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mesa public library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

letter from the editor



The end is near, summer is coming, school is almost (finally) out. By now I'm sure everyone out there is so sick of school a debate goes on each morning whether or not to go. But, enduring only one month more can't be that bad - right? To make suffering through all the more easy, might I suggest some time set aside to just absorb the plot of a good, long book. They can keep us all sane as the countdown to summer continues...

Rolland LaHaie
open shelf Editor



rating system

bad ★
so-so ★★
good ★★★
excellent ★★★★★

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The Black Flower

By Howard Bahr

Bushrod Carter and his two friends, Jack Bishop and Virgil L. Johnson serve in a Mississippi Regiment during the Civil War. They have fought through its entirety and the focus is the battle of Franklin, Tennessee, before, during, and after. This is Bahr's first novel, but he excellently portrays the hearts and minds of the soldiers that fought in America's greatest tragedy.

—Rolland LaHaie ★★★★★

Kissing Doorknobs

By Terry Spencer Hesser

Tara Sullivan is and has always been worried about something! For years she worried something bad would happen to her family, but she always seemed normal to everyone...until one day when she heard the phrase, "step on a crack and break your mother's back." How could that change a person's life, you ask? Well for one out of forty people in America a statement as ordinary as that can wreck their lives forever. Tara begins to avoid stepping on cracks, then she starts counting them. Soon it becomes an obsession she can't get rid of. This is only the beginning of Tara's fight against a disease called obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). This book offers hope to many and the story is both interesting and touching. I loved it! I recommend this book to anyone looking for a good story.

—Mia Fioritto ★★★★★

This month:

The Black Flower by Howard Bahr

Kissing Doorknobs by Terry Spencer Hesser

1984 by George Orwell

Daughter of the Drow by Elaine Cunningham

Dancing Naked in the Mine Field by Kary Mullis

Falling Leaves: The True Story of an Unwanted

Chinese Daughter by Adeline Yen Mah

Salamandastron by Brian Jacques

The Hermit Thrush Sings by Susan Butler

Taking Sides by Kate William

1984

By George Orwell

You are a member of the party. You are one of the few lucky ones who has some rights. But above all, you have Big Brother watching over your shoulder. Big Brother, the Uncle Sam of the English Socialist Party. English Socialists? What!? It is real in the world of **1984** by George Orwell. Nothing is yours; it's all Big Brother's. But will this government stand, or will the few party members who, deep inside, hate it, destroy the power of Big Brother? Read this interesting book and see. But, beware, it is kind of a slow read.

—David LaHaie ★★ ★

Daughter of the Drow

By Elaine Cunningham

The Windwalker. The special amulet that allows you to carry the magic of your homeland around with you. Liriel Baenre is a young (30-year-old) Drow elf in search of adventure in the "Night Above." Fyodor of Rashemen is an equally young berserker human trying to find a way to control his battle rages. What do these three things have in common? Do you really have to ask me that?

It was a great book—romance, treasure, dismemberment, burning, parties...all the necessary requirements for a good book. I loved the book; I read it twice! If you love **Forgotten Realms**, pick this book up.

—Christopher C. Carbone ★★★★★

Dancing Naked in the Mind Field

By Kary Mullis

Ever wonder what it is exactly that Nobel Prize winners think about? They must have complicated mathematical formulas or confounding scientific inquiries on their minds all the time, right? Kary Mullis shoots holes in that theory with a book that is basically a forum for his highly intelligent—and highly irreverent—mind to spill into. Mullis won the Nobel Prize in 1993 for his invention of the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), which advanced by leaps and bounds the world of DNA and genetics. In his book, the reader receives Kary Mullis on everything from the scientific method to the OJ Simpson trial, from what really causes AIDS to how one can light up a light bulb with brain power. The widely respected chemist shows that you don't have to give up fun for a Nobel Prize. The jacket touts this book as a "multi-dimensional playland of ideas," exactly what you'd imagine the interior of the mind of this quirky Nobel laureate to resemble. Of course, Mullis' language is highly advanced and the stream-of-consciousness style of the writing makes his reasoning a bit hard to follow at times, but with careful reading one can gain an in-depth look at the creative, endearing, and mostly wacky mind of a Nobel laureate.

