

open shelf

september
2000

mesa public library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

letter from the editor

Well, September has rolled around again and we all know what that means: a new school year and a new **open shelf** editor. We are all sorry to see Rolland go, and wish him luck in whatever his life will bring. I hope I can do my job as well as he did.

As we look ahead we wonder what the next year will bring. School will inevitably get harder as that precious commodity known as "free time" diminishes. Use what little free time you have wisely. Find a good book to read. Who knows—maybe you will get so absorbed in a book that you will forget the stresses of the day. Give it a try!

Leon Eubanks
open shelf Editor

Send comments and suggestions to
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rating system

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

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This month:

Cryptonomicon by Neal Stephenson

The Eye of the World by Robert Jordan

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit by Garry Willis

The Onion: Our Dumb Century

by T. Herman Zweibel

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

by J. K. Rowling

Out of Nowhere by Ouida Sebestyen

The Haunting of Hill House by Shirley Jackson

Cryptonomicon

By Neal Stephenson

This book is amazing! It is an intricate web of plot sequences, each related to the other, but it is also a work of ideas. This lends a rambling quality to the book that is intriguing, although confusing at times. As you read the book you can see Stephenson's quirky ideas in each of his characters and this makes it truly unique.

Cryptonomicon is about encryption and how it has and is affecting the world. The two basic plot lines take place in WWII and present day. Each is composed of many sub-stories with different characters and amazingly, they are all related in some way. The connections in this book are dizzyingly complex, but in their complexity lies the key to Stephenson's technique. His rambling style and detailed descriptions lend a sense of reality to the book because he writes from the perspective of a real human being. We do not always think in logical order and we do not always notice the obvious things in life and Stephenson applies this to his writing.

I loved this book and highly recommend it, but keep in mind that it is not a quick read. It is based on mathematical process of encryption and at times can be a little dense to get through. There will be times when you will skip full pages because they are filled with equations. You will either love this book or not finish it, but it is definitely worth a try!

—**Mia Fioritto** ★ ★ ★ ★

The Eye of the World

By Robert Jordan

If you enjoyed Tolkien's **The Hobbit**, you'll love **The Eye of the World**. Jordan's novel is a very complex fantasy adventure (There's a full glossary in the back!) that takes a while to get into, but once you're hooked, you'll never put it down. I can't say too much so as not to spoil the many surprises of it, but if you enjoy fantasy, give it a try!

—**Janel Torkington** ★ ★ ★

The Chocolate War

By Robert Cormier

This book is about a Catholic, all-boy, private school named Trinity. Within this school is a private society called The Vigils. The Vigils control the students and, to some degree, the teachers. When the annual chocolate sale is announced, Brother Leon, the temporary headmaster, asks Archie Costello, the assignor for The Vigils, to encourage the students to sell. Instead of the students having to sell one thousand boxes of chocolates, it has doubled, meaning they have to meet a quota of fifty boxes at two dollars each instead of twenty-five at one dollar each. Brother Leon is thus fixated on selling the boxes, however the students are all sick and tired of selling things. If it isn't chocolate, it's soap. If it isn't soap, it's T-shirts. So when The Vigils assign Jerry Renault

to refuse to sell chocolates for ten days and then sell them, everybody gets caught up in the challenging of authority. However, when the ten days are over, Jerry finds himself saying no. He continues to refuse, creating a lack of sales and apathy around the school. He goes against The Vigils, Brother Leon and the entire school.

I absolutely loved this book. I go to a school that holds similar goals and outlooks as Trinity, so I could identify with Jerry and everyone else. Although this book is about an all-boys school and the boys in it, girls would also enjoy this book. However, it can be a little crude in parts and the challenging of authority has made this book very controversial.

—*Qwin Mitchell* ★ ★ ★ ★

Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit

By Garry Wills

Garry Wills, a Pulitzer Prize winner and a practicing Catholic, is concerned with the state of the papacy today. In the Middle Ages, no one doubted that popes could err and sin; some frescoes show scenes of popes in Hell. But today, popes have gone so far as to proclaim themselves infallible and seem to have become concerned less with the truth, and more about preserving the power of the papacy. In **Papal Sin**, Wills takes on the intellectual sins of recent popes, and explains his opinions regarding why current Vatican doctrine such as excluding women from the priesthood and not allowing priests to marry, does not make sense, nor is it supported by the New Testament.

Papal Sin is an exhaustively researched book. Wills's arguments are reasonable and well thought out. He does not attack the papacy for the purpose of destroying it; he tries to show how the papacy could be improved if it became more honest. Although it is occasionally confusing and one section in particular tends to sag, overall, **Papal Sin** handles a controversial topic well.

—*Erin Hutchinson* ★ ★ ★ ★

The Onion: Our Dumb Century

By T. Herman Zweibel

"Kennedy Slain by CIA, Mafia, Castro, LBJ, Teamsters, Freemasons—President Shot 129 Times from 43 Different Angles!" is just one of the headlines you'll see in this hysterical book reflecting the insanity of the times. See headlines from the turn of the century to the turn of the century.

I loved it; I couldn't put it down. The stories are just so funny. Read it, or you'll be put on Mr. T's pity list 2000.

—*Christopher Carbone* ★ ★ ★ ★

The Great Gatsby

By F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Great Gatsby wasn't always so great. He was the anonymous son of shiftless farmers living on the edge of the world, the American Midwest. Jay Gatz was his name before his imagination took over, and he forged a colorful life as a closet bootlegger. Now as the incredulously wealthy James Gatsby, he has one desire, Daisy Buchanan, an even wealthier established girl he loved and lost because he was too poor. Around this plot Fitzgerald weaves an allegory about the single-minded desire of the American Dream. Fitzgerald asserts that those who have money are consumed by it and those who don't are consumed by want.

The Great Gatsby is usually required reading for school, but teens should go beyond the study guides and derive their own meanings from this great novel.

—*Sara Thorson* ★ ★ ★ ★

Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban

By J.K. Rowling

In the third **Harry Potter** book, the famous boy-wizard goes back to Hogwarts for his third year. The only problem is that Sirius Black, a prisoner from Azkaban, the wizards' prison, has escaped. The only lead

the guards of Azkaban have is the murmuring of Sirius in his sleep. "He's at Hogwarts; he's at Hogwarts." Naturally everybody thinks he's after Harry because Black was involved with evil Lord Voldemort, but Harry won't stand being stuck in the castle all day...

A must read for anybody, especially **Harry Potter** fans.

—*Elizabeth Steimle* ★ ★ ★ ★

Out of Nowhere

By Ouida Sebestyen

Harley begins to start his life over after he leaves his junkie mother and her lying boyfriend. In the middle of the Arizona desert he meets a dog and a woman who have both been abandoned by the ones they loved. May (the woman) takes Harley and the dog, who they named Ish, to her childhood home in Northern Arizona. When they get there they find that the man who had rented the house had not left but was in the hospital. Taking care of the house in the man's place is a girl named Singer. May takes matters into her own hands and begins cleaning out the house, which has fallen into chaos. When the previous renter, Bill, returns he is confronted with May and the fact that he must leave his home. As they are all working together to clear the house Harley faces the fact that as soon as it is finished he will have to leave. When Ish escapes the yard and tears into the neighbor's trash, Harley runs away. Bill comes after Harley in his truck and Ish is accidentally hit. Ish needs his back leg amputated and Harley feels incredibly guilty. Singer, who has kept the house functioning, leaves suddenly and Harley and Bill must convince May to let them stay as a family. Find out what happens by reading this book.

—*Andrianna Rodriguez* ★ ★

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