

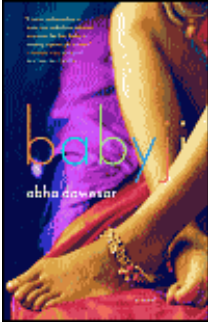
New Fiction May 2007



American Born Chinese

By Gene Luen Yang, Color by Lark Pien

Graphic novels that focus on nonwhite characters are exceedingly rare in American comics. Enter *American Born Chinese*, a well-crafted work that aptly explores issues of self-image, cultural identity, transformation, and self-acceptance. In a series of three linked tales, the central characters are introduced: Jin Wang, a teen who meets with ridicule and social isolation when his family moves from San Francisco's Chinatown to an exclusively white suburb; Danny, a popular blond, blue-eyed high school jock whose social status is jeopardized when his goofy, embarrassing Chinese cousin, Chin-Kee, enrolls at his high school; and the Monkey King who, unsatisfied with his current sovereign, desperately longs to be elevated to the status of a god. Their stories converge into a satisfying coming-of-age novel that aptly blends traditional Chinese fables and legends with bathroom humor, action figures, and playground politics. Yang's crisp line drawings, linear panel arrangement, and muted colors provide a strong visual complement to the textual narrative. Like Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Laurence Yep's *Dragonwings*, this novel explores the impact of the American dream on those outside the dominant culture in a finely wrought story that is an effective combination of humor and drama (*School Library Journal*).

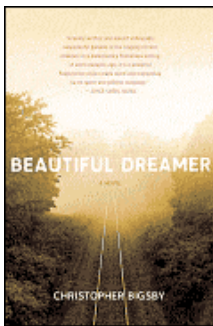


Babyji

By Abha Dawesar

Sexy, surprising, and subversively wise, *Babyji* is the story of Anamika Sharma, a spirited student growing up in Delhi. At school she is an ace at quantum physics. At home she sneaks off to her parents' scooter garage to read the *Kamasutra*. Before long she has seduced an elegant older divorcée and the family servant, and has caught the eye of a classmate coveted by all the boys.

With the world of adulthood dancing before her, Anamika confronts questions that would test someone twice her age. Ebullient, unfettered, and introducing one of the most charming heroines in contemporary fiction, *Babyji* is irresistible (*From the Publisher, Barnesandnoble.com*).

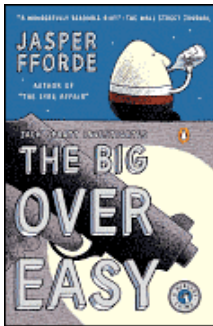


Beautiful Dreamer

By Christopher Bigsby

British author Bigsby brilliantly channels Faulkner in this taut, poetic narrative that has all the hypnotic power of an incantation as it evokes race relations in rural Tennessee in the early part of the twentieth century. A nameless white man lies delirious with pain, having been beaten senseless and branded with a hot poker. His mistake was coming to the aid of a black man who had the temerity to walk through the front door of the local store. The black man's son is so traumatized from watching his father lynched that he can no longer speak. He tends to the white man, although he knows no good can come of it. When the

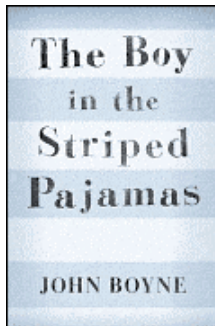
Steadman brothers, the inbred "family of morons" who started the whole horrific chain of events, show up to finish the job, the white man and the black boy make a run for it. From the searing opening scene to its inevitable conclusion, this intense novel never loosens its grip. As the point of view shifts between characters, among them a disgusted lawman and an ignorant killer, Bigsby conveys a world of pain and hurt in which choosing to do the right thing, however reluctantly, carries an enormous cost (*Booklist*).



The Big Over Easy

By Jasper Fforde

Crime lies at the heart of the most innocent-seeming nursery stories: con games (*The Emperor's New Clothes*), counterfeiting (*rumpelstiltskin*), domestic violence (*Punch and Judy*), destruction of property and vigilantism (*The Three Little Pigs*). Fforde, who in his terrific Tuesday Next books (*Something Rotten*, 2004) enjoys deconstructing literature (Next is a cop charged with keeping the classics from falling into chaos), here launches a new detective series, set in Reading, England's no-respect Nursery Crime Division (their clues tend to come in threes). Detective Inspector Jack Spratt and Detective Sergeant Mary Mary are summoned to a trash-strewn and albumen-spattered yard where, at the foot of a wall, lie the mortal remains of one Mr. Dumpty. The British have a rich tradition of nonsense and whimsy, and Fforde is a worthy standard-bearer. But, as with puns, people are fans of silliness or they aren't, and as this book makes evident, literary in-jokes are more fun when the source material is more sophisticated. But Fforde is gaining fans, and even readers who start out groaning may find themselves grinning (*Booklist*).



