

# Kirkus Reviews

Kirkus Supplements • Vol. 5, No. 07 • August 1, 2009

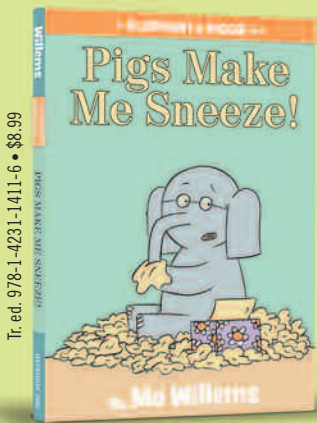
## Big Book Fall Preview

*featuring 2009 Debut Fiction*

Plus the *Freakonomics* guys return, Michael Chabon talks manhood and more

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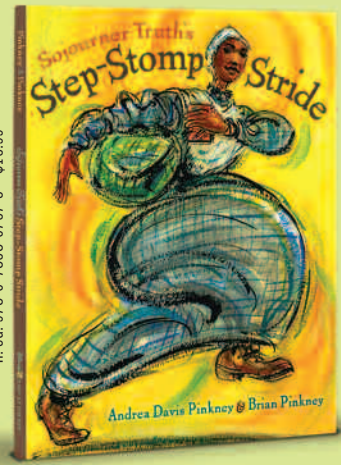
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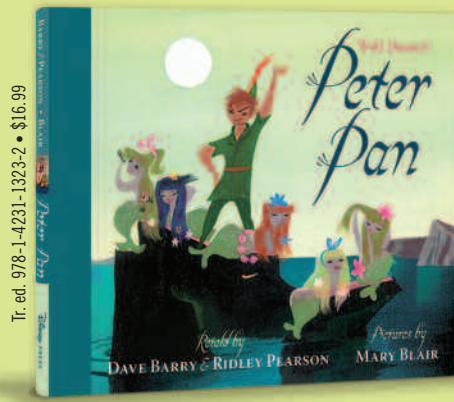


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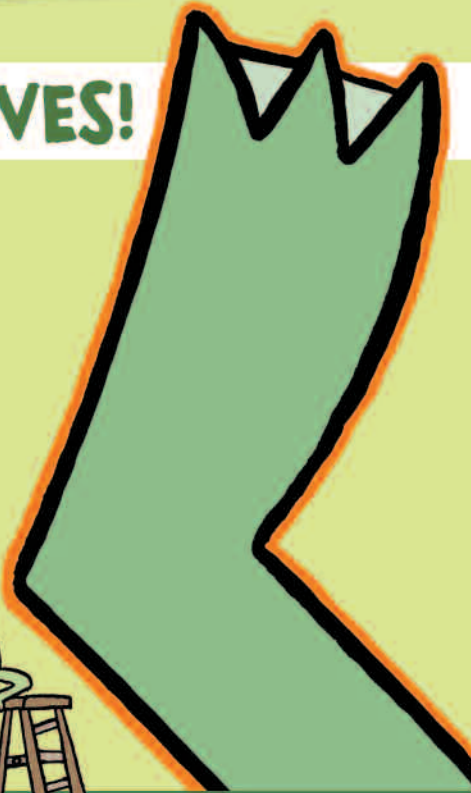
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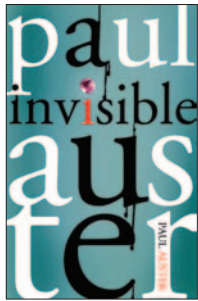




**Fall** always features some of the year's biggest releases, and this year is no exception.

In fact, 2009 finds some of the most revered—and reclusive—authors re-emerging with their latest books. Paul Auster, A.S. Byatt, John Irving, Alexander McCall Smith, Lorrie Moore and Thomas Pynchon all have new fiction out. Dan Brown returns with the follow-up to *The Da Vinci Code*. The *Freakonomics* guys are back for another round of renegade economics. And Michael Chabon talks about being a man in his collection of nonfiction essays. Fall is also a fine time to reflect on the best new fiction voices of the year—here we present ten outstanding titles from debut authors who we think you'll see a lot from in the future. Children's and YA gets the same treatment—we've included nearly 20 excellent books to tuck into backpacks as the kids make their way to the classroom. There's no better time than fall to crack open a new book.

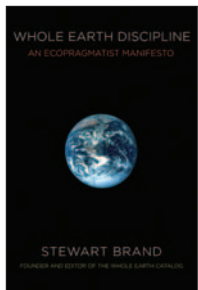
– The Editors



### **Invisible**

Paul Auster  
Henry Holt / November / 9780805090802 / \$25.00

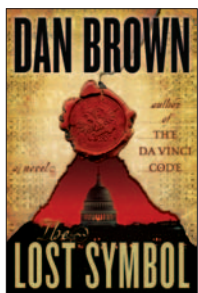
*Invisible* combines Paul Auster's postmodern narrative gamesmanship—What's the relationship between life and fiction? Who is the author behind the author behind the author?—with a thematic depth that is almost Dostoyevskian in its exploration of good and evil. The plot begins with a student at Columbia University in 1967 (when the author also attended) who becomes involved in two transgressions, one of them leaving him feeling guiltier than the reader might expect, the other one considerably less so. It's hard to recount either the story or the narrative strategies without giving away too much, but a professor visiting from France and his seductive girlfriend insinuate themselves into Adam Walker's life, changing it forever. The 20-year-old student also finds his relationship intensifying with his beautiful older sister, though to what extent remains open to question, for “the distance between thought and deed can be enormous, a gulf as large as the world itself.” The novel envelops a fellow Columbia alum who has become a successful writer and a French mother and daughter through whom Adam attempts to atone for “the most reprehensible thing I have ever done.” Ultimately, everything from the narrator to the protagonist to the essence of evil and guilt is up for grabs.



### **Whole Earth Discipline: An Ecopragmatist Manifesto**

Stewart Brand  
Viking / October / 9780670021215 / \$25.95

The green movement is riding a wave of enthusiasm that has not been seen since the first Earth Day in 1970. But, as Stewart Brand contends in *Whole Earth Discipline*, this enthusiasm masks grave issues with the current ideologies that fuel the movement. Brand, a biologist, environmentalist and author of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, which won the National Book Award in 1972, sets about bringing these issues to light here and offers new strategies for moving forward. An environmentalist for more than 40 years, the author writes that he has watched as the green agenda has become “too negative, too tradition-bound, too specialized, [and] too politically one-sided for the scale of the climate problem.” But he says that all is not lost. Brand has hope for the environment and asks that those involved in the green movement undergo a dramatic shift in the way they think about certain issues. His bold ideas focus on urban landscapes, nuclear power and genetic engineering—three areas that will need to be addressed if we intend to effectively counter environmental degradation and climate change. For Brand, these all-too-real problems are solvable, and *Whole Earth Discipline* should inspire readers to rethink their positions as we collectively fight climate change.



### **The Lost Symbol**

Dan Brown  
Doubleday / September / 9780385504225 / \$29.95

Fans will have to wait until September for the revelation of Dan Brown's biggest secret so far—the next adventure of symbologist Robert Langdon, the hero of worldwide bestseller *The Da Vinci Code* (2003). The publisher says it's “a great day for readers and booksellers” but is being coy about the book's details. It's a ploy which should only fuel anticipation for the book's massive first printing of five-million copies. “Nothing is ever as it first appears in a Dan Brown novel,” says Brown's editor Jason Kaufman in a statement. “From the first page, Dan's readers will feel the thrill of discovery as they follow Robert Langdon through a masterful and unexpected new landscape. *The Lost Symbol* is full of surprises.” The book is sure to include the series' popular ingredients, including Brown's propensity for arcane historical details as well as Langdon's preternatural code-breaking abilities. Meanwhile, fans will have to settle for the few details available, like the book's rapid timeframe. “This novel has been a strange and wonderful journey,” says Brown in a statement. “Weaving five years of research into the story's 12-hour time frame was an exhilarating challenge. Robert Langdon's life clearly moves a lot faster than mine.”

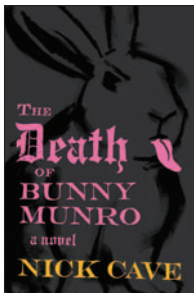


## The Children's Book

A.S. Byatt

Knopf / October / 9780307272096 / \$26.95

Childhood and adulthood reveal magical places as children's author Olive Wellwood and her family and friends move through an idyllic Victorian England to a devastating World War I. "I don't think I have ever worked with so many principal characters before," says A.S. Byatt (*Little Black Book of Stories*, 2004, etc.). "There is no single central consciousness... I like to find several originals with different backgrounds and attitudes, as well as things in common. As a child I longed doggedly to be an adult. I thought it would be better, and it was... I have always worried about how easily adults damage children, even when they love them. But I see nothing sacred in childhood—children are just growing human beings, and [being] a good parent is protecting a child and helping to make a good (competent) adult." The complex story took Byatt seven years to complete. "I had to do a great deal of basic historical research and discovered all sorts of things about things like anarchy and the Kaiser I hadn't known at all," she says. *Kirkus* called the book "ambitious, accomplished and intelligent in the author's vintage manner."

