



# Branches



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2005

Book Review Newsletter of the City of Mesa Library  
Dobson Ranch Branch Young Adult Advisory Council

## Letter from the Editor!

As the holidays wind to a close, life starts to slip back into its daily routine. As we all know, that can seem a little unusual after the hustle and bustle that has surrounded us for the past few months. Maybe the words "read more books" are on your New Year's resolution list? Are you looking for something to do before school starts again? Perhaps the shine has kind of worn off your new Xbox, or maybe you're simply trying to recover from the mad hordes of relatives who descended upon your home, but whatever the case, if you're looking for something to relax and pass the time with, *Branches* is here with some great suggestions!



Since the New Year starts off with thousands of possibilities, so do we. From humor and adventure to tragedy and self-discovery, with everything in between, you're sure to find some great reads in *Branches*. So, grab a good book and head to your favorite reading spot to kick off the year 2005!

– Hilary Waterman  
*Branches* Editor

## Rating System

start a fire	★
punishment for bad children	★★
decent	★★★
I would read it again	★★★★
masterpiece	★★★★★

## Knots in My Yo-Yo String

By Jerry Spinelli ★★★★★

When I first got this book, I only got it because I needed an autobiography to read for my ninth grade English class. To be honest, at first I wasn't too thrilled to be reading anything non-fiction, but I ended up falling in love with this laughter-filled book! *Knots in My Yo-Yo String* is an autobiography by Jerry Spinelli. He talks about his childhood with many humorous details like, "As a child you realize that you can't just *do* something, you have to *be* something, so when I was five years old, I decided to be a cowboy." Jerry's fun-filled adventures have you laughing all the way through! With kissing a girl, searching for the "Devil," and being attacked by BLOOD-SUCKING leeches, this book is guaranteed to have you never wanting to put it down! Who knew that an autobiography could be so much fun?

- Jennie Vaterlaus

## Sophocles: Antigone, Oedipus Rex, and Electra

By Sophocles ★★★★★

*Antigone* is a classical play that portrays how the divine will always triumph over mortal beings. Antigone wishes to bury her dead brother Polyneices, but is forbidden by Creon, the king of Thebes, who sees him as a traitor. Nevertheless, Antigone ignores Creon's warnings and gives her dead brother burial rites, as divine law dictates. Creon is upset that his law has been disobeyed, and thus sentences Antigone to death, despite dire warnings from friends and family that her actions were, in fact, commendable in the public's eyes. Alas, in the end, the wife and son

of Creon take their own lives in response to his decision to kill Antigone. Indeed, Antigone is a truly involving basic lesson of ancient Greece that states that no matter how hard a mortal tries, he can never defy the will of the gods.

*Oedipus Rex* is the best out of the three plays, in my opinion. This is a tale of self-discovery and tragedy. The murder of the former king of Thebes, Laius, sets a plague upon the city, and Oedipus, the new king, is determined to find the murderer and punish him at all costs. Along the way, small hints are given to Oedipus that indicate that he had something to with it, but he refuses to acknowledge these and continues to search for Laius's killer. Alas, eventually, Oedipus realizes too late that he is indeed the murderer. Shamed and disgraced, he gauges his eyes out for being too blind to see the truth, and is exiled. The key to the artistry of *Oedipus Rex* is not what will happen in the plot, but what has already happened in the plot. From the onset, the reader already knows that Oedipus killed the king, and therefore the entire struggle of Oedipus to find the assassin and punish him is rather ironic, since he himself is the killer.

Finally, the last of these great plays is *Electra*. *Electra* is a play about revenge. Set roughly ten to twenty years after the events of the Trojan War, Electra's father, Agamemnon, was murdered by his adulteress wife, Clytemnestra, and her lover, Aegithus. Ever since the day of her father's murder, Electra has harbored hostile feelings for her mother and her lover. This play is easily understood for its theme of revenge.

I recommend these classics to everyone, regardless of age, sex, or race. You will not be disappointed.

- Henry Jiang

## Vegan Virgin Valentine

By Carolyn Mackler \*\*\*\*

Mara Valentine was in control. She knew exactly what was going to happen senior year. First, she was going to beat her womanizing ex-boyfriend in the race for the top and get the #1 ranking in their class. Secondly, she would stick to her vegan ways. Thirdly, she would complete enough college courses so that she could start college as a second-year student. Yes, Mara had it all planned out – the key word being “had.” The one thing she didn’t count on was her niece, 16-year-old “V.” A swearing drug-doer, V hooks up with said ex-boyfriend the first day that she is there. Needless to say, V doesn’t fit into over-achiever Mara’s schedule, and pretty soon, Mara’s life is in chaos. She’s having gushy feelings for her boss, dreaming about grilled cheese sandwiches, and dropping classes. Of course, the most unexpected realization is that maybe the person Mara was trying so hard to be wasn’t really her after all.

