

Born to Fly – Michael Ferraari

No one ever believes Bird McGill. Not when she says she sees an underwater monster, not when she says someone followed her in the woods, and not when she says she wants to be a fighter pilot. Bird's dad is her only friend and the only one that believes in her. But when the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor, he is drafted and sent away to war, leaving Bird to face the world alone. When a Japanese-American boy named Kenji starts school soon after, everyone is sure that he is a spy, and no one wants anything to do with him. After Kenji saves Bird from drowning one night, the two become friends and discover a secret submarine, a real spy in town, and a deadly plot. But Bird has cried "Wolf!" one too many times and no one believes the pair. Kenji and Bird are forced on an adventure that will test their friendship, divide loyalties, and could change the future of the war.

Born to Fly tells the story of eleven-year-old tomboy Bird McGill. Ever since she can remember, Bird has loved flying in small propeller airplanes with her mechanic dad. When the local airstrip is turned into a military flight school, Bird is in heaven. But when a young Japanese American student named Kenji Fujita joins Bird's class, the entire school seems to be convinced that he's a spy, or at the very least, that he and his uncle want the Japanese to win. Bird is wary of Kenji, not just because he's Japanese, but because he steals her flight-related topic for a school report and leaves her to write about the deadly boring local marsh weed. But on Bird's first trip to the marsh, she and Kenji accidentally discover *real* spy activity in the area. Bird realizes that Kenji is actually a stand-up guy—and she and Kenji begin an adventure that will shake the town and may even change the future of the United States.

Maze Runner – James Dashner

Disoriented and with no memories other than their names, boys arrive in a freight elevator to a strange place called the Glade which is connected to an even stranger, more dangerous place called the Maze. Every morning the walls of the Glade open to reveal the Maze and every night the walls close, and when they do, the inhabitants of the Maze, the Greivers who are part animal and part machine come out to kill whatever or whoever is in the Maze. Daily, the boys send in Runners to find a way through the Maze but must return to the Glade each night for safety. One day a girl arrives in the elevator bringing a fearful message - a message that makes the boys' fearful, dangerous existence even more of a nightmare.

When Thomas wakes up in the lift, the only thing he can remember is his first name. His memory is blank. But he's not alone. When the lift's doors open, Thomas finds himself surrounded by kids who welcome him to the Glade—a large, open expanse surrounded by stone walls.

Just like Thomas, the Gladers don't know why or how they got to the Glade. All they know is that every morning the stone doors to the maze that surrounds them have opened. Every night they've closed tight. And every 30 days a new boy has been delivered in the lift.

Thomas was expected. But the next day, a girl is sent up—the first girl to ever arrive in the Glade. And more surprising yet is the message she delivers.

Thomas might be more important than he could ever guess. If only he could unlock the dark secrets buried within his mind.

Thomas wakes up in an elevator, remembering nothing but his own name. He emerges into a world of about 60 teen boys who have learned to survive in a completely enclosed environment, subsisting on their own agriculture and supplies from below. A new boy arrives every 30 days. The original group has been in "the glade" for two years, trying to find a way to escape through a maze that surrounds their living space. They have begun to give up hope. Then a comatose girl arrives with a strange note, and their world begins to change. There are some great, fast-paced action scenes, particularly those involving the nightmarish Grievors who plague the boys. Thomas is a likable protagonist who uses the information available to him and his relationships (including his ties to the girl, Teresa) to lead the Gladers.

11 Birthdays – Wendy Mass

Amanda and Leo have shared ten birthdays. But something happened last year that tore their friendship apart. What will their eleventh birthday be like?

It all started exactly eleven years ago, on the day Leo and Amanda were born. He was named after his grandfather Leo, and she was named after her grandmother Amanda. And they celebrated their birthday together, every year, for ten years. They were best friends, and they did everything together, until their tenth birthday, when Leo did something so mean and hurtful that Amanda just couldn't forgive him.

A year later, on their eleventh birthday, they hadn't even spoken since their last birthday. They had separate parties, which weren't nearly as much fun as one big party. Amanda had such an awful day, that when she woke up the next day, she was glad her birthday was over.