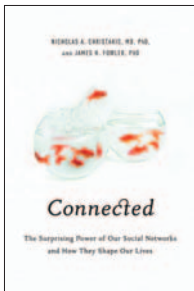


## The Death of Bunny Munro

Nick Cave

Faber and Faber/Farrar, Straus and Giroux / September / 9780865479104 / \$24.00

How to describe a portrait of a drug-addled salesman who just wants to get it on, taking a road trip toward his final reward? Easiest, perhaps, to say that it's by Nick Cave, the post-punk raconteur who is arguably impossible to classify. "I was really intrigued by the way Nick Cave manages to make things seem real and not-real at the same time," says Mitzi Angel, publisher of Faber and Faber. "Yes, there are people like Bunny Munro out there, but there's something hyper-real about him, he's both ordinary and extreme. It's as though he's caught between two worlds—the sordid world he knows, and a more menacing one urging him to confront his crimes." Known for leading bands the Birthday Party and the Bad Seeds, Cave pours as much literary prowess into his latest novel as he did into his earlier biblical gothic *And the Ass Saw the Angel* (1990). The singer-songwriter will even make a rare public appearance for the book in New York City in September. "There's no doubt the book is shocking—it's dirty—so I'm sure people will respond in their own different ways," says Angel. "It is tragic and comic, but also a reminder that there are some things that really matter."

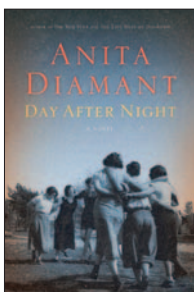


## Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives

Nicholas A. Christakis and James H. Fowler

Little, Brown / September / 9780316036146 / \$25.99

"In essence, if you want to know what makes us uniquely human, you have to study our networks," says James Fowler (Political Science/Univ. of California, San Diego). "It's very interesting to find out that there are people who we don't know and have never met who can be influenced by the decisions that we make." What determines who we'll marry, how we'll vote and whether or not we'll have money? The groundbreaking discoveries of Fowler and Nicholas Christakis (Sociology and Medicine/Harvard Univ.), both leading experts on social networks and their effects, take on these questions and more. Through the "three degrees rule," we don't decide our fates, but rather our networks do. "You are influenced by other people in the social network that you're not directly connected to," says Fowler. "The effect of one person spreads to their friends, to their friends' friends, and to their friends' friends' friends." Say goodbye to the idea of individual choice. Using examples of the widower effect, the spread of STDs, elections, dating circles and more, Christakis and Fowler explore the vast interconnectedness of humanity and its direct correlation to who we are in everyday life.



## Day After Night

Anita Diamant

Scribner / September / 9780743299848 / \$27.00

Telling a Holocaust story, "even in the rearview mirror," is a daunting challenge, says Anita Diamant (*The Red Tent*, 2005, etc.). The author learned by chance about the little-known Atlit internment camp in Israel when sharing a school field trip with her daughter's Jewish history class nine years ago. In 1945, more than 200 men and women were held prisoner by the British forces in the camp near Haifa, waiting for a tangled bureaucracy to issue permission to stay. Eventually they took matters into their own hands. "Refugees were streaming into Palestine," says Diamant. "And the British were stopping them there." Today the camp is a historic site. "Like Williamsburg, tour groups go through and learn about this moment in history," she says. For Diamant, "the prisoners' escape was almost cinematic. They took everybody out safely." She tucked the episode away in her mind and eventually wrote *Day After Night*, telling the story primarily from the perspective of four fictional women: Shayndel, a Polish Zionist; Leonie, a Parisian; Tedi, a Dutch Jew; and Zorah, a concentration-camp survivor. Helping each other, the women begin to trust and love again. "Even though their stories are composites, there is something universal about them," says Diamant.

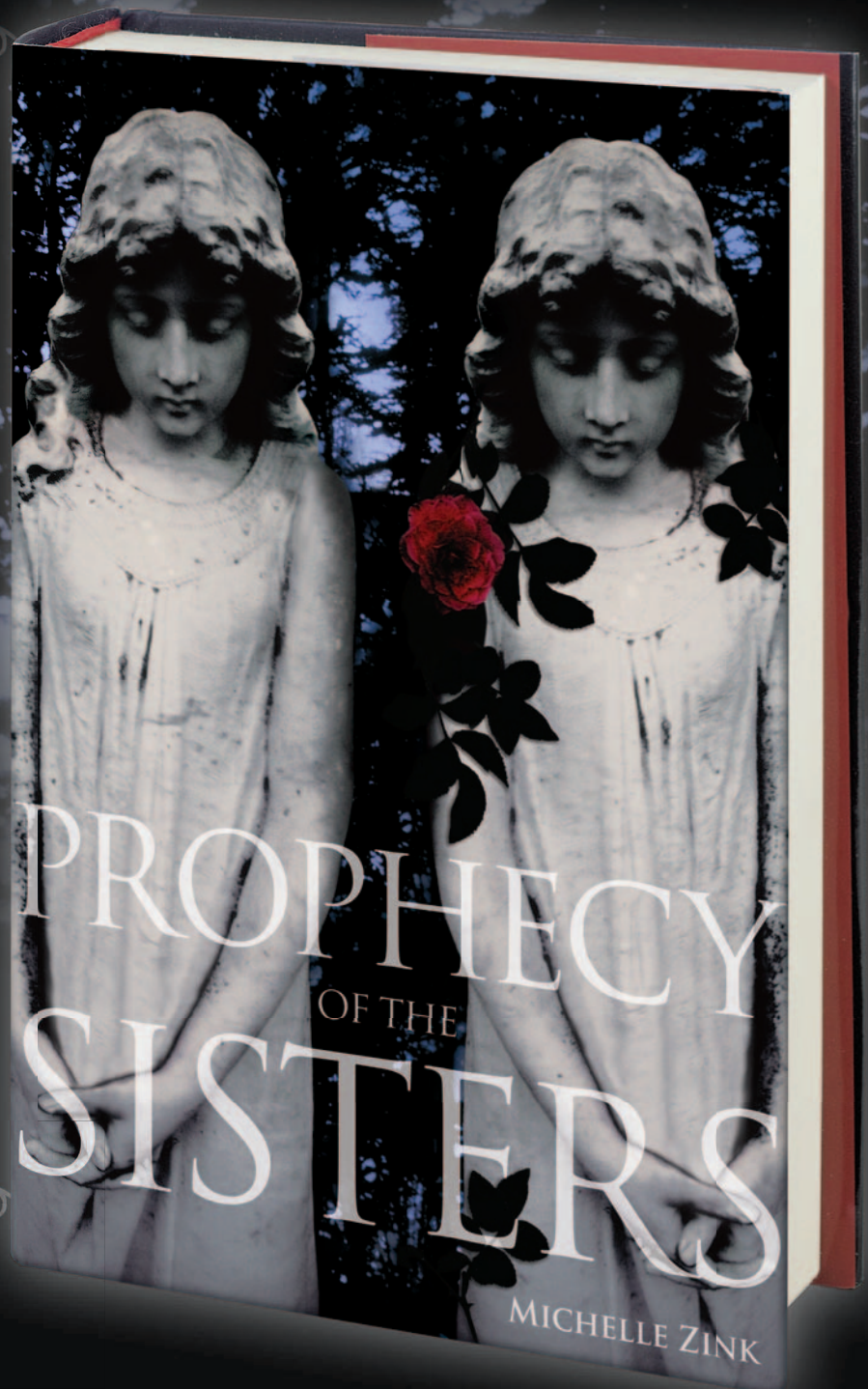
# AN AGE OLD PROPHECY DIVIDES TWO SISTERS.. ONLY ONE WILL PREVAIL.

★ “[Zink] crafts the atmosphere as carefully as she plots the story and shapes her characters...This arresting story takes readers to other planes of existence.”

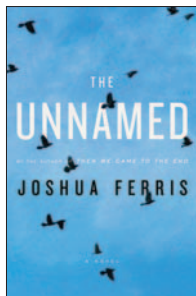
—Booklist (starred review)

*Lia and Alice don't know whom they can trust.*

*They just know they can't trust each other.*





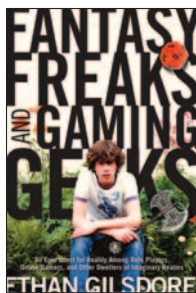


### The Unnamed

Joshua Ferris

Reagan Arthur Books/Little, Brown / January 2010 / 9780316034012 / \$24.99

Having explored the communal conscience of a workplace in decline with his highly praised 2007 debut *Then We Came to the End*, Joshua Ferris returns with a novel that looks at disease and its consequences. In *The Unnamed*, high-powered lawyer Tim Farnsworth is compelled to walk—without warning and without stop. As Tim's mysterious illness, which is never diagnosed, runs its course, his wife and daughter are put through the ringer while attempting to adapt to a severely disrupting and unpredictable phenomenon. "I wanted to write a book that dealt with disease and how disease affects a family and affects a man's notions of himself," says Ferris. "What sickness does, it takes a particular person away from him or herself. It robs that person of free will, and it steals their agency to the point where they might not recognize themselves." In creating a disease, Ferris avoided preconceived notions readers would bring to the book, allowing him greater freedom to investigate the primacy of science, the nature of medicine and the role of free will. "In the end, I hope the book is about what possibilities for meaning and heroism arise in the face of affliction," he says. "In this case, it's a family's love story."



### Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks: An Epic Quest for Reality Among Role Players, Online Gamers, and Other Dwellers of Imaginary Realms

Ethan Gilsdorf

Lyons Press / September / 9781599214801 / \$24.95

Ethan Gilsdorf was made fun of a lot in high school. In the late '70s, playing fantasy role-playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons* put the author on equal social footing as the AV club. Thirty years later, though, fantasy films rule the box office, J.R.R. Tolkien is considered essential reading and games like *World of Warcraft* are pop-culture phenomena. "When I was a teenager this stuff was looked down upon," says Gilsdorf. "Now it's everywhere." But there are still pockets of fantasy culture—*Lord of the Rings* conventions, Society for Creative Anachronism battles, LARP (Live Action Role Playing) camps—that the casual fantasy nerd wouldn't even dare to tread. But Gilsdorf, spurred on by the discovery of his old *D&D* guides, decided to dive elf-ears first into the deepest geek pools. "I wanted to know why a 40-year-old man is still so interested in this stuff that he'd dress up in armor on the weekends," he says. The author traveled from the woods of South Carolina to libraries in Wisconsin, from battlefields in Pennsylvania to the mountains of New Zealand—all in the quest to find some answers. His conclusion? They get to the heart of why any of us, geeks or not, become involved with any group. "It's all about a sense of belonging," says Gilsdorf. And maybe a bit about killing stuff.