The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

By John Boyne

Boyne has written a sort of historical allegory—a spare, but vividly descriptive tale that clearly elucidates the atmosphere in Nazi Germany during the early 1940s that enabled the persecution of Eastern European Jews. Through the eyes of Bruno, a naive nine-year-old raised in a privileged household by strict parents whose expectations included good manners and unquestioning respect for parental authority, the author describes a visit from the Fury and the family’s sudden move from Berlin to a place called Out-With in Poland. There, not 50 feet away, a high wire fence surrounds a huge dirt area of low huts and large square buildings. From his bedroom window, Bruno can see hundreds (maybe thousands) of people wearing striped pajamas and caps, and something made him feel very cold and unsafe. Uncertain of what his father actually does for a living, the boy is eager to discover the secret of the people on the other side. He follows the fence into the distance, where he meets Shmuel, a skinny, sad-looking Jewish resident who, amazingly, has his same birth date. Bruno shares his thoughts and feelings with Shmuel, some of his food, and his final day at Out-With, knowing instinctively that his father must never learn about this friendship. While only hinting at violence, blind hatred, and deplorable conditions, Boyne has included pointed examples of bullying and fearfulness. His combination of strong characterization and simple, honest narrative make this powerful and memorable tale a unique addition to Holocaust literature for those who already have some knowledge of Hitler’s Final Solution (*School Library Journal*).



Castle Waiting

By Linda Medley, with an introduction by Jane Yolen

With its quiet blend of fantasy, folktales, and character-driven storytelling, this charming collection brings the first 12 issues of an Eisner Award-winning comic-book series to a wider audience. It opens with "The Brambly Hedge," which gives the origin of the castle itself. In a comic retelling of Sleeping Beauty, a medieval castle and its loving inhabitants are abandoned when the princess wakes up, finds her Prince Charming, and rides off into the sunset with him. The castle transforms into an outpost of sorts for the unusual, the unwanted, and those just needing a place to hide from the world. Talking chivalrous horses, pregnant mothers on the run, and nuns who were once bearded ladies in the circus are just a few of the colorful inhabitants whose stories fill the remainder of the volume. Medley's storytelling becomes more assured and complex as the series progresses, and she uses flashbacks and stories-within-stories in a manner that creates a rhythm that is both fun and gripping. Hard-edged lines with simple forms create black-and-white artwork that melds nicely with the fairy-tale feel of the stories. This volume is accessible for younger readers but filled with enough layers and depth to satisfy those looking for a bit more sophistication (*School Library Journal*).



Fly on the Wall: How One Girl Saw Everything

By E. Lockhart

Gretchen Yee, 16, feels painfully ordinary in a school where everyone is an overachiever. Teachers at The Manhattan School for Art and Music don't

appreciate her artistic skill, and she feels like she doesn't fit in with the students. She longs to understand what others think of her, and her wish to be a fly on the wall of the boys' locker room comes true. She spends a week there observing her classmates, learning and seeing more than she ever expected. In addition to humorously discovering the mysteries of male anatomy, the teen sees the casual cruelty of her ex-boyfriend, and that her best friend sacrifices her own happiness to keep from upsetting her. She also discovers that there are boys who like her and some who are hiding painful secrets. With this knowledge, Gretchen gains confidence, which ultimately allows her to be a better person. When the insect character emerges, Lockhart's writing style moves from prose to near poetry as she weaves in and out of Gretchen's mind. This technique allows readers to know what the protagonist is thinking, keeps the pace of the quickly moving story, and suspends disbelief with the very absurd concept. Although containing some strong language and mature situations, this novel is a good choice for teens who are unsure of their place in the world, including reluctant readers (*School Library Journal*).



