

# Review of *Chasing Lincoln's Killer* by James Swanson

Love, love, love this book. *Chasing Lincoln's Killer* has so many interesting facts and tidbits about history. The book is very easy to read, and hard to put down. It tells the story of Lincoln's assassination from the events before to the 12 days after as John Wilkes Booth tried to escape to the South. I did not know about all the people involved in his attempt to escape, or about all the other assassination attempts that were part of this tragedy.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys reading about our country's history!

# Review of *Deathwatch* by Robb White

*Deathwatch is a thriller! How can a 20 year old college student escape from a madman that is hunting him with a .358 magnum rifle? Ben is being hunted in the desert by the man he was guiding on a hunting trip. The tables change back and forth, as Ben tries to outwit the madman. If you like thrillers about survival and crazy people who hunt others, Deathwatch is for you! The story keeps you on the edge of your seat as Ben pleads for justice upon his return to his hometown. I would recommend *Deathwatch* to students who like thrillers and crazy stories about madmen with guns in the desert.*

# Review of *W.A.R.P.* by Eoin Colfer

*W.A.R.P. The Reluctant Assassin* is a great read, and it is the first book in a series of three. Based in modern day London and 1870's London, *W.A.R.P.* follows two young kids trapped in a nail biting chase through time. Chevron, a young F.B.I. agent trainee, and Riley, an apprentice to Garrick (a vicious, ruthless, killer for hire, magician) (yes, all those things), cross paths during an incredible and accidental time traveling event. Riley, about to be forced to unwillingly murder an innocent victim, slips into a wormhole and travels through time with his victim. He appears in modern day London, looking like he is guilty of murder. Chevron, is there when he arrives, torn between believing Riley's guilt or innocence. Together, the two must travel through time, running from the evil Garrick.

The action is fast and constant. The jump between present and past is fun and believable. The characters are well drawn and interesting.

I would recommend *W.A.R.P. The Reluctant Assassin* to students who like exciting, action packed adventure, and a bit of a look at historical London.

# Review of *How They Croaked* by Georgia Bragg

*How They Croaked*, by Georgia Bragg is a pretty amazing book! It's very funny and very gross - a perfect combination for anyone wanting to read about how famous people died in funny, strange, and terrible ways. But, it also had a lot of historical information in it, like how King Tut was treated after death and what happens to mummy wrappings after they are used. Talk about recycling! That was going on in 1323 B.C.! There are stories about Christopher Columbus and how his body was taken several times and ended up in many places around the world, how Beethoven basically exploded from a gnarly disease, and the sad life of Pocahontas. I have to say, I learned a lot reading this book! I was amazed and totally grossed out in several places. This is a "must read" for anyone who wants to know "stuff" like what happened to people before we could call 911, before there was soap, and how not to die quickly! Yuck!

I would recommend *How They Croaked* to students who like anything that is totally gross and wickedly cool to read about! You do need guts to read this book-and a strong stomach!

# Review of *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen

Flying in a plane over the Canadian wilderness is exciting enough, not to mention a crash landing. Brian, a thirteen year old boy, must survive on his own in the wilderness with only an ax his mom gave him. During his experience alone in the woods, he has many heart pounding challenges. I would recommend *Hatchet* to students who like a fast, easy to read thriller about survival in the wilderness. If you ever thought about how you might survive outdoors without help, this book is for you! It's exciting, and guess what? You will really learn some lessons about how to survive in the wilderness, what to do, and what not to do.

# Review of *Middle School, the Worst Years of My Life* by James Patterson

Middle School, the Worst Years of My Life by James Patterson is a hilarious story about a boy, Rafe, beginning sixth grade and all of the things that happen to him during his first year of middle school. While trying to figure out how he's going to fit in and get people to notice him, Rafe decides to make it his mission to break every rule in the Student Code of Conduct. While dealing with the stress of school, he also has to deal with a younger sister, a mom who works all of the time, and a soon-to-be step father that contributes nothing to the situation. Rafe's adventures in Middle School will make you laugh and the pictures that his best friend draws depict a middle school student's perspective of these interesting years. Whereas I do not recommend Rafe's tactics to get noticed in middle school, I would highly recommend this book to every middle school student. They will probably identify with many of Rafe's views of middle school.