## Kirkus Reviews Supplements 2009

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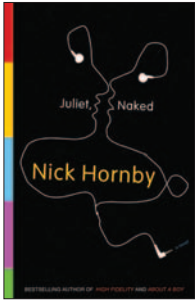
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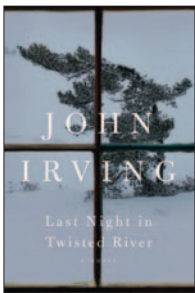
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## Juliet, Naked

Nick Hornby  
Riverhead / September / 9781594488870 / \$25.95

Who knew that an article about a journalist tracking down Sly Stone—of Sly and the Family Stone fame—would help inspire Nick Hornby's *Juliet, Naked*? Well, that along with a few other ideas. "Two or three things came together, that's always where a book starts for me," says Hornby. "For some reason, I had the idea to put an American musician in an English seaside town...the other thing was, I was thinking a lot about how a work of art never means the same thing to a different person...And I wanted to write about the Internet, and how it's changed music and how all these people who used to be on their own now talk to each other all day, every day." Writing about music is secondhand to Hornby—1995's *High Fidelity* focused on music obsessions and relationships—and *Juliet, Naked* is another nod in that direction. In the novel, nearly middle-aged Duncan and Annie have spent most of their adult years together, yet Annie feels distanced—and that she's let her best years slip past. Slightly clueless Duncan is an obsessive fan of obscure American singer-songwriter Tucker Crowe, who hasn't made music in over a decade. When a stripped-down early version of Crowe's seminal album, *Juliet*, is released, and Annie writes an essay about it that Duncan posts to his fan website, it results in Annie and the reclusive Crowe connecting via e-mail. And then things get interesting. "Relationships are my thing," says Hornby. "I really like writing about women, men, kids. If I've got the character right, it's fun."



## Last Night in Twisted River

John Irving  
Random House / November / 9781400063840 / \$28.00

John Irving describes his latest book as a "fugitive novel," tracking the lives of three generations of men across more than 50 years of American history, from New Hampshire to Canada and back again. It begins in 1954, when a young Canadian boy breaks his wrist working in a logging camp, and episodically visits him during his life on the run with his father. "This book is classic Irving, a great story about vivid, original people and their search for meaning," says Kate Medina, executive editorial director for Random House. "It has a big feel to it, and it is incredibly suspenseful. He manages to capture how disaster is one step, one dog or one swerve of a car away, or how love, too, can fall from the sky. Reading several of these scenes, you can sense disaster or pain coming, and the tension is so great, I had to stand up and walk around." Medina says that the novel captures the relationships between men and the women and friends they love, and reveals how the random choices we make in life often determine the people we become. "At its heart, it's a story about fathers and sons," she says.

# Tor/Forge Bestselling Authors Return for the Fall Season

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Scott  
Card**



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# Freakonomics, Part Two



Photo by: Kristine Khouri

Steven Levitt

University of Chicago economics professor Steven Levitt and *New York Times* journalist Stephen Dubner keyed into the zeitgeist in 2005 with the release of their universally beloved book on pop-economic theory, *Freakonomics*. The pair reframed the way readers thought about the world—from sumo wrestling, the living habits of drug dealers to baby-naming patterns—leading to a regular column in the *New York Times* and the Freakonomics blog. In October, Levitt and Dubner will release *SuperFreakonomics* to eager audiences.

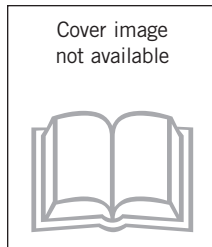


Photo by: Michael Benebib

Stephen Dubner

**Dubner spoke with *Kirkus* about what to expect from the dynamic duo's second act,**

**why economists are fascinating creatures and the rationale behind their success.**



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## **SuperFreakonomics:**

### **Tales of Altruism, Terrorism and Poorly Paid Prostitutes**

Steven D. Levitt  
and Stephen J. Dubner  
Morrow/HarperCollins / October  
9780060889579 / \$29.99

## **Tell us what to expect from *SuperFreakonomics*.**

This book should be better than *Freakonomics*. That's the plan. We took our time to make a book that isn't a typical follow-up. *SuperFreakonomics* is as strong a book as if *Freakonomics* had never existed. It shares the same general approach, the bopping from one topic to the next. We're setting the bar no higher than having something true, surprising and interesting to say about the topics that we've chosen, which are much different this time—they're not as fringe. We're writing about things that are more in the public eye...stuff that concerns what people think about every day.

## **Tell us more about some of the topics the book will cover.**

We write about terrorism—how terrorism works from an economic incentive standpoint and what kinds of people are prone to become terrorists. We write about a variety of relatively simple fixes to what seem like complicated problems, based on a good understanding of how people's behavior really works as opposed to how we think people's behavior works. We write about things like how to stop hurricanes and how to stop people from dying in car crashes. We write about the perils of walking while drunk.

## **Do you discuss the current economic situation?**

No, but we did address up front in the book why we're not writing about it. That's just not what we do...Just because you're an economist doesn't mean that you concern yourself with every piece of what we speak of as the economy. And if we've learned nothing else from the past 18 months or so, it's that economists, like other people, are terrible at predicting the future.

## **You first met up with Levitt while you were profiling him for an article you were writing for the *New York Times*—at that point, how comfortable were you with economic theory?**

I'd say more than the average person and maybe more than your average journalist. I was in the middle of working on a book about behavioral economics when I first met Steven. I'd spent the last year and a half studying, reading and interviewing a ton of different kinds of economists. On an amateur level I was very involved and enthusiastic, if not very learned...As someone who's written about a million different things over their career, I find it a fascinating discipline. I like the brains of people that do this work. Economists can be culturally limited, but they're brimming with rationality.

## **Did either of you have any idea that this was going to become the phenomenon that it has? Why do you think it's resonated so well with audiences?**

A lot of it is luck frankly. I think there are two things that made the book work well, and neither one of them had anything to do with us. One was the title—that came from Levitt's sister, Linda. The other was the cover design, which was really appealing. We were extremely fortunate...If you're a writer or a professor, there's obviously a part of you that wants to be able to communicate ideas to people. It's been a great privilege to have this success. Our biggest hope is that we took proper advantage of that luck and produced a second book that's really worthy of a big audience. We're going to get a big audience this time whether we deserve it or not, so we want to deserve it.



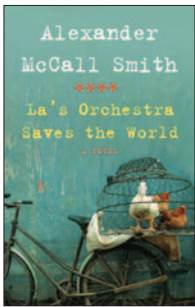


### Stardust

Joseph Kanon

Atria / September / 9781439156148 / \$27.99

In *Stardust*, Joseph Kanon (*Alibi*, 2005, etc.) juxtaposes the raw, unvarnished images of human indignities with the sheen of Hollywood stars in all their constructed glory. Captured on film, are their differences only a matter of production values? “In 1946, more Americans went to the movies than would ever go again,” says Kanon. “What intrigues me about this particular period is to see an industry at the top of its game about to fall apart.” The fictional lens of this realistic novel rests on Ben Collier, an aspiring filmmaker and the progeny of a famous German director from the silent era. Upon returning to America after facing combat and extensive documentary filming the frontlines of World War II, Collier learns that his brother, also a filmmaker, has died under mysterious circumstances. As he searches for the truth behind his brother’s death, Collier is thrust into the golden era of Hollywood—studio heads rule their back lots like pitiless dictators as unctuous agents kowtow to made-up stars on the set of the next box-office blockbuster. The communist witch hunts magnify treachery and deceit in an industry well known for its perfidies, with Collier caught in the middle. In the director’s chair, Kanon keeps the sprawling novel in focus with a gritty terseness that rattles off in rhythmic shots the chitchat and character of ’40s noir.



### La's Orchestra Saves the World

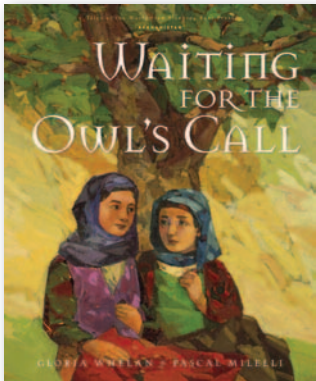
Alexander McCall Smith

Pantheon / December / 9780307378385 / \$23.95

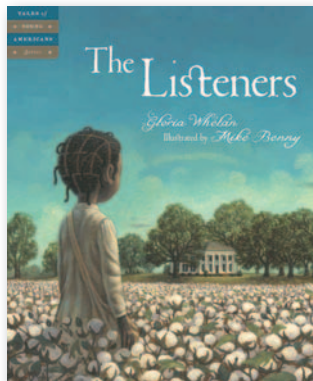
Set in the 1930s, Alexander McCall Smith’s latest features La, short for Lavendar, as she impulsively flees her failed marriage and moves to the sleepy village of Suffolk, England. In her newfound self-sufficient life, La gardens, meets the locals and survives the war with the rest of the world. Smith says he was drawn to the ’30s as a “time of crisis and concern. I see similarities between those times and the times in which we now live. Now, as then, we face great challenges and must try to keep our heads in the face of extremist pressures and a lapse into unreason...I wanted to say something about the courage of ordinary people in those days.” The author decided to write about a woman who “starts a little orchestra during the war,” collecting musicians from the village and local Royal Air Force base. With La’s story, Smith hopes to suggest the healing power of music. “I find that if I listen to music when I am feeling low about something, or anxious, it has a calming effect,” he says. “I think, too, that music has immense moral significance—it shows us the importance of harmony and resolution. Music, of course, is a universal language, and that reminds us of our common humanity.”

