

What's New and Might Fit You:  
Something for Everyone  
Best Books of 2008/2009

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~jblasin/>

# My Father, the Angel of Death



***My Father, the Angel of Death* tells the story of a boy whose father is the ominous, black-clad, skeleton face behemoth, the ACW wrestling heavyweight champion, the Angel of Death.**



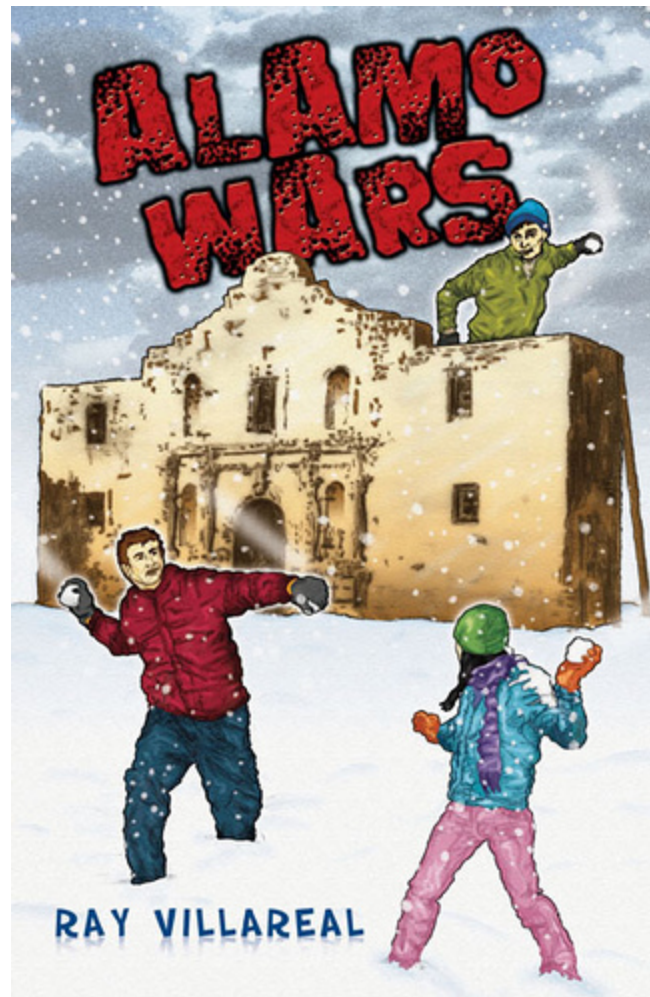
Out of the fog billowing from the regions of the Netherworld steps a gigantic, ominous figure dressed in black. A white, skeleton face peers from the long, hooded cloak draping his massive frame, and in one hand, he clutches a wood-handled scythe with a razor-sharp blade. It's ... the Angel of Death, the American Championship Wrestling Heavyweight Champion! But one of the most popular wrestlers on Monday Night Mayhem is also Mark Baron, Jesse Baron's father.



Jesse has all sorts of problems. His father's celebrity status and frequent road trips are the source of marital strife. Everywhere the family moves, and they've moved a lot, Jesse finds new friends who really only like him because his father, and everyone wonders why Jesse isn't a seventh grade version of his macho father.

Then one day, Jesse decides to stand up to a gang of bullies who have been taking lunch money from girls at school, and his first love begins.





When “Miss Mac” (Ms. MacKeever) really does “die on the job” after 51 years of service, as everyone joked she would one day do, the school decides to put on her original play about the Alamo. No one can foresee how much controversy this will cause. (Seventh grade Golden Gloves champion Marco Dias wins the part of Jim Bowie). But his friend Raquel, an undocumented immigrant, calls him a sell-out because she believes the play makes heroes out of the people who stole her ancestors' land. And Sandy Martinez, Miss Mac's much younger replacement, finds the Mexican characters' dialogue not only politically incorrect but downright offensive.

(www.amazon.com)

# *The Chronicles of Vladimir Tod: Tenth Grade Bleeds* By Heather Brewer



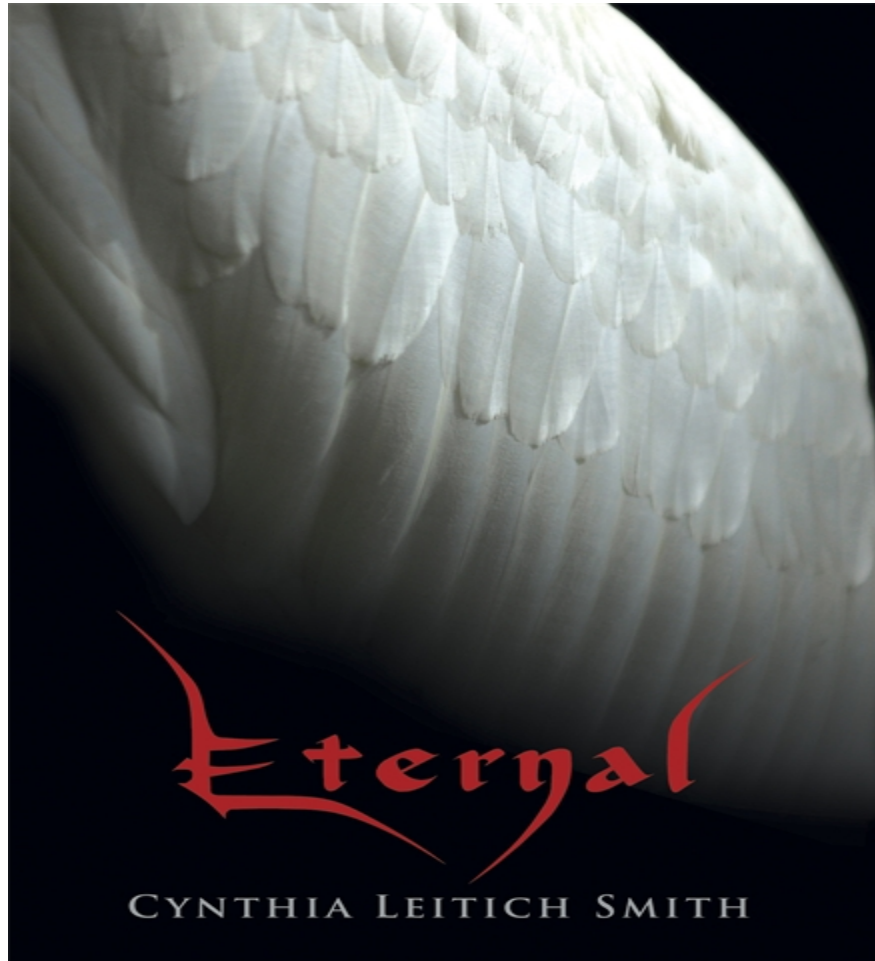
The Chronicles of (V) Vladimir Tod

It's another sucky year at Bathory High for Vladimir Tod. The evil vampire D'Ablo is hunting for the ritual that could steal Vlad's powers. His best friend Henry doesn't want to be his drudge anymore. And as if all that weren't enough, it's getting harder for Vlad to resist feeding on the people around him. When months go by with no word from Uncle Otis and D'Ablo shows up demanding Vlad's father's journal, Vlad realizes that having a normal high school year is the least of his concerns. Vlad needs to act fast, and even his status as the Pravus won't save him this time . . .

(Amazon.com)

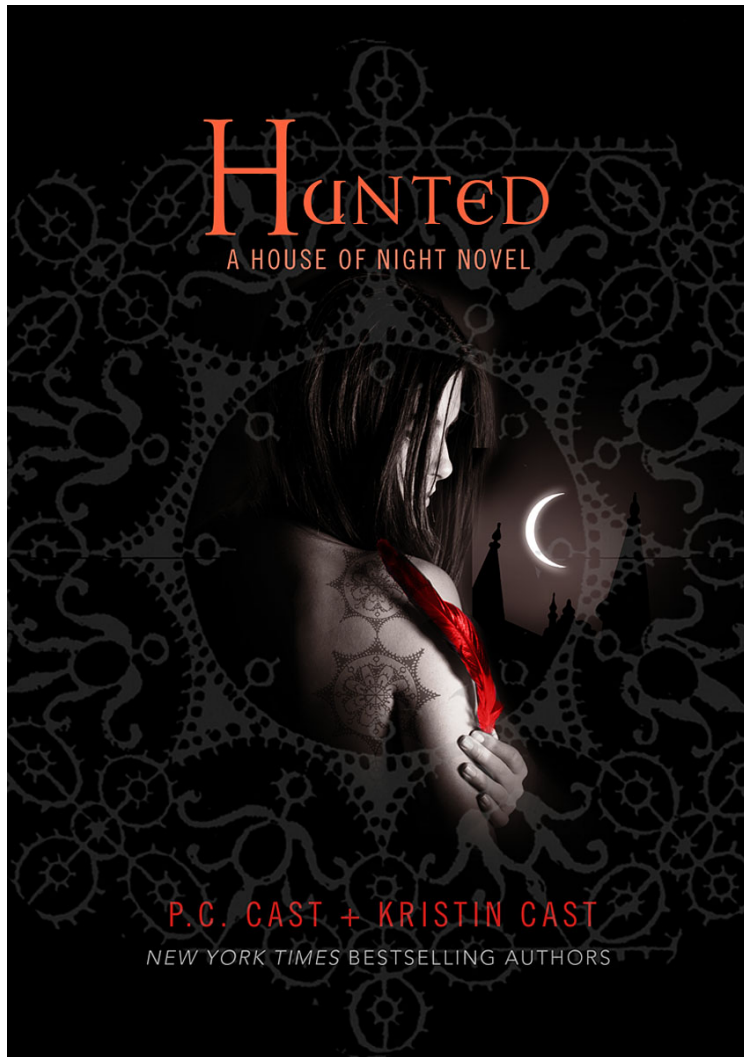
# *Eternal*

## By Cynthia Leitich Smith

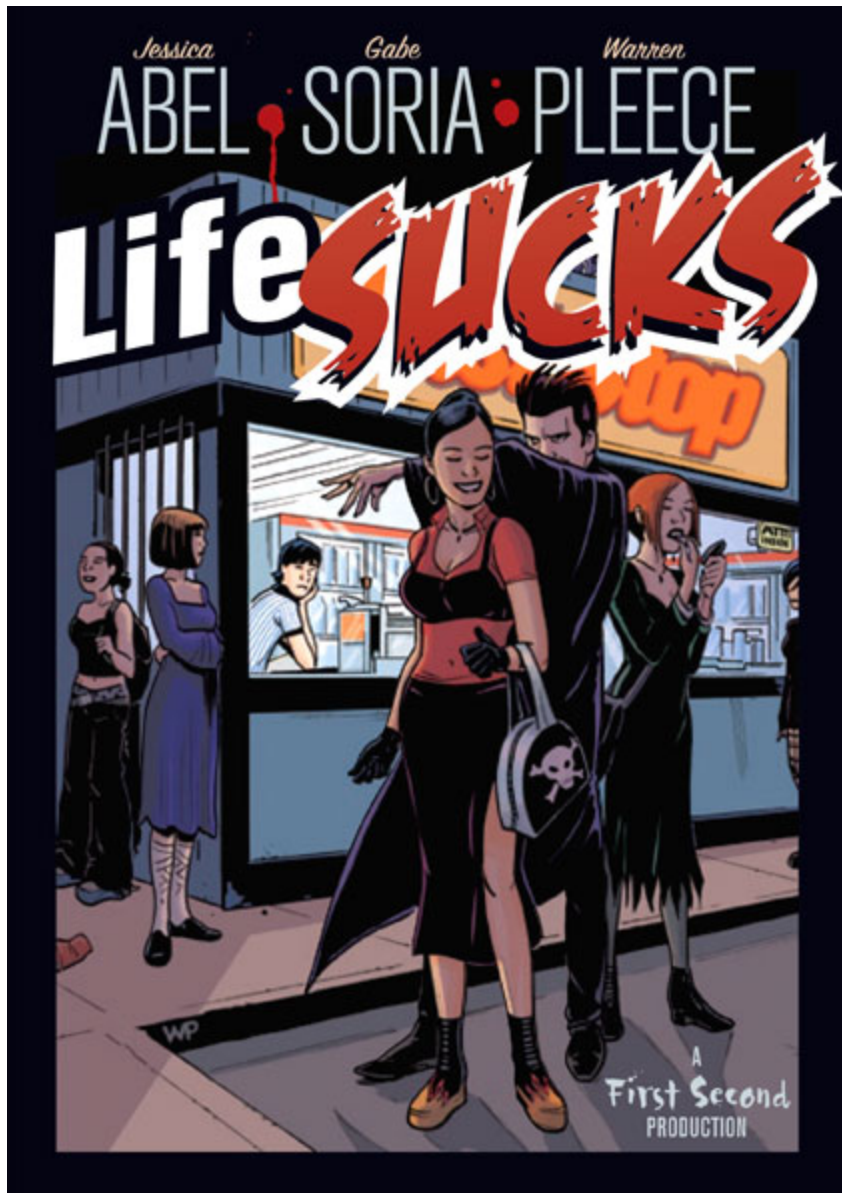


**At last, Miranda is the life of the party: all she had to do was die. Elevated and adopted by none other than the reigning King of the Mantle of Dracul, Miranda goes from high-school theater wannabe to glamorous royal fiend overnight. Meanwhile, her reckless and adoring guardian angel, Zachary, demoted to human guise as the princess's personal assistant, has his work cut out for him trying to save his girl's soul and plan the Master's fast-approaching Death Day gala. In alternating points of view, Miranda and Zachary navigate a cut-throat eternal aristocracy as they play out a dangerous and darkly hilarious love story for the ages. (From Candlewick)**