# Review of *Truce* by Jim Murphy

*Truce*, by Jim Murphy, is a fascinating look at WWI and an interesting look at a spontaneous truce that soldiers on the front line called for Christmas. Murphy loads the book with pictures, artwork and graphs so that the reader can see images of the day while reading a bit about the history of the war. Murphy includes actual accounts from the letters and journals of soldiers fighting in WWI, and backs up his writing with loads of research.

The book is easy to read, especially for a nonfiction. Murphy starts the book with a very simplified explanation of what led up to WWI, explaining the countries involved, the reasoning behind the tension, and some of the suspicion and arrogance of the leaders who made the decision to go to war. The middle part of the book explains in clear and ugly detail what life was like in the trenches on the front line. We see the horror, death, sickness, and danger that the soldiers faced living, and dying, in the trenches. Their leaders, who were safely behind the front lines, continued to order attacks, killing hundreds of thousands of soldiers. The last part of the book describes the “Christmas Truce,” an actual event that occurred on Christmas Day, 1914. Against the orders of their leaders, soldiers from both sides put down their weapons and joined together in “No Man’s Land”, for a spontaneous, peaceful, Christmas Truce.

I would recommend *Truce* to students who like reading about history, learning about WWI, and see a softer more human side of people fight in a war.

# Review of *The Grimm Legacy*

by: Polly Shulman

I loved this book! The author used so much descriptive and figurative language throughout the book that it made the story come to life and I felt like I was there with Elizabeth. She ends up working at a place called the "Circulating Materials Repository" which she initially thought was a library. Well, it was in the sense that people could check out items, but these items were rarely books. "Materials" as is mentioned in the title of the building were indeed any object you could imagine, with the most important ones being valuable pieces from history as well as the "magical" objects. There is a reason why she and the other workers are chosen to work there, and, as you read, you find out how they all connect to each other. Elizabeth finds her purpose, self-confidence, a place of belonging, and lasting friendships as a result of the adventure that she unknowingly embarks on once she accepts the job. As someone who loves history and the ideas of how people interacted with each other in the past, what objects were important to their culture and society, and the idea that Grimm's fairy tales may have had historical relevance and realism just made this book all the more interesting to me. In addition, I loved the idea that objects had magic, purpose, and could come to life so to speak. I would recommend this book to readers who enjoy science fiction, fantasy, mystery, adventure, teen fiction, romance, historical fiction, and suspense. Boys, do not be turned away from this book because I mention romance...there is also basketball intertwined in the story as well! This book has something for everyone in my opinion. I could not put this book down!

# Review of *Deadweather and Sunrise*

## by: Geoff Rodkey

This is the first book in a series titled *The Chronicles of E* and was a fun book to read! At first it took me a few chapters to get into reading it as it introduced the setting and the characters, because it didn't grab my attention at this point. However, I am thankful that I pushed on and continued reading! Egg is the youngest in his family and lives on an island called "Deadweather", which is literal because the weather is so stifling there. His dad owns an "ugly fruit" plantation where pirates who are missing limbs and/or "chunks" of their heads work the fields. When his father stumbles across something intriguing, Egg and his siblings head with him to the island named "Sunrise". Sunrise is an entirely different island where there are "rich" people, an absence of pirates, and a silver mine. When the family meets one of these rich and powerful men, the adventure for Egg truly begins and is when I became hooked on what would happen next for Egg. If you are a fan of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies, this would be a book that you would enjoy reading. I could visualize the pirates and their escapades because I have watched these movies, which helped pull my interest into the story as well. In addition, if you like survival stories and/or stories like the *Hunger Games*, then you would be drawn to the events and details of Egg's dangerous encounters, gory details of survival (not too extreme), and the allies he makes in order to survive. There is no technology or science fiction in this story like in *Hunger Games*; it is truly a "back in the day" story when pirates roamed the seas and people were power and treasure hungry. This would be a book for those who like adventure, suspense, and action. I definitely got hooked enough in the story and how the author crafted its ending to want to read the next book in the series: *New Lands*. (I read *New Lands* and it was a great read as well...a 3rd book will be out this fall. :))

# Review of *Ruins of Gorlan* by John Flanagan

*Ruins of Gorlan*, by John Flanagan, is a story about an orphan named Will who has always dreamed of being a battle warrior. When it comes time for Will to be placed and start training in his future career, he is chosen by a Ranger to be Ranger's apprentice. Will is nervous about being a Ranger, as they are mysterious.

