

Read for a Lifetime 2009-2010 Booklist

Briar Rose

224 pages

Jane Yolen

The story of Briar Rose (commonly known as Sleeping Beauty) is linked to the Holocaust. Rebecca Berlin, a young woman who has grown up hearing her grandmother Gemma tell an unusual and frightening version of the Sleeping Beauty legend, realizes when Gemma dies that the fairy tale offers one of the very few clues she has to her grandmother's past. To discover the facts behind Gemma's story, Rebecca travels to Poland, the setting for the book's most engrossing scenes and its most interesting, best-developed characters.

Chains

320 pages

Laurie Halse Anderson

In the spring of 1776, Isabel, a teenage slave, and her sister, Ruth, are sold to ruthless, wealthy loyalists in Manhattan. While running errands, Isabel is approached by rebels, who promise her freedom (and help finding Ruth, who has been sent away) if she agrees to spy. Using the invisibility her slave status brings, Isabel lurks and listens as Master Lockton and his fellow Tories plot to crush the rebel uprisings, but the incendiary proof that she carries to the rebel camp doesn't bring the desired rewards. Isabel finds that both patriots and loyalists support slavery.

Bridge to Terabithia, The

208 pages

Katherine Paterson

Jess Aarons wants to be the fastest boy in the fifth grade--he wants it so bad he can taste it. He's been practicing all summer, running in the fields around his farmhouse until he collapses in a sweat. Then a tomboy named Leslie Burke moves into the farmhouse next door and changes his life forever. Not only does Leslie not look or act like any girls Jess knows, but she also turns out to be the fastest runner in the fifth grade. After getting over the shock and humiliation of being beaten by a girl, Jess begins to think Leslie might be okay. The two create a secret kingdom in the woods named Terabithia, where the only way to get into the castle is by swinging out over a gully on an enchanted rope. Here they reign as king and queen, fighting off imaginary giants and the walking dead, sharing stories and dreams, and plotting against the schoolmates who tease them. Jess and Leslie find solace in the sanctuary of Terabithia until a tragic accident befalls Leslie as she ventures alone to Terabithia, and the two are separated forever.

Coraline

192 pages

Neil Gaiman

Coraline lives with her preoccupied parents in part of a huge old house--a house so huge that other people live in it, too; round, old former actresses Miss Spink and Miss Forcible and their aging Highland terriers and the mustachioed old man under the roof. Coraline contents herself for weeks with exploring the vast garden and grounds. But with a little rain she becomes bored--so bored that she begins to count everything blue (153), the windows (21), and the doors (14). And it is the 14th door that--sometimes blocked with a wall of bricks--opens up for Coraline into an entirely alternate universe.

Dairy Queen

288 pages

Katherine Murdock

D. J.'s family members don't talk much, especially about the fact that 15-year-old D. J. does all the heavy work on their Wisconsin dairy farm since her father broke his hip and her two older brothers left for college. Nor do they talk about why D. J.'s mom, a teacher, is so busy filling in for the middle-school principal that she's never home. And they never, ever discuss the reason why her brothers haven't called home for more than six months. So when D. J. decides to try out for the Red Bend football team, even though she's been secretly training (and falling for) Brian Nelson, the cute quarterback from Hawley, Red Bend's rival, she becomes the talk of the town. Suddenly, her family has quite a bit to say.

Deadline

336 pages

Chris Crutcher

After being diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukemia, 18-year-old Ben Wolf elects to forgo treatment and keep his illness secret from his family and friends in an attempt to have a "normal" senior year at his small Idaho high school. Free from long-term consequences, he connects with his crush, frustrates his biased U.S. Government teacher, and tries out for football. However, Ben's illness slowly exacts its toll on him, and he begins to realize the consequences of keeping his condition hidden.

Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks

352 pages

E. Lockhart

In the summer between her freshman and sophomore years, Frankie Landau-Banks transforms from "a scrawny, awkward child" with frizzy hair to a curvy beauty, "all while sitting quietly in a suburban hammock, reading the short stories of Dorothy Parker and drinking lemonade." On her return to Alabaster Prep, her elite boarding school, she attracts the attention of gorgeous Matthew, who draws her into his circle of popular seniors. Then Frankie learns that Matthew is a member of the Loyal Order of the Basset Hounds, an all-male Alabaster secret society to which Frankie's dad had once belonged. Excluded from belonging to or even discussing the Bassets, Frankie engineers her own guerilla membership by assuming a false online identity.