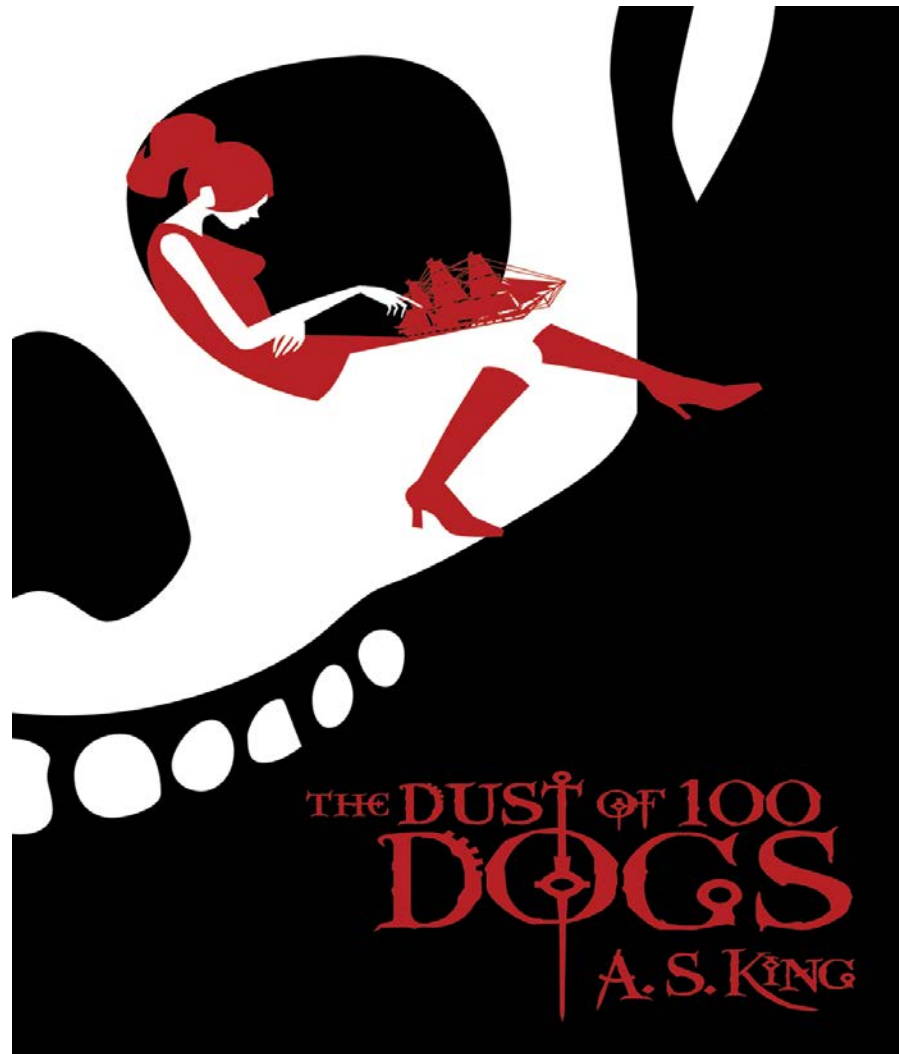


- PC and Kristin Cast
- The House of Night series
- Zoey



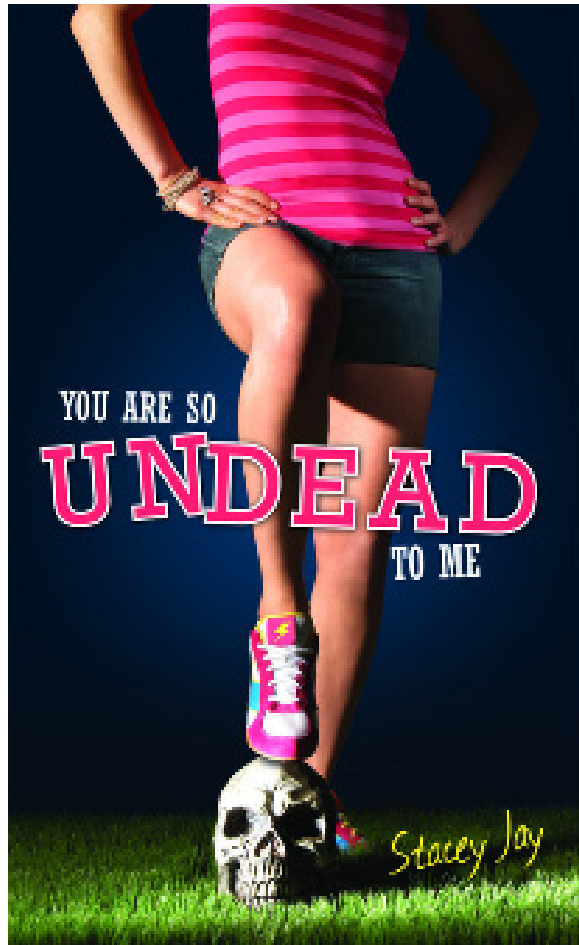
Dave is a poor vampire, working the night shift at the 24-hour convenience store run by his vampire master, Lord Radu Arisztidescu, who thinks Dave is pretty much a wuss as a bloodsucker. Truth is, Dave would rather steal his nutrition from a blood bank than kill the innocent. But this choice leaves him weak and vulnerable to more predatory types like alpha-vampire surfer dude Wes, who's making a move on Rosa, the Latina gothic babe Dave has his eye on. There's plenty of humor with Dave's friend Jerome acting as a *Clerks*-like foil, coming over to Dave's work at night when the black-eyeliner crowd comes by (the Running of the Goths). ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

*The Dust of 100 Dogs*  
By A.S. King



# *You are So Undead to Me*

## By Stacey Jay

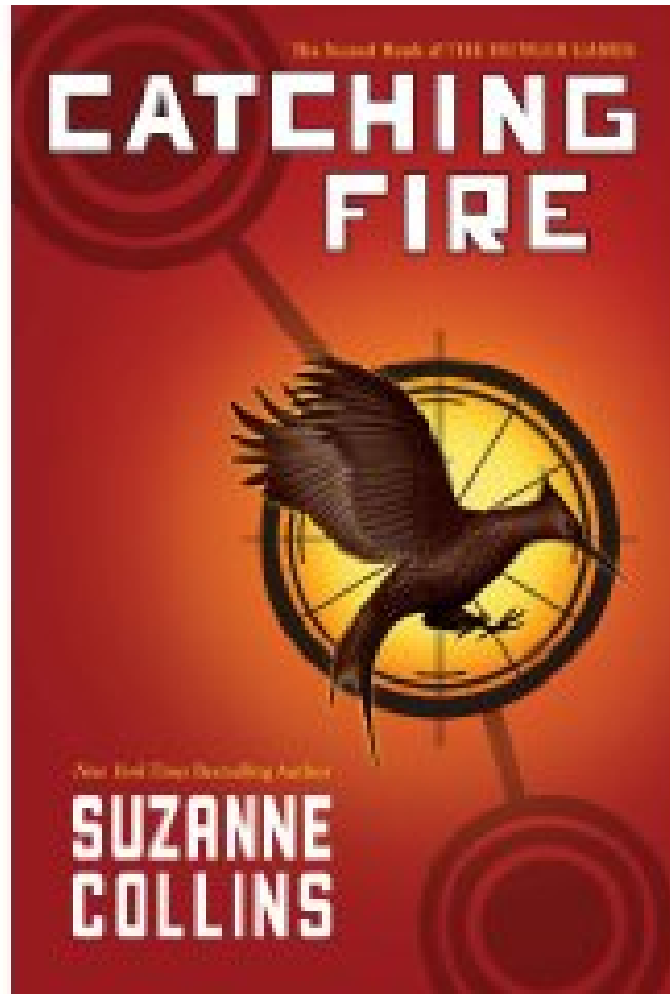


- *Megan Berry* is a Zombie Settler by birth, which means she's part-time shrink to a whole bunch of semi-dead people with killer issues. All Megan really wants is to go to homecoming, but when you're trailed by a bunch of slobbering corpses whenever you leave the house, it's kinda hard to score a date. Let's just say Megan's love life could use some major resuscitation.
- Megan's convinced her life can't get any worse - until someone in school starts using black magic to turn average, angsty Undead into scary, hardcore flesh-eating Zombies. Now it's up to Megan to stop the Zombie apocalypse. Her life - and more importantly, the homecoming dance - depends on it. (Amazon.com)

One of the hottest books right now is *Hunger Games*, by Suzanne Collins. (28 weeks on NYT Bestseller List)

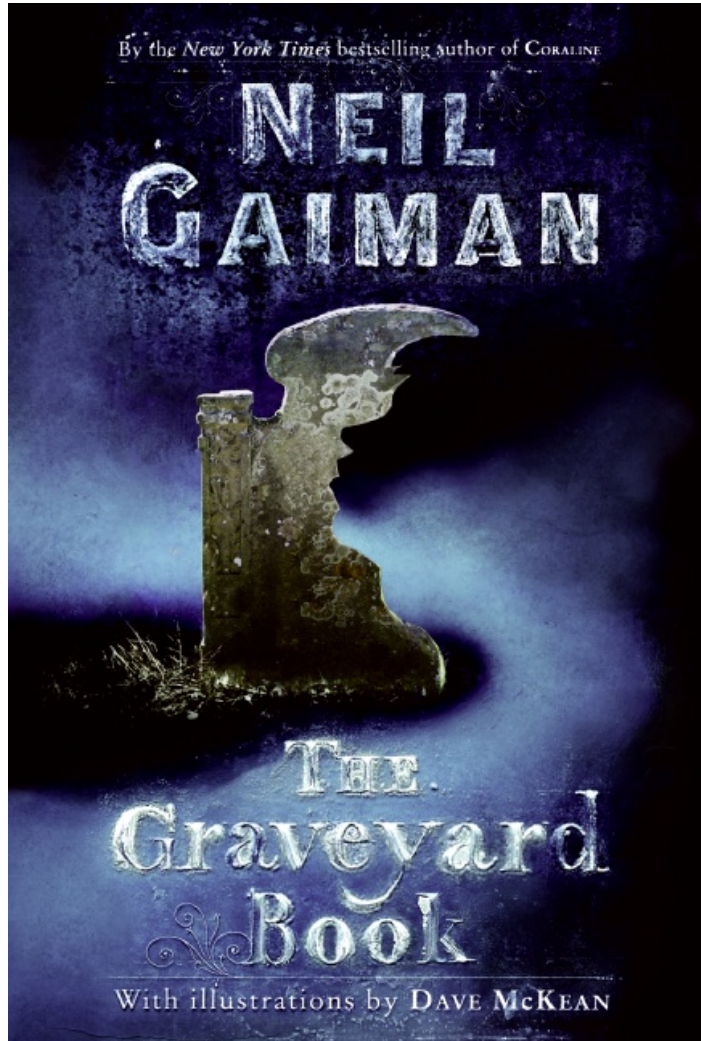
[http://www.reading.org/Publish.aspx?page=JAAL-52-8-Blasingame\\_5.html&mode=retrieve&D=10.1598/JAAL.52.8.8&F=JAAL-52-8-Blasingame\\_5.html&key=35B4A411-51CC-4377-9F7B-96194C592F20](http://www.reading.org/Publish.aspx?page=JAAL-52-8-Blasingame_5.html&mode=retrieve&D=10.1598/JAAL.52.8.8&F=JAAL-52-8-Blasingame_5.html&key=35B4A411-51CC-4377-9F7B-96194C592F20)





In the sequel, Suzanne Collins really shows her political savvy. This would be an excellent pairing with a history unit on any country that oppressed its people. Katniss defied the government in the annual Hunger Games by threatening suicide if only one person could win. Her integrity and refusal to be accept “the Capital’s” rule sparks rebellion.

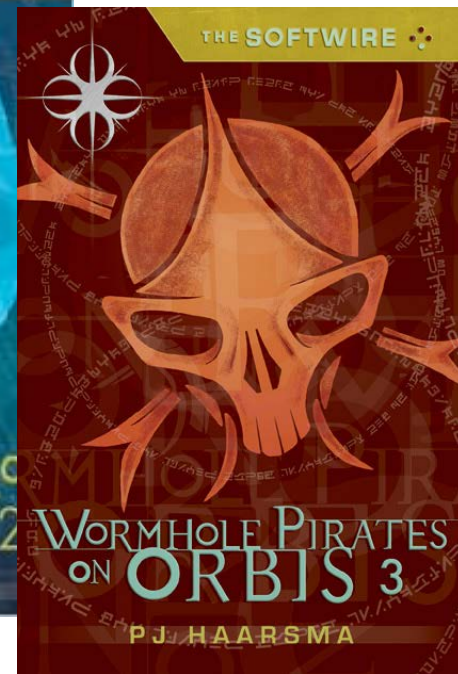
2009 Newbery Award (25 weeks on NYT Bestseller list)



When a dark assassin murders a family in the dead of night, the only survivor, an eighteen month old baby escapes to a graveyard where he becomes the darling of its residents.

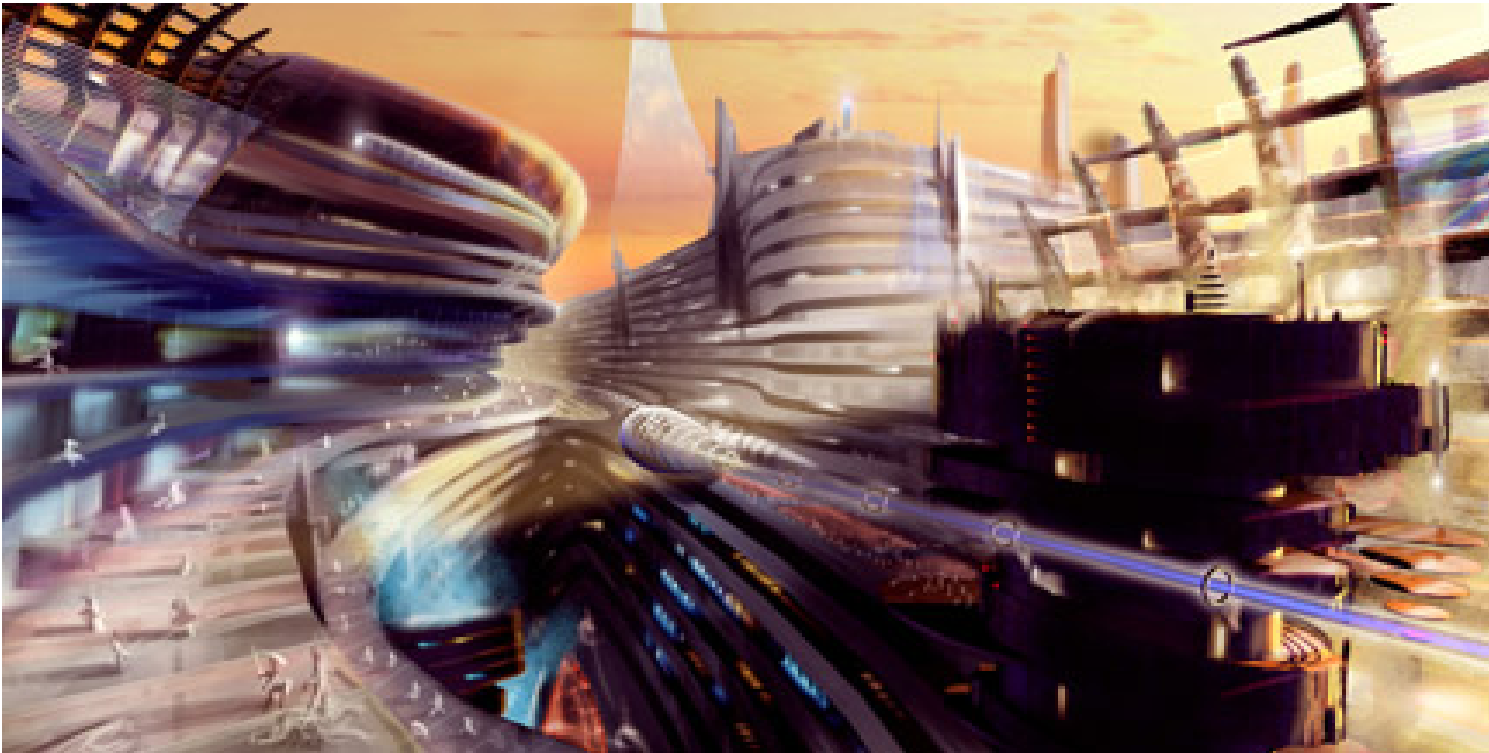
PJ Haarsma's Software series may be the newest, hottest thing in reading for scifi readers who are also gamers.

<http://www.thesoftware.com/readergetyourprize/>  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/06/books/06games.html>





PJ has created a free, online video game that parallels the books' stories and expands as new books come out.



