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Spotlight on Teen Reading

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her research is also helpful. Recommended for public libraries and elementary school media centers. ►►

— Reviewed by **Sarah McGhee**
Chestatee Regional Library System

CHILDREN'S FICTION

Late for School by Mike Reiss,
Illustrated by Michael Austin
 (Peachtree Publishers, 2003; ISBN:
 1-56145-286-6, \$16.95)



In his picture book *Late for School*, author Mike Reiss takes us on one boy's fantastical morning journey to class. Taking place in Manhattan, the well-known landmarks in the city that the protagonist passes and interacts with are some of the most charming elements of this book. The obstacles he encounters at each are equally delightful. Smitty tells us he has never been late for school, but that's before he meets up with whales in Times Square, King Kong at the Empire State Building, a T. rex and humongous birds. Illustrator Michael Austin is clever in his ability to perfectly blend the visual elements of the city with Reiss' text. A great example of this can be seen in how the swooping, humongous birds Smitty runs into take the form of the metal variety that adorn the Chrysler Building. This picture book demonstrates the power of the imagination in making the everyday world that surrounds us come to life. The intricate and playful illustrations serve as a perfect partner for the equally humorous rhyming text. At the end of his walk to school, we realize why Smitty's trip is so eventful, and it makes the reader long for equally adventurous journeys as well. This would be a welcome addition for most children's collections. ►►

— Reviewed by **Tracy Walker**
Dawson County Public Library

Spotlight on Teen Reading

In 2004, a group of high school media specialists saw a need to promote teen literature throughout the state. The group came together, brainstormed, and the Georgia Peach Award for Teen Readers was born. The purposes of these awards are to highlight and promote the best current young adult literature for Georgia high-school-age students, to encourage young adults to read, and to promote the development of cooperative school and public library services for young adults. Teens vote for their favorite books out of the year's top 20 nominees at their high schools and local public libraries. The deadline

for teens to cast their vote this year is Friday, March 13.

This year's nominees are:

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie (Little, Brown, 2007; ISBN: 978-03160-1368-0, \$16.99)

Budding cartoonist Junior leaves his troubled school on the Spokane Indian Reservation to attend an all-white farm town school where the only other Native American is the school mascot.

Absolutely Positively Not by David LaRochelle (Arthur A. Levine Books, 2005; ISBN: 978-04395-9109-6, \$16.95) Chronicles a teenage boy's humorous attempts to fit in at his Minnesota high school by becoming a macho, girl-loving, Playboy-pinup-displaying heterosexual.

American Born Chinese by Gene Yang (First Second, 2006; ISBN: 978-15964-3152-2, \$17.95)

This wonderfully illustrated graphic novel alternates three interrelated stories about the problems of young Chinese-Americans trying to participate in the popular culture.

Boot Camp by Todd Strasser (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2007; ISBN: 978-14169-0848-7, \$16.00) After ignoring several warnings to stop dating his teacher, Garrett is sent to a boot camp that uses unorthodox and brutal methods to train students to obey their parents.

The Boyfriend List by E. Lockhart (Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2005; ISBN: 978-03857-3206-2, \$15.95) Ruby Oliver, a moderately popular 15-year-old who has suddenly become a social pariah, begins seeing a psychiatrist and makes a list of all her past boyfriends in an attempt to understand where her life went wrong.

Copper Sun by Sharon Draper (Atheneum, 2006; ISBN: 978-06898-2181-3, \$16.95)

Two 15-year-old girls — one a slave and the other an indentured servant — escape their Carolina plantation and try to make their way to Fort Moses, Fla., a Spanish colony that gives sanctuary to slaves.

Epic by Conor Kostick (Viking Juvenile, 2007; ISBN: 978-06700-6179-2, \$17.99)

On New Earth, a world based on a video role-playing game, 14-year-old Erik persuades his friends to aid him in some unusual gambits in order to save Erik's father from exile and safeguard the futures of each of their families.

Gingerbread by Rachel Cohn (Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2002; ISBN: 978-06898-4337-2, \$15.95) After being expelled from a fancy boarding school, Cyd

Charisse's problems with her mother escalate after Cyd falls in love with a sensitive surfer and is subsequently sent from San Francisco to New York City to spend time with her biological father.

