boy-wizard-dominated adolescent fantasy genre.

– Joe Tuccillo

★★★★★

Jurassic Park

by Michael Crichton

This is an awesome book about an island where dinosaurs are brought back into existence to be part of one big zoo, Jurassic Park. Everything's going fine until one of the employees shuts down everything in order to make some quick cash. The following events cascaded, making an absolute horror from what was supposed to be the greatest zoo in the world. This is a dystopia for you—that which is said to be perfect being completely un-perfect.

If you have seen the movie adaptation of this book, then forget what you saw and read the real story, because as is often the case, the book is better than the movie.

– Chris Smith

★★★★★

The Wind Singer

by William Nicholson

The Hath family lives in Aramanth, where the motto is "Better today than yesterday. Better tomorrow than today." In this society, every person has a chance to change his or her status in the social structure of the city. One's status is based on one's intelligence and ability to perform according to the guidelines. At least, that's the way it's supposed to be. Aramanth is far from being the Utopian society that it promises to be. When twins Kestrel and Bowman Hath, along with their outcast compadre Mumpo, get the chance to change their world, they take it. With the power of the

ancient relic in the center of their city, they are able to make Aramanth into something better.

Of course, that's just book one of the **Wind on Fire** trilogy. Things are never so simple. However, **Wind Singer** is by far my favorite of the three, and is a fulfilling read.

– Jenny Knatz

★★★★★

Where's FRANK?

FRANK Teen Literary Magazine 2005 is now on sale at all three City of Mesa Library branches for 75 cents, or read it for FREE in the library or your school media center. Teen submissions for the 2006 issue will be accepted until March 31, 2006. You can also sign up to join the teen editorial staff.

Check

<http://mesalibrary.org/teens/frank/>
for more information.

What is YAAC?



The Young Adult Advisory Council (YAAC) is a group of teens from many of Mesa's junior and senior high schools. They hold meetings twice monthly to review books for this newsletter and to plan special activities. They also help the librarians in Mesa Public Library's Young Adult Room at the Main Library as volunteers and assist with programs.

If you are interested in becoming a member of YAAC, call (480) 644-2734 or stop by the Young Adult service desk and ask for an application.

Learn more at:

 **mesalibrary.org**
City of Mesa Library on the Web



CITY OF MESA
Great People, Quality Service!