

Open Shelf

September 2002

mesa public library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

letter from the editor



Hello! I'm Jason, and you guys are stuck with me as editor for one whole year. I'm a senior at Dobson High School, and I've been on YAAC for quite a number of years. What I had in mind for this issue of *Open Shelf* was that since school has just started, all of your English teachers will probably give you a big list of classics you have to do book reports on. Therefore, this issue is dedicated to the classics. You will find some recommendations, caveats, and also some other books just to read for fun. I hope these reviews help, and see you next month!

Oh yeah, any comments you have can be sent to this address, and it'll get to me sooner or later.

teens_info@ci.mesa.az.us

Jason Yan
open shelf Editor



rating system

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

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

Pride and Prejudice

By Jane Austen

If you believe that all classics must be heavy and humorless, you obviously haven't read Jane Austen.

You wouldn't think that a book nearly 200 years old would be able to make you laugh, but *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the funniest books I've read. Austen's prose leaps off the page and stuns you with its truthfulness. The characters she creates could be attending your school.

Elizabeth Bennet is a young woman of marriageable age, but small fortune, residing in the English countryside in the early 1800s. When the very eligible bachelor, Mr. Bingley, moves to the neighborhood with his proud, disagreeable friend Mr. Darcy, the whole Bennet family rejoices at the thought of a match between Bingley and Elizabeth's older sister, Jane. When their marriage is thwarted by Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth is furious. Little does she know that Darcy has marriage on his mind as well...

The theme of *Pride and Prejudice* is ancient but still relevant today. Simply put, it is a masterpiece.

—Erin Hutchinson ★★★★★

Call of the Wild

By Jack London

Call of the Wild is about a dog named Buck who is stolen from his lovely life in

This month:

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Call of the Wild by Jack London

The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien

Republic by Plato

Graveyard Girl by Wendy Lewis

Open House by Elizabeth Berg

Sister of My Heart by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

The Revenge of the Forty-Seven Samurai by Erik Christian Haugaard

Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury

California. He is taken to Alaska and there he has to adapt to everything to survive. Buck learns many important lessons and goes through way more than any other dog would probably ever go through. During the time he's in Alaska he comes in touch with instincts from his ancestors, and returns to the wild and joins a pack of wolves.

—Ashley Egan ★★★★★

The Hobbit

By J.R.R. Tolkien

The Hobbit tells the tale of a Bilbo Baggins, one of the many not too tall hobbits that have no need for adventure. This all changes when Gandalf, the wizard, and a company of dwarves drag him on a quest to steal a huge treasure from a huge dragon. Bilbo becomes a new hobbit as he discovers a magic ring, saves his friends on a regular basis, and encounters trolls, big spiders, elves, a riddling Gollum and a dragon. This book is incredible. It meets all its praise and more. I wanted to read this before I tackled the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and I'm glad I did. I promise you will like this book, so stop reading this and go check out *The Hobbit*.

—Remy Albillar ★★★★★

Hip Hop Dance Extravaganza!

Main City of Mesa Library

64 E. 1st Street

September 21 • 2 p.m.

Republic

By Plato

Plato examines aspects of morality and immorality in *Republic*, challenging the idea that immoral people are happier through long arguments based on a theoretical, perfect society. He also examines, in passing, appropriate education for both normal people and the ruling class, gender equality (revolutionary for the time), and the idea of the philosopher king. Read it for something to think about.

—Kevin Teeling ★★ ★

Graveyard Girl

By Wendy Lewis

Don't you remember how important the wedding of Princess Diana and Prince Charles was? Neither do I!

But in a small town in Canada, it was the most important thing to happen in years. So important that the next year, on the same day, the residents reenact it.

This book of short stories tells how reenacting the wedding negatively affected the lives of everyone in town. Each chapter is from a different point of view and each person complains about how awful their lives are, and how they hate the royal family. And on, and on, and on. But you end up laughing out loud because of the way things end up. There are some very realistic characters and some very stereotypical ones.

The stories are great. The writing is great. Everything about the book is good except, of course, the characters' lives.

—Alyssa Ratledge ★★ ★

Open House

By Elizabeth Berg

Samantha Morrow is going through a rough divorce. She decides that she needs money to keep herself and her child, Travis, in their old house, and she takes in a few roommates: Lydia, an 80-year-old woman who has a boyfriend, a depressed girl named Lavender Blue, and a gay hairdresser named Edward who gives Samantha highlights in return for letting

him rent the room. Samantha, in moving Lydia's furniture, meets an astrophysicist who does day-to-day jobs and surprisingly they become best friends.

Read this book. It's really good and it explores a different side of divorce and single life.

—Andrea Alonge ★★ ★

Sister of My Heart

By Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Sister of My Heart is a story of the love between sisters, a bond deeper than friendship, and the dark world of secrets and past shames that threatens to tear it asunder.

In the novel, we get to know Sudha and Anju, two cousins who, despite their polar differences, have been bonded in ways that even their mothers cannot understand. Sudha is as beautiful, soft-spoken and patient as Anju is plain, clever and defiant, and yet, all through their childhood, the two only grow closer. Set against the rich and varied backdrop of Calcutta, India, the girls slip through relatively protected lives as members of the upper class.

But when Sudha discovers a shameful family secret, the most precious thing she has—her bond to Anju—is in danger of shattering. Both pressured into arranged marriages, the girls are forced apart and away from each other, Sudha to the traditional and rigid home of her new mother-in-law, and Anju across the sea to her husband in America, to learn to keep her own cache of furtive secrets. As the emotional and physical distance between them grows, it seems that the bond between their hearts has been broken. But when tragedy and heartbreak strike them both, they discover that they do, after all, have only each other to depend upon.

Sister of My Heart is beautifully woven with imagery lush and elaborate, and feelings both compelling and heart-rending. The author brings her audience right into the story, to the point where you can nearly feel the smooth silk of a sari, hear the street vendors' raucous calls, thrill with delicious abandon alongside Sudha as she meets her love for the first time, and quiver with Anju's fear and excitement as she leaves her home, bound for America.

This novel perfectly combines the gritty reality of Calcutta and the rich possibilities of a fairy tale, giving us a story that is at the same time believable and inspiring.

—Ella Peterson ★★ ★

The Revenge of the Forty-Seven Samurai

By Erik Christian Haugaard

This book was very fun to read. It is an interesting take on the story of the 47 ronin, told through the eyes of Jiro, a servant to Lord Oishi Kuranosuke, who along with 200 other retainers are insulted when their master is killed. Oishi is the leader of the 47 new ronin who will take revenge. Jiro, "Fly on the Wall," is thrown into this massive play as an information gatherer for his master and watches as the beginning and end of the story unfold. I really liked the book, and I think anyone interested in the time period in Japan's history will as well. On the other hand, it lacks action.

—Remy Albillar ★★ ★

Martian Chronicles

By Ray Bradbury

I had to read this for my English class, and all I have to say is that Ray Bradbury is insane. Whoever dreamed this up has to be totally nuts because in every chronicle, someone either died (was shot or fell off a mountain) or tried to blow up the world. It was horribly sad. If you like understanding nothing in books you read, I suggest this book. There were about 25 short stories that had absolutely nothing to do with each other, except that they said the word "Mars" more than once. I didn't get it at all, except the world got blown up.

—Alyssa Ratledge ★★