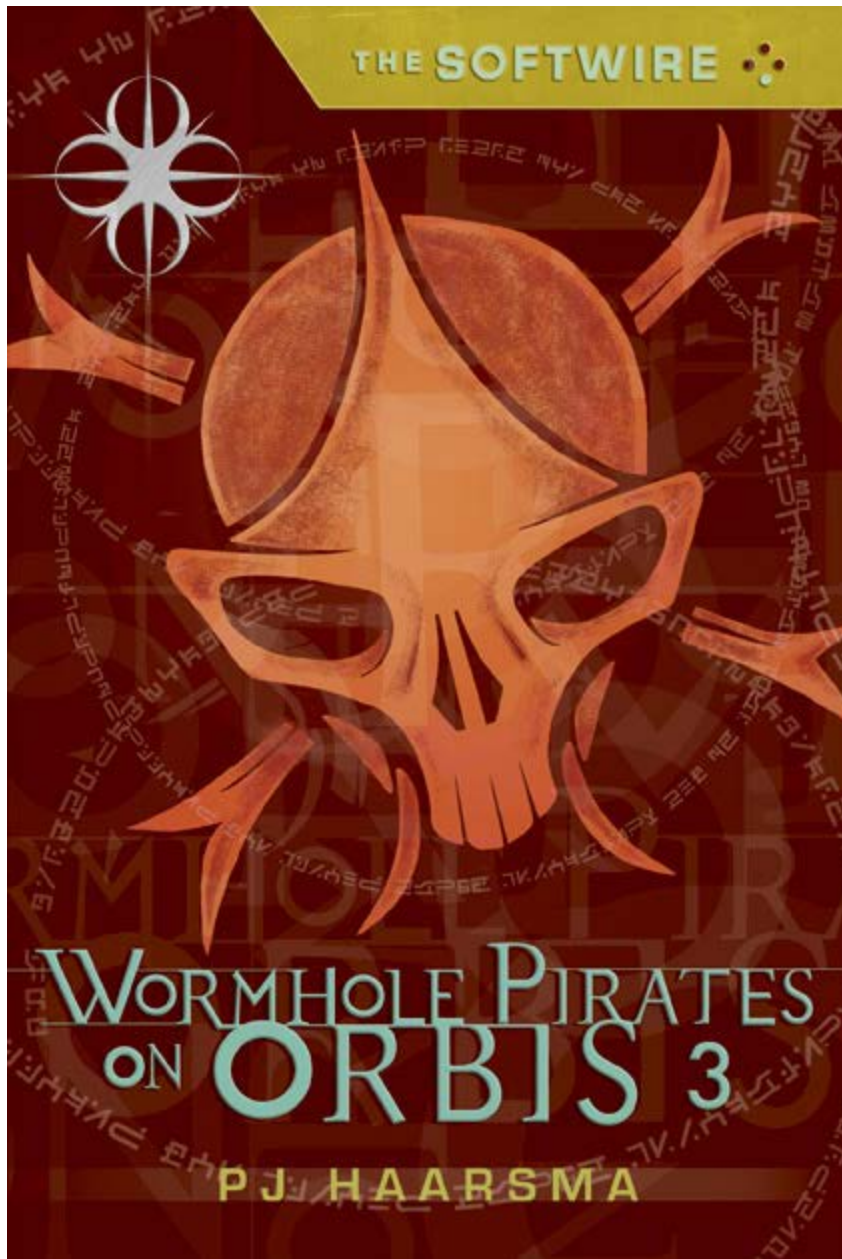
<http://english.clas.asu.edu/wiki-wire>

<http://www.ringsoforbis.com/>

PJ and Nathan Fillion, star of *Serenity* and *Firefly*, have started Kids Need to Read, a foundation to provide under-resourced schools and libraries with books.

<http://www.kidsneedtoread.org/>

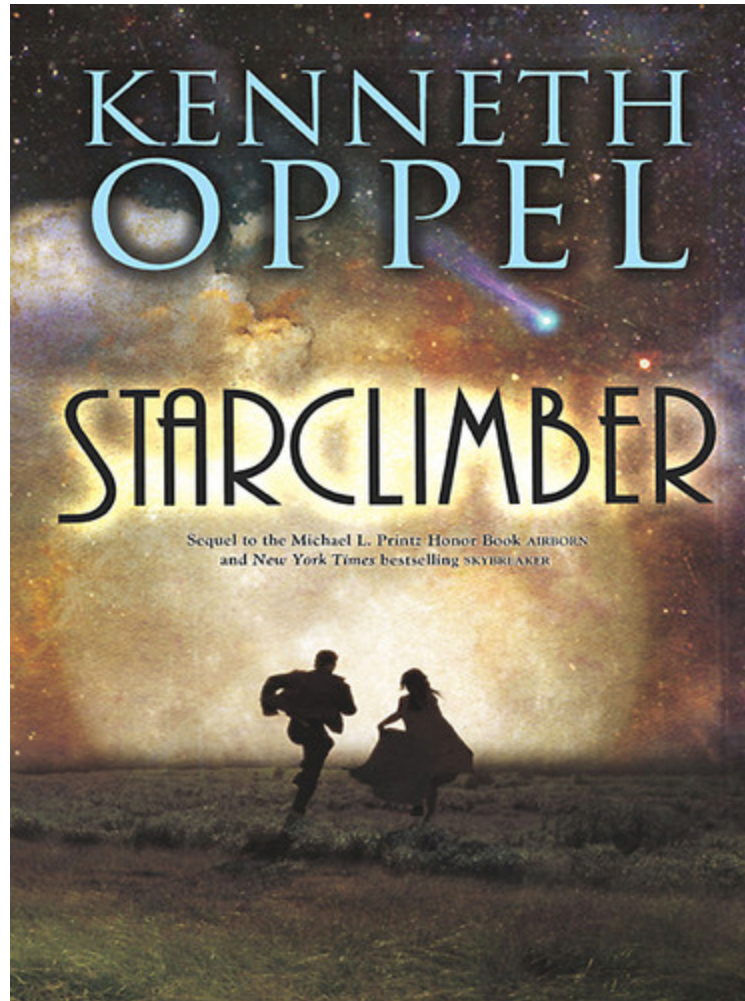




PJ's third book will be out this month. It turns out that JT's ability to play the ultimate video game (except that it's real) may have significance he never would have guessed, and that he and his sister are more than who they seem to be.

# *Starclimber*

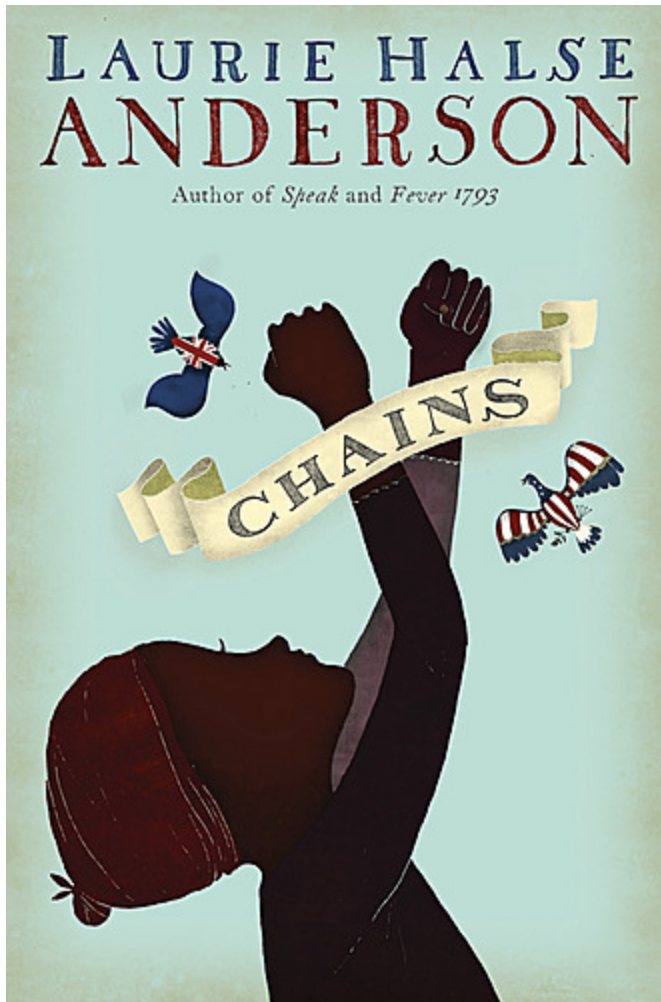
By Kenneth Oppel



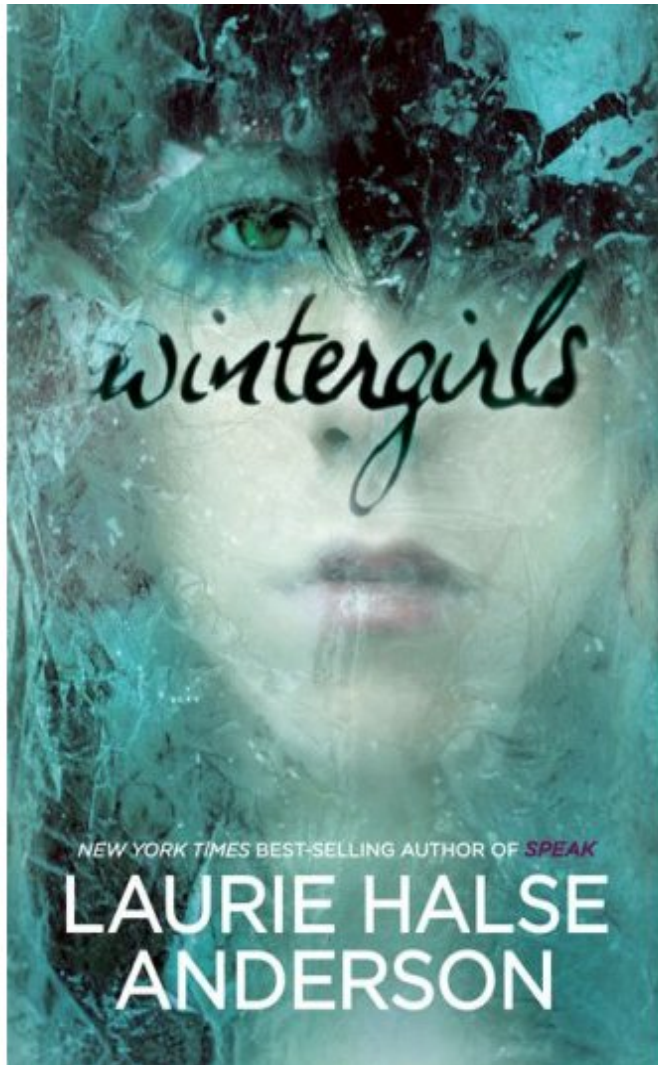
- Laurie Halse Anderson, just won the ALA's Margaret Adams Award for an author's work in "helping adolescents become aware of themselves and addressing questions about their role and importance in relationships, society, and in the world." This award goes to an author for a body of work and not just one book.

(<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/booklistsawards/margaretaedwards/margaretedwards.cfm>)





One of Laurie's latest books, *Chains*, is a Revolutionary War slave narrative about thirteen-year-old Isabel who has been promised freedom upon the death of their owner. When Isabel and her sister, Ruth, become the property of a mean couple, the Locktons, British sympathizers who have no intention of honoring the promise, Isabel becomes a spy for the Patriots, informing them of the British invasion plans. One of the first things she learns is that when neither side can be trusted.



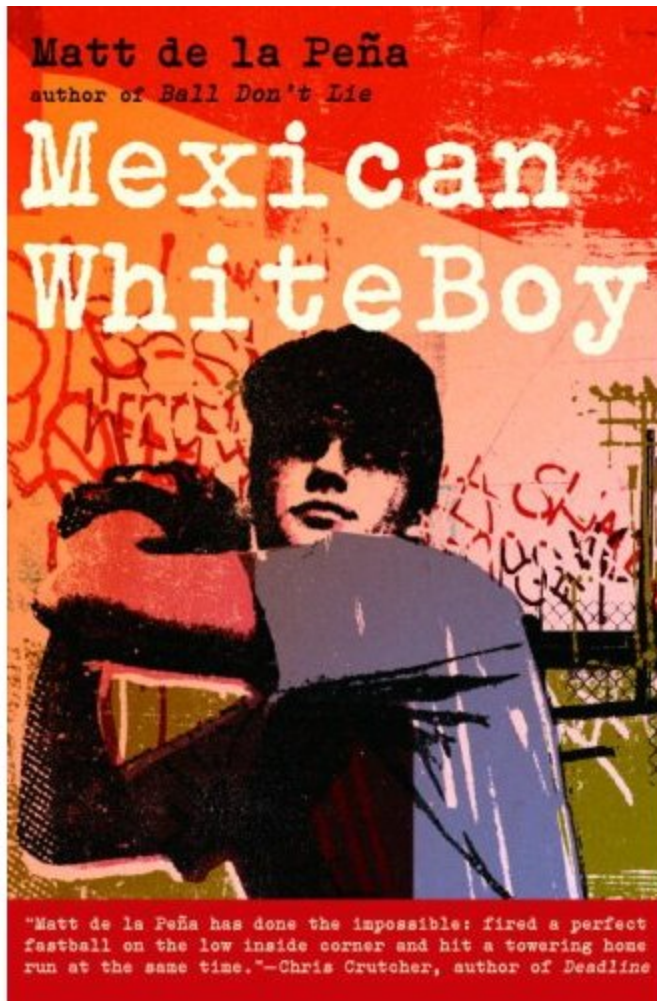
Lia is not only anorexic but also a cutter. Lia's friend, Cassie, has already died from starving herself and Lia may not be far behind. Cassie's lonely ghost seems to call to her to join her. This book is getting rave reviews. It just came out a few days ago and it's already selling like crazy.

- Frank Beddor's sequel to *The Looking Glass Wars* has Alyss back in her own dimension and serving in her rightful position as queen, but her evil aunt, Redd, may have escaped her imprisonment and be, once again, up to her murderous tricks.

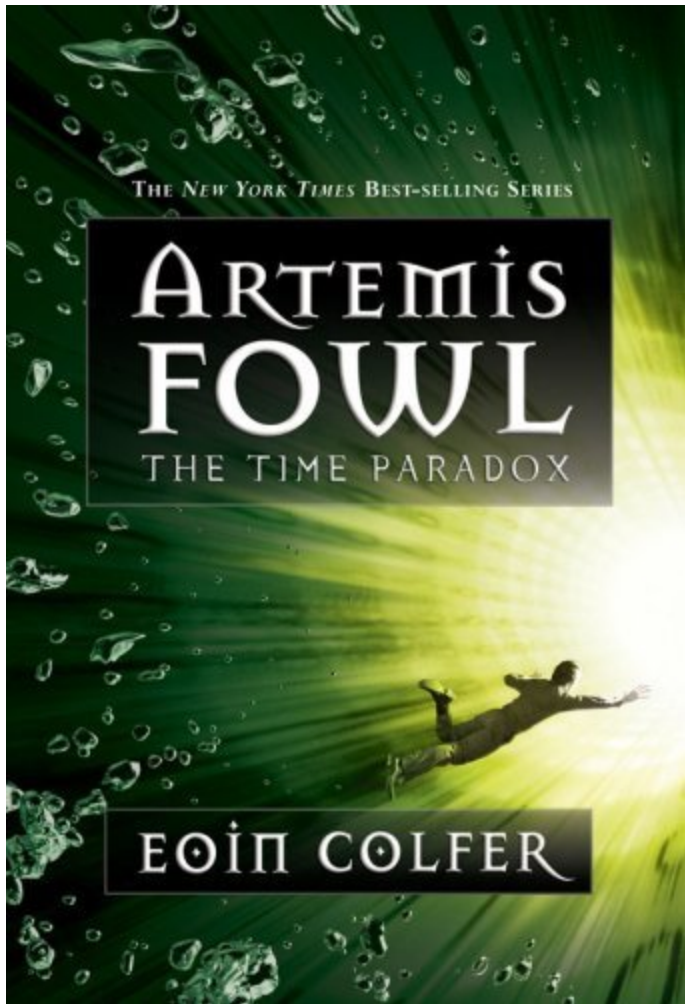




# *Mexican White Boy*, by Matt de la Peña



In his latest novel for young adults Matt de la Peña describes the life altering summer of Danny Lopez, a bi-racial high school student spending the summer with his father's relatives in a low-income, predominately Mexican town, just north of the Mexican border near San Diego, California. Danny has moved a great deal in his young adult life, but grew up mostly in an upper-middle class neighborhood in San Diego and now attends a prestigious, private high school where he is one of only a few students of color. His father is Mexican and his mother is Caucasian American and Danny spends much of his time trying to come to terms with feeling in between two cultures and two ethnicities. When he is at school, he feels too brown and when he is around his Mexican relatives, he feels too white. Unfortunately, the adults in Danny's life continually let him down and fail to provide the support and guidance he desperately seeks. (Jessica Early, JAAL, March 2009)



When the world's smartest human being, Artemis Fowl's, mother contracts a fatal disease, Artemis must go back in time to find the cure. He will face himself in the past and actions of his own which he must now undo. What will the consequences of changing the past be?