Getting It

By Alex Sanchez

Carlos Amoroso, 15, loves video games, junk food, and hanging out with his buddies. The only thing he can't do is get a date with sexy, popular Roxy Rodriguez. After watching *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, he approaches a gay classmate, Sal, for a makeover. Sal agrees but insists that Carlos help him start a Gay-Straight Alliance at their predominantly Hispanic Texas high school. Carlos is conflicted—what if his friends think he's gay, too? In the process, the teen learns how to clean, dress, clear zits, and talk to girls. He also learns how to be honest with himself, and how to tell people, including his macho father and homophobic buddies, how he really feels. Although Sanchez's prose is creaky and expository at first—it seems slightly dumbed down compared to his Rainbow books (S & S)—the truth of the story and familiar, realistic characters quickly engage

readers. The dialogue is pointed and natural, and the characterizations and plot emerge deftly from conversation, especially teenage trash talking. Sanchez's usual good-natured humor flavors Sal and Carlos's tumultuous friendship. The easy pace and farcical Cyrano de Bergerac meets Queer Eye construct of the novel is deceptive: the mood is wholly emotional as hate is exposed everywhere and even the minor characters discover new truths. This sweet, simple examination of homophobia and friendship is a welcome addition to the genre, especially for reluctant readers (*School Library Journal*).



In the Name of God

By Paula Jolin

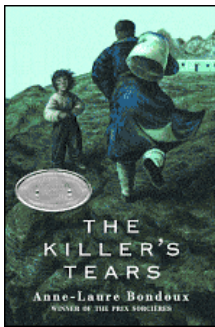
In this believable depiction of the growth of religious zealotry, 17-year-old Nadia describes the period after her cousin's arrest by the Syrian secret police. Already committed to Islam, she moves toward fanaticism, actually seeking out an attractive man whom she hopes will help her to learn more about the revolutionary cause. Moderates in her family attempt to counter her extremism; this is not the kind of flirtation her mother expected of a teenage daughter, and the mother's quiet example of a different Muslim way is the most appealing part of this unsettling picture. Nadia's internal and external arguments provide a stark vision of how others see the U.S. Jolin effectively works in every negative impression, real or perceived, about America and its foreign policy. Beyond the usual stereotypes of American commercialism, there are comments on 9/11 and the war in Iraq, quotations from George Bush, and allegations of worldwide Jewish conspiracies. American readers may find that Nadia's change from an ambitious student to a suicide bomber comes a bit too quickly. But the author's Islamic studies and long residence in the Middle East help make this a convincing picture of life in present-day Damascus, and the suspense will keep readers engaged (*School Library Journal*).



Keturah and Lord Death

By Martine Leavitt

At 16, Keturah is a poor peasant girl who constantly ponders her future. She has always been different from the other girls of the village and has unique but unrealized gifts. She has been raised by warm and loving grandparents, experiencing firsthand what a truly happy marriage is all about. The teen is committed to finding a suitable husband so she, too, can be happy but has not yet been successful. All this changes for her the day she follows the legendary hart deep into the forest and becomes lost. After three days of wandering aimlessly, she knows that she is about to die. Keturah is surprised to discover that Death is a strong, handsome lord to whom she immediately feels connected. Despite the fact that she is afraid, she challenges Lord Death, which is something he is not used to. She uses her storytelling skills to make him grant her a reprieve for one day. She spins a story of a love so pure that even Death cannot destroy it. He allows her to live another day on the condition that she come to him with an ending to the story and her true love. Keturah continues to delay the inevitable but in doing so learns much about herself and what she is truly capable of achieving. Along the way she also discovers that her true love was there beside her all along. This is a dark, but uplifting story combining elements of fantasy as well as romance. It has a gripping plot, strong characters, and a surprise ending that will intrigue readers (*School Library Journal*).

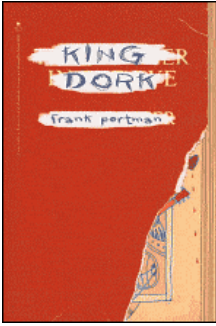


Killer's Tears

By Anne-Laure Bondoux

Translated from the French by Y. Maudet

Bondoux's latest novel is a haunting, provocative blend of allegory, gritty social commentary, and magic realism that, like David Almond's work, defies definition. The shocking contradictions begin with the first scene: a thief and murderer named Angel kills a farmer and his wife and settles into their home on the desolate tip of Chile. He spares the family's small son, Paolo, and surprises himself with the intense devotion he develops for the boy. Then a young, wealthy traveler arrives, and at Paolo's insistence, the stranger settles into the improbable household at the end of the earth. Eventually, the trio is pulled back into the wider world, and its fragile connections are threatened and torn. The symbolism occasionally feels too purposeful, the characters more representational than real. But Bondoux asks the largest questions about crime, punishment, and how souls can change in language that is both visceral and poetic, and with unsparing, emotional truth, she describes a world in which the morality of the heart doesn't always match the morality of civilized society. "Poets know how to transform things," says one character. "They look at the world and they absorb it like a drink. And then when they start talking, nothing is the same." Winner of France's prestigious Prix Sorcierès, this novel is filled with challenging ideas and potent language that will pull readers in new directions (*Booklist*).