Graveyard Book, The**320 pages****Neil Gaiman**

Although the book opens with a scary scene--a family is stabbed to death by "a man named Jack" --the story quickly moves into more child-friendly storytelling. The sole survivor of the attack--an 18-month-old baby--escapes his crib and his house, and toddles to a nearby graveyard. Quickly recognizing that the baby is orphaned, the graveyard's ghostly residents adopt him, name him "Nobody" ("Bod"), and allow him to live in their tomb. The toddler navigates among the headstones, asking a lot of questions and picking up the tricks of the living and the dead. The story follows Bod's progress as he grows from baby to teen, learning life's lessons amid a cadre of the long dead, ghouls, witches, intermittent human interlopers. A pallid, nocturnal guardian named Silas ensures that Bod receives food, books, and anything else he might need from the human world. Whenever the boy strays from his usual play among the headstones, he finds new dangers, learns his limitations and strengths, and acquires the skills he needs to survive within the confines of the graveyard and in wider world beyond.

Hoops Of Steel**240 pages****John Foley**

Love of basketball and Honors English, and the surrogate parenting of neighbor Granny Dwyer, help high school senior Jackson O'Connell deal with the breakup of his family, being ostracized at school, and having second-string status on his varsity team. Haunted by his father's alcoholism, which led to a climactic night of violence and self-defense, Jackson is labeled "Mr. Killer" by wary classmates. Estranged from his parents and living with Granny Dwyer, he hangs out on weekends with Danny and other new friends on rival Shoreview's basketball team. As the boys wisecrack and compete on Danny's backyard "High Court," they banter about racial attitudes, their rich versus poor New Jersey towns, girls and sex, acne and body odor, and their basketball dreams. When Ivory Lewis, an alluring, manipulative classmate, betrays Jackson's new friend, Thaddeus, and falsely accuses a favorite teacher of sexual advances, Jackson learns the importance of loyalty and forgiveness. His narrative is candid, witty, and full of angst as he struggles to understand Danny's racist father; wonders if he can trust his own father's letter of apology; wavers in his attraction to smart, perceptive Kelly; and anxiously waits for the coach to give him more playing time.

How to Build a House**240 pages****Dana Reinhardt**

"When you live in California and have relatives in New York, everything in between feels like a big inconvenience," says 17-year-old Harper. But even the middle of the country sounds better to Harper than her own home, which feels empty since her stepmother and stepsiblings moved out. Harper is also eager to leave Gabriel, her "sort-of boyfriend" behind, so she signs up as a summer volunteer to build houses for tornado victims in Bailey, Tennessee. In chapters that alternate between recollections of her past year and her Tennessee summer, Harper slowly reveals the events in L.A. that led to heartbreak and then the healing work, friendships, and romance she finds in Bailey.

Hunger Games, The**384 pages****Suzanne Collins**

Sixteen-year-old Katniss poaches food for her widowed mother and little sister from the forest outside the legal perimeter of District 12, the poorest of the dozen districts constituting Panem, the North American dystopic state that has replaced the U.S. in the not-too-distant future. Her hunting and tracking skills serve her well when she is then cast into the nation's annual Hunger Games, a fight to the death where contestants must battle harsh terrain, artificially concocted weather conditions, and two teenaged contestants from each of Panem's districts. District 12's second "tribute" is Peeta, the baker's son, who has been in love with Katniss since he was five. Although Katniss may be skilled with a bow and arrow and adept at analyzing her opponents' next moves, she has much to learn about personal sentiments, especially her own.

I Am Scout: The Biography Of Harper Lee**256 pages****Charles J. Shields**

To Kill a Mockingbird is one of the most widely read novels in American literature. Yet onetime author Harper Lee is a mysterious figure who leads a very private life in her hometown of Monroeville, Alabama, refusing to give interviews or talk about the novel that made her a household name. Lee's life is as rich as her fiction, from her girlhood as a rebellious tomboy to her days at the University of Alabama and early years as a struggling writer in New York City. This is a riveting portrait of an unconventional, high-spirited woman who drew on her love of writing and her Southern home to create a book that continues to speak to new generations of readers. Anyone who has enjoyed *To Kill a Mockingbird* will appreciate this glimpse into the life of its fascinating author.

