

Open Shelf

September
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city of mesa library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

letter from the editor



Hi and welcome to a new year of *Open Shelf*! I'm Jenny, your brand-new editor! *evil cackle* This month I kept as close as I could to a classics theme, what with school started and far too many of us having to read many of these old books. Next issue will be more fun, I promise!

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rating system

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

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

Crime and Punishment

by Fyodor Dostoyevsky ★★★★★

A few months ago I wrote a review of this book, completely ranting about how horrible it was. Thankfully I came across another copy on a long plane ride, and I beg you to disregard that review. This was a way different translation and a way, way better one. If you intend to read *Crime and Punishment* (as you definitely should), try as hard as you can to get the translation by Sidney Monas.

Crime and Punishment details the downward spiral into insanity as a murderer contends with morals, ethics, and his own sneaking Christianity. There are many subplots, each of which contributes in its own way to Raskolnikov, and his battle with himself. Also, there are many subtle (and not-so-subtle) ideas on life, morality, hell and all those fun subjects that make the reader step away from the story for a moment to ponder, but nonetheless fit in perfectly. Most of these conversations occur between Raskolnikov and his friend Razuminhin, both of whom offer viewpoints that are... *interesting*, to say the least. So don't let that bad review deter you from reading this. In the right translation, it really is a great piece of classic literature.

Alyssa Ratledge

The Trial

by Jen Bryant ★★ ★

This book is the story of the trial of Bruno Richard Hauptman, the man accused of kidnapping and murdering the baby of Charles

This month:

Crime and Punishment
by Fyodor Dostoyevsky
The Trial by Jen Bryant
The Red Badge of Courage
by Stephen Crane
Emma Brown by Charlotte Brontë
1984 by George Orwell
Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy
Spirits in the Wires by Charles de Lint
Paradise Lost by John Milton
East by Edith Pattou

Lindbergh. It's told from the point of view of a girl who lives in the town where the trial is being held. The whole trial is based on circumstantial evidence and the witnesses change their story several times, which almost makes you question the justice system. I really enjoyed the book, as it gave me a new perspective of what goes on in the trial process, both in and out of the courtroom.

Jasmine Williamson

The Red Badge of Courage

by Stephen Crane ★

My first piece of advice is this: Leave this book on the shelf!!! Sure, it's a classic, and the metaphors are good, but there are too many. It takes three pages to say that people are fighting in a battle, but you only realize it says this when you stop, reread it and think about it for a few minutes. I had to read it for English, but don't waste any of your time reading this.

Patricia Langevin

Emma Brown

by Charlotte Brontë ★★★★★

The unfinished novel of Charlotte Brontë is finished here by another author, and the transition is seamless. A mystery of a missing girl, a lost identity, a thwarted love story—what else could you ask for? All of you *Jane Eyre* fans desperately need to pick this up.

Andrea Alonge

1984

by George Orwell ★ ★ ★ ★

George Orwell's novel *1984* is as familiar to our culture as apple pie and reality T.V. Almost anyone can recognize phrases such as Big Brother, which comes directly from the book. Even though it is so ubiquitous, the ideas are still revolutionary.

Winston Smith has lived most of his life in the massive country of Oceania and under the constant gaze of Big Brother.

Telescreens watch every move and hear all but the lowest of whispers. Something as innocent as muttering in your sleep can get you thirty years in a re-education camp or even outright killed. People disappear and "unpeople" have any evidence of their existence expunged from the past. Winston is one of a massive contingent of workers who change the past in the Ministry of Truth so that the Party has always been right. He grapples with holding on to the shifting truth and bringing down the Party.

Orwell's writing sketches a cold, grimy world without even the slightest comfort. It is a pessimistic warning about the power of words and the importance of memory. Do yourself a favor and read this before your English teacher forces you to wring every ounce of symbolism out of the text. I probably missed acres of "important literary techniques," but I'm more than satisfied to mull over the ideas.