King Dork

By Frank Portman

From its subtle cover, featuring the title superimposed over the yellow lettering on a vintage red copy of *Catcher in the Rye*, to its intelligent, self-deprecating, opinionated narrator, Portman's novel is a humorous, scathing indictment of the current public education system. Sophomore Tom Henderson is bored with AP classes in which creating international foods and a "collage and Catcher" curriculum pass for academic instruction. What does he do to engage his mind? Along with his best friend, he invents a new band every few hours--a band name, cover art, song titles--no matter that neither boy owns a guitar. The guys aren't popular; they're picked on by the alpha sadists in gym class and nicknamed in humiliating ways, but they still survive. A mystery about the death of Tom's father and the caricatured assistant principal's illicit activities are weakly executed, but Tom's voice carries the story. Mature situations, casual sexual experiences, and allusions to Salinger suggest an older teen audience, who will also best appreciate the appended bandography and the very funny glossary (*Booklist*).



Last of Her Kind

By Sigrid Nunez

Nunez's layered, thoughtful novel opens in the heyday of the civil rights movement, when Georgette George arrives at Barnard and is greeted by her activist roommate, Ann Drayton. Ann, a child of privilege who has

rejected her upper-class roots, is persistent in her attempts to befriend Georgette, who comes from a working-class background. Georgette gradually finds herself drawn in by Ann. Although she never becomes the activist Ann is, the two remain friends even after they both drop out of college, until they have a violent fight and part ways for good--or so Georgette thinks. A few years later, Ann reappears as the central figure in a murder case that garners national attention. Ann stands accused of murdering the police officer who shot and killed her lover, an African American intellectual. Ann readily admits her guilt, and her seeming lack of repentance perplexes and enrages the country, but Georgette is unsurprised. Although she doesn't completely understand Ann, she has by now learned Ann's beliefs are unshakable and sincere. Nunez moves far past the obvious clichés about activism to show a character who, while not always completely sympathetic, is nonetheless multifaceted and three-dimensional. Told in Georgette's graceful, introspective voice, this engrossing, beautiful novel will enthrall readers (*Booklist*).



Little Pink Slips

By Sally Koslow

Magnolia Gold, formerly ambitious Maggie Goldfarb of Fargo, North Dakota, is now the suave sophisticated editor in chief of *Lady* magazine. So what if she has no love life? She loves her job and is looking forward to updating the magazine, if only CEO Jock Flanagan approves her new ideas. The bullheaded Jock hardly pays any attention to Magnolia's new plan because the publisher has the "fabulous" idea of turning her beloved magazine into the play toy of the overblown celebrity talk-show-host Bebe Blake. Bebe is a loudmouthed, opinionated woman (sound familiar?) with no magazine experience, and now Magnolia must kowtow to her so she can keep her job. On the heels of *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003), Koslow presents another dishy and delightful insider's view of the elite in magazine publishing, a subject she is more than qualified to spoof, having been editor in chief of *McCall's* (*Booklist*).



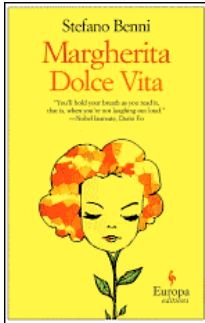
Loving in the War Years

By Cherríe L. Moraga

Weaving together poetry and prose, Spanish and English, family history and political theory, *Loving in the War Years* has been a classic in the feminist and Chicano canon since its 1983 release. This new edition—including a new introduction and three new essays—remains a testament of Moraga's coming-of-age as a Chicana and a lesbian at a time when the political merging of those two identities was severely censured.