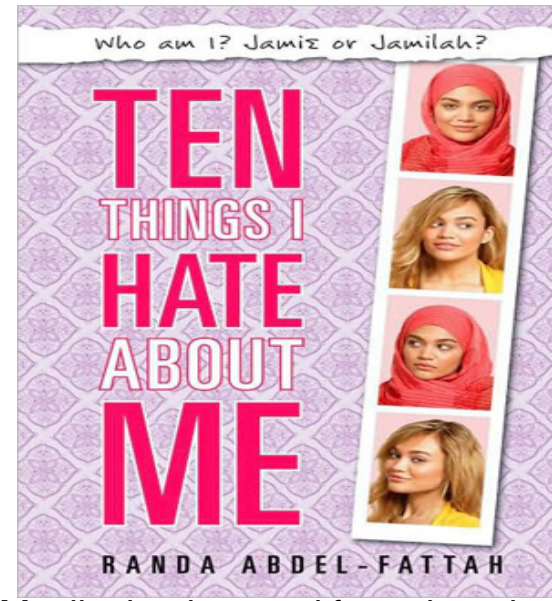
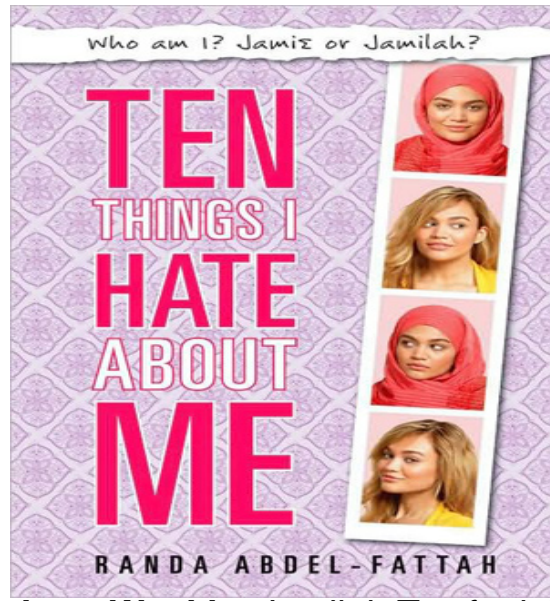
Does  
My  
Head  
Look  
Big  
In  
This?

Randa Abdel-Fattah

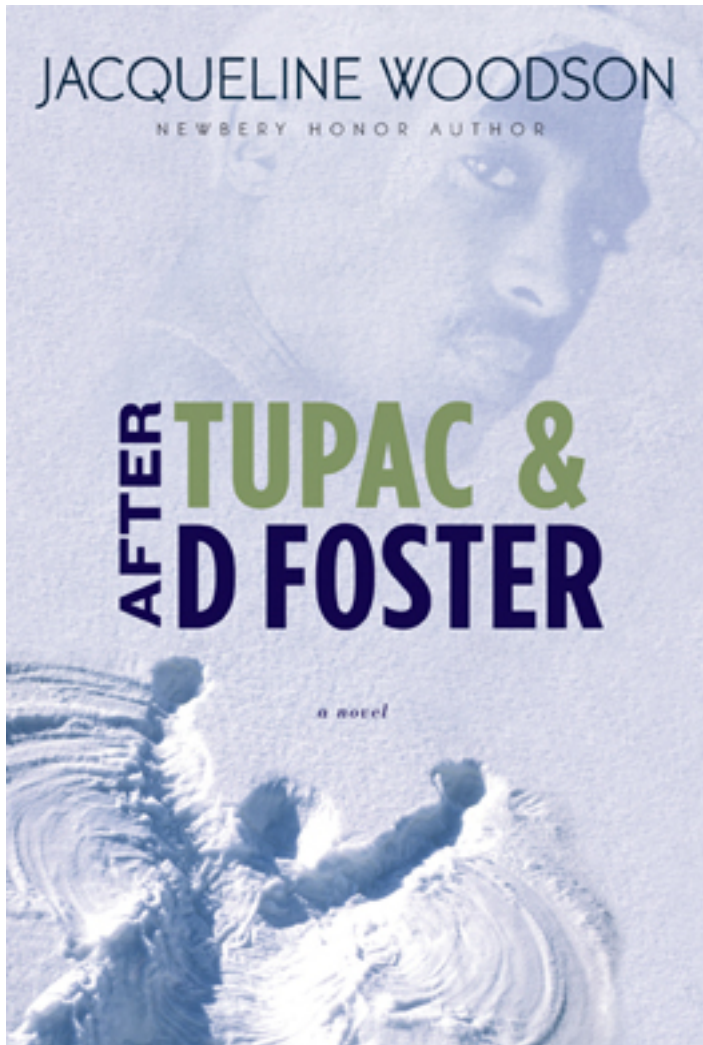
**Randa Abdel-Fattah writes the story of Australian-born, Muslim Palestinian, 11th-grader Amal, who is witty, charming, funny, outspoken, a good student, and a loyal friend. Some of her relatives want her to totally assimilate into Australian culture, and are aghast when Amal decides to wear the hijab to school and in her daily life. Her parents (medical doctors) understand and so do her real friends of all cultural heritages although some of the folks at her upper crust prep school take the opportunity for inappropriate and ignorant observations. She also is refused a job in the fast food court at the mall because she's "not hygienic," which is ironic given the hairnet requirement. This book is funny and informative, and selling well.**

# *Ten Things I Hate About Me*

## By Randa Abdel-Fattah



**From Publishers Weekly:** Jamilah Towfeek hides her Lebanese-Muslim background from the other kids at her Australian school "to avoid people assuming I fly planes into buildings as a hobby." She dyes her hair blonde, wears blue contacts and stands by when popular kids make racist remarks. Passing as "Jamie" is fraught with difficulties: she can't invite friends to her house, lies to cover up her widower dad's strict rules and reveals her true self only to an anonymous boy she meets online (her e-mail address is "Ten\_Things\_I\_Hate\_About\_Me"). Tensions at home and school culminate when the band she plays in at her madrassa (Islamic school) is hired to perform at her 10<sup>th</sup> grade formal. Abdel-Fattah (*Does My Head Look Big in This?*) follows a predictable pattern and uses familiar devices, such as the understanding teacher ("If [your friends] don't know the real you, then you've already lost them"). On the other hand, the author brings a welcome sense of humor to Jamilah's insights about her culture, and she is equally adept at more delicate scenes, for example, Jamilah's father recounting memories of Jamilah's mother. For all the defining details, Jamilah is a character teens will readily relate to.



When D Foster steps off the bus and strolls into their lives one day, Neeka is not sure she wants a new girl in the mix, but a shared love of Tupac and a passion for double-dutch the girls unites them. “Three the hard way” becomes their trademark as they prepare to face the years ahead together. Their love of Tupac brings them as close as they can be and provides them with hours of conversation and entertainment. This music brings meaning and clarity to many aspects of life for the girls. Together they start their search for their “Big Purpose” in life. JAAL March, Bridgette Stahn)

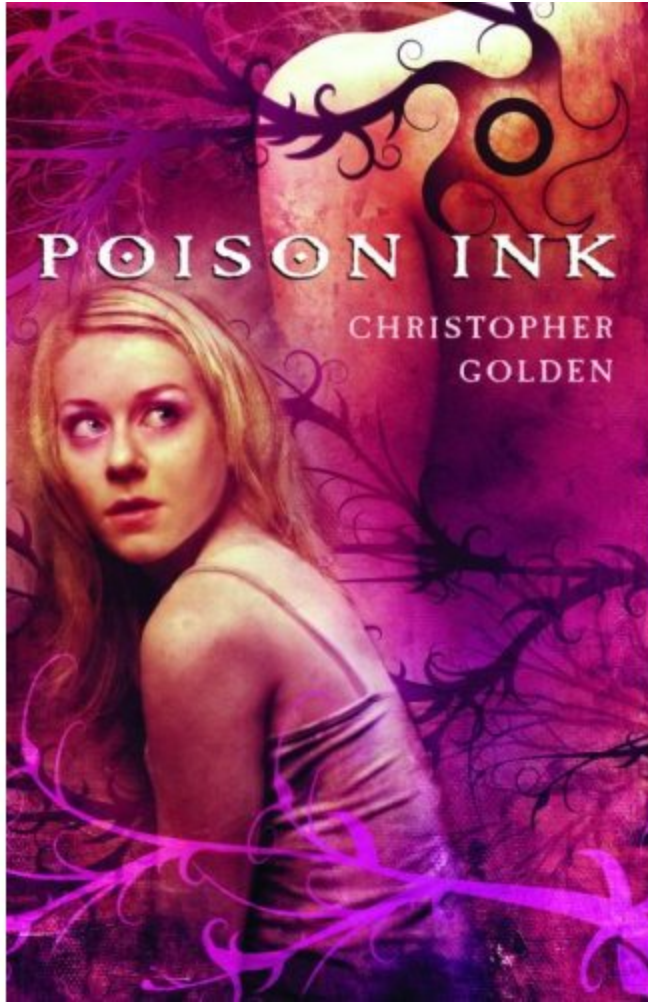
## YALSA 2009 Great Graphic Novels for Teens Award



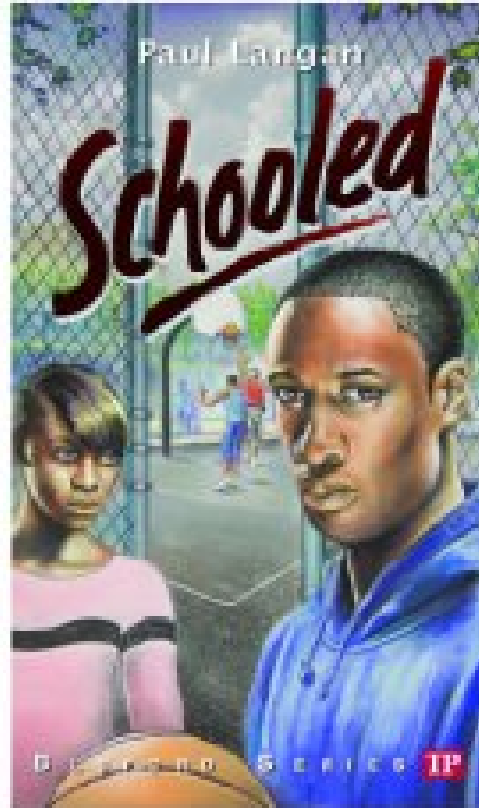
Who knew Rapunzel had it in her? All those years spent locked away in that tower, waiting for some handsome young prince to come along and rescue her --- wait, she didn't need a man to get out of that predicament?

It turns out Rapunzel was actually a kick-butt heroine who had a feisty temperament and tenacity --- or at least that's how a trio of Hales have envisioned her. Shannon Hale, a Newbery Award-winning children's book author, has teamed up with her husband, Dean, to write *RAPUNZEL'S REVENGE*, which turns the original Brothers Grimm tale on its ear. They brought in the help of talented illustrator Nathan Hale (no relation) for help fleshing out the story. (Amazon review from a reader)

# YALSA Quick Pick Award 2009



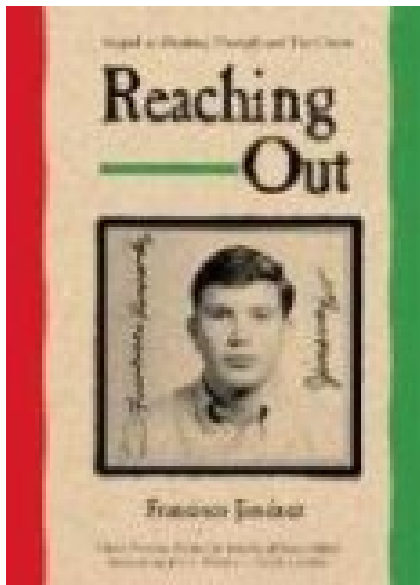
Things go bad when all but one of five friends get a tattoo, which turns out to be magical (and not in a good way).



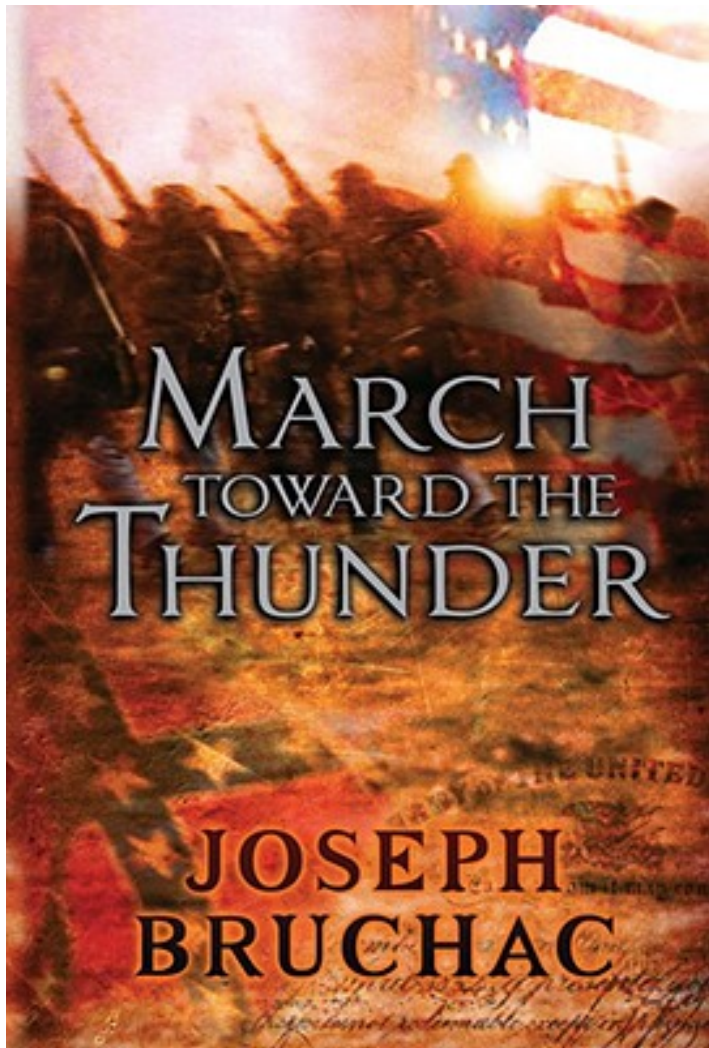
There's no backing down for Lionel Shephard. With a dream of joining the NBA, all he wants to do at Bluford High is play basketball. But everyone's trying to stop him. His father thinks basketball is a waste of time; his teachers don't know he can barely read and threaten to fail him; and his dropout friend Jamar wants him to quit school. Unsure where to turn, Lionel must make a choice. Will he pursue his dream or get caught in a nightmare?