During Will's training, he learns all about Rangers, what they do, and the important role they play in the safety of the kingdom. Will feels like he has a lot to prove to many people, including himself. He is forced to battle bullies from the orphanage he grew up in and enemies of the kingdom. As Will's training progresses, a former threat to the Kingdom is rising once again and this time he has bigger and better forces helping him. Will Will be ready for the inevitable battle? Is he truly meant to be a Ranger? You won't be able to put this exciting adventure down, once you get started.

I would recommend *Ruins of Gorlan* to students who like action, adventure, and rooting for the underdog. This is the first book of a series of ten books surrounding Will and his apprenticeship. If the rest of the books are as good as the first book, it's going to be a fantastic series!

# Review of *Trouble* by Gary D. Schmidt

*Trouble* was an excellent book. I couldn't put it down. There were many twists and turns and lots of excitement. The main character is Henry, but there are many characters that play important roles. The story is based on Henry's older brother Franklin being killed in a car accident by a young Cambodian boy named Chay. The town is in an uproar, because "those people" should not be allowed here. The first part of the book deals with Henry's family and their reaction to Franklin's death. The book then takes a new direction when it focuses on Henry and his own personal battle with Franklin's death. He is determined to fulfill the dream of climbing a mountain that he and Franklin were supposed to climb before his death. On his journey, many different things take place and Henry finds himself in situations he never knew he could possibly handle. There is a lot of foreshadowing in the book and a lot of unexpected events. Overall, it is a page turner. The author pulls you in with the easy writing style and highly descriptive language. It is as if you are traveling right along with Henry and following him in all his adventures. The book is a little bittersweet, because Henry learns that he has to face trouble head on, but he learns it the hard way. Big thumbs up for this one.

# Review of *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card

*Ender's Game* is about a boy named Ender Wiggin. The story takes place in the future in which creatures called Buggers have attacked Earth previous to where the reader picks up the story. The Earth seems to have won the first and second Bugger invasions, but this story is how Earth prepares for the third invasion. The International Fleet recruits genius children to go to battle school in outer space and save the planet, Ender being one of these.

I had a difficult time believing that Ender and many other characters were very, very young. Ender was only six when he was recruited. The intelligence and the way they spoke seemed much older. I almost had to picture Ender at least 15 years old most of the time. Other than that, however, I really enjoyed the story. I was a bit bogged down and a little bored of some of the training Ender went through, but upon reaching the surprising ending, I now want to read it again sometime. Ender's relationships with his family as well as his superiors was probably the most fun to read about. I would recommend any middle school student to read this.

# *I Am The Great Horse* by Katherine Roberts

*I Am The Great Horse*, by Katherine Roberts, was a good book, not great but good. I kind of got bogged down with some of the war stories and felt like the book went from war to war with Alexander the Great and his faithful horse, rather than the story being about characters and how they change. Bucefalas is pretty old at the beginning of the story and gets older quickly, which is another thing I didn't like. The story about how he became the horse he was at 16 and 20 needed more time rather than only the story when he met Alexander. The book is about the horse, not just his time with Alexander. Anyway, it's a good book, especially for horse lovers. However, there are other great books about horses that I enjoyed more like *Snowball*, *Secretariat*, *Seabiscuit* and *The Black Stallion*.

I would recommend *I Am The Great Horse* to students who love horses and love the idea of being a horse, if that makes sense. This book is told from the horse's perspective and it's fun because of that.

# Review of *Willa by Heart* by Coleen Murtagh Paratore

*Willa by Heart* is a fun, easy read. Willa is a character that many middle school girls can relate to for a variety of reasons. First, Willa is getting ready for summer and has to learn how to balance her social life with that of a summer job as a wedding planner. Willa is an avid reader (which is a cool part of the book because she suggests real books to read and has a new list of books at the end of every book in the series) and is reading the story *Our Town*, when she finds out the local theater will be putting on the same play this summer. Willa creates a master plan in her mind to try out for the lead role in the play and have her boyfriend try out for the male lead. If they both win the parts, they will have to get married in the play and kiss. Willa's grand plan is altered when a mysterious girl named Marielle shows up. Will Marielle ruin Willa's relationship with her boyfriend? You will have to read this book to find out.