This is the story of Meg Moore's growth to awareness. Set in a British era when women were subservient to men, this work looks at the life of a motherless girl, who is faced not only with a changing family, but with a society that is in the middle of defining new roles for women. Her experiences and her dreams take her to a new maturity that will help her control her future. And help her secure her deserved fortune.

As the story unfolds, Meg finds herself in a stepfamily that she mistrusts and a future that is uncertain. Seeking the advice of everyone from astrologers to literary scholars, Meg gradually learns to assert herself and her new found womanhood.

Sturtivant's story and characters are believable and realistic. Adolescent readers will not only be drawn into the characters' lives, but they will come away from the reading with a better sense of the Restoration.

Jeanne M. Gerlach
Arlington, Texas

During the Nazi takeover, this well-written, fast-paced first novel focuses on likable, admirable, and indomitable twelve-year-old Greta Radky as she pursues her dream of becoming a concert pianist. When Greta discovers that her widowed mother plans to sell their piano because she cannot cope with hearing it played after the death of Greta's brother, another promising pianist, Greta is devastated. However, with the help of a family friend and Herr Hummel, Greta's mysterious new piano teacher, Greta's mother relents and even consents to her performing in a prestigious recital.

Dahlberg does a superb job in depicting the Nazi takeover, showing how many Austrian supporters - seemingly decent people - violently turned against Jews and those who wanted an independent Austria. Middle school girls, especially, will appreciate Greta's determination and her helping Herr Hummel flee to Prague, since he actually is a wellknown German pianist whose anti-Nazi actions have marked him an enemy of the state.

Bill Mollineaux
Granby, Connecticut
Lost and Found: Award-Winning Authors Sharing Real-Life

Lizzie at Last by Claudia Mills
Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2000, 160 pp., $16.00
Lizzie at Last, a sequel to Losers, Inc. and You’re a Brave Man, Julius Zimmerman, follows the middle school blossoming of Lizzie Archer. Lizzie self-consciously enters the halls of Creek Middle School suddenly uncomfortable with her love of poetry, the old-fashioned white dresses she favors, reminiscent of her idol Emily Dickinson, and her reputation as a math whiz. Embarrassed by her parents, she looks to visiting Aunt Elspeth to take her shopping for jeans and t-shirts, and to popular Maricia Fatsak to give her tips on fitting in and attracting the attention of Ethan Winfield.

Lizzie at Last is a predictable pre-teen novel for younger middle school students. While it does sympathetically explore the typical teen concerns about conformity and popularity, it’s strictly light reading.

Margaret J. Ford
Campbell, Ohio

A Wizard Aboard by Diane Duane
Harcourt Brace, 1999, 339 pp., $6.00

Clearly fifteen year-old Hitis's parents don’t fully grasp what it means for their two daughters to be wizards. Misunderstanding the nature and intensity of Hitis’s relationship with Kit, her wizard partner, they bundle their daughter off to Ireland to spend the summer with her father’s sister, Aunt Anne, unaware that the trip actually fulfills a much larger purpose than their own, and also that wizardry runs in the family.

This well written book, fourth in Duane's Wizardy series, moves quickly and will undoubtedly please wizardy fans that have outgrown Harry Potter.

Peter E. Morgan
Carrollton, Georgia

The Transformation Mette Newth
translated by Faith Ingwersen
Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2000, 195 pp., $16.00

Set in fifteenth-century Greenland, this novel explores the relationship between a native Inuit woman and a young Irish missionary, both seeking answers to spiritual questions and struggling to survive in a harsh, frozen environment. Navarana saves Brendan’s life when she finds him in a deserted church settlement, but Brendan is convinced he must save her soul from her “heathen” Shaman religion.

This book is well worth the read for teachers interested in suggesting realistic fiction to those middle teens wrestling with these very tender issues.

Patti Cleary
Peninsula, Ohio

Jerome by William Taylor
Allyson Books, 1999, 95 pp., $9.95

Stylistically, Jerome is a surprising novel - beginning suspiciously like another Catcher in the Rye wanna-be, with considerably more reliance on the “F” word, then quickly moving to a tight FAX/E-mail dialogue between two friends, Marco and Katie. Their discussion and hence, the theme of this work, centers on two friends counseling each other about the unexpected suicide of a close mutual friend, Jerome.

This talk between Marco and Katie becomes an analysis of Jerome’s character, leading eventually to a personal encounter between these two, during which is revealed that the deceased Jerome was unwilling to accept his homosexuality. Instead, Jerome chose to end his life rather than live it as a gay person and express his love for Marco.