Drawing on the Mexican legacy of Malinche, the symbolic mother of the first mestizo peoples, Moraga examines the collective sexual and cultural wounding suffered by women since the Conquest. Moraga examines her own mestiza parentage and the seemingly inescapable choice of assimilation into a passionless whiteness or uncritical acquiescence to the patriarchal Chicano culture she was raised to reproduce. By finding Chicana feminism and honoring her own sexuality and loyalty to other women of color, Moraga finds a way to claim both her family and her freedom.

Moraga's new essays, written with a voice nearly a generation older, continue the project of "loving in the war years," but Moraga's posture is now closer to that of a zen warrior than a street-fighter. In these essays, loving is an extended prayer, where the poet-politica reflects on the relationship between our small individual deaths and the dyings of nations of people (pueblos). *Loving* is an angry response to the "cultural tyranny" of the mainstream art world and a celebration of the strategic use of "cultural memory" in the creation of an art of resistance (*Book Description, Amazon.com*).



Margherita Dolce Vita

By Stefano Benni

Translated from the Italian by Antony Shugaar

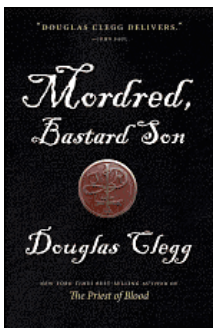
Benni is renowned in his native Italy as a shrewd and entertaining satirist. His inventive style must be daunting for translators, but Shugaar's English rendering is dazzling. *Margherita Dolce Vita* is the 14-year-old narrator's nickname, and the allusion to Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960) hints at the uncanny chaos and angst Margherita so ably and drolly chronicles. She is happiest frolicking with her dog in the meadow surrounding her family's modest house, where her father repairs old bicycles, her mother watches her soap opera, one brother obsesses over soccer while the other plays mad scientist, and her grandfather ingests toxins in the hope of becoming immune to pollution. It's a sweet life, all right, until a giant black cube is erected next door, the forbidding high-tech mansion of a wealthy family up to no good. Soon Margherita's once frugal and content parents are caught up in their neighbors' passion for excess and sinister clandestine activities, while the once fecund meadow is poisoned with pesticides. What's an observant, outspoken, and nature-loving girl to do? Benni's seriocomic vision of the drastic consequences of unchecked consumerism, environmental decimation, and End Times mania is at once fantastic and believable, delightful and chilling (*Booklist*).



Midnight Blue: The Sonja Blue Collection

By Nancy A. Collins

White Wolf proudly announces the return of Sonja Blue, the powerful and intriguing vampiress chronicled in *Sunglasses After Dark* and *In the Blood*. This third novel [*Paint It Black*] in the popular series becomes available for the first time in this trade paperback omnibus collection containing all of the award-winning Sonja Blue novels in their entirety (*Annotation, Barnesandnoble.com*).



Mordred, Bastard Son (Book One of the Mordred Trilogy)

By Douglas Clegg

Clegg puts an inspired wrinkle in the hoary tale of Arthur and the grail by casting Arthur's kindred enemy, Mordred, as a gay man. An injured stranger in a cloak and odd, paganish mask, is captured and held in a monastery, igniting wild speculation among the locals, who believe him a notorious traitor. And so he is. He is Mordred, the bastard son of Arthur Pendragon and his half sister, the witch-queen Morgan Le Fay, and he now awaits trial for murder and treason. The young monk tending him is keenly interested in him, and so for a small price, the bastard son unfolds his story. All his life, Mordred has been at the center of powerful drives--his own and those of his mother. Morgan is obsessed with vengeance against Arthur, and Mordred is absolutely devoted to his unbalanced mother. But he is terribly conflicted about his father and wildly, passionately, hopelessly in love with Lancelot. The tale he unfolds culminates in an

unholy betrayal of his own magical talent by someone he loved and trusted all his life. This is the riveting first volume in a trilogy. How excellent (*Booklist*).



Onion Girl

By Charles de Lint

De Lint's novels are driven not so much by destinations as by journeys, and *The Onion Girl* is no exception. Jilly Coppercorn, a figure familiar to readers of de Lint's other Newford stories, is an artist with paint in her hair and under her fingernails, always there for others, but possessing her own dark secrets. Now she must face both her present hospitalization after being hit by a car and the pain hidden in her past. She does this in the company of many familiar Newford faces, as well as some new folks in Newford and in *manido-aki* (the spirit world). What makes de Lint's particular brand of fantasy so catchy is his attention to the ordinary. Like great writers of magic realism, he writes about people in the world we know, encountering magic as a part of that world. Fairy tales come true, and their magic affects realistic characters full of particular lusts and fears (*Booklist*).