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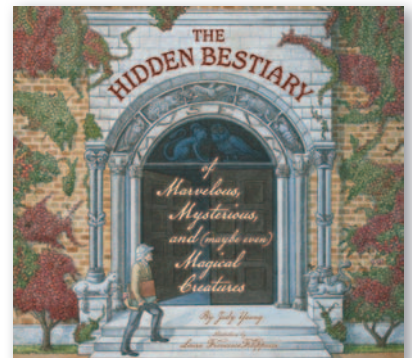
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# 2009 *Debut* Fiction

## Buffalo Lockjaw

Greg Ames

Hyperion / March / 9781401309800 / \$14.99 paperback

Hailed by *Kirkus* as “a beautifully observed debut,” Greg Ames’ *Buffalo Lockjaw* is a story about making hard choices within delicate family dynamics. James Fitzroy is not your typical coming-of-age protagonist—he’s lived a boozey, rebellious existence until his mother becomes sick with Alzheimer’s. “When James realizes that his mother has lost her personality to Alzheimer’s, this prods him to try to overcome his selfish tendencies,” says Leslie Wells, an executive editor at Hyperion. “I was immediately drawn to Greg Ames’ powerful writing, and in particular to the dark humor, which reminded me of *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* and also of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*.” This misguided character reveals himself through gripping tales that use a caustically humorous tone. Ames also delivers a thorough depiction of Buffalo, N.Y., his blustery, burnt-out, Rust Belt hometown, through a clever use of first-person interviews peppered throughout the novel. These interviews are the remnants of James’ abandoned ethnographic project. “[It] adds texture to the narrative and gives readers a vivid sense of the community,” says Wells. “They give depth to the book from someone outside James’ purview.”

## The Little Giant of Aberdeen County

Tiffany Baker

Grand Central Publishing / January / 9780446194204 / \$24.99

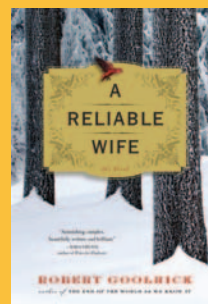
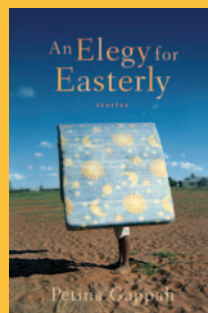
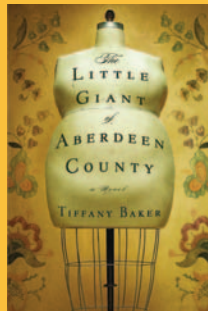
“I lost track of how many times *The Little Giant of Aberdeen County* was rejected,” says Tiffany Baker. “Let’s just say often.” But perseverance—and a dogged agent—paid off for Baker, and the story of Truly Plaice, a narrator of epic proportions in a town too tiny to appreciate her, at last saw the light of day. After her birth kills their mother, Truly, and her perfect older sister Serena Jane, are bounced around town and eventually separated from one another, with Truly sent to live and work with the local outcasts, the Dyersons. While Serena Jane finds adulation everywhere she goes, the oversized Truly struggles to simply be accepted. But when Serena Jane leaves her brutal doctor husband and delicate young son, Truly must step in, and, by delving into Aberdeen’s mystical past, discovers powers she didn’t know she had. “I’m a West Coaster, but I attended a boarding school in New England and have always just loved the small towns in that part of the country. I’m especially a sucker for a proper cemetery,” says Baker. “Aberdeen is a mythical, small town, and I wanted a geography that could accommodate and reflect that.”

## A Disobedient Girl

Ru Freeman

Atria / July / 9781439101957 / \$25.00

“I spent a lot of time with the servants because I was starving for female company in my home full of boys,” says Sri Lankan-born author and women’s-rights activist Ru Freeman, whose elegant *A Disobedient Girl* tells the story of mutinous Latha, a servant girl purchased at the age of five by a wealthy family and raised to be a companion to their privileged daughter, Thara. Keenly aware of the differences that separate her from her friend and mistress, Latha suffers quietly at first while cherishing the modest dreams of a circumscribed life—bracelets, shoes, a bed of her own—



but when her employers refuse to pay her money she’s owed, Latha takes revenge by sleeping with, and becoming impregnated by, the boy Thara loves. Growing up, Freeman developed a similarly uneasy friendship with a young servant girl in her grandmother’s house, also named Latha. “We were a lot alike in appearance and ambition,” says Freeman. “I had a lot of difficulty, as a child, treating Latha as a servant, not a friend.” Though the two would share food, she says, it “came to me in a saucer, for her on a piece of paper, even though we ate together and felt the same tastes in our mouths...I thought a lot about Latha... I think I wanted to know what she actually thought about, or wanted for herself, and what she would do if she could do anything.”

## An Elegy for Easterly

Petina Gappah

Faber and Faber/Farrar, Straus and Giroux / June

9780865479067 / \$23.00

“Being outside Zimbabwe has helped me, I hope, to be more clear-sighted about my country,” says Petina Gappah, a Zimbabwe-born, Cambridge-educated, Geneva-dwelling, international-trade lawyer and short-story writer. “Traveling in other countries in Africa has helped me to dispel the assumption that Zimbabweans are somehow special. Our story is the story of Africa, our troubles are burdens that we share with other Africans.” In this collection of 13 short stories, which *Kirkus* called “a fine, soul-stirring debut,” Gappah presents devastating—and sometimes devastatingly funny—portraits of often-desperate lives in contemporary or near-contemporary Zimbabwe. Her characters struggle with infidelity, infertility and betrayal, but they also deal with uniquely Zimbabwean problems, like the ever-present specter of AIDS. “I think I love Zimbabwe more fiercely precisely because I left,” says Gappah, who plans to continue both practicing law and writing. “I love the intellectual challenges of my job, I love the feeling that I am making a real difference in the world, and besides, there are many, many fiction writers, thousands upon thousands, but the number of international-trade lawyers in the world is less than the number of people who have successfully climbed Mount Everest. As long as I can, I hope to do both.”

## A Reliable Wife

Robert Goolrick

Algonquin / March / 9781565125964 / \$23.95

“Country businessman seeks reliable wife,” writes Ralph Truitt in Robert Goolrick’s chilling debut. “Compelled by practical, not romantic reasons.” Set in rural Wisconsin in 1907, Goolrick’s novel, which *Kirkus* called “a sublime murder ballad that doesn’t turn out at all the way one might expect,” plays almost unbearably with tension and desires from the moment the scheming—and lovely—Catherine Land replies to Truitt’s ad. “I like the past better than the present in many ways as a setting for fiction,” says Goolrick. “There are fewer gizmos there...I wanted the characters to be as isolated as possible—to be alone under the microscope. That meant secluding them in both place and time.” Goolrick, who also wrote the acclaimed memoir *The End of the World as We Know It* (2007), says writing fiction is quite a different experience. “In a novel, you’re creating something out of whole cloth—it’s like writing grand opera, however stark or lush the result may be,” he says. “Every note, every orchestration, every filigree has to come out of your head. Writing a memoir, for me, is like writing a long and honest letter to a friend...A memoir is more self-aggrandizing, obviously, since you presume somebody’s going to be interested in what you write.”



# 2009 *Debut* Fiction

*continued...*

## How I Became a Famous Novelist

Steve Hely

Black Cat/Grove / July / 9780802170606 / \$14.00 paperback

Steve Hely, who's worked on *The Late Show with David Letterman* and is now a writer for *30 Rock*, knows Hollywood, but for his first fiction book, he wanted to exploit the absurdity behind the book-publishing world. "I got the idea from being in bookstores, seeing all the books there," he says. "I thought it would be great if one book contained all these genres and ideas. Plus authors are very funny. They take themselves very seriously." So, Hely created aspiring author Pete Tarslaw, a struggling, everyday guy who's biggest motivation for penning a bestseller is getting back at his ex-girlfriend—who just got engaged. In his quest for justification, Pete narrows down what makes a successful novel—it must involve a club of some sort, a road trip, an old woman and a love story, among many other things—pops some experimental speed and power—writes *The Tornado Ashes Club*. But once Pete becomes a Famous Novelist, hilarity ensues. Scenes include Pete getting so hammered at his ex's wedding that he has a cocktail-shrimp throwing contest with a Down syndrome kid, sleeping with one of the world's bestselling crime authors at a book conference and his final showdown with his enemy, a literary writer he disdains. In a starred review, *Kirkus* called it "a satiric, facetious and laugh-out-loud funny first novel."

