

Open Shelf

February 2005

city of mesa library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

This month:

Black Juice by Margo Lanagan
The Sight by David Clement-Davies
Eragon by Christopher Paolini
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letter from the editor



This is my official "hodgepodge" month. Hopefully, since there's a little bit of everything, you'll find something you like.

Happy Groundhog Day!!! (For, as we all know, that's the only REAL important holiday this month. ^.-)

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Black Juice

By Margo Lanagan

This book was a collection of eleven stories, most of them very bizarre. They range from a family having a relative put to death slowly in a tar pit to one where people treat the sounds an accordion makes as the sounds of gods.

I didn't really care for this book, but then I prefer long books with lots of adventuring. If off-the-wall kinds of things are what you like, then I am sure that you will enjoy this book.

—Chris Smith ★★

The Sight

By David Clement-Davies

This book is a heartwarming work of imagination. It's about a wolf pack and their struggle to stay alive after an evil wolf curses

them. This book has a little bit of everything, including adventure, mystery, and fantasy. It brings you into a whole new world from a wolf's point of view. You will definitely get into this book after the first couple of pages. It is one of the best books I've read in a while. Enjoy!

—Anna Gurevitz ★★★★★

Eragon

By Christopher Paolini

Looking for fresh original fantasy that doesn't rely on the old crappy standbys of wise elves, mystical swords, and talking dragons? Well, look right past *Eragon*, which tries to squeeze any literary goodness out of these tired subjects. It even commits the grievous (and often hilariously transparent) crime of lifting its plot from *Star Wars*. Young *Eragon* (read: Luke Skywalker) lives with his uncle (Uncle Owen) when he finds a dragon's egg in the wilderness while hunting. He meets an old man, Obi Wan, who becomes his mentor and teaches him the ways of magic, called the Force. He also learns that he is a member of the long-dead warriors, the Dragon Riders (Jedi). After his home is destroyed and his uncle killed, he receives a mysterious sword (light saber) and embarks on the inevitable quest. He joins up with the rebellion (Rebellion) to bring down the evil empire and its emperor (Evil Empire and its emperor).

Paolini shows some flair for writing, and I may read the sequel when it is released. However, if he does not move past the crutches of fantasy, his potential talent will quickly fade. This book clearly shows the sad state of modern fantasy. Books are few and far between that hook readers with engaging plots and literary skill rather than swirling descriptions of magic. I, along with many other

fans of original, challenging fantasy, will continue to pray for the future of our beloved genre. Unfortunately, if the trend continues, we will simply have more and more *Eragons* cluttering up the shelves, copies of copies of copies...

—Mary Beth Hutchinson ★★★

Editor's Note: This was meant to be put in opposition to the review of Eragon in the December issue, but due to email glitches, it goes in now. Sorry!

The Sea of Trolls

By Nancy Farmer

When I first picked up this book, I was expecting rollicking adventure on the high seas... and trolls. Well, what I got was a slightly juvenile book with a solid plot and rather lovable characters. It also has Vikings, which is of course an added bonus. If I were you, wandering the shelves, I wouldn't hesitate to pick it up.

—Luke Lambert ★★★★★



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!

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

By Douglas Adams

Imagine *Star Wars*, only funnier and with fewer epic battles. Experience the adventures of Arthur Dent as he meanders through the galaxy to just do things. Feel the excitement as he faces the terror known as vagon poetry, the fear as the mice argue the price of Arthur's brain, and know the agony as he loses his towel in space. If I say it once, I'll say it a thousand times: READ THIS BOOK!

—*Matthew Taylor* ★★★★★

Screen Test

by David Klass

I found this on the shelf, and, noting it was by the author of *You Don't Know Me*, which I had loved, I eagerly picked it up. *Screen Test* is an okay book, and I admit I would have liked it more if I had read it before the standard-setting *You Don't Know Me*.

This novel tells the story of a girl who is a plucked from her hometown to be in movies in Hollywood. Yes, it's one of the cute-girl-becomes-star-gets-betrayed books (betrayal? in Hollywood? NEVER!), but it was as good, if not better, than most. My only real complaint was how thin she was and, of course, that it wasn't *You Don't Know Me*.

—*Alyssa Ratledge* ★★★

Worldwar series

By Harry Turtledove

This series picks up in the midst of WWII. The Germans, Soviets, and British are happily pounding away at each other when a new, mysterious power arrives on planet Earth. They are the Race, and they have come to conquer Earth. The remaining human powers join together and forge an uneasy alliance to face this deadly enemy. The Race quickly crushes the humans again and again, throwing the world into disarray. But the humans have a few tricks left, including nuclear bombs and poison gas, making the world a very interesting place.

This story is told from a variety of perspectives from all sides, bringing the conflict to a very

personal level. This is an incredible series, both in scope and detail, making it a good read for both history buffs and fantasy fans.

—*Justin Millar-Haskell* ★★★★★

Esperanza Rising

by Pam Munoz Ryan

Esperanza is a happy, content girl used to living on a wealthy ranch in Mexico. She had the best clothes, went to the finest schools and was surrounded by kind, loving people until she lost her beloved father. Since a man must run Esperanza's father's ranch business, one of her devious and greedy uncles proposes marriage to her mother. When her mother defiantly refuses, her house is destroyed, forcing Esperanza's family to flee to California and move in with the migrant workers.

Through the journey to California, the precious little princess is forced to mingle with the peasants, thinking that even though she's riding the train with poor, dirty people there is a wide, deep river that runs between her and them.

Shortly after having finally arrived in California, her mother is struck with first Valley Fever, then pneumonia. In fear of also losing her mother, Esperanza desperately begins working in the fields doing hard labor. As she strives to survive and keep her loved ones safe, she realizes that there is no actual river between her and the others "below" her.

Esperanza Rising, based on a true story, is a splendid and easy read that reaches out to readers to inspire with the captivating story of a courageous girl who never gives up.

—*Geraldine del Rosario* ★★★

My Sister's Keeper

By Jodi Picoult.

Wow. This book. Wow. The whole time I was reading it I could not put it down and I have the detention slips to prove it. Wow. I've never read Picoult before, but now I'm going to look into her other stuff.

The story begins both in present day and fifteen years ago Rhode Island when fourteen-year-old Anna Fitzgerald pawns the locket her father gave her seven years ago to raise the money to hire a lawyer. Her case: suing for medical emancipation from her parents,

meaning that legally her parents have no power over her when it comes to medical treatment. The story behind this starts before Anna is born, when her then two-year-old sister, Kate, is diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. Kate needs a donor and she needs one badly. Her older brother Jesse isn't a good match and Kate can't wait for mom to pop out a kid a year in hopes that one is a match. So, Sara and Brian Fitzgerald find a geneticist who picks out an embryo who matches Kate and nine months later, Kate is given a transfusion of stem cells from her younger sister's cord blood.

From there on out, Anna has been a 'spare-parts' kid, living her life to give her sister the biomaterial Kate needs to live. Cord blood, white blood cells, bone marrow, regular blood when Kate starts bleeding . . . The whole book is not just one story, but the stories of everyone involved told from their points of view.

I won't tell you the ending, but be warned, someone does die at the end and no matter what you think as you read it, the death will make your jaw drop when you learn who it is.

Moving, yet filled with enough humor to make you choke, *My Sister's Keeper* is a really good—no, *great*—story. What are you waiting for? Here's your invitation. Go read it!

—*Patricia Langevin* ★★★★★

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

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