But everyone else in her family seemed to think it was still her birthday. And when she got to school, everyone did too! It was like her birthday was being replayed. The longer it went on, the more confused she got—could she be stuck in some kind of time warp or something?

Then, she began to wonder what would happen if she didn't do exactly what she'd done the day before. Could she change what other people did?

She could! When she did something different, so did everyone else. It wasn't until she woke up on her birthday for the fourth time, that Amanda discovered that she wasn't the only one living one day over and over. Leo was too! He passed her a note in first period that said, "Happy Birthday (for the fourth time)!"

What was going on? Why were they reliving their birthday over and over? And how long would it last? Was there any way to break the cycle and get back to real life and living each day only one time? And if they couldn't make life stop repeating itself, would they both be eleven years old forever?

It's Amanda's 11th birthday and she is super excited---after all, 11 is so different from 10. But from the start, everything goes wrong. The worst part of it all is that she and her best friend, Leo, with whom she's shared every birthday, are on the outs and this will be the first birthday they haven't shared together. When Amanda turns in for the night, glad to have her birthday behind her, she wakes up happy for a new day. Or is it? Her birthday seems to be repeating itself. What is going on?! And how can she fix it? Only time, friendship, and a little luck will tell. . .

Amanda and Leo, born on the same day, have celebrated their birthdays together for 10 years. Still feeling hurt from an unkind remark Leo made at last year's party, Amanda spends her eleventh birthday without her now-estranged friend to share the fun. In the days that follow, both Amanda and Leo discover that they are caught in a time loop, waking up each morning to find themselves repeating their eleventh birthdays. They soon renew their friendship and begin to experiment by making different choices throughout the day, partly for the thrill of acting without long-term consequences and partly from their fear of never escaping this mysterious time trap. From the double-entendre title to the solid character portrayals to the clarity and wit of the writing, this novel offers a fresh twist on the familiar themes of middle-grade family and school dynamics. The mysterious power that rewinds time eventually seems less important than the power that Amanda finds within herself. Emboldened by the idea of daily do-overs, she discovers that small changes in her attitude and actions result in sometimes-subtle, sometimes-monumental shifts in results for herself, her family, and her friend

Born to Fly – Michael Ferrari

Ever since she can remember, Bird has loved flying in small propeller airplanes with her mechanic dad. When the local airstrip is turned into a military flight school, Bird is in heaven.

But when a young Japanese American student named Kenji Fujita joins Bird's class, the entire school seems to be convinced that he's a spy, or at the very least, that he and his uncle want the Japanese to win.

Bird is wary of Kenji, not just because he's Japanese, but because he steals her flight-related topic for a school report and leaves her to write about the deadly boring local marsh weed. But on Bird's first trip to the marsh, she and Kenji accidentally discover real spy activity in the area.

Bird realizes that Kenji is actually a stand-up guy—and she and Kenji begin an adventure that will shake the town and may even change the future of the world.

Dying to Meet You – Kate Klise

When former best-selling children's author I.B. Grumply moves into a Victorian mansion in Ghastly, IL, to write the latest installment in his "Ghost Tamer" series, he is hindered by more than just his overwhelming case of writer's block. He is dismayed to find the mansion already occupied by an 11-year-old boy named Seymour Hope, his cat, and Olive C. Spence, a ghost living in the cupola who is unhappy because she never managed to publish her books in her lifetime. Similar to the Klises' other offerings, the story is successfully told through letters, newspaper clippings, drawings, and related devices. Although Grumply has written ghost tales, he himself is a nonbeliever, and Olive and Seymour attempt to convince him. They then collaborate on a book about their own experiences, including the possibility of the demolition of the mansion, a ghost who falls in love with the occupant of her house, and Seymour's parents and their lack of responsibility for his care. This first title in a new series will appeal to readers, especially reluctant ones, as it moves quickly and leaves its audience eager for book two, which is announced in this ghastly and fun tale.—

Ignatius B. Grumply moves into the Victorian mansion at 43 Old Cemetery Road hoping to find some peace and quiet so he can crack a wicked case of writer's block. But 43 Old Cemetery Road is already occupied by eleven-year-old Seymour, his cat Shadow, and an irritable ghost named Olive. It's hard to say who is more outraged. But a grumpy old ghost just might inspire this grumpy old man--and the abandoned kid? Well, let's just say his last name's Hope.