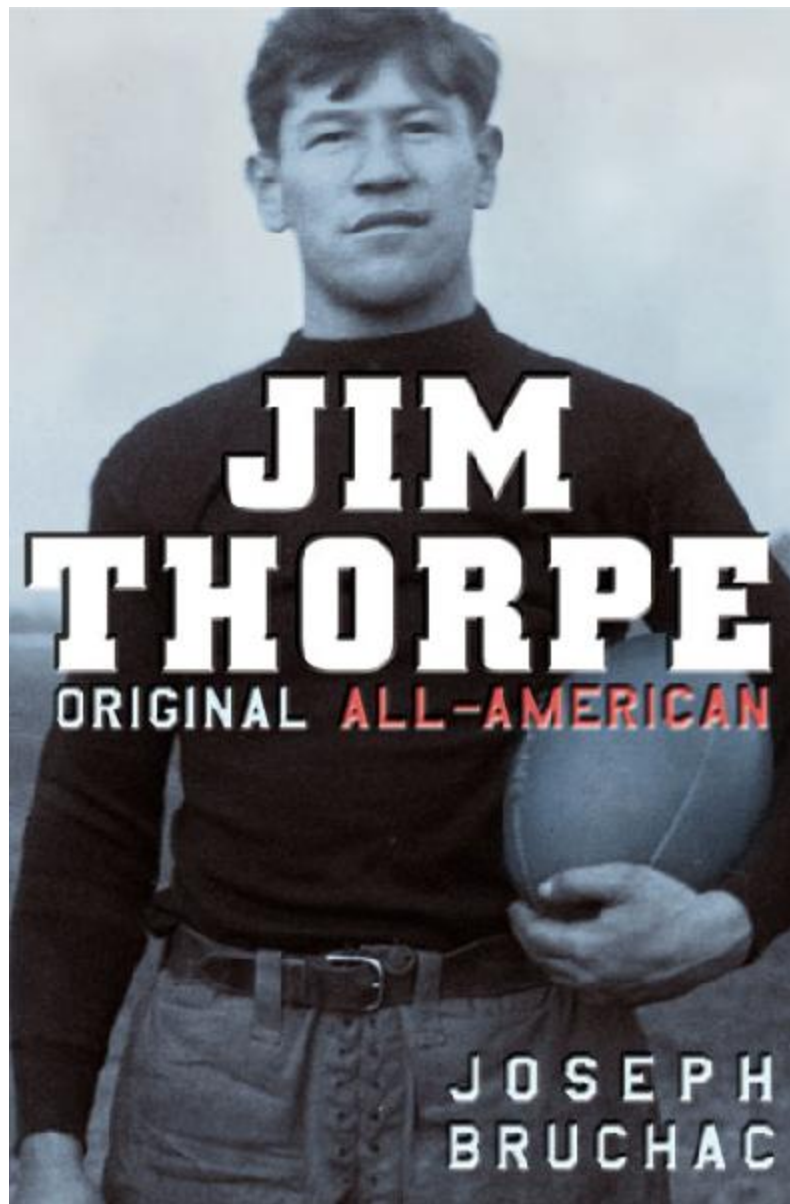
# Pura Belpré Honor Award winner



"[Jimenez] does a thorough job . . . of describing the difficulties, such as feeling unprepared and disadvantaged when compared to others, that some first-generation college students face . . . There are several kind-hearted mentors and benefactors . . . These gestures of kindness offer readers hope. This book is recommended for the library that already has the first two books on its shelf."-- VOYA (3Q3P)



Joseph Bruchac's latest novel follows fifteen year old Louis Nolette through his battles for the Union Army in the famed Irish Brigade. This novel is largely about cultural boundaries and crossings, about war, and about the role Native Americans played in the Civil War.



In 1903, a group of defeated warriors stepped out onto a field in front of thousands of hostile fans. They walked off heroes.

**THE REAL ALL  
AMERICANS**

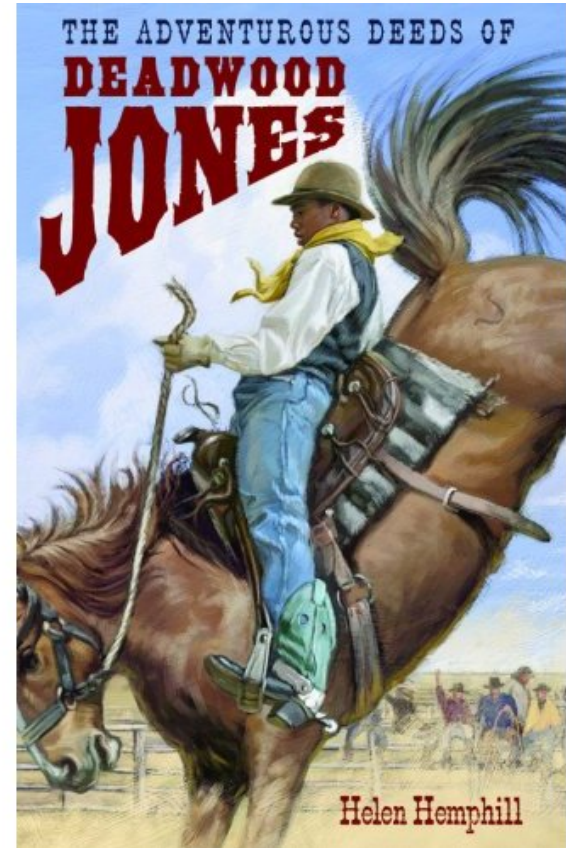
THE TEAM THAT CHANGED A  
GAME, A PEOPLE, A NATION



**SALLY JENKINS**

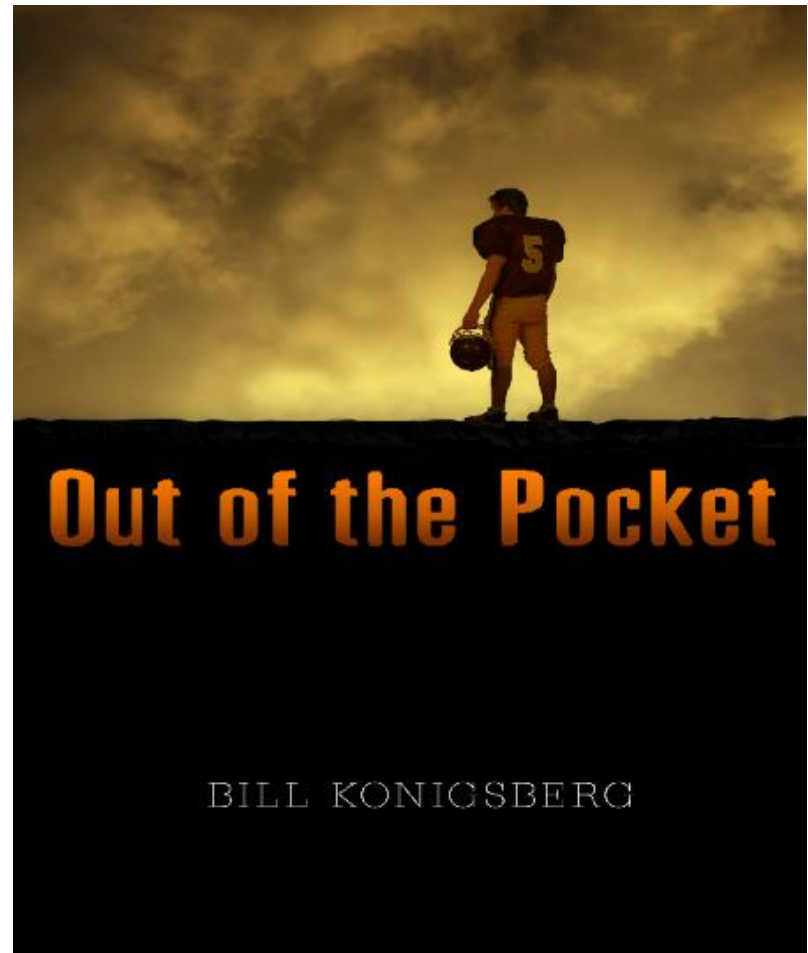
*Cowriter of the Bestselling IT'S NOT ABOUT THE BIKE*

- Helen Hemphill's heavily researched and admirably accurate fictional account of Prometheus Jones is based on many real characters in American history, not the least of which is Deadwood Dick.

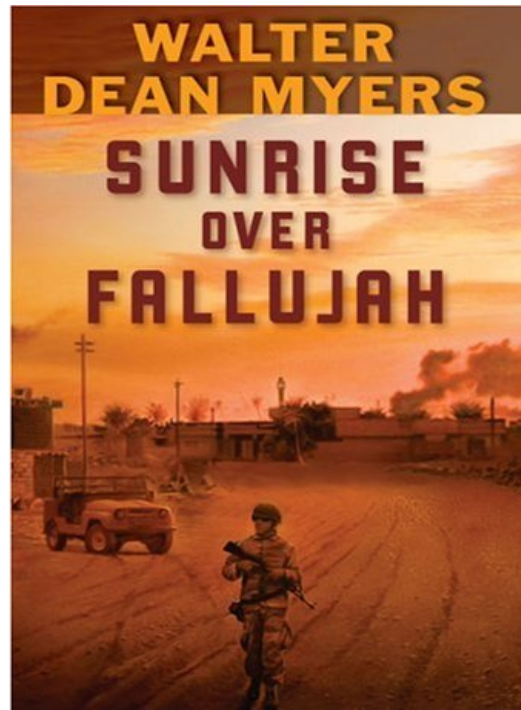


# And as long as we're talking about football-

- Bill Konigsberg, previously a sportswriter and editor for the Associated Press, has also written for ESPN.com, *The New York Daily News*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Miami Herald*, *Denver Post* . In his first young adult novel, coming from Penguin this fall, Bill ask the question: What would happen if the star of the high school football team was secretly coming to terms with being gay?

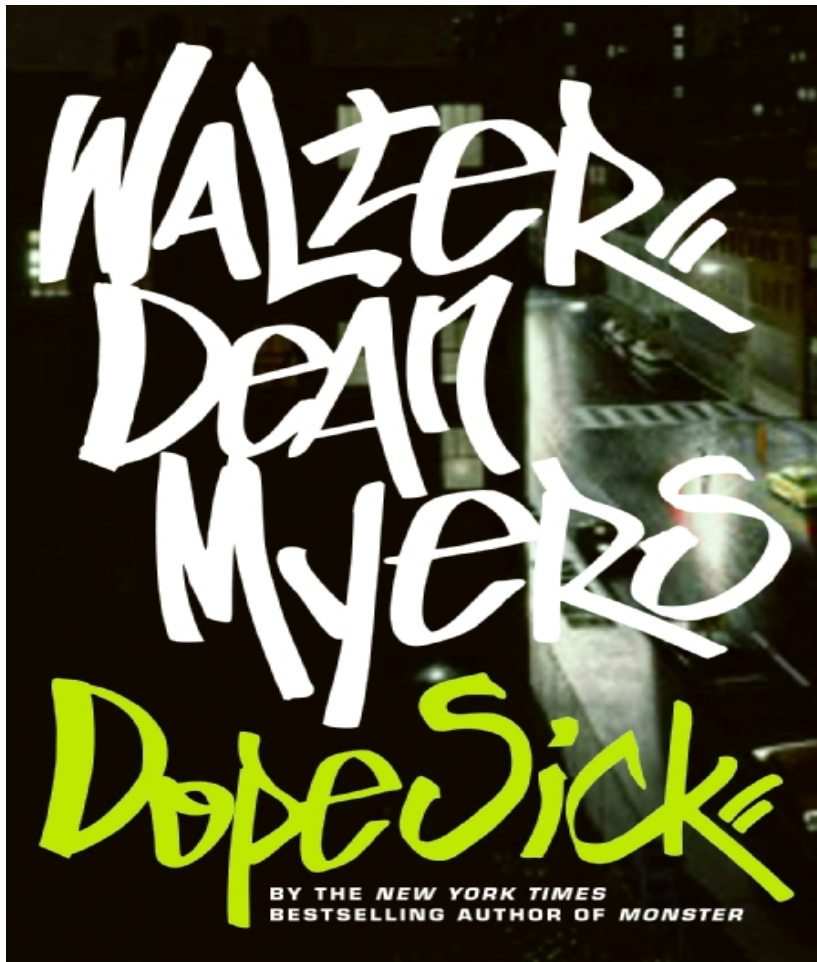


- **Harlem teenager Robin Perry is part of the Civil Affairs unit -- that is simultaneously supposed to be winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqis while trying to survive the random attacks and setups**
- **Sort of a sequel to *Fallen Angels* (1984) --Robin Perry's uncle is Richie Perry, the protagonist from Myer's Vietnam book. Robin writes letters to Uncle Richie about the irony and difficulty of their assignment.**



# *Dope Sick*

## By Walter Dean Myers



Starred Review. Using both harsh realism and a dose of the fantastic, Myers (*Game*) introduces an inner-city teen in the jaws of a crisis: 17-year-old Lil J is holed up in an abandoned building, believed to have shot an undercover cop in a drug bust, while police officers assemble in the street below. As he searches for a way out, Lil J is stopped by Kelly, an eerily calm vagrant who invites him to cop a squat and check yourself out on the tube. Kelly's TV not only plays scenes from Lil J's life but projects what will happen if he sticks with his current plan: suicide. Shocked, Lil J considers Kelly's question, If you could take back one thing you did... what would it be? Aided by Kelly's TV, Lil J revisits pivotal moments and wrestles with his fate. (Publishers Weekly)

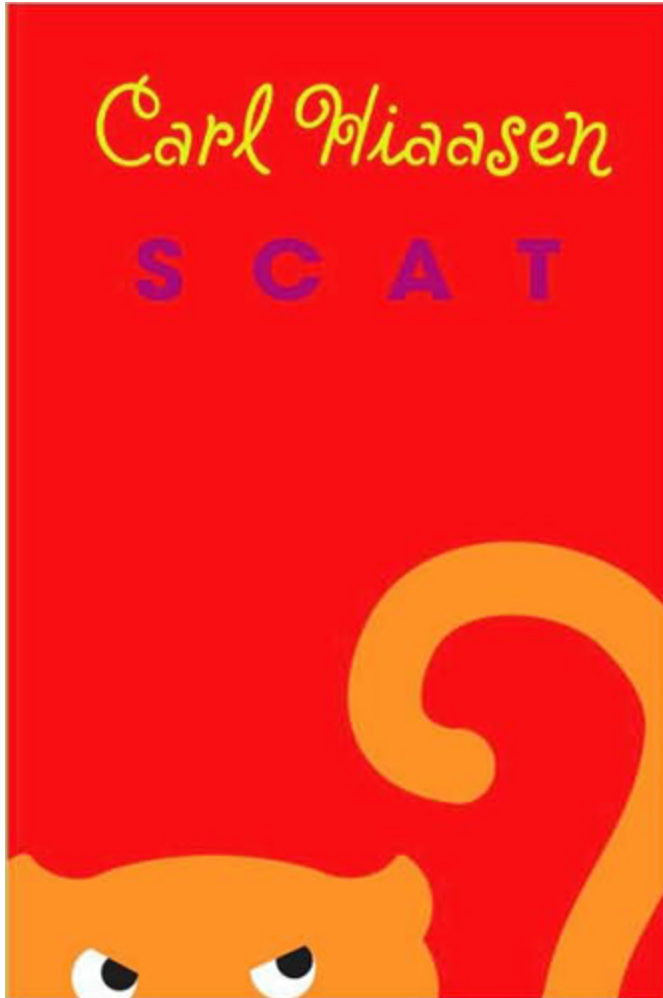
- **Chris Crutcher has come back to Trout, Idaho (*Running Loose*, 1983).**
- **Louie Banks is now the high school football coach (with scruples) and English teacher.**
- **Ben Wolf has chosen to live his senior year as if it were his last (because it is).**
- **As always with CC, no easy answers in life and no Ozzie and Harriet families.**