## The Calligrapher's Daughter

Eugenia Kim

Henry Holt / August / 9780805089127 / \$26.00

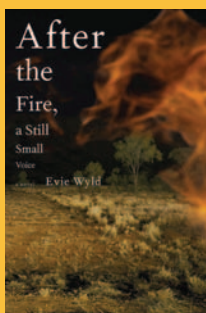
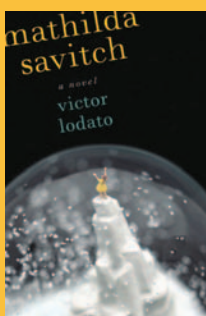
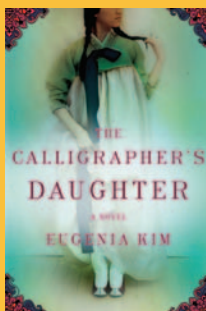
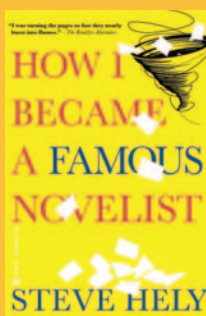
"Most of the events that occur in Najin's life and in the lives of the main characters were inspired by family stories," says Eugenia Kim. After dabbling in a few different careers, Kim was inspired enough by familial legends from her parents' homeland of Korea that she ultimately wove them into the story of Najin, the unusually self-directed daughter of an artisan, who rebels against family and tradition in early 20th-century Korea. "[The stories] were the skeleton that I laid against the shadow of history to flesh out a narrative," says Kim, whose parents were moored by the Korean War in the United States, where Kim and two of her older siblings were born. "I'm the last of six," she says. "My father was fluent in three languages and read four; my mother mostly spoke Korean while we answered in English. Our conversations seemed schizophrenic to listeners. Once I left home, I lost any little ability I had for the Korean language. The one sibling who is the most Korean, having lived in South Korea until age 11, has her own story to tell, which at this point is part of my next novel."

## Mathilda Savitch

Victor Lodato

Farrar, Straus and Giroux / September / 9780374204006 / \$24.00

"I want to be awful," confesses the 13-year-old centerpiece of *Mathilda Savitch*, a startling debut novel by playwright Victor Lodato that opens up a Pandora's Box of secrets about



the titular girl's family, not to mention the unusual workings of her adolescent mind. "It was a moving experience," says Lodato of crafting the funny, tender and worldly story about Mathilda's investigation of her older sister's mysterious death, her passage from childhood to adulthood and the ways she copes with her parents' grief. "I know it sounds crazy, but she speaks to me," he says. "At first I thought this was a really long monologue, but once I started to trust the authenticity of her voice, I thought well, maybe this is a novel after all." Equipped with an unreliable but utterly charming narrator, an unexpected narrative that opens new blooms with every page and Lodato's gift for finding Mathilda's voice, the novel sparked a fierce bidding war that heralds an even more interesting audience response. "I was often at the edge of my chair wondering what this girl was going to say next," says Lodato. "Nothing would please me more than finding out that other people want to befriend Mathilda as well."

## Tunneling to the Center of the Earth

Kevin Wilson

Perennial/HarperCollins / March / 9780061579028

\$13.99 paperback

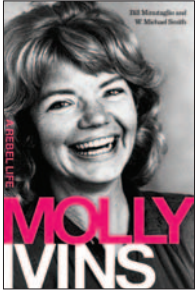
Rent-a-grandma, Scrabble tile sorter, museum-of-whatnot curator all describe some of the more unusual protagonists in this 31-year-old Tennessee native's (English/Univ. of the South) rich and darkly compelling short-fiction debut. But one of the most arresting figures in this Sherwood Anderson-like collection of oddities, which *Kirkus* starred, noting Wilson's "marvelous sense of narrative ingenuity," is a baby with a full set of teeth. Wilson says his gift for reeling us in comes from a lifetime of reading comic books and pulp novels that rely on the "quick hooks" of "outlandish events" to entertain. "The struggle for me is to make the story fantastical without the characters being ridiculous," says Wilson. "For example, a lot of people don't have—I hope!—experience with a baby with a full set of teeth, but a lot of people do have experience falling in love with someone for no real reason, without knowing anything about them, in a kind of quick infatuation. So that's what I hope connects them, what I hope keeps them tethered to the story is the character's real emotion." The 11 quirky tales assembled here don't just entertain—they enlighten.

## After the Fire, a Still Small Voice

Evie Wyld

Pantheon / August / 9780307378460 / \$24.00

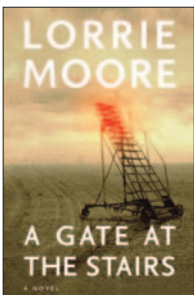
"I like to write about things that give me the creeps," says Evie Wyld, whose fiction debut is an unflinching, cinematic exploration of men coping with trauma in the wake of war. Selected as one of *Granta's* New Voices in 2008, this Australian-British writer now living in London drew on childhood memories of New South Wales and her uncle's experiences fighting for Australia in Vietnam to create the parallel narratives of Frank, retreating to a shack in the Australian wilds after the breakup of a relationship, and Leon, who abandons his family after returning from Vietnam. The author says she was interested in how individuals pick up the pieces after great tragedy. "I don't think there's much difference between men and women really," says Wyld. "It's more that we are expected to behave in very different ways. Men for a long time have been expected to keep quiet about certain things—fear, sadness, weakness—and the man who can talk about all this stuff is a fairly recent invention." Here, Wyld gives voice to the uncanny silence of broken lives.



### Molly Ivins: A Rebel Life

Bill Minutaglio and W. Michael Smith  
PublicAffairs / November / 9781586487171 / \$26.95

Whether they rallied behind her biting critiques of power or were appalled by her politics, readers were inevitably moved by the work of Texas debutante turned hard-hitting journalist Molly Ivins. Bill Minutaglio, a journalism professor at the University of Texas, and W. Michael Smith, a former Ivins colleague, explore her legacy of speaking truth to power—often as the only woman in the room—acerbic wit and social activism. From her experiences as a student in the 1960s, to her reporting days in the heart of Texas, drinking political thoroughbreds under the table, to her bouts with alcoholism and the breast cancer that would finally take her life, Minutaglio and Smith chronicle a full life with help from the subject herself. “Molly was an incredibly self-aware person,” says Minutaglio. “She was a pack rat and kept everything from the age of 12 on. We found dozens and dozens of bankers boxes in her archives at the university, mostly unopened. In large part she tells the story herself.” Tracing her metamorphosis as a journalist from the *New York Times*, to a nationally syndicated columnist in more than 400 newspapers, to a bestselling nonfiction writer, Minutaglio was struck by how important a role Ivins played in the evolution of news. “Molly is really sort of the spiritual leader of a lot of writers and journalists today—Maureen Dowd, Anna Quindlen, Arianna Huffington,” he says. “Many women became public voices because Molly Ivins was there before them.”



### A Gate at the Stairs

Lorrie Moore  
Knopf / September / 9780375409288 / \$25.00

Long awaited, the first novel in 15 years from an author acclaimed for her short stories concerns the education of a 20-year-old student from a rural Wisconsin community as she comes of age in the state’s more liberal university town. Most of this education takes place away from the classroom, where her courses range from wine tasting to Sufism, as the bass-playing, remarkably observant, yet still unworldly Tassie Keltjin falls into her first serious romance while serving as a nanny for an upscale couple who have adopted a biracial baby. As Tassie shifts back and forth from campus to the town where her father supports the family as a “hobbyist” farmer, her voice and vision sustain the narrative, which seems comic at the outset but turns darker as the plot becomes more complicated. “Certain moments, the whole earth seemed a grave,” she says. “Other times, more hopefully, a garden.” “I think the ending is supposed to indicate that it is a failed comic novel,” says Moore. “That is, it’s a novel that believes in the virtues of comic novels but is weighed down and turned inside out by its own internal circumstances.”

## More Big Books *this* Fall/Winter

Mitch Albom, *Have a Little Faith*, Hyperion (September)

Patricia Cornwell, *The Scarpetta Factor*, Putnam (October)

Michael Crichton, *Pirate Latitudes*, HarperCollins (November)

Hope Edelman, *The Possibility of Everything*, Ballantine (September)

Craig Ferguson, *American on Purpose: The Improbable Adventures of an Unlikely Patriot*, HarperCollins (September)

Stephen King, *Under the Dome*, Scribner (November)

Barbara Kingsolver, *The Lacuna*, HarperCollins (November)

Michael Lewis, *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine*, Norton (November)

Tracy Morgan with Anthony Bozza, *I Am the New Black*, Spiegel & Grau (October)

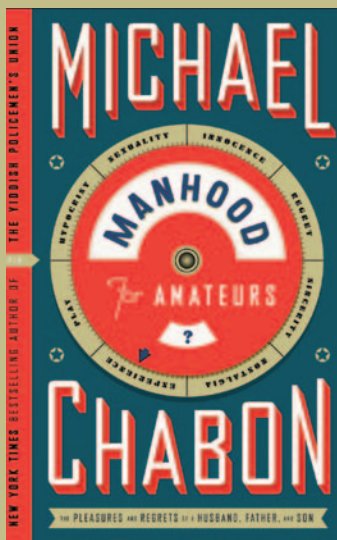
Daniel H. Pink, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Riverhead (January 2010)



# A dangerous book for **BIG** boys

Chabon journeys into nonfiction with a collection of essays on  
how to be a man

Michael Chabon is not a parenting expert. He's not the perfect husband. And he's rarely the best man in the room. But he does try—and he does have a lot of stories about his attempts and occasional failures to be each. In fact, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author has culled together a collection of columns and essays he's written over the last several years into *Manhood for Amateurs: The Pleasures and Regrets of a Husband, Father, and Son*, a compendium that acts as both a nostalgia-rich quasi-autobiography and Chabon's own take on how to be a man in the modern world. His first tip: Don't be afraid to throw out your kids' art. It gets even more interesting from there.