Ignatius B. Grumply moves into the Victorian mansion at 43 Old Cemetery Road hoping to find some peace and quiet so he can crack a wicked case of writer's block. But 43 Old Cemetery Road is already occupied by eleven-year-old Seymour, his cat Shadow, and an irritable ghost named Olive. It's hard to say who is more outraged. But a grumpy old ghost just might inspire this grumpy old man--and the abandoned kid? Well, let's just say his last name's Hope.

Closed for the Season – Mary Downing Hahn

Another well-done, action-packed mystery from Hahn. This book starts off as seventh-grader Logan Forbes learns that a murder had been committed in his family's new house three years earlier. Myrtle Donaldson, a bookkeeper accused of embezzling from the local amusement park, was found dead in her ransacked house and her killer is still at large. Logan's next-door neighbor, Arthur Jenkins, a sixth grader with a bottomless stomach and a quirky personality, is convinced that Mrs. Donaldson was falsely accused, and he wants Logan to help him find the real perpetrator. The boys discover a letter and puzzle left among the woman's possessions that convinces them they are on the right track. Their investigation includes visiting the abandoned and overgrown Magic Forest amusement park, a reporter with secrets, shady property developers, a menacing convict, and purloined library materials. It all culminates in a terrifying nighttime showdown among the kudzu at the Magic Forest where the truth is revealed. This is an enjoyable mystery with just the right amount of frightening and dangerous elements to entice readers. Logan is a sympathetic character—a new kid in town trying to find his place in the pecking order, almost immediately befriended by someone on the lowest rung who turns out to be the right friend for him.

Two 13-year-old boys, Arthur and Logan, set out to solve the mystery of a murder that took place some years ago in the old house Logan's family has just moved into. The boys' quest takes them to the highest and lowest levels of society in their small Maryland town, and eventually to a derelict amusement park that is supposedly closed for the season.

This book starts off as seventh-grader Logan Forbes learns that a murder had been committed in his family's new house three years earlier. Myrtle Donaldson, a bookkeeper accused of embezzling from the local amusement park, was found dead in her ransacked house and her killer is still at large. Logan's next-door neighbor, Arthur Jenkins, a sixth grader with a bottomless stomach and a quirky personality, is convinced that Mrs. Donaldson was falsely accused, and he wants Logan to help him find the real perpetrator. The boys discover a letter and puzzle left among the woman's possessions that convinces them they are on the right track. Their investigation includes visiting the abandoned and overgrown Magic Forest amusement park, a reporter with secrets, shady property developers, a menacing convict, and purloined library materials. It all culminates in a terrifying nighttime showdown among the kudzu at the Magic Forest where the truth is revealed. This is an enjoyable mystery with just the right amount of frightening and dangerous elements to entice readers. Logan is a sympathetic character—a new kid in town trying to find his place in the pecking order, almost immediately befriended by someone on the lowest rung who turns out to be the right friend for him.

Extra Credit – Andrew Clements

A forced pen-pal exchange turns into an opportunity for real communication between Illinois sixth-grader Abby Carson and Sadeed Bayat, the best English-language student in his Afghan village. When Abby's first letter arrives in Bahar-Lan, 11-year-old Sadeed is asked by the elders to compose his sister Amira's reply; it isn't proper for a boy and girl to correspond with one another. But soon Sadeed can't resist telling Abby that it is he who has been writing to her. The third-person narrative alternates points of view, allowing for inclusion of intriguing details of both lives. Never a scholar, Abby prefers the woods behind her family's farm and the climbing wall in her school; in the afternoons, Sadeed works in his father's grain shop. In spite of their differences, Abby and Sadeed connect through their imaginations, and their earlier readings of *Frog and Toad Are Friends*. They learn, as Abby reports, that "people are simple, but the stuff going on around them can get complicated." Full-page pencil illustrations throughout add to the book's appeal. Clements offers readers an engaging and realistic school story and provides an evenhanded comparison between a Midwestern girl's lifestyle and a culture currently in the news.