Mary Beth Hutchinson

Tess of the D'Urbervilles

by Thomas Hardy ★ ★

This book, to be brief, is about Tess Durbeyfield. It starts when she is around sixteen and takes you with her through her many life experiences. (There's nothing more I can really say without retelling the story.) I'd like to tell you that this is a great book and that everyone should read it, but I'd be lying if I did. Yes, there are some great parts that will hold your attention and keep you in suspense, but overall it is boring and drags on to a terrible ending. It's not completely bad—the characters are really well developed and there are those interesting sections. However, I wouldn't read it if I could help it.

Heather Pearce

Spirits in the Wires

by Charles de Lint ★ ★ ★ ★

This book combines two of the things I love: fantasy and the Internet. There are lots of little story lines, so I won't go into those. I'll just give you the premise and the basics.

Five teens start a website and three years later, the HTML code (the language with which all computers and websites connect and are built) disappears, but the site is still fully functional. In fact, it's MORE than functional—it's flawless. But when people start disappearing into their computers (when they're on the WordWood website), the founders and relations of the disappeared know something's up. Another neat aspect of the book is that it elaborates on how there are worlds that are inside the wires of your computer—worlds full of fantasy creatures that lived in woods and wild moors until humans stole their land. And what better place to hide from humans than in a world that can't see?

This book is absolutely FANTASTIC. If you are addicted to the Internet or firmly believe that elves, dryads, and faeries exist, then go read it. NOW!!!

Mandi Levendowski

**Editor's note: Yeah, not exactly a classic ...but it should be, and they should have let me put the reviewer's million stars in.

Paradise Lost

by John Milton ★

And next in line of the "wonderful" classic novels I've read for English: *Paradise Lost*. Apparently I am now in league with the thousands of people who've read it. Considering it was published in the early 17th century, this is quite a feat. Easily the most difficult book I've ever read, I now understand why so few people can get through it.

The self-described epic chronicles several celestial events from Genesis: Satan's fall from Heaven, the Great War, the formation of Hell and the temptation of Eve. The working title was *Adam Unparadiz'd* (which Milton *so* should've kept. "Unparadiz'd" is the most fun word EVER), and it fits as well as *Paradise Lost*.

Don't read the actual book—read the Cliffs Notes. I have yet to do so, but just hearing the words strikes fear in my heart. In

fact, don't read the Cliffs Notes, either. Read *The Devil's Advocate* by Andrew Neiderman (yes, there is a movie). It combines a bit more of Greek mythology and something very rare in the novel world—an original plot.

Alyssa Ratledge

East

by Edith Pattou ★ ★ ★ ★

Although I normally would not read this kind of book, it was on the list of Teens' Top Ten nominations and I can definitely see why. This excellent book is written in first person from five different perspectives—Rose (the main character), Neddy (one of Rose's brothers), Father (Rose's father), the Troll Queen (current ruler of Hudrel), and the White Bear (who's really an enchanted prince). Rose is a north-born, which, according to ancient Norse lore, is a bad thing. It means the child will be a wanderer and an adventurer, and, according to a fortuneteller, this particular north-born is supposed to die in some sort of avalanche.

After growing up with an over-protective mother, Rose decides to go with the White Bear, who promises to make her family wealthy and her sick sister well. She lives with him in a castle in the mountains for almost a year, until she breaks an unspoken rule that costs the White Bear his old life as a French prince. When she realizes what has happened, Rose goes after him, hoping to free him from trollich imprisonment. As I said, this is a great book and I would recommend it to anyone.

Deidre Oberpriller

What is YAAC?

The Young Adult Advisory Council (YAAC) is a group of teens from many of Mesa's junior and senior high schools. They hold meetings twice monthly to review books for this newsletter and to plan special activities. They also help the librarians in Mesa Public Library's Young Adult Room at the Main Library as volunteers and assist with programs.

If you are interested in becoming a member of YAAC, call (480) 644-2734 or stop by the Young Adult service desk and ask for an application.



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