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REVIEW: Keturah and Lord Death

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steeped in authentic details and true understanding of deafness and the discrimination faced by the deaf in the earlier 20th century. The layers of the story mesh beautifully as a strong link is established between the story of racial discrimination faced by Robinson and the discrimination and embarrassment felt at times by both father and son when engaged in social situations. The story begins with Opening Day for the Dodgers in 1947, Robinson's debut. A young boy who loves baseball dreams of attending a game at Ebbets Field to see Jackie Robinson play. His father arrives home one day with tickets for a game. While the boy is enthralled with the crowds, vendors, music and field, he also feels ashamed when his father, while cheering, cannot pronounce Jackie's name correctly. He also feels the same when, practicing catch on the street in their neighborhood, his father cannot easily catch the ball. Father and son avidly follow Jackie Robinson in person, on the radio and in the daily newspaper; attend several games; and keep a scrapbook of Jackie's career, while the boy's father, in sign, explains to the boy the harsh realities of discrimination. In the last game of the playoffs, with them in attendance, Jackie catches a line drive for the last out of the game and throws the ball into the crowd, straight to the young boy's father! His father easily catches the ball for the first time ever, "and just like that, the baseball season of 1947 was over." But while the season was over, the memories linger, as do the lessons. Highly recommended for grades two-five. ►►

— Reviewed by **Candace Craig**

Walton/Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School Head Librarian

Cynthia's Attic: The Magic Medallion by *Mary Cunningham*
(Echelon Press Publishing, 2006; ISBN 978-1-59080-460-5, \$9.99).

Good children's stories are usually enjoyable and thought-provoking for adults as well as children. This time-travel adventure by Villa Rica, Ga., author Mary Cunningham includes plenty of excitement for young readers: a sinister clown, a helpful Gypsy family who can work magic, a treasure hidden in a cave, a forest fire and an apparently threatening horseman in pursuit of our heroines, best friends Cynthia and Augusta ("Gus"). But it also sounds some themes that will intrigue adults. One of these is the ties that bind us to our ancestors, which include not just our genes, but, often, the objects that have passed from their lives into ours and the places that have been significant to a family over generations as well. Cynthia and Gus time-travel to their grandmothers'



childhood from the attic of Cynthia's family home by putting on their ancestors' clothes. Another theme is the desire to know what our parents and grandparents were like before we were born when they were young. Yet a third is dreams, with their combination of eerie familiarity and strangeness — a topic that has fascinated human beings throughout history. Mary Cunningham got the idea for the *Cynthia's Attic* books when she had recurring dreams about the attic of her childhood best friend. When she began writing this series, the dreams stopped. *Cynthia's Attic: The Magic Medallion* is the second book in the series. This 50-something reader is sufficiently intrigued to go back and look up the first book, *Cynthia's Attic: The Missing Locket*, and to eagerly await the appearance of the third, *Cynthia's Attic: Curse of the Bayou*. ►►

— Reviewed by **Rebecca Ziegler**
Georgia Southern University

Keturah and Lord Death by *Martine Leavitt*
(Boyd's Mill Press, 2006; ISBN 978-1-9324-2529-1, \$16.95).

Georgia Peach Book Award for Teen Readers Nominee

Sixteen-year-old Keturah follows a hart into the woods of medieval England, becomes lost, and after three days, Lord Death arrives to whisk her away. Putting her storytelling skills to use, Keturah bargains with Lord Death, promising to finish her story of a young woman seeking true love if he will grant her one more day of life. In addition, Lord Death responds that if Keturah can find true love in the one day she is granted, he will not take her at all. Besides agreeing to her terms and granting the extra boon, much to Keturah's surprise and dismay, Lord Death states that he plans to make her his bride and shares the startling news that plague will visit the town. The next day, Keturah visits the village wise woman to get a charm enabling her to identify her true love and attempts to find a way to save her neighbors from the coming plague. Keturah's search is to no avail, but she manages to gain another day from Lord Death by weaving a different story and again withholding the ending. Throughout the course of the novel, the villagers alternately fear and revere Keturah and her unusual relationship with Lord Death. Leavitt's lyrical style is effective for the telling of this story that closely resembles a fairy tale, containing elements of both light and dark. Though Keturah's dilemmas combined with her sensibilities will appeal to teens, the themes explored in the book broaden its appeal to adult readers as well. Leavitt sustains the suspense of Keturah's fate all



the way through the novel, culminating in an ending that makes the book a good candidate for a discussion.