**Manhood for Amateurs:  
The Pleasures and Regrets  
of a Husband, Father, and Son**  
Michael Chabon  
Harper/HarperCollins / October  
9780061490187 / \$25.99

**A lot of these essays originally appeared in *Details* and other magazines. What made you decide to put all these works into a book?**

Two summer's ago it just occurred to me that I had a fair number of nonfiction pieces. I went through my files and found all of it, put it in one big pile, and then gave it all to my wife [author Ayelet Waldman]. She pointed out that I had all of this stuff on men—sons, husbands, fathers.

**Once you put all those essays together, you ended up with a book that is as much about you—as a father, a son, a husband—as it is anything else. It's almost an autobiography.**

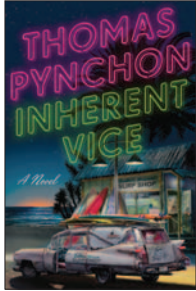
Yeah, I never would have actually sat down and written an autobiography or a memoir. I don't have the desire or the presumption to do one. The only time I think I'd be willing to do something like that is after I die, but then I don't think it would work so well. If I were going to do anything I'd wrap chapters around certain categories—a chapter on cigars, a chapter on women, etc. That way I could do something like manhood actually is—kaleidoscopic and nonlinear. So really, I think if I sat down to do a memoir it would end up with something like what I came up with accidentally, which is this book.

**Do you worry that you've revealed too much about yourself?**

I just try to get it right—just lay it all out there and say what really happened and not spare people or myself. I don't have a good rule on doing that. I just go by feel. But as soon as you start arranging what happened you're fictionalizing. But I don't have notes about these things. I don't journal. So I have to rely on my memory and that means inevitably fictionalizing, knowing that I'm going to get it wrong on some level. I just try to be as truthful on some level and know that there is some protection in forgetting.

**What did you learn about your own manhood when you were putting this together?**

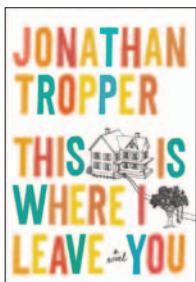
Actually, how profoundly growing up in the 1970s shaped me. The idea of a man was more in flux during that decade than it has ever been. There was a huge loosening up from the '60s into the '70s. The gay-rights movement was coming into its own. Gender and sexuality were very fluid at that time. And that was when I was looking around for ideas of how to be a man. And you'd see these glam rockers with long hair and makeup and platform boots, but they were still very manly...There just seemed to be a lot more freedom—stylistic freedom of being—and that helped shape what I've now become.



### Inherent Vice

Thomas Pynchon  
Penguin Press / August / 9781594202247 / \$27.95

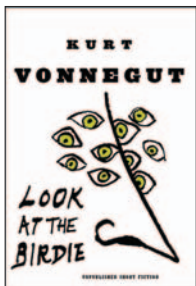
*Kirkus* called this “the closest the novelist is likely to come to a beach book.” Shorter and breezier than most of the novels that have earned Thomas Pynchon his renown, it initially reads more like genre fiction, a classic detective novel, beginning with the cliché of a beautiful woman walking into a detective’s office, asking for help. Yet Larry “Doc” Sportello is more “gumsandle” than “gumshoe,” a stoned hippie whose late 1960s Los Angeles is trippier than Philip Marlowe’s. It is also a city on the verge of profound transition, from Summer of Love to Charlie Manson, with early hints of the World Wide Web threatening to enmesh society in a manner previously beyond imagination. As is typical with Pynchon, there’s the possibility of a vast conspiracy, the powers that be behind the ostensible powers that be. Here it takes the form of the shape-shifting Golden Fang, which might be anything from a schooner to a heroin cartel to a tax scheme involving a group of dentists. There is plenty of sex and drugs and rock ’n’ roll, including an album’s worth of lyrics written by Pynchon. Whatever its reception among critics and cultists, this minor work by a major author may increase his readership among those who have resisted him in the past as too difficult.



### This Is Where I Leave You

Jonathan Tropper  
Dutton / August / 9780525951278 / \$25.95

“I’m very character-driven,” says Jonathan Tropper. “My books always tend to radiate out from an initial character, as opposed to a particular premise.” At the center of Tropper’s novel is 34-year-old Judd Foxman, who discovers that his wife is having an affair with his boss. “So he effectively loses his marriage and his job, two cornerstones of his identity, in one fell swoop,” says Tropper. “I liked the idea of this man, stripped of everything that he thought made him a man, trying to come to terms with his new reality.” Judd’s new life also includes his father’s death and an eventful, revelatory week spent with his family, all of which showcases Tropper’s signature blend of humor and sorrow. *Kirkus* called these scenes “poignant depictions of damaged men befuddled by the women they love.” Tropper says that he wanted to “go darker with this one, to write a more brutally honest, less sympathetic character... a portrayal of what a man thinks and feels, warts and all.” The author adds that he is fascinated by how “your life can change in an instant... I think that’s when character becomes essential. The status quo leads to a certain inertia, but once that’s gone, we are forced to be the people we really are, to rediscover or reinvent ourselves. There’s something both terrifying and heartening about that.”



### Look at the Birdie: Unpublished Short Fiction

Kurt Vonnegut  
Delacorte / October / 9780385343718 / \$27.00

“Mind going back to the Great Depression for a few minutes—clear back to 1932?” writes Kurt Vonnegut in “King and Queen of the Universe.” “It was an awful time, I know, but there are a lot of good stories in the Great Depression.” With the stage set, this intro takes us into the late Vonnegut’s 14 previously unpublished short stories. “He had an enormous gift of accessibility,” says Sidney Offit, the author’s longtime best friend and author of the introduction to this collection. “Everybody could understand him. He’s one of the few writers I know that was read by my generation, by my children and then by my grandchildren. His style is accessible. You can understand what he’s saying.” From tiny aliens who come to Earth and drop into a linoleum salesman’s life, to the tale of Peter and Joseph Broznik, Russia’s leading “myrmecologists,” this is the master storyteller in the depth of his provocative imagination, commenting on the human condition through his trademark dark satire and ironical wit. “He had very strong feelings about life,” says Offit. “Kurt always had to make a commentary on things he experienced and gave them an ironic context. It had to do with fulfilling a spiritual need to express himself. The story wasn’t just the story. The story was a way of expressing his feelings.”

## Coming Up...

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# THE MOST ANTICIPATED BOOKS FOR FALL 2009

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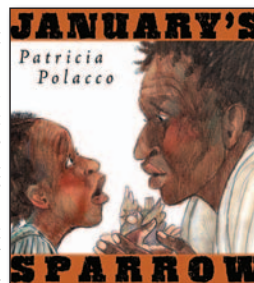
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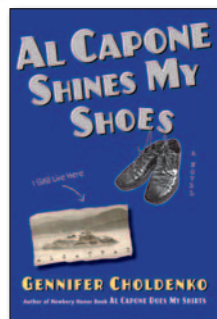
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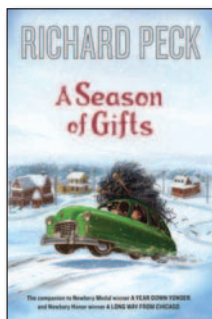
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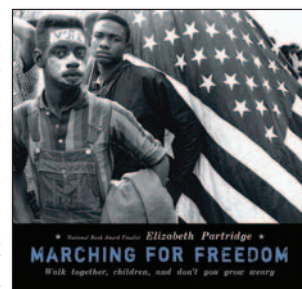
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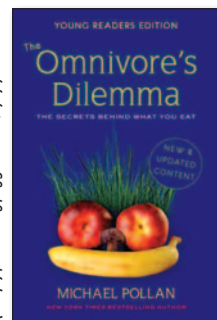
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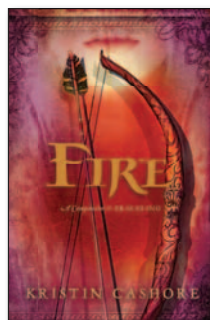
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Available in October!  
She was the last of her kind...





**The Day-Glo Brothers**

Chris Barton  
 Illustrated by Tony Persiani  
 Charlesbridge / July / 9781570916731 / \$18.95

It's right there in the name—Day-Glo—but it's almost too obvious to notice. Namely, fluorescent colors don't typically glow in daylight—they glow in the dark, under an ultraviolet lamp. But Bob and Joe Switzer's revolutionary paint managed to pump up the volume by releasing some of the absorbed daylight, thus adding to the reflected light. Behind the strange invention is a modestly loopy story that Chris Barton tells with humor and a little awe. "One of Bob Switzer's sons sent me the original notes and correspondence that Bob and Joe kept while they were doing their initial experiments," he says. "These documents should have been in the Smithsonian. Instead, they were with me at Kinko's! I felt much more like a historian than I ever had while sitting in college classrooms and getting my history degree." From posters to World War II applications to Tony Persiani's glowing retro-1960s artwork, Day-Glo has left its mark, radiantly. (Ages 7-10)



**NERDS: National Espionage, Rescue, and Defense Society**

Michael Buckley  
 Illustrated by Ethen Beavers  
 Amulet/Abrams / September / 9780810943247 / \$14.95

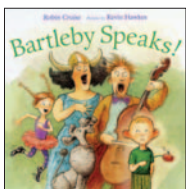
If you think James Bond is the greatest secret agent, think again. He is so obviously a spy, how could it be a secret? Now nerds—no one pays any attention to them, plus they're good at technology—are real spy material. "NERDS was inspired by my recent 20th high-school reunion, where I discovered all the popular kids still clinging to their past glories, and all the nerds living lives no one would have predicted," says Michael Buckley. "As a nerd myself, I basked in their successes and the joy that filled their lives. I wish someone had told me when I was an awkward kid with braces and pop-bottle glasses that my day in the sun was right around the corner." NERDS is as fine a collection of dorks, waste-cases and goobers as ever assembled, and Buckley serves them forth with glee. (Ages 10-14)