It isn't that Abby Carson can't do her schoolwork. She just doesn't *like* doing it. And consequently, Abby will have to repeat sixth grade—unless she meets some specific conditions, including taking on an extra credit project: find a pen pal in a distant country. But when Abby's first letter arrives at a small school in Afghanistan, complications arise. The elders agree that any letters going back to America must be written well, but the only qualified English-speaking student is a boy. And in this village, it's not proper for a boy to correspond with a girl. So, Sadeed's sister will dictate and sign the letters for him. But what about the villagers who believe that girls should not be anywhere near a school? And what about those who believe that any contact with Americans is...unhealthy?

As letters flow back and forth—between the prairies of Illinois and the mountains of central Asia, across cultural and religious divides, through the minefields of different lifestyles and

traditions—a small group of children begin to speak and listen to each other. And in just a few short weeks, they make important discoveries about their communities, about their world, and most of all, about themselves.

Neil Armstrong is My Uncle: and Other Lies Muscle Man McGinty Told Me – Nan Marino

It's July 1969 and while the attention of everyone else in her Long Island neighborhood is on the impending moonwalk, Tamara Ann Simpson's focus is the black hole created by the sudden departure of her best friend, Keesie, a foster child who lived across the street. She directs her considerable anger at Douglas McGinty, the new foster kid, whom she ironically dubs "Muscle Man." In her self-absorbed grief, Tammy fails to see that the whoppers Douglas tells—he's training for the 1972 Olympics, he's sung on Broadway—are his way of coping with a major loss of his own. "Muscle Man McGinty is a squirrely runt, a lying snake, and a pitiful excuse for a ten-year old," Tammy's narration begins. "The problem is.... only I can see him for what he really is." Indeed, among the well-realized cast of scruffy neighborhood pals, no one joins Tammy's campaign to unmask Muscle Man as a phony.

"Muscle Man McGinty is a squirrely runt, a lying snake, and a pitiful excuse for a ten-year old.....the problem is that no one knows it but me. In the entire town of Massapequa Park, only I can see him for what he really is. A phony.

It's the summer of 1969, and things are not only changing in Tamara's little Long Island town, but in the world. Perhaps Tamara could stand to take one small step toward a bit of compassion and understanding?

It's July 1969 and while the attention of everyone else in her Long Island neighborhood is on the impending moonwalk, Tamara Ann Simpson's focus is the black hole created by the sudden departure of her best friend, Keesie, a foster child who lived across the street. She directs her considerable anger at Douglas McGinty, the new foster kid, whom she ironically dubs "Muscle Man." In her self-absorbed grief, Tammy fails to see that the whoppers Douglas tells—he's training for the 1972 Olympics, he's sung on Broadway—are his way of coping with a major loss of his own. "Muscle Man McGinty is a squirrely runt, a lying snake, and a pitiful excuse for a ten-year old," Tammy's narration begins. "The problem is.... only I can see him for what he really is." Indeed, among the well-realized cast of scruffy neighborhood pals, no one joins Tammy's campaign to unmask Muscle Man as a phony

Nest for Celeste: A Story of Art, Inspiration and the Meaning of Home – Henry Cole

Celeste is not your average mouse. She lives alone, quietly weaving baskets with creative flair under the floor boards of the Oakley Plantation. However, Celeste's world turns upside down with the arrival of the great naturalist John James Audubon and his assistant Joseph, who have come to study and paint the birds of the Louisiana bayou. Their arrival coincides with Celeste's sudden displacement from her home below to a guest room upstairs. There she watches young Joseph struggle to create the backgrounds for Audubon's bird paintings.

As the two homesick souls strike up a friendship, the mouse secretly puts her artistic skills to good use; she simultaneously helps Joseph improve his compositions while aiding the wounded birds that Audubon captures for his studies. Nearly every page of author-illustrator Henry Cole's fine novel combines text and remarkable drawn images to tell the story of a mouse in need of a home of her own from the tiny creature's unique vantage point.

Beneath the crackled and faded painting of a horse, underneath the worn and dusty floorboards of the dining room, lives Celeste, a mouse who spends her days weaving baskets, until one day she is thrust into the world above. Here Celeste encounters danger—and love—unlike any she's ever imagined. She dodges a hungry cat and witnesses the brutality of hunting for the first time. She makes friends with a singing thrush named Cornelius, a talkative osprey named Lafayette, and Joseph, Audubon's young apprentice. All the while, Celeste is looking for a new home. Is her home in the toe of a worn boot? Nestled in Joseph's pocket? Or in the dollhouse in the attic, complete with mouse-size furniture perfect for Celeste? In the end, Celeste discovers that home is really the place deep inside her heart, where friendships live.