This book is well worth the read for teachers interested in suggesting realistic fiction to those middle teens wrestling with these very tender issues.

Michael Angelotti
Norman, Oklahoma

The Queen of Attolia by Megan Whalen Turner
Greenwillow, 2000, 279 pp., $15.95

The thief, with a reputation for being able to steal anything, seems to know the Queen’s castle and all its passages intimately. However, this time the Queen of Attolia, who has lost face because of him, knows he’s there and eventually captures and punishes him in a horrible, unthinkable way.

This fast-paced, breath-taking sequel to the Newbery Honor Book, The Thief, has fabulous twists and turns which make this not only a wonderful story of adventure but also a story about life.

Diana Mitchell
Williamston, Michigan

Calling the Swan by Joan Thomas
Viking, 2000, 147 pp., $15.99

The loss of a family member is always difficult for those who remain behind. Thessman explores the impact of an unanswerable question: what happened? Alexandria has been missing for three years - she simply disappeared one day while going to feed the swans in the local park.

Skyler, her sister, wants to believe that Alexandria is still alive; she talks with her in Alexandria’s room, sees her on the street, and at school. The family is uncertain whether to proceed with life, based on the assumption that Alexandria could return, or that she is truly gone. Skyler’s mother fears her other children will disappear as she becomes overly protective, not wanting Skyler to go to summer school and interact with young people. Still, Skyler’s grandmother believes that the family must somehow put their lives back together and get on with living. She supports Skyler as she begins to make new friends.

Thessman captures vividly the impact such an event can have on a Family. The novel will stir powerful emotions and should be recommended only to mature readers.

Charles R. Duke
Boone, North Carolina
Here is a volume of thirteen short works guaranteed to inspire readers to read and writers to write. Lost and Found is the second short story anthology compiled by Helen and Jerry Weiss aimed at young adults.

In David Lubar’s “Dual Identities,” sports and ethics spar as freshman Scot Tarbel defends his honor as a fence amid a school of football players and wrestlers. Shelly Stoeber’s “The Book” is about Jesse, who discovers her old high school memoir in her parents’ attic. Jesse learns—through her writings—of a long ago car accident that left her disabled and for which she still grieves. Adele Griffin tackles eating disorders in her prom story, “As Skinny Does,” and Mel Glenn looks at teens hanging out in “Kids in the Mask,” told in his traditional free verse.

Each of the thirteen short pieces is a fast read—about fourteen pages in length. Highly accessible for both teachers and teens, this enjoyable collection brims with inspiring stories, revealing insights, informative biographies, and adaptable lessons.

Lisa K. Winkler  
South Orange, New Jersey

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**Spindle’s End by Robin McKinley**  
Putnam, 2000, 422 pp., $19.95

Renowned fantasy writer Robin McKinley retells the fairy tale about the dreamy Sleeping Beauty. This time, she is called Infant Princess Rosie who is cursed by wicked Perricia to die when she pricks her finger on a spindle on her 21st birthday.

That very same day, though, a good peasant fairy steals her away and raises her concealing her royal identity from others, including baby Rosie herself. As she grows toward adulthood, our Infant Princess Rosie develops strength and insight through her many experiences in the forest and her communication with her animal friends.

Hence, when our heroine Rosie approaches the ill-fated 21ST birthday, she is, by now, powerful enough to thwart the destiny Perricia intends. She avoids the spindle prick and receives, like Sleeping Beauty, a “spell-binding kiss,” from a most surprising source.

McKinley’s rich storytelling— the fictitious countryside, the classic personification of good and evil, the magical elements, the humanized animals, the spunky peasant girl with a secret identity—work smoothly. The end result is a clever, suspenseful and highly moral fairy tale bound to please McKinley fans or any middle or high school reader who is in love with good fantasy.

Marjorie M. Kaiser  
Louisville, Kentucky

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**Experiences Through Fiction**, edited by M. Jerry Weiss and Helen Weiss  
Forge, 2000, 217 pp., $19.95

Here is a volume of thirteen short works guaranteed to inspire readers to read and writers to write. Lost and Found is the second short story anthology compiled by Helen and Jerry Weiss aimed at young adults.

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**Snail Mail No More by Paula Danziger and Ann M. Martin**  
Scholastic Press, 2000, 344 pp., $16.95

Using the e-mail correspondence of two girls, popular children’s writers Paula Danziger (The Cat Ate My Gymsuit, The Bat in Bunk Five) and Ann M. Martin (The Baby-Sitters Club Series) let us in on the lives of Tara and Elizabeth and their families.