**Catching Fire**

Suzanne Collins  
 Scholastic / September / 9780439023498 / \$17.99

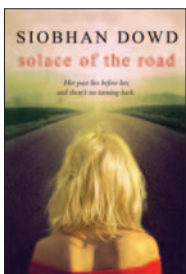
In 2008's *The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins created a dystopia in which a wealthy Capitol sets the rules for an annual spectacle, pitting a boy and girl from each of 12 Districts against one another—only one can survive. Considered one of the best books of 2008, *Kirkus* called it, "as good as *The Giver* and more exciting." For the first time in the history of the Games, both Katniss and Peeta from District 12 survived. In this new episode, on the eve of their Victory Tour, President Snow himself pays Katniss an ominous call to warn her that her Game tactics did not sit well with him and that if she does not comply with his wishes, both she and her loved ones are at risk. "We take it on faith in publishing that the right book can ignite thoughtful devotion and devoted thought," says David Levithan, vice president and editorial director of Scholastic Trade Publishing. "Well, here's proof positive." (Ages 12 & up)



**Bartleby Speaks!**

Robin Cruise  
 Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes  
 Melanie Kroupa/Farrar, Straus and Giroux / August / 9780374305147 / \$16.99

"Bartleby gurgled and cooed and clucked. He burped and sputtered and made rude poopy noises." What young Bartleby does not do is speak—not that the jug-eared, balloon-headed charmer needs words, as illustrator Kevin Hawkes well knows. "Like Bartleby," he says, "the highlight of my youthful days was watching a butterfly, smelling lilacs, seeing a cloud move." But Bartleby's speechless condition causes a family-wide fret. They sing and dance to a froth in hopes of coaxing out a word. Grampy, however, knows better: Bartleby will speak when ready. "*Bartleby Speaks!* is a small bouquet to my second born, the middle child who is forever sandwiched between his older brother and younger sister," says Robin Cruise. "Like Bartleby, my Henry didn't speak much until he had something important to say! The book is a celebration of the calm, quiet people and the gentle spaces in busy, loud lives." (Ages 4-8)



**Solace of the Road**

Siobhan Dowd  
 David Fickling/Random House / October / 9780375849718; 9780375949715 (Lib. Ed.) / \$17.99; \$20.99

Holly Hogan, 14, is a "care-babe," a ward of the British foster-care system. She likes her life at Templeton House, especially Grace and Trim and her key worker, Miko. But now Miko's up for another job, so when he urges Holly to try living with Ray and Fiona Aldridge, she agrees. What Holly really wants is to return to Ireland and find her mother, who'd "had to leave England in a hurry and meant to send for [her]." So, donning Fiona's ash-blond wig and calling herself Solace, the heroine sets out on her journey. "Siobhan was always looking to improve her own work. When I could find nothing more to improve she would upbraid me," says David Fickling, the late Dowd's editor. "Just because this is a book open to the younger mind and easily read by all, do not think it was not written to the highest literary standards." (Ages 14 & up)





## When Stella Was Very, Very Small

Marie-Louise Gay  
Anansi/Groundwood / August / 9780888999061 / \$16.95

According to Marie-Louise Gay, ever since she first began sharing her Stella and Sam books with children, readers have often asked her questions such as: How big is Stella's imagination? What did Stella look like when she was small? And was Stella lonely before Sam was born? Gay wrote this book to find the answers: "When Stella was very, very small, she thought she was a turtle," then a goldfish, "But being a dog was even better." To the very, very small Stella, "words looked like ants running off the pages" and "butterflies flew on the walls" (telltale crayons litter the floor). Before long, Stella is reading stories to Sam and teaching him the valuable things she's learned, like how to be a snake. Gay says, "I discovered a tiny Stella who already had a sense of wonder, of great curiosity and the certainty that there are adventures waiting around every corner." (Ages 4-8)



## Purple Heart

Patricia McCormick  
Balzer + Bray/HarperTeen / September / 9780061730900; 9780061730917 (Lib. Ed.) / \$16.99; \$17.89

Traumatic brain injury, or TBI, is what happens to gray matter when your head gets treated as if it were a maraca. Matt Duffy, currently serving in Baghdad, sustained TBI when he got too intimate with a rocket-propelled grenade. Not all was right with that firefight, but Duffy's memory won't allow it to come into focus. His painful road to recovering that day is given a steady, aching examination by Patricia McCormick. "A few years ago, I saw an exhibit that used rows of soldier's boots to show the human cost of war," she says. "Nearby was a pile of everyday shoes, signifying civilian casualties. A pair of little red sneakers caught my eye. I instantly saw an image of a little boy being shot, an image that haunted me until I wrote this book"—which addresses not only the horror of war, but its strangeness, how it twists the mind, delivering a TBI even without the concussive blow. (Ages 14 & up)

**Tips from a pro: 'No one but a reader ever became a writer'**

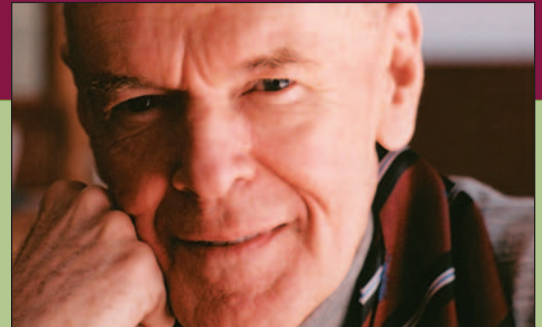
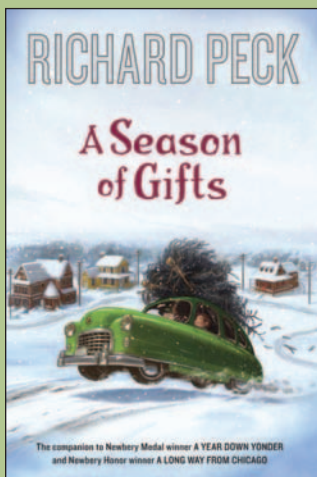


Photo by: Sonya Sones

# Q&A with Richard Peck

This fall, Richard Peck will publish his third book about the redoubtable Grandma Dowdel. "Grandma Dowdel will tell your secrets but not hers," says Peck. "She and I are very much alike." Here, 38 years after publishing his first novel, *Don't Look and It Won't Hurt* (Holt, 1972), Peck shares his secrets with new writers.



## A Season of Gifts

Richard Peck  
Dial / September  
9780803730823 / \$16.99

### Take us back to that first manuscript. You were a teacher first, weren't you?

I always dreamed of being a writer, but a boy in the Middle West couldn't be a writer. Boys weren't asked how they intended to express themselves, they were asked how they intended to make a living. We were told in my youth that America is getting bigger and will always need teachers. On the day I was reassigned to junior high—no one chooses to teach junior high—I found my readers right there in the roll book.

### How did you meet George Nicholson, your first editor?

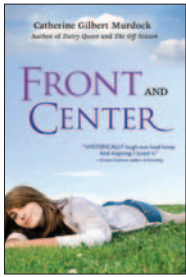
I wanted to teach nonfiction that was not out of date. We put together an anthology and took it to George, who was then at Dell paperbacks. Years later, I'd read 30 YA novels, hoping to see if I could write one. At the end of the school year I read the 30th book, and I thought, "I can do this," and left teaching. That summer I went to a party Scholastic threw for teachers. There was George Nicholson. I said, "George I've written a novel for my former students, will you read it and see if you can make it better?" He said, "I'll be away for six weeks." I had not finished

the novel. But six weeks is great for a teacher: It's a grading period. I took it to him at the end of six weeks, and he took me to lunch. I had the manuscript in a shoebox. He read the first few pages and said, "I'll let you know." It was the darkest moment of my life. I had no job and no manuscript. The next morning, he called me and said, "You may start your second novel."

### What advice would you offer new writers?

Do your homework. Know what publisher publishes what kind of book and what they're looking for. Remember the story is always something that never happened to the author. J.K. Rowling never attended Hogwarts School. Beatrix Potter was never a rabbit. Your readers are looking for a story, so keep *you* out.

No one but a reader ever became a writer. If you're taking a writing class that doesn't have a good, stiff reading list, drop out! This field is particularly besieged by people who've never written a children's book and think they can. I've been in this business for 38 years, and I'm still finding my role models in writers: Laurie Halse Anderson, M.T. Anderson, John Green.