—Sara Thorson ★ ★ ★ ★

Falling Leaves: The True Story of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter

By Adeline Yen Mah

Falling Leaves is the story of Adeline Yen Mah's life. Two weeks after she is born in Shanghai in 1937, her mother dies. Her father, Joseph, then marries Niang, a beautiful but hate-filled woman who rules the home with an iron fist; her reign of terror infects the family even after her death. Adeline is the youngest, and a girl, the lowest rung of the ladder. Niang treats the children from Joseph's previous marriage

like trash. Although the family is rich, they are forced to walk miles to school every day, despite the fact that a tram runs right by their house.

Falling Leaves recalls Frank McCourt's memoir of his childhood, **Angela's Ashes**. Both take place in foreign countries and both describe unendurable childhoods. Yet both uplift us and remind us of the will of the human spirit to survive. The similarities stop there, though. Yen Mah's crisp writing style is very different from McCourt's colorful, casual writing. **Falling Leaves** is remarkable in its own way, it's not "the next **Angela's Ashes**." It's a jewel in its own right.

—Erin Hutchinson ★ ★ ★ ★

Salamandastron

By Brian Jacques

This is an extremely good story, set in a mythical world called Mossflower. The characters are creatures like mice, rats, foxes, badgers, etc. It's about a badger lord who rules the mountain of Salamandastron. He adopted a young female badger who runs away. A large army led by the blue-eyed weasel Feragho besieges Salamandastron. At Redwall Abbey, a young squirrel named Samkim and his friend Arula the Mole lose the fabled Sword of Martin. They try to recover it and end up helping the besieged Badger Lord. It has a surprise ending so I think more people should read it.

—Thomas Alonge ★ ★ ★ ★

The Hermit Thrush Sings

By Susan Butler

Many generations after the world, swept by nuclear fire, was wiped out of all but a few pockets of human life, a young girl named Leora Moran is born with a webbed hand. Because of this "deformity," she is an outcast in her stepmother's house and a curiosity to the rest of her town. But, as well as being an affliction, her unusual hand also gives Leora the ability to draw with mysterious power. However, it is not until she frees a baby birmba, a creature she has been taught to fear her entire life,

that Leora realizes that there might be more for her. She recognizes that perhaps there could be opportunities beyond those that currently await her within the restricted village. In setting free the birmba, Leora risks being sent to the Institute, a horrible establishment for those with irregularities, such as her hand. Rather than face this grim fate, Leora decides to run away, to the forbidden Outside. Beyond the locked gates of her protected village dwell the birmbas and mortal danger. Regardless, Leora goes out into the Edgeland and further, into the forest past the Great Fence ringing the town, setting in motion an unforgettable quest for belonging and family, and ultimately, for liberation.

The Hermit Thrush Sings is an excellent book. It pulls you into the story so that you can't put it down for a minute. It keeps you wanting more, and I hope a sequel is soon in coming. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone.

—Ella Peterson ★ ★ ★ ★

Taking Sides

By Kate William

All of a sudden Enid falls head over heels in love with the new kid in school, Jeff French. The problem is—so has every other girl at Sweet Valley. Now, Enid is the shy, quiet type and just as she is about to talk to him Lila says she wants him.

Elizabeth Wakefield is Enid's best friend and doesn't tolerate Lila, the rich snob. She won't let Lila take Jeff away from Enid because she deserves the best. Well, while Liz is helping Enid, her twin, Jessica, decides to help Lila. Since you now have the problem of sisters against each other you can see why this book is called **Taking Sides**. To find out who gets the guy, and if the sisters ever stop the feud, read it.

Personally, I think it could have had more story and plot but it was good if you like **Sweet Valley High** books.

—Becky Melohn ★ ★ ★



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