

# Open Shelf

October  
2002

## mesa public library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

### letter from the editor



Well, now that school has gotten into full swing, you probably don't have that much time to read. That's why Open Shelf could possibly be your new best friend. We, the professional (well, almost) members of YAAC have painstakingly compiled a comprehensive set of reviews of the best and worst books around. That means you won't have to waste your time by getting halfway through a book just to find out it's bad. So, check out the reviews I've selected for this month.

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Jason Yan  
open shelf Editor



### rating system

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

Visit the Library's NEW Web Site:  
[www.mesalibrary.org](http://www.mesalibrary.org)  
and see the Teens page!

### A Prayer for Owen Meany

by John Irving ★★ ★

"God has a purpose. I am His instrument." Owen Meany is our hero's best friend. Short and small but with a nasal voice that causes people to shudder, he believes he is God's instrument. This book takes you through a bunch of stories about his life. When he accidentally kills the storyteller's mother with a foul ball, their relationship becomes surprisingly close. This was totally good.

—Andrea Alonge

### Dune

by Frank Herbert ★★ ★★

On the desert planet of Arrakis, water is a precious commodity. Inhabitants risk life and limb merely by stepping outside. (Sounds familiar.)

The planet is treasured for a hallucinogenic drug known as spice, which can be found only in the dangerous desert sands of Arrakis. As a result, Arrakis is of extreme strategic significance and bathed in the mists of political intrigue, which eventually envelops the Atriedes family. After a brutal coup against the ruling Duke Leto Atriedes, his son Paul retreats into the desert to wage guerilla warfare against the new rulers of Arrakis.

In my opinion, the purpose of science

### This month:

*A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving

*Dune* by Frank Herbert

*Soul Music* by Terry Pratchett

*The Paranoid's Pocket Guide* by Cameron Tuttle

*Game Plan* by Thomas J. Dygard

*The 13th Warrior (or Eaters of the Dead)* by Michael Crichton

*Bat-21* by William C. Anderson

*Ella Enchanted* by Gail Carson Levine

*Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* by Douglas Adams

fiction is to use an exotic setting to force readers to examine issues in our own world today. **Dune** excels in this area. You will never look at politics or water the same way again. On an intellectual level, **Dune** gives a fascinating payoff. Herbert crams everything from ecology to philosophy into his intricately layered plot. My only qualm is the lack of a compelling hero. There is no question that Paul will succeed, which leaves the book lacking in the sheer gut reaction I expect from top-tier sci-fi. However, do not let this dissuade you from picking up **Dune**, rightfully respected as a science fiction classic.

—Erin Hutchinson

### Soul Music

by Terry Pratchett ★★ ★★

Death is a very busy specter, and that is beginning to prey on his mind. He has gotten sick of his job and has even developed some sort of a conscience. He apparently feels bad about all the people he has helped "pass on" and wants to forget. Unfortunately, being divine, he cannot forget anything. He even remembers the future. So, he disappears, and leaves the "family business" (so to speak) to his granddaughter, Susan. Susan has always been a strange girl. She, for some odd reason, keeps seeing the Death of Rats (who is the same as the regular Death, except he is a rat), a talking raven, and a flying horse named Binky. On top of it all, Susan has to deal with the fact that she has to go around

in black, with a scythe, and kill people (sort of; Death doesn't kill per se, he or she simply has to tell the person that they are dead and cut the soul away from the body).

Meanwhile, a musician named Imp y Celyn has formed The Band With Rocks In, and is doing marvelously, except for the fact the Musicians Guild want to kill his fellow band members and him for performing without a license. To add to the troubles, Imp's guitar has taken over the band, possessed Imp, and is generally wreaking havoc. That is where Susan steps in.

A very complex plot as you can tell by my review, but it is still a rather jolly romp.

—Elizabeth Dormady

## The Paranoid's Pocket Guide

by Cameron Tuttle ★★☆☆

So you've read some Stephen King, read some Michael Crichton. Yet you hunger for fear, which fiction simply isn't giving you. Well, chew on this: that headache that you think you got from reading too much could be tension, eyestrain, or a brain tumor. This and more is encompassed in the handy volume that is **The Paranoid's Pocket Guide**. The cover boldly proclaims, "Hundreds of things you never knew you had to worry about!" Sure, you scoff until you read the statistic that says you have a one out of thirteen chance of being hospitalized every year.

An excellent quick read, great coffee table book, and fabulous conversation starter, but be forewarned – close-range conversations spread airborne germs...

—Janel Torkington

## Game Plan

by Thomas J. Dygard ★★☆☆

**Game Plan** is a great book, plain and simple, with an interesting scenario and nice characters, not to mention some good sports action, all tied up in one package. The plot revolves around "Beano" Hatton, team manager of his school's football team and your regular nerd. Having the posi-

tion for three years, it was no surprise to some when Beano is chosen to act as coach when the old one is involved in a car accident. What first surprised me about Beano is that, though a nerd, he is very self-confident. He knows the players and he knows football. He is not without opposition, however, from the cocky, prima donna quarterback, Mark. Though Beano finally earns the team's respect, leading them to victory in the big game is a totally different matter. The book's major fault is its lack of interest to most girls. Still, a football fan or casual reader will enjoy it.

—Remy Albillar

## The 13<sup>th</sup> Warrior (or Eaters of the Dead)

by Michael Crichton ★★☆☆

This book is a supposed manuscript from 922 AD written by an Arab Courtier, ibn-Fadlan, ibn-al-Abbas, ibn Rased, ibn-Hammad (or just Ibn Fadlan). On his way to convert a foreign king, he gets sidetracked and is forced into a hero's mission with a group of Vikings. Ibn Fadlan's commentary on Viking culture and blatant sexuality are hilarious and fascinating at the same time. The book is a retooling of the epic poem, **Beowulf**. An excellent book and read.

—Mary Beth Hutchinson

## Bat-21

by William C. Anderson ★★

This book is about Air Force pilot Lt. Colonel Hambleton and his struggle for survival after being shot down over enemy territory in the Vietnam War. Having taken cover in a small patch of jungle near a village, Hambleton is forced to rely on his radio for help from the outside world.

**Bat-21** is a twist on the classic survival story, which I thoroughly enjoyed. However anyone who is less than fascinated with landmines and complex rescue plans would probably be quickly bored by this book.

—Danielle Cotie

## Ella Enchanted

by Gail Carson Levine ★★☆☆

Imagine that you have to obey whatever someone tells you to do. That is Ella's life. When she was a baby, a fairy put an enchantment on her, making her do whatever was asked of her. The fairy didn't mean it as a curse, but as a blessing.

This ends up being a re-telling of Cinderella. I totally fell in love with this book. I then listened to it on an audio book which I think really completed it.

—Lora Eubanks

## Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency

by Douglas Adams ★★☆☆

Dirk Gently runs the only "Holistic" Detective Agency in Britain, and with good reason. Although brilliant, he often adds inexplicable costs to his employer's bill. This time, though, he manages to discover how humans were accidentally created, that time travel exists, and have a very funny scene with a horse. This is a hilarious detective novel that I would recommend to anyone.

—Matt Grimes

## Ongoing Programs



**YAAC (Young Adult Advisory Council)**

Volunteer teen book review groups; meet twice a month (Main) or once a month (Dobson) on Saturday mornings at 10 a.m.

## FRANK Magazine

Published by teens for teens. Submit writing, artwork, or black/white photographs, or join the editorial staff (or both). Staff meets every month during the school year.



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