Impulse by *Ellen Hopkins* (Margaret K. McElderry, 2007; ISBN: 978-14169-0356-7, \$16.99)

Three teens who meet at Reno, Nevada's Aspen Springs mental hospital after each has attempted suicide connect with each other in a way they never have with their parents or anyone else in their lives.

Keturah and Lord Death by *Martine Leavitt* (Front Street, 2006; ISBN: 978-19324-2529-1, \$16.95)

When Lord Death comes to claim 16-year-old Keturah while she is lost in the King's Forest, she charms him with her story and is granted a 24-hour reprieve in which to seek her one true love.

Life As We Knew It by *Susan Beth Pfeffer* (Harcourt Children's Books, 2006; ISBN: 01520-5826-5, \$17.00)

Through journal entries 16-year-old Miranda describes her family's struggle to survive after a meteor hits the moon, causing worldwide tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Notes From the Midnight Driver by *Jordan Sonnenblick* (Scholastic Press, 2006; ISBN: 978-04397-5779-9, \$16.99)

After being assigned to perform community service at a nursing home, 16-year-old Alex befriends a cantankerous old man who has some lessons to impart about jazz guitar playing, love and forgiveness.

Plain J.A.N.E.S. by *Cecil Castellucci* (Minx, 2007; ISBN: 978-14012-1115-8, \$9.99)

After a bombing in the city, Jane's parents move to a suburb where she befriends three outcasts — all named Jane — and starts a group called People Loving Art in Neighborhoods, which tries to enrich their community with art but instead is viewed as a threat.

Right Behind You by *Gail Giles* (Little, Brown Young Readers, 2007; ISBN: 978-03161-6636-2, \$15.99)

After spending over four years in a mental institution for murdering a friend in Alaska, 14-year-old Kip begins a completely new life in Indiana with his father and stepmother under a different name but has trouble fitting in and finds there are still problems to deal with from his childhood.

Rucker Park Setup by *Paul Volponi* (Viking Juvenile, 2007; ISBN: 978-06700-6130-3, \$15.99)

While playing in a crucial basketball game on the very court where his best friend was murdered, Mackey tries to come to terms with his own part in that murder and

decide whether to maintain his silence or tell J.R.'s father and the police what really happened

Side Effects by *Amy Goldman Koss* (Roaring Brook Press, 2006; ISBN: 978-15964-3294-9, \$16.95)

Fourteen-year-old Isabella is a typical teenager. She is concerned with friends, school and gaining weight until the fateful morning that she discovers the enlarged glands in her neck. With the subsequent diagnosis of stage-four Hodgkin's lymphoma, she enters the netherworld of cancer.

Sold by *Patricia McCormick* (Hyperion, 2006; ISBN: 978-07868-5171-3, \$15.99)

Lakshmi, a 13-year-old from a poor mountain village in Nepal, gets a job thinking she is being hired as a maid. Instead, she is forced into prostitution in India when her stepfather "trades" her for 800 rupees.

A Thousand Splendid Suns by *Khaled Hosseini* (Riverhead Books, 2007; ISBN: 978-15944-8950-1, \$25.95)

This is a novel set against the three decades of Afghanistan's history shaped by Soviet occupation, civil war and the Taliban, which tells the stories of two women, Mariam and Laila, who grow close despite their 19-year age difference and initial rivalry as they suffer at the hand of a common enemy: their abusive husband.

Twisted by *Laurie Halse Anderson* (Viking Juvenile, 2007; ISBN: 978-06700-6101-3, \$16.99)

After finally getting noticed by someone other than school bullies and his ever-angry father, 17-year-old Tyler enjoys his tough new reputation and the attentions of a popular girl, but when life starts to go bad again, he must choose between transforming himself or giving in to his destructive thoughts.

Uglies by *Scott Westerfeld* (Simon Pulse, 2005; ISBN: 978-06898-6538-1, \$16.95)

Tally is faced with a difficult choice when her new friend Shay decides to risk life on the outside rather than submit to the forced operation that turns 16-year-old girls into gorgeous beauties and realizes that there is a whole new side to the pretty world that she doesn't like.

This list is used in the Georgia Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl high school competition and is promoted in public high schools and public libraries across the state. Resources are available online, including ballots, a PowerPoint presentation, book talks and book discussion questions. Students, teachers, media specialists and librarians can e-mail nominations for upcoming awards to Amy Golemme, Georgia Peach Book Award for Teen Readers co-chair, at Amy_Golemme@gwinnett.k12.ga.us. ►►