Jellicoe Road**432 pages****Melina Marchetta**

Taylor Markham isn't just one of the new student leaders of her boarding school, she's also the heir to the Underground Community, one of three battling school factions in her small Australian community (the others being the Cadets and the Townies). For a generation, these three camps have fought "the territory wars," a deadly serious negotiation of land and property rife with surprise attacks, diplomatic immunities, and physical violence. Only this year, it's complicated: Taylor might just have a thing for Cadet leader Jonah, and Jonah might just be the key to unlocking the secret identity of Taylor's mother, who abandoned her when she was 11. In fact, nearly every relationship in Taylor's life has unexpected ties to her past.

Last Lecture, The**224 pages****Randy Pausch**

What wisdom would we impart to the world if we knew it was our last chance? If we had to vanish tomorrow, what would we want as our legacy? When Randy Pausch, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon, was asked to give such a lecture, he didn't have to imagine it as his last, since he had recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer. But the lecture he gave—"Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams"—wasn't about dying. It was about the importance of overcoming obstacles, of enabling the dreams of others, of seizing every moment (because "time is all you have...and you may find one day that you have less than you think"). It was a summation of everything Randy had come to believe. It was about living.

Life of Pi, The**420 pages****Yann Martel**

The precocious son of a zookeeper, 16-year-old Pi Patel is raised in Pondicherry, India, where he tries on various faiths for size, attracting "religions the way a dog attracts fleas." Planning a move to Canada, his father packs up the family and their menagerie and they hitch a ride on an enormous freighter. After a harrowing shipwreck, Pi finds himself adrift in the Pacific Ocean, trapped on a 26-foot lifeboat with a wounded zebra, a spotted hyena, a seasick orangutan, and a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker ("His head was the size and color of the lifebuoy, with teeth"). It sounds like a colorful setup, but these wild beasts don't burst into song as if co-starring in an anthropomorphized Disney feature. After much gore and infighting, Pi and Richard Parker remain the boat's sole passengers, drifting for 227 days through shark-infested waters while fighting hunger, the elements, and an overactive imagination. In rich, hallucinatory passages, Pi recounts the harrowing journey as the days blur together, elegantly cataloging the endless passage of time and his struggles to survive

Lord of the Rings, The**J.R.R Tolkien**

For over fifty years, J.R.R. Tolkien's peerless fantasy has accumulated worldwide acclaim as the greatest adventure tale ever written. No other writer has created a world as distinct as Middle-earth, complete with its own geography, history, languages, and legends. And no one has created characters as endearing as Tolkien's large-hearted, hairy-footed hobbits. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* continues to seize the imaginations of readers of all ages, and this new three-volume paperback edition is designed to appeal to the youngest of them.

Marley and Me**320 pages****John Grogan**

Labrador retrievers are generally considered even-tempered, calm and reliable; and then there's Marley, the subject of this delightful tribute to one Lab who doesn't fit the mold. Grogan, a columnist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and his wife, Jenny, were newly married and living in West Palm Beach when they decided that owning a dog would give them a foretaste of the parenthood they anticipated. Marley was a sweet, affectionate puppy that grew into a lovably naughty, hyperactive dog. With a light touch, the author details how Marley was kicked out of obedience school after humiliating his instructor (whom Grogan calls Miss Dominatrix) and swallowed an 18-karat solid gold necklace (Grogan describes his gross but hilarious "recovery operation"). With the arrival of children in the family, Marley became so incorrigible that Jenny, stressed out by a new baby, ordered her husband to get rid of him; she eventually recovered her equilibrium and relented.

Memory Keeper's Daughter, The**432 pages****Kim Edwards**

Edwards's assured but schematic debut novel (after her collection, *The Secrets of a Fire King*) hinges on the birth of fraternal twins, a healthy boy and a girl with Down syndrome, resulting in the father's disavowal of his newborn daughter. A snowstorm immobilizes Lexington, Ky., in 1964, and when young Norah Henry goes into labor, her husband, orthopedic surgeon Dr. David Henry, must deliver their babies himself, aided only by a nurse. Seeing his daughter's handicap, he instructs the nurse, Caroline Gill, to take her to a home and later tells Norah, who was drugged during labor that their son Paul's twin died at birth. Instead of institutionalizing Phoebe, Caroline absconds with her to Pittsburgh. David's deception becomes the defining moment of the main characters' lives, and Phoebe's absence corrodes her birth family's core over the course of the next 25 years. David's undetected lie warps his marriage; he grapples with guilt; Norah mourns her lost child; and Paul not only deals with his parents' icy relationship but with his own yearnings for his sister as well.