The Night Fairy – Laura Amy Schlitz

What would happen to a fairy if she lost her wings and could no longer fly? Flory, a young night fairy no taller than an acorn and still becoming accustomed to her wings — wings as beautiful as those of a luna moth — is about to find out. What she discovers is that the world is very big and very dangerous. But Flory is fierce and willing to do whatever it takes to survive. If that means telling others what to do — like Skuggle, a squirrel ruled by his stomach — so be it. Not every creature, however, is as willing to bend to Flory's demands.

Flory is a night fairy who is still becoming accustomed to her beautiful mothlike wings when a run-in with a bat drops her into a strange garden unable to fly. She is forced to learn to survive in the daylight and takes up residence in a birdhouse in a Giantess's garden. Flory, no taller than an acorn, struggles at first with squirrels, hummingbirds, spiders, and other creatures that do not look at the world the same way she does. She quickly learns that kindness, compassion, generosity, and bravery can help her to make much-needed friends. Written in short chapters, this beautifully crafted tale works equally well as a read-aloud or as independent reading. Barrett's full-color watercolor illustrations add depth and perspective to the story. Detailed and drawn to scale, they give readers a sense of just how tiny Flory is compared to the other animals

The Secret of Zoom – Lynne Jonell

Christina lives in a big, old stone mansion on the edge of a dark forest surrounded by barbed wire. Deep within the forest is the laboratory where her father works—and where her mother was blown to bits years ago. Christina's father knows just how dangerous the world can be, so he keeps her safe at home, forbidding her from talking to the very interesting orphans down the road. But when an orphan boy named Taft talks to *her*, she's

thrilled to help him search for a secret tunnel. But soon she discovers there's more to the orphanage, the lab, and the mystery of her mother's accident than she ever suspected. Sinister things are in the works—and the secret of zoom is the most dangerous secret of all!

Star in the Forest – Laura Resau

Zitlally's family is undocumented, and her father has just been arrested for speeding and deported back to Mexico. As her family waits for him to return—they've paid a coyote to guide him back across the border—they receive news that he and the coyote's other charges have been kidnapped and are being held for ransom. Meanwhile, Zitlally and a new friend find a dog in the forest near their trailer park. They name it Star for the star-shaped patch over its eye. As time goes on, Zitlally starts to realize that Star is her father's "spirit animal," and that as long as Star is safe, her father will be also. But what will happen to Zitlally's dad when Star disappears?

After her father is imprisoned in Colorado and then deported to Mexico as an illegal immigrant, lonely 11-year-old Zitlally befriends her neighbor and classmate, Crystal. Together, the girls care for Star, an abandoned dog they find chained up in their trailer-park "forest," made up of heaps of rusted car parts. Zitlally's stressed, angry mama works many jobs and sells the family's truck so that they can send Papá money to pay border smugglers, who will help him try to return. Then Papá is kidnapped and held for ransom, and Zitlally's illegal family cannot go to the police. Crystal's family is also in trouble: her father is in prison in the U.S., although she makes up wild stories about him working in Antarctica and Madagascar. Always true to Zitlally's viewpoint, the unaffected writing makes clear the anguish of illegals. The thematic parallels with the dog, also an illegal of sorts, are redundant; it's the family story, more than the pet plot, that will grab readers. A pronunciation guide, a glossary, and a note about immigration from Mexico to the U.S. close this unforgettable narrative of a girl's daily struggle to find a home

The Alchemyst: The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel – Michael Scott