Recommended for public and high school libraries. ►►

— Reviewed by **Carol Malcolm**
Riverside Military Academy

Life As We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer (Harcourt Children's Books, October 2006; ISBN 0-1520-5-8265, \$17.00).

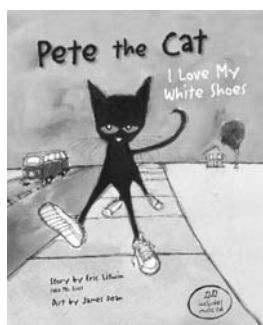
Georgia Peach Book Award for Teen Readers Nominee

The moon. It's beautiful, romantic and mysterious. But never before has it been terrifying. In *Life As We Knew It*, a meteor knocks the moon out of its orbit and that much closer to earth. This has a profound effect on the climate and the tides, and the globe is plunged into a stage of unexpected emergency. Through the eyes of one family's struggle, we see a catastrophe of global proportions unfold. In Miranda's diary, we see a 16-year-old girl whose high school worries quickly get overshadowed in the battle for survival. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this story is the example set by Miranda that ordinary people are capable of extraordinary sacrifice, courage and heroism in times of need. The fact that global warming and subsequent climate change are part of our everyday political and social dialogue puts *Life As We Knew It* very close to the realm of possibility. This eerie realism makes the story that much more suspenseful and terrifying. After reading *Life As We Knew It*, you'll never look at the moon the same way again. ►►

— Reviewed by **Jessica De Maria**
Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System

Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes by Eric Litwin, illustrated by James Dean (United Writers Press, 2008; ISBN: 978-1-934216-51-8, \$17.95).

Pete the Cat, the iconic creation of artist Dean and subject of dozens of paintings, debuts as a children's picture book hero in this rollicking, rhyming ditty (music CD included). Children's musical entertainer Litwin outfits his hero in spanking new white shoes. Proud of these sparkling treads, Pete strides along until he steps in a large pile of something colorful (strawberries), transforming the shining sneakers. Poor Pete the Cat! But Pete doesn't let his shoes' new hues get him down: "Did

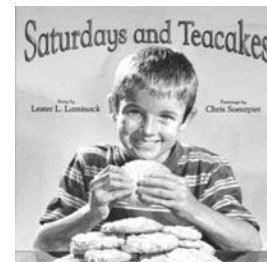


Pete cry? Goodness, no!" Pete repeats his cheerful refrain through several colorful if unlikely fashion mishaps and concludes, "It's all good." The illustrations, in vibrant primary colors, pace the story in much the same way as Litwin's musical telling does. Part color concept book, part tribute to optimism, part sing-along, *I Love My White Shoes* is recommended for ages 3 to 7 and for library story programs. Count on an even wider age range of appeal if pairing the book with musical storytelling. ►►

— Reviewed by **Vanessa Cowie**
Forsyth County Public Library

Saturdays and Teacakes by Lester L. Laminack, illustrated by Chris Soentpiet (Peachtree Publishers, 2004; ISBN 1-56145-303-X, \$16.95).

What's the best thing about Saturdays? According to the main character in *Saturdays and Teacakes*, the best thing is going to see Mawmaw who is always waiting, just for him. Lester L. Laminack's story is a summertime account of one young boy's weekly ritual — bicycling to his grandmother's house to spend the day with her. The reader watches his trip, including his stop at the traffic light near the gasoline station where he remembers his mother's stricture "You stop and look both ways ... I don't care if the light is green. I'll hear about it if you don't." Once he gets to Mawmaw's, tomatoes are picked, grass is cut so that the clippings cling to bare legs and lunch is made of juicy tomato sandwiches. Then he and Mawmaw make the teacakes of the title, enjoying their time together before he returns home with a basket of teacakes and vegetables. Lester Laminack's words draw a picture of the special relationship between a grandmother and grandson as well as childhood in a small Southern town. Chris Soentpiet's paintings are a charming visual telling of the story. The incredible details of the paintings, from the cars at the gasoline station to the inside of Mawmaw's house, draw the reader further into the story and help to create an enjoyable reading experience. Grandparents will enjoy reading this story to grandchildren for the story itself and its illustrations. Children will enjoy the use of repetitive words such as pedal and criiick-craaack as well as following the story through the pictures. Recommended for most children's collections. ►►



— Reviewed by **Beth Pye**
Gordon College