**Front and Center**

Catherine Gilbert Murdock  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt / October / 9780618959822 / \$16.00

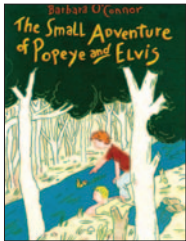
Catherine Gilbert Murdock says that she never intended to write a third book about D.J. Schwenk, but the readers made her do it. That, plus while she was researching *The Off Season* (2007), the author became intrigued with the process of college-sports recruitment. Here, readers find out how well, or not, D.J. fares in what Murdock calls the “pressure-cooker environment” of junior year as a gifted athlete. Brian Nelson may be out of the picture, but...is that just a friendly arm Beaner’s putting around D.J.’s shoulders? “Just to make the story that much more compelling, I tossed in two boys competing for D.J.’s affection—a petrifying situation for someone like her!” says Murdock. “If *Dairy Queen* was about learning to find your voice, and *The Off Season* about confronting adversity, then *Front and Center* is about the necessity—the imperative—of recognizing your own value.” (Ages 12 & up)



**A Savage Thunder: Antietam and the Bloody Road to Freedom**

Jim Murphy  
McElderry / July / 9780689876332 / \$17.99

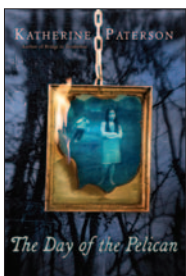
The Civil War was an undecided affair when the Union and Confederate armies met near Sharpsburg, Md., at Antietam Creek in September 1862. It would prove to be the bloodiest single day in American history, with 22,717 casualties. Jim Murphy, a two-time Newbery honoree, handles the story of that horrific day with dignity, combining a pungently atmospheric narrative, a wealth of archival images and telling snippets of contemporary writing. “As I researched *A Savage Thunder*, I became interested in including as much Civil War poetry as possible, finding pieces that echoed the main action line of each chapter,” he says. “The qualities of the poetry varied, from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s earnest ‘Boston Hymn’ to Walt Whitman’s dramatically realistic ‘The Artilleryman’s Vision.’ One of the most astonishing poems was written by a Quaker named Severn Teackle Wallis, who spent a year in jail for opposing the war”—22,717 others might have elected to join him. (Ages 10 & up)



**The Small Adventures of Popeye and Elvis**

Barbara O’Connor  
Frances Foster/Farrar, Straus and Giroux / September / 9780374370558 / \$16.99

In a tiny rural town like Popeye’s, it’s easy to spend all afternoon waiting for something to happen. But one day, when young Popeye and his dog Boo think the rain will never stop, it does. They go out for a walk, and what do they find? A Holiday Rambler. For Popeye, “Just looking at that big silver motor home was pure entertainment.” But that’s not all! Six children traveled with it, including the oldest, Elvis, and the excitement begins. “My inspiration for this story came from the idea of a bored boy in a boring little Southern town—the perfect setting for something unusual to turn into a small adventure,” says Barbara O’Connor. “I wanted it to be a light and breezy romp of a tale involving a gang of rowdy kids, a stuck-in-the-mud motor home, a girl with butterfly wings and little boats in a creek.” (Ages 8-12)



**The Day of the Pelican**

Katherine Paterson  
Clarion / October / 9780547181882 / \$16.00

As 11-year-old Meli Lleshi takes laundry down from the clothesline, her younger brothers—ages six and eight—play war, fighting over who gets to be the KLA, or Kosovo Liberation Army, man while the other’s stuck playing a Serb. But all too soon their game takes on a sinister tone when their 13-year-old brother Mehmet mysteriously disappears after school. As the tensions heighten in Kosovo between the Christian Serbs and the Albanian Muslims, Meli and her family must choose between their home and livelihood and their lives. But is any place safe? “I chose to tell a story about a family fleeing from the horrors of war to settle in Vermont,” says Katherine Paterson, “because, as a child, I, too, was a refugee from war who had to learn how to live in a country that was strange to me.” (Ages 10 & up)

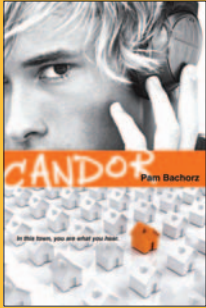


**Last Night I Sang to the Monster**

Benjamin Alire Sáenz  
Cinco Puntos Press / September / 9781933693583 / \$19.95

At 18, Zach has already hit bottom. Through Zach’s sessions with his therapist, readers learn about his addiction to alcohol, which he inherited from his father, his mother’s severe depression and his older brother’s violent abuse of Zach’s entire family. But Zach also reveals his intelligence and drive, his sweet, forgiving nature and his abiding love and compassion for his family. “It is a difficult and painful journey for boys who have been damaged by the world,” says Benjamin Alire Sáenz. “Some boys have wounds so deep that something radical has to happen in order to stop the bleeding. Some boys get lucky. Too few, but some. They find men who see them and know them. Healing happens only when other human beings take the time to intervene, human beings who can say simply and firmly and gently: ‘I see you.’ Invisible boys become visible when they finally hear those words.” (Ages 16 & up)

# 2009 *Debut* Fiction KIDS&YA



## Candor

Pam Bachorz

Egmont USA / September / 9781606840122; 9781606840443 (Lib. Ed.) / \$16.99; \$19.99

Oscar Banks didn't run for class president, but he won as a write-in. He is the model teen in a model town. That's what everyone thinks anyway. Except for 17-year-old Nia Silva, who's just moved to Candor from Boston. Oscar's father created Candor from Florida swamplands, and subliminal Messages tucked into music keep everyone in line. But Oscar makes his own tapes to counteract the brainwashing, and Nia sees Oscar for who he is. Should he help Nia escape or keep her in Candor for his own sanity? "*Candor* was inspired by the six years I spent living in Celebration, Fla., Disney's planned community," says Pam Bachorz. "I was out walking the dog late one night, and a white pickup drove by spraying mosquito repellent. I was coated in the stuff. What if, I wondered, it had Prozac in it? What if everybody was so friendly and happy in Celebration because we were drugged?" (Ages 12 & up)

## The Demon's Lexicon

Sarah Rees Brennan

McElderry / June / 9781416963790 / \$17.99

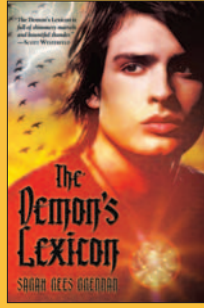
It's us against them for 16-year-old Nick Ryves and his older brother Alan. With their father murdered and their mother driven mad, the teens live constantly on the run, engaged in a relentless battle against magicians who routinely kill innocent humans to serve as hosts for demons. But now an even greater challenge looms: Two teens who arrive seeking help witness the brothers murdering a magician in their kitchen. And one of the visitors bears a demon's mark—are they too late? "I first read this over the weekend at a big all-day birthday party. I wanted to party, but I couldn't stop reading," says Karen Wojtyla, editorial director of McElderry Books. "I knew right away I was onto something different, and the twist at the end blew me away!" It blew us away, too. In a starred review, *Kirkus* called it a "fresh voice dancing between wicked humor and crepuscular sumptuousness." (Ages 14 & up)

## The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate

Jacqueline Kelly

Henry Holt / May / 9780805088410 / \$16.99

In what *Kirkus* called "a witty, deftly crafted debut novel" set during the sweltering summer of 1899 in Fentress, Texas, Jacqueline Kelly introduces 11-year-old Calpurnia Virginia, or "Callie Vee," Tate, the only girl of seven children. While other girls learn cooking and embroidery, Callie Vee ponders the



differences between two dramatically different grasshoppers. She wonders if they were even the same species, recalling a discussion between Grandfather and the minister about Darwin's writings. That question leads Callie Vee to an unlikely partnership with her reclusive grandfather and a calling as a budding naturalist. "This book was inspired by my huge, 140-year-old Victorian farmhouse in central Texas," says Kelly. "I wondered how people stood it in the summer heat a hundred years earlier, especially since they had to wear so many layers of clothing. Suddenly, Calpurnia and her whole family sprang to life and basically dictated the first page to me." (Ages 12 & up)

## Sophomore Switch

Abby McDonald

Candlewick / March / 9780763639365 / \$17.99

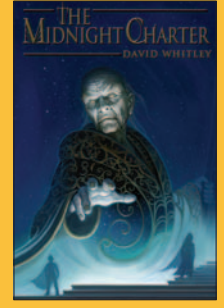
"How could I resist this book about an American teenager and a British teenager who swap lives for a few months?" says Liz Bicknell, editorial director and associate publisher at Candlewick. "As a Brit who lives in the States, so much of this book's humor—the American obsession with perfect teeth, the British one with the perfect cup of tea—rang true." Tasha, fresh from "Tubgate" (in which images of her topless in a hot tub with a celebrity are leaked to the Internet), trades her desk at UC–Santa Barbara for Emily's at Oxford University. Emily, who'd hoped for a spot at Harvard, takes the UCSB option because of a romance gone wrong. Both young ladies definitely get an education. "I wanted to write a book that was equal parts feminism and fun," says Abby McDonald, herself a recent Oxford grad. "Shiny pop culture can be an amazing vehicle for challenging ideas." (Ages 14 & up)

## The Midnight Charter

David Whitley

Roaring Brook / September / 9781596433816 / \$16.99

In the city-state of Agora, Lily was raised in an orphanage; Mark's entire family died of the plague, except for his father, who sold Mark in order to survive. Lily wants to be out in the world; Mark has seen enough of it. So they switch places. Lily becomes servant to the doctor who saved Mark's life, and Mark assists Count Stelli in an ancient tower with his studies of the stars. In Agora, on your 12th birthday—your title day—you finally own yourself. But that, too, comes with a price. "Agora was inspired by my love of the 18th century. A glorious period, a flowering of thought," says David Whitley. "What if Enlightenment philosophers had conceived a city without money, ruled by the marketplace, where everything and everyone was for sale? How would it work, what would life be like, and where would the power lie?" (Ages 11-14)



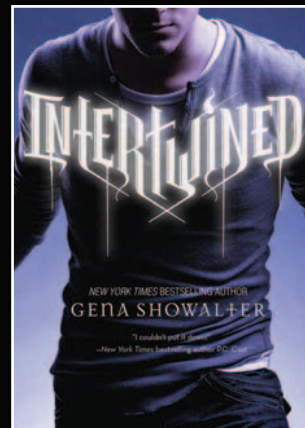


*Teens love  
to escape.*

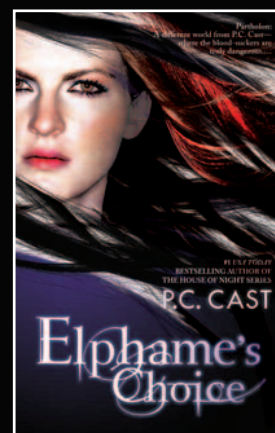
*They're gonna  
love these.*



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