Twin 15-year-old siblings Sophie and Josh Newman take summer jobs in San Francisco across the street from one another: she at a coffee shop, he at a bookstore owned by Nick and Perry Fleming. In the very first chapter, armed goons garbed in black with "dead-looking skin and... marble eyes" (actually Golems) storm the bookshop, take Perry hostage and swipe a rare Book (but not before Josh snatches its two most important pages). The stolen volume is the Codex, an ancient text of magical wisdom. Nick Fleming is really Nicholas Flamel, the 14th-century alchemist who could turn base metal into gold, and make a potion that ensures immortality. Sophie and Josh learn that they are mentioned in the Codex's prophecies: "The two that are one will come either to save or to destroy the world." Mayhem ensues, as Irish author Scott draws on a wide knowledge of world mythology to stage a battle between the Dark Elders and their hired gun—Dr. John Dee—against the forces of good, led by Flamel and the twins (Sophie's powers are "awakened" by the goddess Hekate, who'd been living in an elaborate treehouse north of San Francisco). Not only do they need the Codex back to stop Dee and company, but the immortality potion must be brewed afresh every month. Time is running out, literally, for the Flamels.

All the Broken Pieces: A Novel in Verse – Ann Burg

Told in verse - Two years after being airlifted out of war-torn Vietnam, Matt Pin is haunted: by bombs that fell like dead crows, by the family -- and the terrible secret -- he left behind. Now, inside a caring adoptive home in the United States, a series of profound events force him to choose between silence and candor, blame and forgiveness, fear and freedom.

12-year-old Matt Pin lives a fractured life. He is the son of a Vietnamese woman and an American soldier and was airlifted to safety from the war zone. Adopted by a caring American couple, he has vivid and horrific memories of the war and worries about the fates of his mother and badly injured little brother. Matt's adoptive family adores him, and he is the star pitcher for his middle school baseball team, but there are those who see his face and blame him for the deaths of the young men they lost in the war. The fractured theme runs the course of this short novel in verse: Matt's family, the bodies and hearts of the Vietnam vets, the country that is "only a pocketful of broken pieces" that Matt carries inside him. Ultimately, everything broken is revealed as nonetheless valuable.

Antsy Does Time – Neal Shusterman

Fueled by friendship and sympathy, Antsy Bonano signs a month of his life over to his "dying" classmate Gunnar Umlaut. Soon everyone at school follows suit, giving new meaning to the idea of "living on borrowed time." But does Gunnar really have six months to live, or is news of his imminent death greatly exaggerated? When a family member suffers a heart attack after donating two years to Gunnar, Antsy wonders if he has tempted fate by playing God. Fans of "the Schwa" will welcome favorite and new characters in this wholly fresh tale, which is as touchingly poignant as it is darkly comical.

In this sequel to *The Schwa Was Here* (Dutton, 2004), Brooklynite Antsy Bonano, 14, finds another peculiar friend, a Swedish import named Gunnar Umlaut. When a balloon from the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade gets away, Antsy and his friends Howie and Ira head into Manhattan to follow the debacle. On the way, they run into their classmate Gunnar. Watching the catastrophe unfold, he confides to Antsy that he's been "coming to disasters" lately, and that he's dying of Pulmonary Monoxic Systemia. Gunnar says he has only six months to live, so Antsy gives him one of his own, drawing up a legal-looking document, and, before he knows it, the whole school's giving Gunnar months of their lives. Spending more time at Gunnar's house, Antsy falls for his friend's older sister, and also notices that things seem off. Gunnar's obsession with his presumed imminent death is largely ignored. When Antsy discovers that Gunnar is not going to die, that he was "diagnosed" by a fake online doctor, he wonders why the boy lied. As Antsy uncovers the truth—that Gunnar's dad has gambled away the family's money and they're headed back to Sweden—he learns more about the meaning of the time you have on Earth.

Elephant Run – Roland Smith

In 1941, bombs drop from the night skies of London, demolishing the apartment Nick Freestone lives in with his mother. Deciding the situation in England is too unstable, Nick's

mother sends him to live with his father in Burma, hoping he will be safer living on the family's teak plantation.

But as soon as Nick arrives, trouble erupts in the remote Burmese elephant village. Japanese soldiers invade, and Nick's father is taken prisoner. Nick is left stranded on the plantation, forced to work as a servant to the new rulers. As life in the village grows more dangerous for Nick and his young friend, Mya, they plan their daring escape. Setting off on elephant back, they will risk their lives to save Nick's father and Mya's brother from a Japanese POW camp.

In this thrilling journey through the jungles of Burma, Roland Smith explores the far-reaching effects of World War II, while introducing readers to the fascinating world of wild timber elephants and their mahouts.

