

Branches



September/October
2005

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

Letter from the Editor!



I can't believe it's already been a year since I first wrote for Branches. On one side of the scale, it seems like I've been here forever (not a bad thing at all!), but on the other, it's already practically October of 2005?!? With college just around the corner, life has gotten a bit scary as reality has finally sunk in - I'm staring adulthood in the face. High school has gone *unbelievably* fast, and was nothing like I thought it would be - yet, I don't feel that I've missed out on anything. I've read so many books about other kids my age - highschoolers in England, teenagers in medieval Venice, or sophomores who travel to Holocaust Poland from modern Zimbabwe - that somehow I've been a teenager for a thousand years. Am I ready to move on? Perhaps - I can't tell just yet. I can take heart, however, in this: if I ever want to be one again, even for an hour, all I have to do is pick up the right book. Because if there's one thing I've learned in my seventeen years of existence, it's to appreciate the astounding things a good read can accomplish when it's really, really needed.

So, take a look below for a few of our favourites.who knows? What you read might just change everything. That's the danger and the beauty, the exposure and the protections, all the allure and the magic of those plainly bound papers we know and love; our books.

- Hilary Waterman
Branches Editor

Rating System

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

The Last Dog on Earth

By Daniel Ehrenhaft ★★★★★

Logan Moore thinks he has the worst life. His father, who ran away, abandoned him. His step-father Robert thinks everything must be under *his* control and based on his childhood. Everything seems horrible until Robert decides that Logan needs self-discipline, so he gets Logan a dog. It is a very mangy, ugly dog. Her name is Jack.

Then, there is a mysterious disease that is infecting almost every dog in the country. Although Jack isn't infected, she is still in danger. Everyone is shooting dogs and almost slaughtering them before even checking to see if they're infected. Suddenly, Logan and Jack are on the run from everyone. For now, they can only trust each other.

This book was very exciting and full of unexpected twists. There is some rare humor in it, too - a very good book!

- Kelley Pong

The Picture of Dorian Gray

By Oscar Wilde ★★★★★

Young and innocent, Dorian Gray is Basil Hallward's source of inspiration. The artist adores Dorian with an unhealthy passion. At the height of his fervor, he paints a life size painting of the young man. It is on the day he puts the finishing touches on his masterpiece that two things happen. First, Dorian meets the immoral, satirical Lord Henry who warns him of the fleeting nature of beauty, and then

Dorian speaks the fatal words: "If that picture were to grow old, and I to remain young... I would give my soul for it." The Picture of Dorian Gray was beautifully written and full of wry humor. It's easy and quick to read; just don't take it too seriously.

- Shaoyuan Wu

Vampire Kisses

By Ellen Schreiber ★★★★★

This book is about a vampire-crazed Goth-girl named Raven. When Raven loses all hope in her hometown that she calls "Dullsville," she is surprised that someone has suddenly moved into the old mansion on the top of the hill. When she starts dating the boy that lives in the house, she wonders if he's a vampire. Then the rich soccer snob, Derek, tells him why Raven is dating him - for pure excitement - the boy retreats back into his little sheltered attic, ignoring Raven's pleas of forgiveness. Has Raven lost the only boy who understands her?

All in all, it was a very good book - a little sad in parts, but good.

- Ashley Sanders

White Lies and Barefaced Truths

By Cathy Hopkins ★★★★★

His name is Ollie Axford, son of the famous Axford Rockstar, and he's caught the eye of nearly every girl in the village, including Cat

Kennedy. Alas, she's already tied down to her boyfriend *since forever*, Squidge. Knowing that it is time for a change of scenery, Cat keeps attempting to break the relationship off, but there never seems to be a good time to do it! Her chemistry with Squidge has faded, but the feelings for the Rockstar's son have blown out of proportion. How can she forget her fancy for Ollie now? And what will her best friend Becca (who also has her eye on Ollie) say when she finds out Cat "snogged" him on the beach? Will fancying Ollie – or the "love rat" as his sister Ophelia Moonbeam Axford calls him – even be worth it? Follow best friends, Squidge, Mac, Becca, and Cat, as they embark on a new adventure of love, laughter, white lies, and barefaced truths.