# Scat

## By Carl Hiaasen



- Hiaasen starts off this story—a hybrid madcap swamp adventure and cast-driven environmental whodunit—with the disappearance of a biology teacher after a fire breaks out during a field trip in the Everglades. The immediate suspect for the fire, at least, is a young miscreant, but friends Nick and Marta figure something else is afoot: it might have something to do with the nefarious oilmen slinking about nearby, as well as the rumor of an endangered panther and her cubs in the swamp. (Amazon.com)

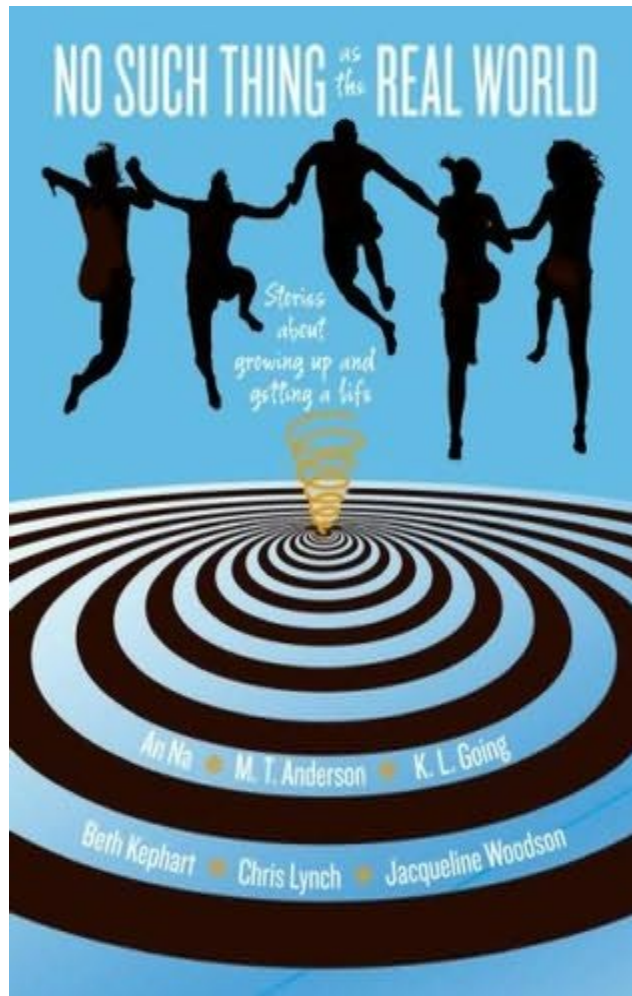
# *Along for the Ride* By Sarah Dessen



Dessen has built a well-deserved reputation for delicately depicting teen girls in turmoil. Her latest title showcases a socially awkward young woman who seeks solace in the comforting rigidity of academic success. Auden is about to start college in the fall, and decides to escape her control-freak professor mom to spend the summer with her novelist father, his new young wife, and their brand-new baby daughter, Thisbe. Over the course of the summer, Auden tackles many new projects: learning to ride a bike, making real connections with peers, facing the emotional fallout of her parents' divorce, distancing herself from her mother, and falling in love with Eli, a fellow insomniac bicyclist recovering from his own traumas. The cover may mislead readers, as despite the body language of the girl in pink and the hunky blue-jeaned boy balanced on a bike, this is no slight romance: there's real substance here. Dessen's many fans will not be deterred by the length or that cover; they expect nuanced, subtle writing, and they won't be disappointed. Grades 9-12. --Debbie Carton

# *No Such Thing as the Real World: Stories About Growing Up and Getting a Life*

Edited by M.T. Andersen

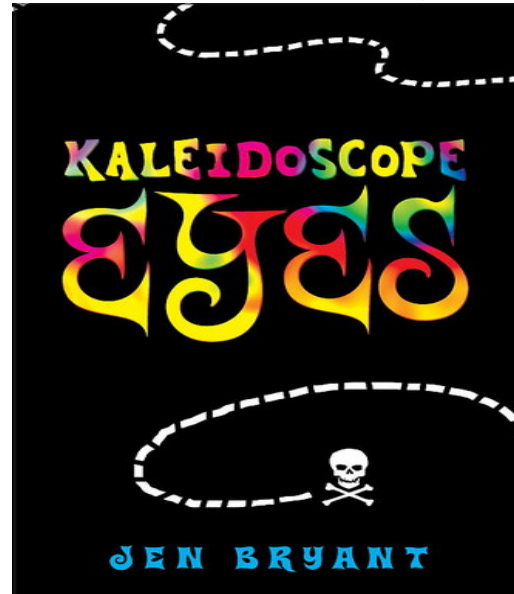


Six award-winning authors tackle the subject of the real world, in this stunning collection of pieces about graduation, pregnancy, death, pain, love, and loss. Authors include An Na, M.T. Anderson, K.L. Going, Beth Kephart, Chris Lynch, and Jacqueline Woodson.

[http://www.boonebridgebooks.com/No\\_Such\\_Thing\\_Real\\_World\\_Stories\\_Growing\\_Up\\_Getting\\_Life\\_An\\_Na\\_M\\_T\\_Anderson\\_K\\_L\\_Going-i-0061470589](http://www.boonebridgebooks.com/No_Such_Thing_Real_World_Stories_Growing_Up_Getting_Life_An_Na_M_T_Anderson_K_L_Going-i-0061470589)

# *Kaleidoscope Eyes*

## By Jen Bryant



"Will Lyza's 1968 summer mystery lead to . . . pirate treasure?" When Lyza helps her dad clean out her late grandfather's house, a mysterious surprise brightens the sad task. In Gramps's dusty attic, Lyza discovers three maps, carefully folded and stacked, bound by a single rubber band. On top, an envelope says "For Lyza ONLY." What could this possibly be? It takes the help of her two best friends, Malcolm and Carolann, to figure out that the maps reveal three possible spots in their own New Jersey town where Captain Kidd ("the "Captain Kidd, seventeenth-century pirate) may have buried a treasure. Can three thirteen-year-olds actually conduct a secret treasure hunt? And what will they find? In a tale inspired by a true story of buried treasure, Jen Bryant weaves an emotional and suspenseful novel in poems, all set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War during a pivotal year in U.S. history. ("From the Hardcover edition."[http://www.boonebridgebooks.com/Kaleidoscope\\_Eyes\\_Jen\\_Bryant-i-0375940480](http://www.boonebridgebooks.com/Kaleidoscope_Eyes_Jen_Bryant-i-0375940480))

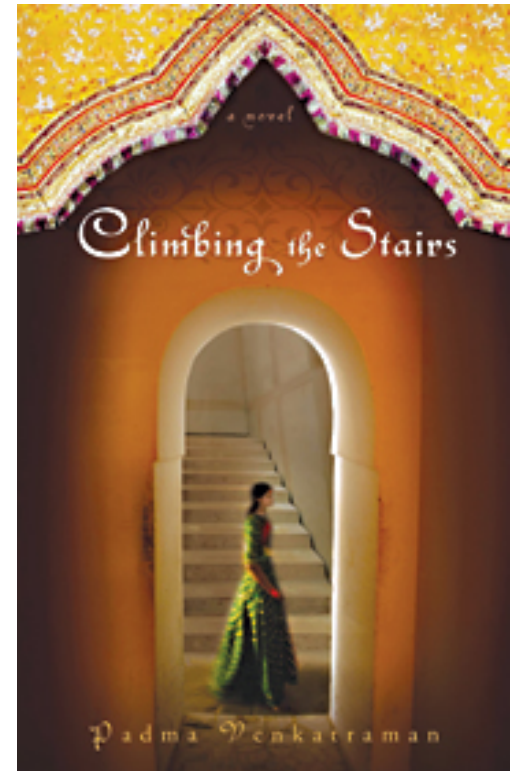
# Climbing the Stairs

by Padma Venkatraman

Fifteen year old Vidya is a Brahmin (upper-caste) girl living in Bombay, India, during an important time in India's independence movement. Her father is a member of the non-violent independence movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. As a doctor, Vidya's father serves by caring for the protesters wounded by the British during peaceful demonstrations. Vidya's father is also a scholar and discusses history, religion, and philosophy with Vidya. He teaches her that the caste system was originally about the responsibility of the rich to take care of the poor and was not meant to be hereditary. This is why Vidya's father treats their servants with respect, when many others of their class do not.

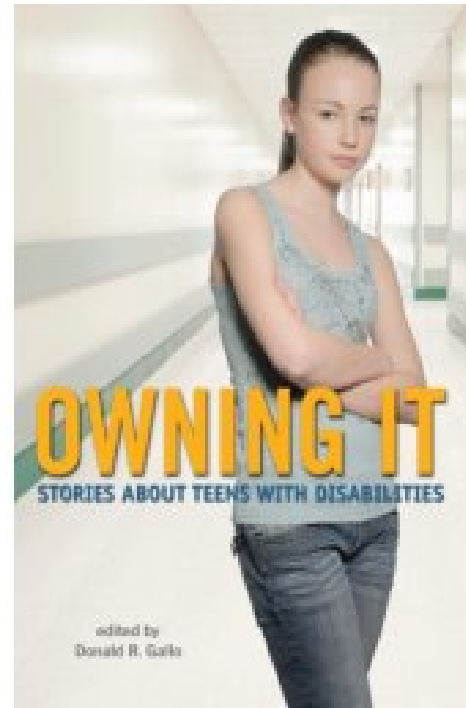
At fifteen, Vidya is nearing marital age. Vidya, however, is afraid to get married. She wants to finish school and then continue on to college. Vidya's father promises her that she will not have to marry early and that she can go to college, a promise which dies with him, when he is killed while trying to help wounded demonstrators in a riot.

Vidya's new life in her grandfather's home will be very different from her previous life.

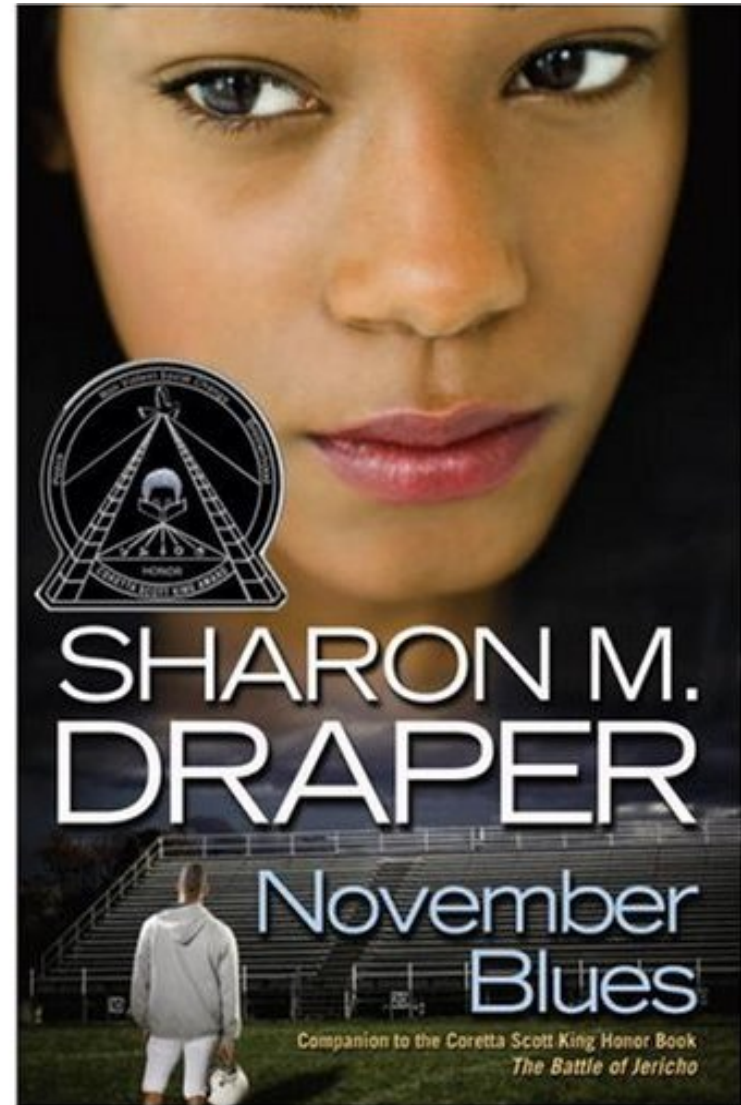


# Don Gallo edited a new collection about young people with disabilities.

- Short story authors are top names, like Chris Crutcher, Gail Giles and David Lubar

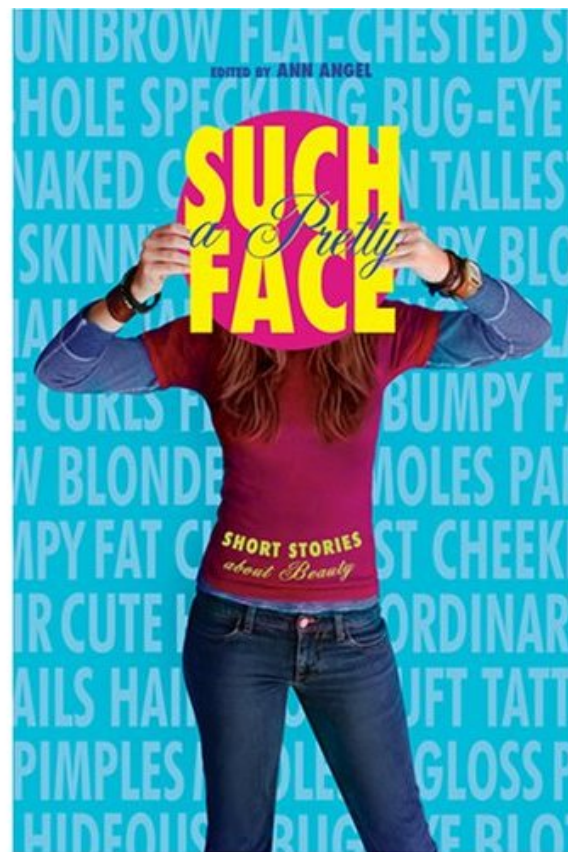


- **Former, United States Teacher of the Year, Sharon Draper, writes about November Nelson, who loses her boyfriend in a stupid accident.**
- **Realistic account of pregnancy.**
- **Sequel to *The Battle of Jericho***
- **Coretta Scott King Honor Book**



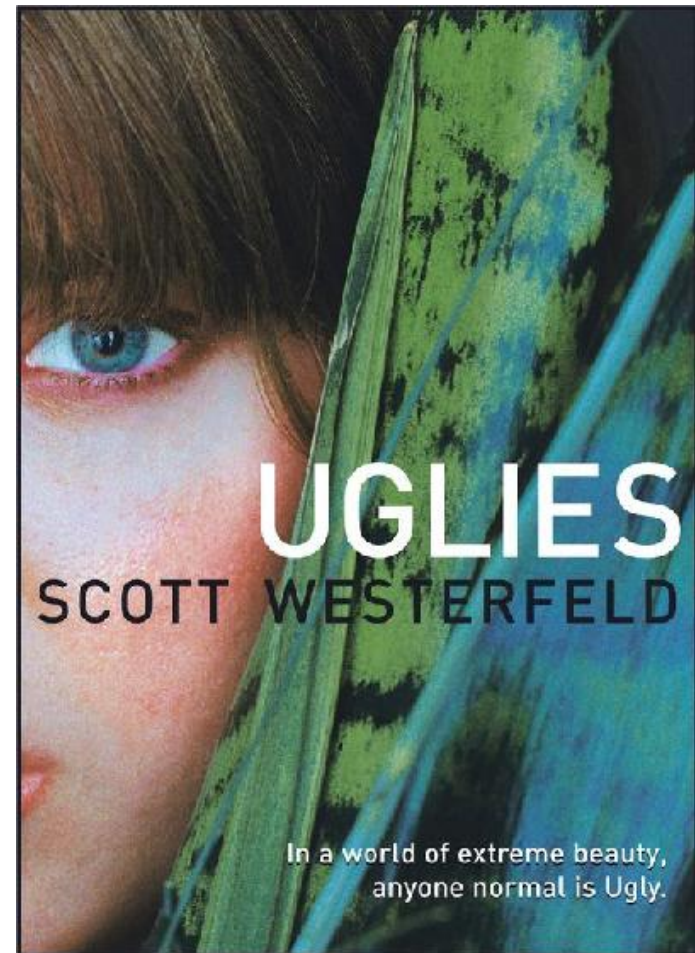
Short story collection that explores the truth about what is or isn't “beautiful.”