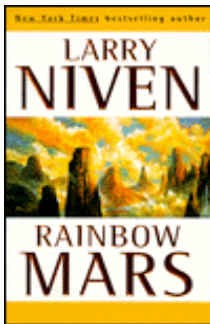
Over a Thousand Hills I Walk With You

By Hanna Jansen

Translated from the German by Elizabeth D. Crawford

The patient encouragement of the author to help her adopted daughter, Jeanne d'Arc Umubyeyi, come to terms with her memories provides the

frame for this account of genocide in Rwanda in 1994. When Jeanne was eight, Hutu neighbors massacred her family and destroyed her home; she witnessed the murder of her mother and brother, as well as other Tutsis, strangers and family friends. Beautifully crafted and smoothly translated, this searing novel is all the more remarkable for the sense of place it conveys through vividly remembered details of an African world where the mundane experiences of daily life were cataclysmically interrupted by a few months of unimaginable violence. Jeanne's courage, will to live, and understandable anger come through clearly, leading readers to wonder how a person or a country can ever recover from such events. The young woman's adoptive mother's childhood memories, mentioned in one of the chapter introductions, make explicit the connection between Rwanda and Germany. The title, taken from a story Jeanne's grandmother told, also reminds readers of the importance of human connections and continued trust. Painful to read, but unforgettable, this book will provoke thought and discussion (*School Library Journal*).

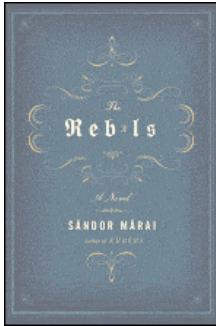


Rainbow Mars

By Larry Niven

Larry Niven weaves together time travel and fantasy to create an utterly unique novel on the origin of the Martian "canals." Hanville Svetz was born into a future to match the sorriest predictions of Greenpeace. Most of Earth's original life forms are extinct. It is Svetz's job to go back in time and retrieve them, or at least it was until his Institute for Temporal Research was transferred. Now, with a new boss obsessed with stars and planets, Svetz must figure out why the Martian canals have gone dry and what that means for Earth's future. Because Mars was inhabited. When Svetz learns how the sapient Martian species were wiped out he realizes that Earth could soon fall victim to a similar fate. Together with his dog, Wrona, a visitor from the distant past, and Miya, an astronaut with her own complex history, Svetz must struggle to unravel a puzzle that will tax

not just his rational mind but the very limits of his imagination (*From the Publisher, Barnesandnoble.com*).

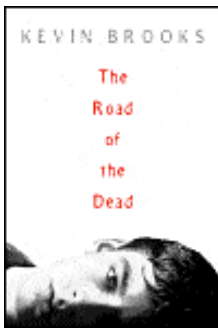


The Rebels

By Sándor Márai

Translated from the Hungarian by George Szirtes

The third of the novels by this great Hungarian writer (whose fame in his native country reached its apogee in the 1930s, but who had to live out his later years in exile in the U.S., where he died in 1989) joins *Embers* (2000) and *Casanova in Bolzano* (2004) in being translated into English for the first time. Márai wrote historical fiction rooted in the politics, manners, and events of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. This particular novel is set specifically during World War I, in a small, provincial Hungarian town; most men in the community are absent at the front. A band of teenage boys, having just finished their schooling, face having to join their fathers somewhere in battle. But the friends themselves constitute their own army; the novel's title indicates their current modus operandi: rebelling against the adult social order in their small corner of the universe. Just as the army at the front functions as a unit, so does the gang of rebels; however, the author is interested in exploring not only their group mentality but also how, as distinct personalities, they operate not in concert. Rendered in sumptuous prose, this is a deeply penetrating novel of psychology (*Booklist*).