Often hilarious, sometimes deep, and all-around awesome, *Vegan Virgin Valentine*, by Carolyn Mackler, the author of *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things*, is a book about what happens when the true you is brought out by the person who’s least likely to get close to you. While definitely not for those below a high school level, this book is well worth it for older readers.

- Sarah Pate

## Heir Apparent

By Vivian Vande Velde ★★★★★

In the virtual reality game *Heir Apparent*, there are millions of ways to get killed, and only a few ways to win. Giannine only seems to find all the ways to get killed. But hey, the game’s just for fun, right? Right, of course, until the virtual reality game machine is trashed by some jerks; everyone’s okay...except for Giannine. Suddenly, Giannine is in a life-and-death situation. The only way to live is to win the game as soon as possible. If she doesn’t, she’ll die-for real this time.

I really liked how Velde made the personalities of each character. Every character also has a significant meaning in the book, even the very minor characters. It was very suspenseful, hilarious, and rather amusing.

- Kelley Pong

## Animal Farm

By George Orwell ★★★★★

All the animals hate their “master”, Mr. Jones. One of the pigs, Major, tells the animals about a strange, but pleasant, dream he had. It

was about a farm run by and for the animals. Soon after that, the animals have a revolution. They kick out all the humans and make rules to live by. Soon, however, corruption and mutiny come into the group when the pigs start to take over. The other animals think that what the pigs are doing is okay, because Squealer (one of the pigs) keeps changing the rules. The pigs then change the rules to form an equal society where “all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.” The other animals have low rations, long working hours, and general absence of pampering. After a while, the other animals overhear the humans talking to the pigs. The pigs have turned into humans!

I found this book to be a very insightful glance into communism. A very boring read, but I would have to call it a masterpiece, because it is one.

- Colleen O'Connor

## Tomorrow’s Treasure

By Linda Lee Chaikin ★★★★★

*Tomorrow’s Treasure*, the first book in a series called *Into the Setting Sun*, begins in the year 1879, in South Africa, introducing Katie Van Buren, the mother of a tiny baby girl named Evy. Sadly, Katie finds herself in a desperate situation when she is locked in a room of her guardian’s house and separated from her baby, who is taken to some missionaries in a nearby town. Katie escapes to find her baby, but when she reaches the home of the missionaries, they are all unexpectedly attacked by the fearsome and bloodthirsty Zulu Impis who massacre every one except a Christian convert who escapes and saves the life of baby Evy.

The next portion of the story takes place in a small town in 1890s England, where young Evy Varley grows up in the care of her aunt and uncle, hidden away from the truth of her past, her mother, and a secret about the theft of an extremely valuable diamond. After certain occurrences, Evy and her aunt are fortunate enough to come and live within the mansion of the wealthy and prestigious Chantry family. However, growing up in this rich and regal environment, Evy becomes more and more suspicious of a dark secret, which she believes is being deliberately and mysteriously hidden from her by her aunt, and even members of the Chantry family.

In the midst of all this secrecy, the tension is heightened when Rogan and Evy begin to fall in love, but Evy knows that such a relationship is pretty much impossible, considering the difference between their social statuses, so she keeps her love hidden. Then Evy is thrown into a state of bewilderment and confusion when she unexpectedly discovers some of the truth about her mother, involving the theft of

the Black Diamond.

Leaving for music school, Evy finds some relief from the continuous confrontation of Rogan’s blossoming love for her, and the constant reminders about her puzzling past. Upon returning from school, Evy is left alone in the world and is still searching for answers when her aunt passes away. When Rogan and Evy reunite, more light is shed upon Evy’s mysterious history and they also begin to share the special love that they have kept for each other.

The mysterious characters, the hints of romance and the captivating story line kept me riveted to *Tomorrow’s Treasure*. It was masterfully written and full of unexpected twists and turns. In addition, I was encouraged and uplifted by the way that Evy placed her life in God’s hands and trusted Him, even when it seemed her life would fall apart. *Tomorrow’s Treasure* is certainly a treasure chest of enthralling mystery and excitement, which I would highly recommend to read.

- Kierstyn Lyts

## What is YAAC?



Join other teens at the Dobson Ranch Library who love reading! Share your thoughts and ideas on what you have read by presenting book reviews at our monthly meetings and writing reviews for *Branches*, our bimonthly publication written and edited by teenagers. Members are considered official library volunteers. Group meets once a month. Applications are available in the Teen area. For ages 12-18 or grades 7-12.

Check out our

# Teens

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### Dobson Ranch Branch Library

2425 S. Dobson Rd.  
(480) 644-3441



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