Perfect Chemistry**368 pages****Simone Elkeles**

When Brittany Ellis walks into chemistry class on the first day of senior year, she has no clue that her carefully created "perfect" life is about to unravel before her eyes. She's forced to be lab partners with Alex Fuentes, a gang member from the other side of town, and he is about to threaten everything she's worked so hard for—her flawless reputation, her relationship with her boyfriend, and the secret that her home life is anything but perfect. Alex is a bad boy and he knows it. So when he makes a bet with his friends to lure Brittany into his life, he thinks nothing of it. But soon Alex realizes Brittany is a real person with real problems, and suddenly the bet he made in arrogance turns into something much more.

Playing for Pizza**320 pages****John Grisham**

Third-string Cleveland Browns quarterback Rick Dockery becomes the greatest goat ever by throwing three interceptions in the closing minutes of the AFC championship game. Fleeing vengeful fans, he finds refuge in the grungiest corner of professional football, the Italian National Football League as quarterback of the inept but full-of-heart Parma Panthers. What ensues is a winsome football fable; replete with team bonding and character-building as the underdog Panthers challenge the powerhouse Bergamo Lions for a shot at the Italian Superbowl.

Rose That Grew from Concrete**176 pages****Tupac Shakur**

This is a collection of poetry written by the rapper between 1989 and 1991, before he became famous. The poems are passionate, sometimes angry, and often compelling. Selections are reproduced from the originals in Shakur's handwriting, personalized by distinctive spelling and the use of ideographs (a drawing of an eye for I, etc.), and complete with scratch outs and corrections. With the exception of "In the Event of My Demise," all of the pieces are accompanied by typed text, which leaves his spelling intact. Some poems are also accompanied by his drawings. A few black-and-white photographs appear throughout.

Tamar: A Novel of Espionage, Passion, and Betrayal**432 pages****Mal Peet**

It was her taciturn but beloved grandfather, William Hyde, who gave Tamar her strange name. But in 1995, when she was 15, he committed suicide, leaving her to wonder if she knew him at all. Later, when she opens the box of War II memorabilia that he left her, she's struck by the need to find out what it means, who he really was, and where she fits in. Tension mounts incrementally in an intricate wrapping of wartime drama and secrecy, in which Tamar finds her namesake and herself. Forming the backbone of the story are intense, sometimes brutal events in a small Dutch town in Nazi-occupied Holland and the relationship between the girl's namesake, a member of the Dutch Resistance; Dart, a code operator assigned to help him; and Marijke, the love of his life.

Their Eyes Were Watching God**256 pages****Zora Neale Hurston**

This American classic is about Janie Crawford, a Southern Black woman in the 1930s, whose journey from a free-spirited girl to a woman of independence and substance has inspired writers and readers for close to 70 years. This poetic, graceful love story, rooted in Black folk traditions and steeped in mythic realism, celebrates boldly and brilliantly African-American culture and heritage. And in a powerful, mesmerizing narrative, it pays quiet tribute to a Black woman who, though constricted by the times, still demanded to be heard.

Thirteen Reasons Why**320 pages****Jay Asher**

When Clay Jenson plays the cassette tapes he received in a mysterious package, he's surprised to hear the voice of dead classmate Hannah Baker. He's one of 13 people who receive Hannah's story, which details the circumstances that led to her suicide. Clay spends the rest of the day and long into the night listening to Hannah's voice and going to the locations she wants him to visit. Clay listens to her words, which illuminate betrayals and secrets that demonstrate the consequences of even small actions. Hannah, herself, is not free from guilt, her own inaction having played a part in an accidental auto death and a rape. The message about how we treat one another, although sometimes heavy, makes for compelling reading.

Tough Boy Sonatas**88 pages****Curtis Crisler**

This collection of 38 poems, offers a view of the boys who run within the confines of the industrial town of Gary, IN. Their lives, unknown to the "groggy commuters" who flash by on the train, are harsh and difficult, bold and passionate. There's LaRoy, who sings and Millicent, the tomboy who crushes with her snarl and good right cross. A grandson is hurting under the lost smile of an addicted grandmother; tough boys get nods of approval from the grown-ups when they learn the art of chops. These poems are muscular and vivid, fierce with the sound and force of language.