At the height of the London blitz, Nick's mother sends him to join his father on the family's remote, ancestral timber plantation in Burma. Her gambit turns out badly: The invading Japanese soon seize the plantation, imprisoning his father in a brutal POW camp, and leaving 13-year-old Nick to endure hardship under Japanese overseers (whose characterizations are less complex than those of the diverse Burmese). As readers will expect from suspense-specialist Smith, Nick faces exciting situations (including several weeks in the estate's secret catacombs), and details of Burmese politics, spirituality, and daily life weave an alluring backdrop. Some readers, however, may feel disoriented by Smith's fragmented storytelling style, in which momentum often seems to consolidate around one character or plot development only to move suddenly in an entirely new direction. Still, this offering's unusual setting deserves attention from historical fiction fans, who will appreciate the window on a rarely discussed theater of World War II.

Flygirl – Sherri L. Smith

All Ida Mae Jones wants to do is fly. Her daddy was a pilot, and years after his death she feels closest to him when she's in the air. But as a young black woman in 1940s Louisiana, she knows the sky is off limits to her, until America enters World War II, and the Army forms the WASP - Women Airforce Service Pilots. Ida has a chance to fulfill her dream if she's willing to use her light skin to pass as a white girl. She wants to fly more than anything, but Ida soon learns that denying one's self and family is a heavy burden, and ultimately it's not what you do but who you are that's most important.

Readers first meet 18-year-old Ida Mae Jones, a Louisiana girl who longs to be a pilot, in December 1941, on the eve of America's entrance into World War II. She is pretty and smart, but she has two huge strikes against her. She is black in an America where racism holds sway, and a competent pilot in an America in which she is denied her license because she is a woman. Smith explores these two significant topics and does a wonderful job of melding the two themes in one novel. Ida Mae is a likable character who is torn by the need to pass for white and fake a license in order to fulfill her dream. Readers learn a great deal about what it must have been like to be African American in the South during this period, as well as about the Women Airforce Service Pilots, WASP, a civilian group that performed jobs that freed male pilots for other things. The women's close friendships and the danger, excitement, and tragedy of their experience create a thrilling, but little-known story that begs to be told.

A Kiss in Time – Alex Flinn

Talia fell under a spell. . . .
Jack broke the curse.

I was told to beware the accursed spindle, but it was so enchanting, so hypnotic. . . .

I was looking for a little adventure the day I ditched my tour group. But finding a comatose town, with a hot-looking chick asleep in it, was so not what I had in mind.

I awakened in the same place but in another time—to a stranger's soft kiss.

I couldn't help kissing her. Sometimes you just have to kiss someone. I didn't know this would happen.

Now I am in dire trouble because my father, the king, says I have brought ruin upon our country. I have no choice but to run away with this commoner!

Now I'm stuck with a bratty princess and a trunk full of her jewels. . . . The good news: My parents will freak!

Think you have dating issues? Try locking lips with a snoozing stunner who turns out to be 316 years old. Can a kiss transcend all—even time

In the same vein as Flinn's *Beastly*, this clever and humorous retelling of "Sleeping Beauty" follows an aimless American boy who awakens a princess who has been slumbering for 300 years. Jack is on a European tour mandated by his parents ("What they don't tell you about Europe is how completely lame it is") when he breaks an ancient curse by kissing the slumbering Princess Talia. Instead of rejoicing, she and other awakened members of their magical kingdom are confused and perturbed to find themselves in the 21st century. In order to escape the wrath of her father, who blames her for causing the curse, Talia flees with Jack to his home in Florida. While acclimating to the modern world—cell phones, television, Jell-o shots—the princess manages to charm everyone she meets and help Jack sort out his life. Alternating between the teenagers' distinctive points of view, Flinn skillfully delineates how their upbringings set them apart while drawing parallels between their family conflicts.

The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg – Rodman Philbrick

Young Homer Figg sets off to follow his brother into the thick of the Civil War. Through a series of fascinating events, Homer's older brother has been illegally sold to the Union Army. It is up to Homer to find him and save him. Along the way, he encounters strange but real people of that era: two tricksters who steal his money, a snake-oil salesman, a hot-

air balloonist, and finally, the Maine regiment who saved Little Round Top at the Battle of Gettysburg and won the war for the Union.