Louise Hawes  
J. James Keels  
Ron Koertge  
Chris Lynch  
Norma Fox Mazer  
Lauren Myracle  
Jamie Pittel  
Anita Riggio  
Mary Ann Rodman  
Ellen Wittlinger  
Jacqueline Woodson  
Tim Wynne-Jones

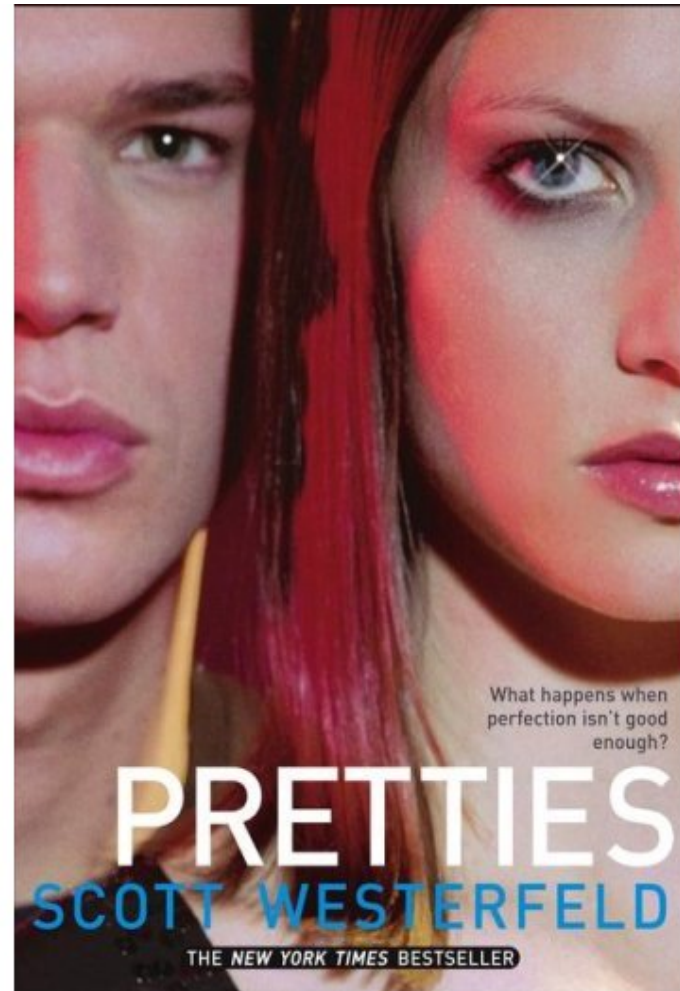




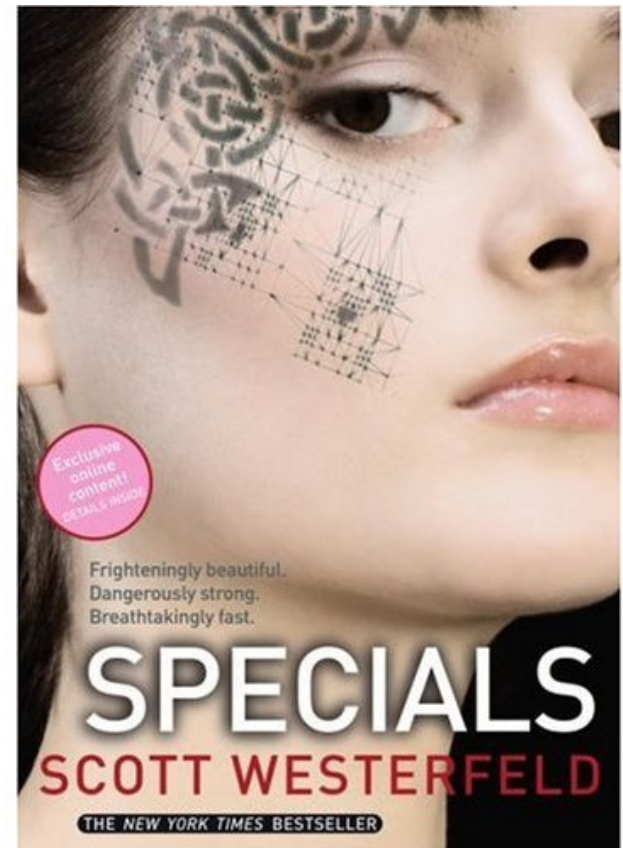
- Tally Youngblood may choose not to become a Pretty at age 16, but what will that mean and how will the world take it? Is it even a choice?



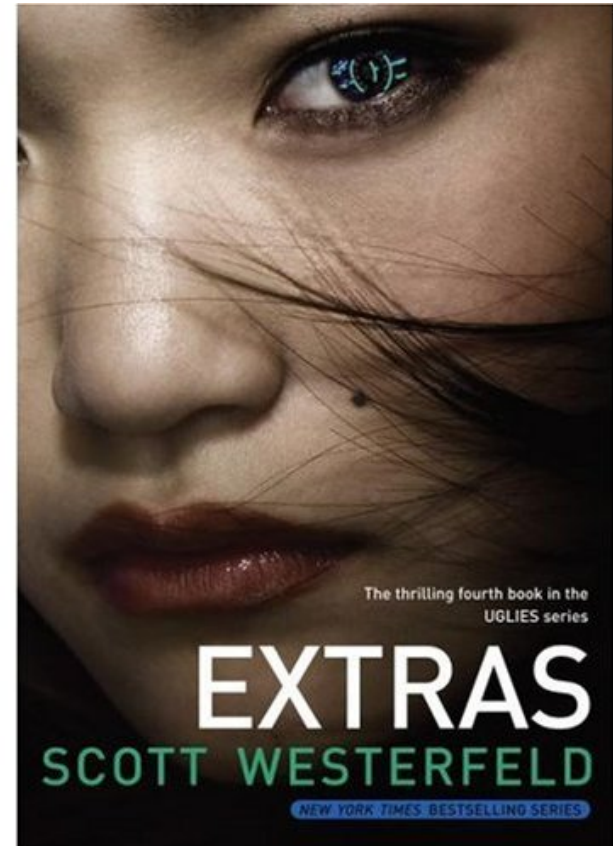
**As a Pretty, Tally sees things differently, her life, her love, and herself. Does she understand what happened to her brain? And what can she do about it!**



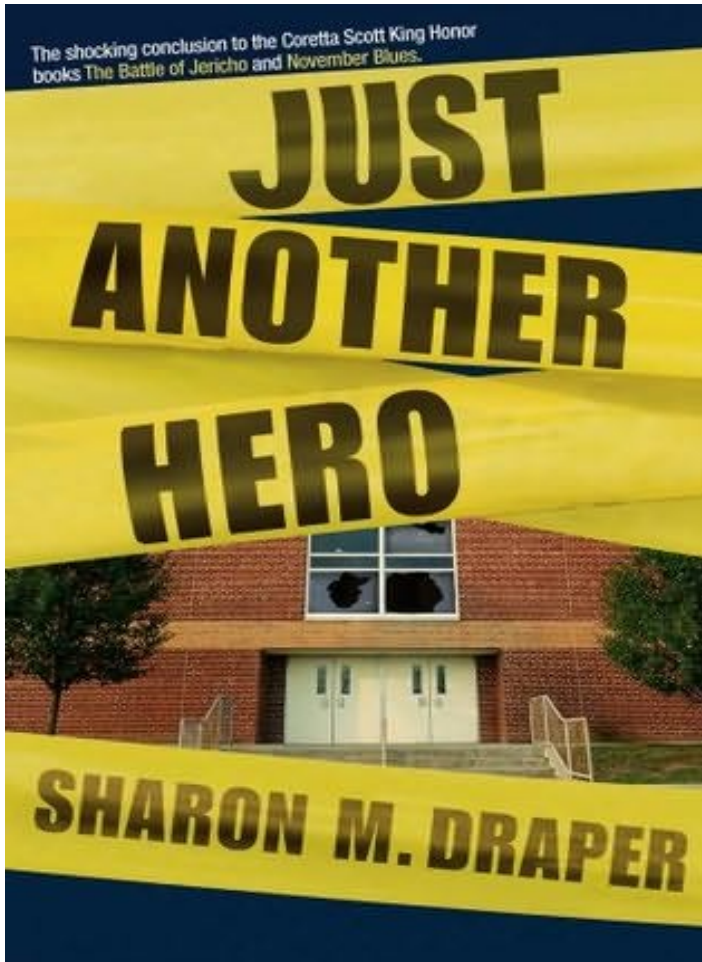
Life as a Pretty was very “bubbly,” but life as a special is extremely “thrill making!” As a sort of Terminator/vampire/extreme sports adrenaline addict/Gestapo, Tally will be up against the very people she set out to save.



- Aya Fuse has a face rank of 453,652 (how dreary), but she is a kicker and there lies her chance to make the Party of 1,000.
- Among the surge monkeys, tech-heads and Sly Girls, can she really rise to fame? And is that what life is all about?



# *Just Another Hero* By Sharon Draper



Suppose someone showed up in YOUR classroom carrying an AK-47. You have a split second:

To think.

To act.

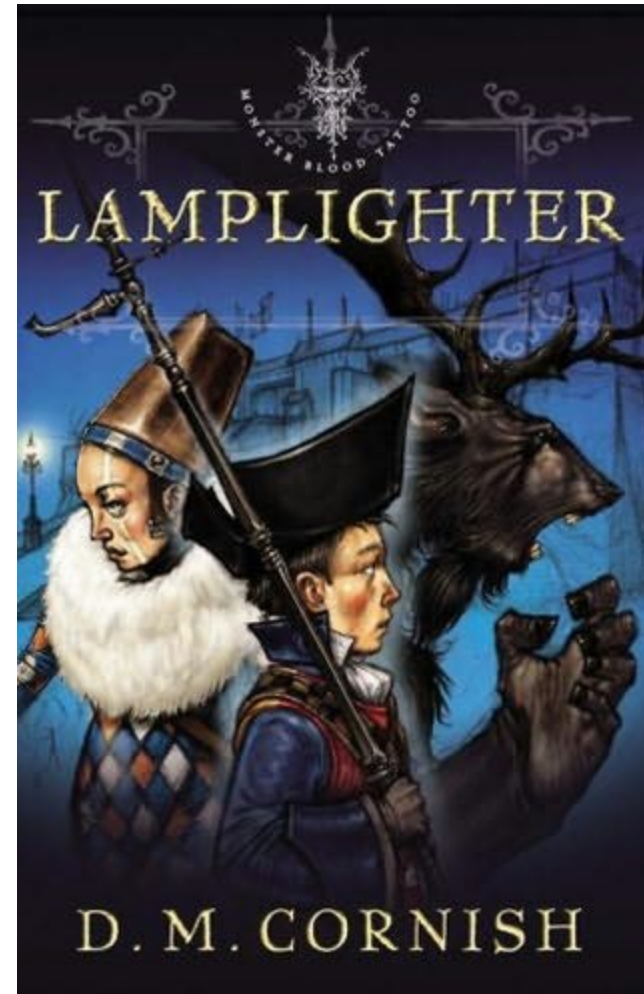
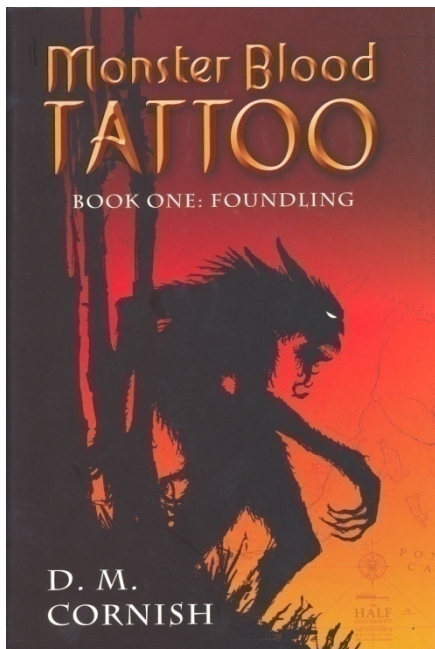
To be a hero.

**But what is a hero?**

That question becomes all too real for Arielle, November, Jericho, and their friends. They've been through so much: the hazing ritual that left Joshua dead and hearts aching; November finding out that she was pregnant with Josh's baby. But senior year is going well, and when the fire alarm goes off in English class, everyone assumes that crazy Jack is trying to get out of another quiz. But the alarm was pulled for a very different reason. A potentially deadly reason. There's only a matter of seconds to stop a tragedy, and all eyes are searching for someone -- anyone -- to step up and do something.

This shocking conclusion to the two-time Coretta Scott King Honor-winning trilogy by Sharon M. Draper will have you holding your breath to the very last page.

**D.M. Cornish has written the second installment in his intriguing Monster Blood Tattoo series, the story of an unlikely monster fighter, Rosamünd Bookchild.**



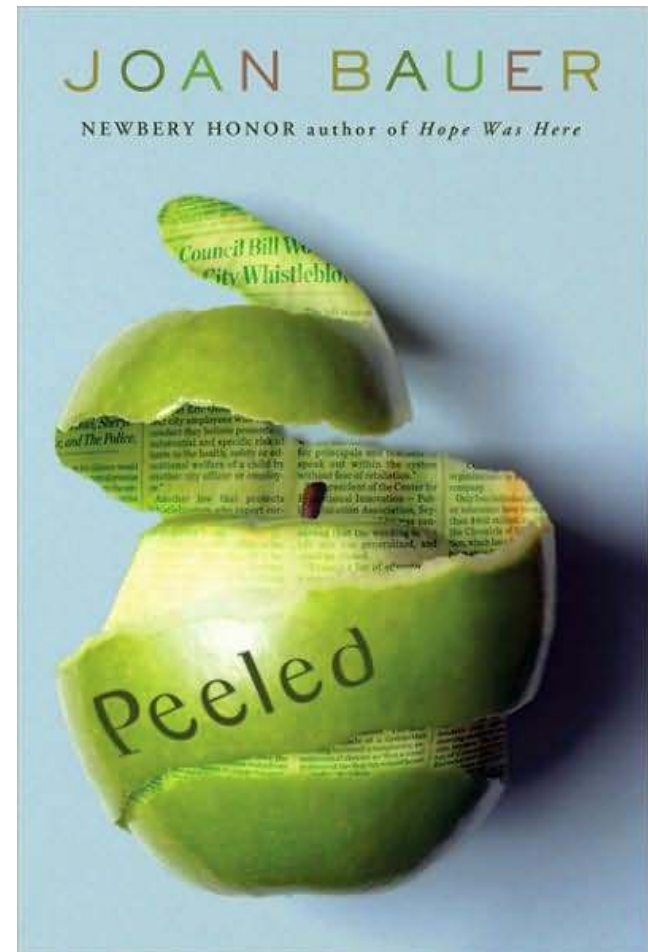
# Everyone loves Sarah Dessen!