Road of the Dead

By Kevin Brooks

Ruben Ford, 14, feels things. When his sister is murdered on the English moors, he knows she's dead even though he's home in London. He and his brother, Cole, 17, are freakishly linked by Ruben's power to feel what Cole feels. The teens travel to Dartmoor to find Rachel's killer and bring her body home. They're received by a Dickensian assortment of sadistic thugs, greasy criminals, and corrupt cops, all hiding something. Brooks's feel for mood and setting is as masterful here as in his taut, noir *Martyn Pig* (Scholastic, 2002). A haunting, tense drama builds from the first line and only lets up for scenes of brutal, vivid violence that bring readers back down to earth. The murder is all but solved by the second half of the book, and the pace falters a bit as the resolution becomes obvious. However, Brooks sustains a mythical aura throughout, and rapid-fire action should keep teens engrossed. Ruben is vintage Brooks: sensitive, strange, and wholly three-dimensional. The dialogue between the brothers is crisp and natural, and often funny and touching at once. Cole is perfectly drawn as Ruben's tough, detached counterbalance. Brooks shows that the real magic between the brothers is their ferocious love for one another, and he does so brilliantly (*School Library Journal*).



A Room on Lorelei Street

By Mary E. Pearson

When Zoe's teacher mispronounces her name on the first day of class, the 17-year-old explodes. To teachers and administrators, she is just another rebellious teenager. Not even her friends know or understand the depth of her emotional stress. Caring for an alcoholic mother, dealing with an overbearing grandmother, going to school, and working to make ends meet all collide and Zoe finally walks out. She finds solace in a small rented room on Lorelei Street and discovers a new friend in Opal, her eccentric elderly landlord. Throughout the novel, Zoe struggles with her feelings for Mama, which swing from hatred to guilt to longing; thoughts about her father, whose accidental death may have been suicide; and her need for attention, which has resulted in numerous sexual relationships. Unable to make enough money at her waitressing job to pay the rent, Zoe finds that she will do anything--no matter how self-destructive--to keep her safe haven. For her, the rented room represents an escape from an impossible situation, a break from suffocating family bonds that gives her the impetus to start a new life. The third-person narration is at times lyrical, vividly expressing the teen's feelings and motivations. This book is a good read and the message--while powerful--is not overpowering (*School Library Journal*).



Rules of Survival

By Nancy Werlin

Living with an unpredictable, psychotic mother has taught Matthew how to survive. Constantly on alert, he and his sister, Callie, devotedly shelter their younger stepsister, Emmy, from their mother's abuse and worry about staying safe. Matt insists that "fear isn't actually a bad thing It warns you to pay attention, because you're in danger. It tells you to do something, to act, to save yourself," but his terror is palpable in this haunting, powerful portrayal of domestic dysfunction, which is written in retrospect as a letter from Matt to Emmy. Unfortunately, the adults in the children's life, a distant father and an apathetic aunt, don't help, though Matt sees a spark of hope in Murdoch, who dates his mother, Nikki, and then leaves when he becomes another target for her escalating rage. It is Murdoch, with a violent past of his own, who is willing to risk getting involved and eventually becomes the change agent that the children so desperately need. The author of *Double Helix* (2003), Werlin reinforces her reputation as a master of the YA thriller, pulling off a brilliant departure in this dark but hopeful tale, with pacing and suspense guaranteed to leave readers breathlessly turning the pages (*Booklist*).

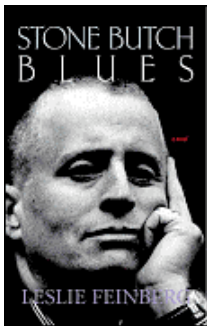


Some Fun: Stories and a Novella

By Antonya Nelson

Nelson is a superb storyteller preternaturally attuned to the wildness in our hearts. She is particularly versed in the courage and recklessness of

teenage girls, whose penchant for risk casts a blazing light on the pain and hypocrisy of adult life. Two girl renegades stand out with striking fierceness in Nelson's fifth fiction collection, a gathering of seven stunning short stories and a novella, all tales of fractured family life, trauma, and redemptive transformation. In "Eminent Domain," an actor in Houston for a run of *Othello* realizes that the punked-up street cutie he's drawn to is Sophie Gunn, the wily runaway daughter of a prominent family. In "Some Fun," Claire keeps things together in the chaotic aftermath of her mother's sister's violent death. Elsewhere, daughters look after ailing fathers, a college freshman is in constant touch with his dead mother, and two young boys are shattered by their abrupt separation. Nelson daringly orchestrates disconnection, illness, death, and myriad other forces that sabotage family life. Growing more resplendent with each book, Nelson writes with breathtaking directness, humor, and insight about the cycles of sorrow and renewal that shape our confounding lives (*Booklist*).



Stone Butch Blues

By Leslie Feinberg

Published in 1993, this brave, original novel is considered to be the finest account ever written of the complexities of a transgendered existence.