When his older brother gets conscripted into the Union Army, Homer runs away from his uncle, "the meanest man in the entire state of Maine." He sets out after Harold but has multiple misadventures along the way. He survives thanks to courage, luck, and his talent for telling lies when needed, since "old Truth ain't nearly as useful as a fib sometimes." Homer relates his own adventures in colorful language as he crosses paths with con men, rogues, and scoundrels of various types. The comic tone is reflected in character names, such as Stink and Smelt, the cold-blooded slave catchers, and the kind but shifty Professor Fleabottom. Things take a more somber tone when Homer sees the horrors of the battlefield up close. The final reunion of the brothers during the Battle of Gettysburg is bittersweet. Homer's escapades introduce some interesting features of the year 1863, including the Underground Railroad, a traveling medicine show, Civil War spies, and an early version of the hydrogen balloon. Homer runs into plenty of danger, but there's more comedy than suspense in most episodes. He also deals with some moral dilemmas as he tries to make sense of the wide world and find people and ideas to believe in.

Pop – Gordon Korman

When Marcus moves to a new town in the dead of summer, he doesn't know a soul. While practicing football for impending tryouts, he strikes up an unlikely friendship with an older man. Charlie is a charismatic prankster—and the best football player Marcus has ever seen. He can't believe his good luck when he finds out that Charlie is actually Charlie Popovich, or "the King of Pop," as he had been nicknamed during his career as an NFL linebacker. But that's not all. There is a secret about Charlie that his own family is desperate to hide.

When Marcus begins school, he meets the starting quarterback on the team: Troy Popovich. Right from the beginning, Marcus and Troy disagree—about football, about Troy's ex-girlfriend, Alyssa, but most of all, about what's good for Charlie. Marcus is betting that he knows what's best for the King of Pop. And he is willing to risk everything to help his friend.

New to town, Marcus spends the summer before his junior year practicing football alone at a local park hoping to meet someone from the high school team. Instead, he meets an eccentric middle-aged man named Charlie who teaches Marcus more about football, tackling, and the art of the "pop" than he could have imagined, and the two strike up an unusual friendship. Charlie lives by no set schedule and can't seem to remember that Marcus's name is not Mac. Marcus tries out and makes the team, but learns that they are not a welcoming group, fearful that the newcomer will upset their perfect record. To make matters worse, the star quarterback, Troy, is Charlie's son, and his ex-girlfriend, Alyssa, has the hots for Marcus. Gradually, Marcus figures out that Charlie is an ex-NFL star who is suffering from early on-set Alzheimer's, a secret his family tries to keep well hidden. Despite these obstacles on and off the field, Marcus is determined to help his friend. Nick Podehl's skillful narration of his novel (HarperTeen, 2009) seamlessly flows between Marcus's teenage obliviousness and Charlie's middle-aged gruffness, adding another affective level to this heartbreaking story.

Savvy – Ingrid Law

Thirteen is when a Beaumont's savvy hits - and with one brother who causes hurricanes and another who creates electricity, Mibs Beaumont is eager to see what she gets. But just before the big day, Poppa is in a terrible accident. And now all Mibs wants is a savvy that will save him. In fact, Mibs is so sure she'll get a powerful savvy that she sneaks a ride to the hospital on a rickety bus with her sibling and the preacher's kids in tow. After this extraordinary adventure - full of talking tattoos and a kidnapping - not a soul on board will ever be the same.

For generations, the Beaumont family has harbored a magical secret. They each possess a "savvy" -a special supernatural power that strikes when they turn thirteen. Grandpa Bomba moves mountains, her older brothers create hurricanes and spark electricity . . . and now it's the eve of Mibs's big day.

As if waiting weren't hard enough, the family gets scary news two days before Mibs's birthday: Poppa has been in a terrible accident. Mibs develops the singular mission to get to the hospital and prove that her new power can save her dad. So she sneaks onto a salesman's bus . . . only to find the bus heading in the opposite direction. Suddenly Mibs finds herself on an unforgettable odyssey that will force her to make sense of growing up - and of other people, who might also have a few secrets hidden just beneath the skin.