- Jennie Vaterlaus

Shattering Glass

By Gale Giles ★★★★★

Shattering Glass is a well-written and slightly disturbing novel about the twists and turns of high school friendship. It begins with four friends in the "popular" crowd. At the other end of the spectrum is the class nerd, Simon Glass. The ringleader of the four boys is Rob, who concocts a plan to make Simon one of them. Little do the other three – Bob, Coop, and Young – know that the plan is really to help Rob out! The story is told through the eyes of Young, and it is made clear that he does not like Simon at all. With flashes of the future, a deceptively simple plot, and an ending that will leave you thinking, Shattering Glass is a terrific Saturday afternoon read for the teen looking for an adventure.

- Kelsey Phillips

Downsiders

By Neal Shusterman ★★★★★

Within the pages of this fascinating novel, the lives of two "ordinary" teens run unexpectedly into each other and startling realizations about things they never imagined were true begin to surface, creating a wild and intriguing adventure you'll not soon forget. Meet Talon Angler, a young downsider who lives miles under Grand Central Station in New York City in a utopian-like community, cut off from everyone "topside." Secondly, meet Lindsay Matthias, an insecure teenager who just moved to New York to live with her dad, whom she's never met, and her obnoxious step-brother. These two totally

opposite characters and their unbelievably different lives accidentally collide when Talon illegally escapes from his city and finds himself in Lindsay's bedroom. Introduced to each other's inconceivable worlds, a blossoming friendship occurs between Talon and Lindsay as they secretly begin to discover the wonders that are to one of them normal and day-to-day, and but to the other breathtaking and incomprehensible.

Then Lindsay discovers a dark and mysterious secret about the city underground that lies hidden from all mankind except the city dwellers. She must now decide between dropping Talon an earth-shattering revelation, or keeping her mouth shut about the truth that could set him and his people a bondage which is squelching their life and freedom without them even realizing it. For one who normally dislikes the realm of science fiction in literature, I would say that was a wonderful story which I thoroughly enjoyed. While parts of the book were absurdly far-fetched and at times a little lame, I found the plot to be powerfully gripping, leaving me with a constant urge to read more and find out how the story could possibly be resolved. I'd definitely encourage you to check it out if you'd like an intriguing and exciting read.

- Kierstyn Lyts

The People Sparks

By Jeanne DuPrau ★★★★★

This book is the sequel to *The City of Ember*. It is a very different book from the first, but not disappointing. A terrible Disaster has hit the Earth, and the people of Ember learn that they were sent below the Earth to live there so that if the Disaster did, in fact, occur, one day they could return to land and repopulate the world. The Emberites are luckily found by one of the growing towns. In the town of Sparks, the people are good and hardworking and agree to supply these strange newcomers for a period of time; they will also teach them how to survive to build their own town. The Emberites do not know how to live on the Earth, because all they've known were the simple rules they had underground. Sparks has its own rules and regulations. The author, DuPrau, has also created imaginative cultures for both people. Because of one person's actions and the bitterness of others, troubles start coming up. Soon it becomes a battle, in a sense, between the people of Sparks and the Emberites. The differences between the two groups cause more strife, and Doon and Lina need to find a way to avoid war! Both groups must learn the golden rule before it is all too late! The

opportunity for this comes up, and readers see how one person can make a big difference. The Emberites, in the end, have to teach the people of Sparks an important lesson: a team is stronger than two separate parts.

DuPrau gives an insightful look into the post-apocalyptic world and the dangers that come up when people are greedy and prideful. This book teaches many lessons, among them this idea: if someone does something mean to you, you should turn around and be kind to them. I thought it was a really good lesson, since the media of today's world often puts a lot of negativity into our heads.

- Christina Fang

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

page at

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Dobson Ranch Branch Library

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



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Great People, Quality Service!