Woman or man? That's the question that rages like a storm around Jess Goldberg, clouding her life and her identity. Growing up differently gendered in a blue-collar town in the 1950's, coming out as a butch in the bars and factories of the prefeminist '60s, deciding to pass as a man in order to survive when she is left without work or a community in the early '70s. This powerful, provocative and deeply moving novel sees Jess coming full circle, she learns to accept the complexities of being a transgendered person in a world demanding simple explanations: a he-she emerging whole, weathering the turbulence.

Leslie Feinberg is also the author of *Trans Liberation*, *Trans Gender Warriors* and *Transgender Liberation*, and is a noted activist and speaker on transgender issues (*Book Description, Amazon.com*).



The Tent

By Margaret Atwood

A quirky collection of short tales and a few poems that can be read in any order. Although not all of these selections will appeal to teens, some will, especially "Plots for Exotics," in which the narrator, who has always aspired to be a main character, has to apply for a job at the plot factory, where he learns he is not main-character material. Others, such as "Our Cat Enters Heaven," will also engage teen readers. The pieces are brief and varied in style. The ironic and often sarcastic tone is one that many teens will appreciate. Simple line drawings appear throughout. As a whole, the book should appeal to anyone who appreciates a wry and somewhat biting look at society (*School Library Journal*).



Trace Elements of Random Tea Parties

By Felicia Luna Lemus

The breezy tone of Lemus' gen-X coming-of-age story keeps one flipping pages, even when its gay heroine, Leticia, a film-school grad who grooms dogs in L.A. rather than face the rigors of a professional career, suffers debilitating loss and heartbreak. Family, blood-related or acquired, and the "Nana" who raised her, in particular, are central to her life, as is also the mythic Weeping Woman, a Hispanic icon whose presence throughout is by

turns threatening and comforting. Only when she is at her lowest, grieving dual losses, does "Let" come to terms with the duality of Weeping Woman and her cultural attachment to the icon--a development parallel to her coming to accept the duality of her Anglo-Hispanic and lesbian identity. Engagingly told in quirky English reflecting Let's speech (e.g., "The static crackle jangle of my voice hummed warm reliable"), this story of ultimately strong friendships charms enough to earn its first-time author an early following (*Booklist*).



We Are All Welcome Here

By Elizabeth Berg

As a student nurse, Paige Dunn once took care of Elvis Presley's mother in Tupelo, MS. She contracted polio while pregnant with her daughter and is paralyzed from the neck down. Deserted by her husband and on welfare, Paige relies on Peacie, her black daytime caregiver, and on her daughter, Diana, now 13, for help at night. The teen is devoted to her beautiful, talented mother, yet at times is resentful that her mother's needs must come before her own. When the girl wins \$2500 in a contest, Paige gives most of the money to Peacie for medical care for her boyfriend, who was badly beaten for participating in a civil rights demonstration. When their social worker learns that the money that would have provided for a nighttime caregiver has been used for other expenses, she demands that the situation be remedied. Diana writes to Elvis, enclosing a song her mother had written long ago, he responds with a visit to Paige, and suddenly their life is made infinitely easier. Full of humor, devoid of self-pity, with lively characters that rise above their circumstances, this is the story of an adolescent accepting adult responsibilities, encountering the temptations of boys and booze, and experiencing the tensions between race and class in the 1960s (*School Library Journal*).



Wild Orchid

By Beverly Brenna

Written in a clear voice with three-dimensional characters, this novel is destined to be compared to Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Doubleday, 2003). Both are narrated by a young person who has Asperger's Syndrome and both deal with the unique ways in which people with this condition relate to the world. Taylor, 18, does not want to go with her mother to Prince Albert National Park for the summer. She is terrified at what an unstructured future holds and wants to find a boyfriend. This objective proves to be a bit difficult because Taylor cannot bring herself to look at people's faces and she discovers that she positively does not like kissing. As the teen negotiates her summer, finding a job, learning more about herself, and realizing that her mother also has flaws, she moves forward with her life, in spite of some minor setbacks. She discovers some things that she is good at and comes to understand that these qualities can be desirable, even coveted. In places, the story line simplifies Taylor's disabilities, possibly in a palpable attempt to add humor. Nonetheless, Brenna has done a credible job of capturing the voice of a young woman on the brink of maturity; in some ways Taylor is incredibly similar to most teenage girls and in other ways she is exceedingly different (*School Library Journal*).