- **In *Lock and Key*, Sarah's seventeen year old protagonist, Ruby, is taken away from her old life, where she pretty much took care of herself, and placed with her estranged sister, whom she hasn't seen in ten years. Ruby resists accepting her new life, and plans to wait it all out until she turns eighteen. Her new lifestyle is pretty cushy, however, and as time goes by she starts to enjoy the fancy house, and much higher standard of living, and even the handsome boy next door.**
- **Ruby will come to learn that a nice house and comfortable lifestyle don't necessarily mean happiness, however, as she watches her sister and her brother-in-law struggle through difficult times. She also learns that affluence does not at all insure a family will not be dysfunctional.**



- Bauer's protagonist, Hildy, is a high school journalist in the fictional town of Banessville, in up-state New York. The "villains" include the editor of the town's newspaper, who is in cahoots with a big development company, a fraudulent security company, and a fortune teller hired by the developers to offer dire hints about the future of Banessville. These developers have a special interest in the old abandoned Ludlow house, rumored to be haunted, which will be at the center of the scary theme park they are planning to build after bulldozing the local apple orchards. When the farmers resist selling their orchards, the company tries other tactics.

- Bauer relies on several themes that she's used before, especially those that made *Hope Was Here* such a good book. She has optimistic and enthusiastic young people defeating small-town political corruption, cross-generational communication and support, single-parent and blended families, high school cliques, and the satisfaction of doing a job well.



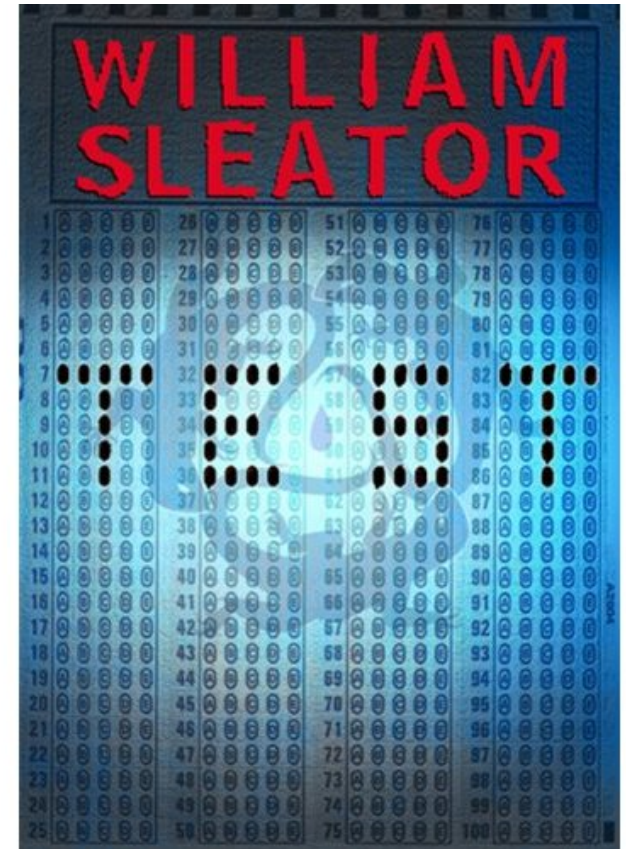


Somewhere in the not too distant future, in a place not unlike the United States, society is stratified by economic status, heavy traffic makes commuting to work so onerous that the wealthy travel by helicopter, schools have given up student-centered curriculum for a high stakes testing program of education, and the powers that be dominate society through major corporations which easily control a corrupt government. In this brilliant work of social satire and commentary, William Sleator takes a swipe at No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), oil companies, politicians and the mandatory high stakes testing that has most school districts in such an uproar they abandon intelligent curriculum in order to teach to the test.

The test is problematic for many reasons, not the least of which is that it is created for the ease of the test makers and scorers (in other words, the test company) and isn't a valid measure of learning. The effect this has on English class, for example, is criminal:

Every minute of English was preparing to pass XCAS. You didn't read whole books by famous authors. You read little selections, a few paragraphs long, rewritten by people at the test publishing company. The paragraphs were too short to be stories about interesting and unusual people having adventures and emotional experiences. Reading was a formulaic exercise.  
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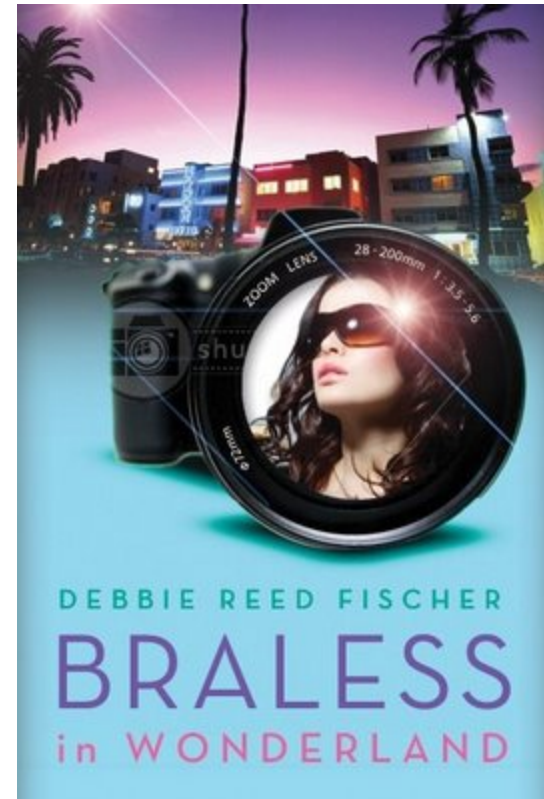
Sleator's two protagonists include the daughter of a medical social worker, Ann, who does well in school but has a sense of justice that gets her in trouble; and Lep, an impoverished young man from Thailand, who is basically an indentured servant to the Replico Company.



# *Braless in Wonderland*

Debbie Reed Fischer's protagonist, Allee is dead set on going to Yale. She focuses on her studies and invests herself in topics that seem sophisticated enough for the Ivy League such as feminism. Her hard work pays off with an early acceptance letter, but then her dream seems out of reach due to her father's bad investments. Still, dreams don't die that easily . . .

In the middle of Allee's senior year, her sister, Sofia (a.k.a. "The Fluff"), goes to a modeling search at the mall. However, Allee, not Sophia, is the one singled out by the modeling agency scouts. At first Allee refuses the invitation, faithfully sticking to her feminist beliefs that modeling exploits women. But when the agency explains the financial benefits, the possibility of attending Yale comes back into focus. Allee becomes a model.



# *King of the Screwups: A Novel*

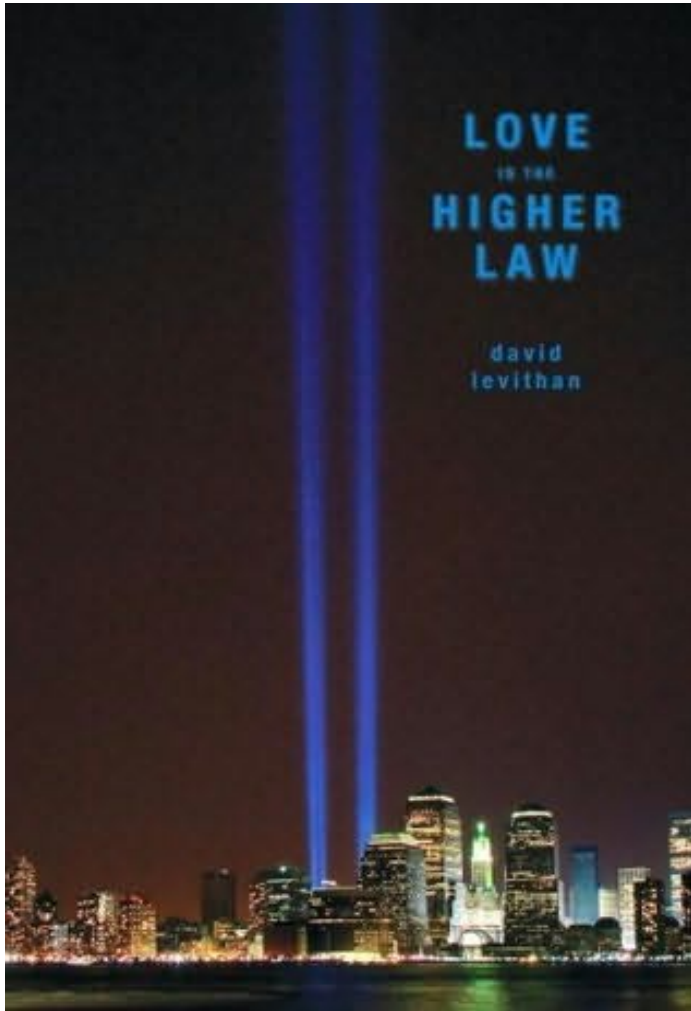
## By K.L. Going



Liam Geller is Mr. Popularity. Everybody loves him. He excels at sports; he knows exactly what clothes to wear; he always ends up with the most beautiful girls in school. But he's got an uncanny ability to screw up in the very ways that tick off his father the most. When Liam finally kicked out of the house, his father's brother takes him in. What could a teenage chick magnet possibly have in common with his gay, glam rocker, DJ uncle who lives in a trailer in upstate New York? A lot more than you'd think. And when Liam attempts to make himself over as a nerd in a desperate attempt to impress his father, it's his "aunt" Pete and the guys in his band who convince Liam there's much more to him than his father will ever see.

# *Love is the Higher Law*

## By David Levithan



*First there is a Before, and then there is an After. . . .*

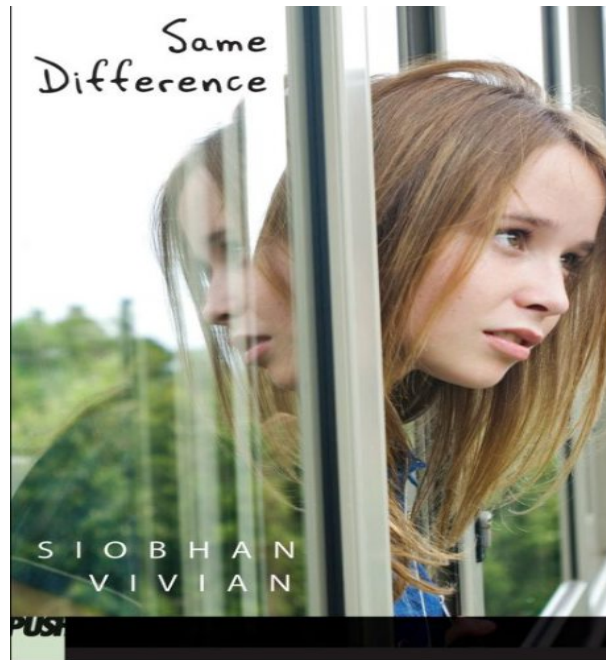
The lives of three teens—Claire, Jasper, and Peter—are altered forever on September 11, 2001. Claire, a high school junior, has to get to her younger brother in his classroom. Jasper, a college sophomore from Brooklyn, wakes to his parents' frantic calls from Korea, wondering if he's okay. Peter, a classmate of Claire's, has to make his way back to school as everything happens around him.

Here are three teens whose intertwining lives are reshaped by this catastrophic event. As each gets to know the other, their moments become wound around each other's in a way that leads to new understandings, new friendships, and new levels of awareness for the world around them and the people close by.

David Levithan has written a novel of loss and grief, but also one of hope and redemption as his characters slowly learn to move forward in their lives, despite being changed forever.

# *Same Difference*

## By Siobhan Vivian

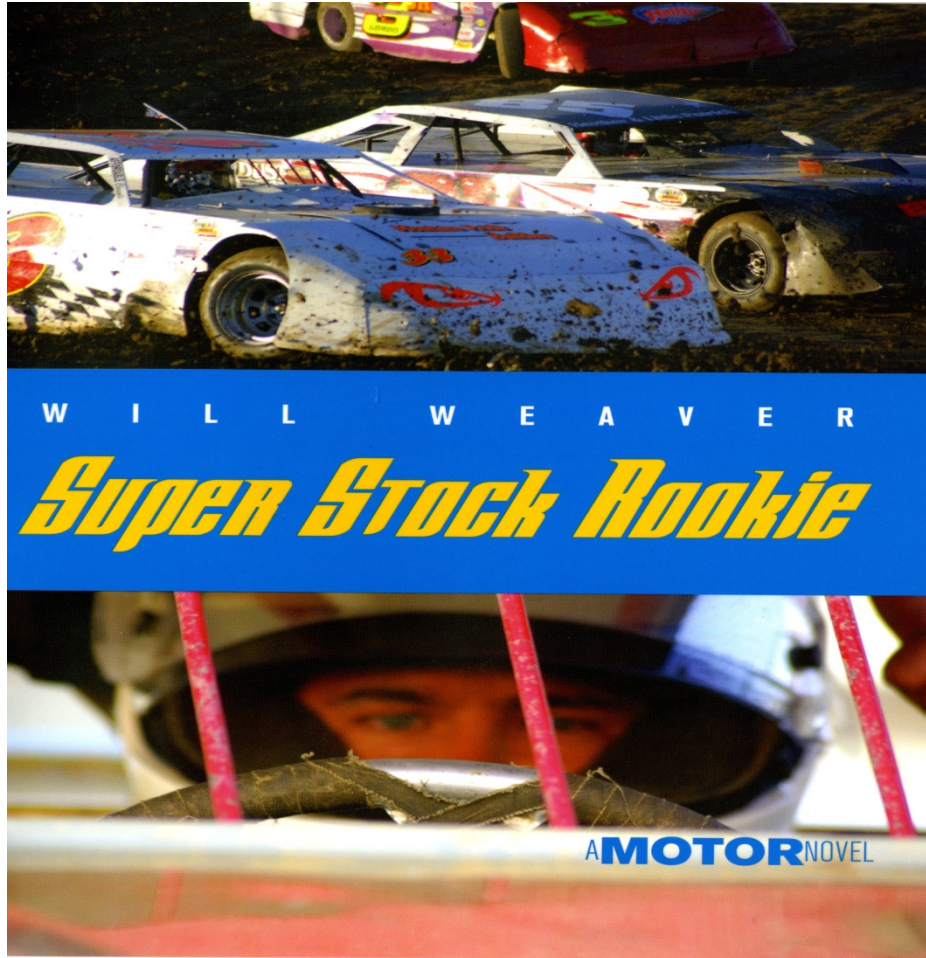


### From Publishers Weekly

Emily's life reeks of the ordinary: she lives in suburban New Jersey in a posh gated community and hangs out at Starbucks with her friends in a town where most of the buildings are old, and if they're not, they're eventually made to look that way. When Emily heads to Philadelphia for a summer art institute—complete with an eclectic cast of funky classmates and one dreamy teaching assistant—she faces the classic teen dilemma of whether to choose the familiar over the new and exciting, while figuring out who she really is: Emily from Cherry Grove or Emily the aspiring artist? (I look like two halves of two different people mashed together, she reflects during a trip to the beach. Is it possible to be a poseur in both worlds?) Vivian (*A Little Friendly Advice*) serves up the story with vivid description and dialogue; the author's talent for scene-setting and evocative imagery is especially effective for a story about a girl just discovering her eye as an artist and herself as a person.

# *Super Stock Rookie*

## By Will Weaver



### From Booklist

Trace Bonham, last seen in *Saturday Night Dirt* (2008), returns with hopes to move beyond his local rural Minnesota race-car track. He tries out for the driver of a car sponsored by an outfit called Team Blu, and much to his surprise, he is picked and sets off on the mid-level stock-car circuit in the Midwest. Weaver offers outstanding descriptions of the races, putting readers in the center of the action and showing how skills, such as the ability to read the subtleties of the track, make the difference between winning and losing. The novel ends with several questions hanging, presumably to be answered later in the series. Grades 8-11. -- Todd Morning