Eighth grader Tara has moved to Ohio and begins to correspond by ‘snail mail’ (begun in their first book, P. S. Longer Letter Later) with her best friend since childhood, left-behind Elizabeth. As in the first book, we learn that bubbly Tara likes people and drama, while introspective Elizabeth writes poetry and serves as editor for a school magazine. Tara, as a typical seventh grader, gets herself grounded periodically as a result of the mistakes she makes in her “growing up” process. Elizabeth, the wearied friend, condemns Tara’s reckless behavior, while simultaneously dealing with her own problem— an alcoholic father.

Funny and serious, this easy-to-read book addresses many of the problems and concerns that confront tweens today: babysitting, boyfriends, dating, drinking, and even death. Although marred by a slow beginning, the story does achieve its own fun pace as the characters of these two girls are well revealed through the e-mails they send and the feelings they express.

Connie Russell  
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

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**True Believer by Virginia Euwer Wolff**  

Eight years ago readers fell in love with the spunk, determination, compassion of fourteen-year old La Vaughn in Virginia Euwer Wolff’s Make Lemonade. Now fifteen, La Vaughn returns in True Believer as she continues to pursue her goal of someday going to college. Despite the poverty of her neighborhood and school, La Vaughn believes she is “lucky, born under a star,” and through the offering of a Claddagh ring, he is reunited with his real family in his own time period.

Tom is united with the Monagham family after her performs CPR on Tully Monagham, and the locals of Ireland deem him a “holy angel” because of his mysterious healing powers. Tom’s assimilation is quick and soon he finds himself engaged in the struggles of the Irish potato famine. It is during this historical time period that Tom learns what a true sense of family is and through the offering of a Claddagh ring, he is reunited with his real family in his own time period.

Heneghan’s story is a good introduction for readers not accustomed to historical fiction. His blending of modern day with the events of the past will engage readers interested in historical struggles.

Jerry R. May  
Mason, Ohio

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**The Grave by James Heneghan**  
Frances Foster Books, 2000, 245 pp., $ 17.00

Abandoned as a baby in a department store, thirteen-year old Tom Mullen has spent all his life in neglectful, Irish foster homes. Such experiences have left him calloused yet curious about his family heritage. It isn’t until after he is lured into a mass grave and mysteriously transported back in time to 1847 that he begins to piece together his family heritage.

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Jerry R. May  
Mason, Ohio

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**Hope Was Here by Joan Bauer**  
G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2000, 188 pp., $18.99

True Believer explores issues relevant to today’s teens in an honest and sensitive manner. Virginia Euwer Wolff gives readers a moving, beautifully written poignant story, well worth the eight year wait— a story that makes us true believers in La Vaughn and in the tenacity and resiliency of her spirit.

Joan Kopperud  
Moorhead, Minnesota

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**Fantasy/ Fairy Tale**  
ISBN: 0-399-239466-7

**Teen Issues, Alcoholism**  

**Coming of Age**  
ISBN: 0-689-82827-6

**Coming of Age/Relationships**  
ISBN: 0-399-23142-0
Moving from New York City to a small town in Wisconsin is the latest in a long string of disappointments for Hope. Abandoned by her mother and pinning for the father she has never met, Hope yearns to stay in one place, but more importantly, to belong.

Aunt Addie provides stability in Hope's life, but it is Hope's own sense of humor, her ability to relate to people, and her considerable skills as a waitress that forge her a place as an important citizen of Mulhoney, Wisconsin. In the process, Hope discovers integrity, romance, and a resolution to dreams she has long carried in her heart.

Joan Bauer excels in using humor to address serious issues such as responsibility, political double-dealing and acceptance. Hope Was Here also offers a central character who, while plagued with adolescent insecurities, remains strong. This book is particularly recommended for the way it shows young people performing competently outside of school, at work, and in politics.

Beverly J. Jackson
Columbia, South Carolina

My Grandfather Jack the Ripper by Claudia Apona
Harcourts, 2000 (English translation), 200 pp., $19.00

What would it be like to find out that you might indeed be a descendant of the infamous Jack the Ripper? It's a painful discovery for Andy Dobson, a realistic teenager with unusual mental powers. Andy has the ability to touch an object and visualize its past.

Growing up in a shabby boarding house built by his great-grandfather has not been easy on Andy, although he realizes the significance of his fate when his grandfather, Bob, slips and reveals the mysteries still connected to this house. Things begin to unfold quickly when a young graduate student, Massimo, arrives to write his thesis on the Ripper murders. Maximo learns of Andy's powers and teams up with Andy to uncover the secrets that lie behind the door to Room 4, the site of Ripper's last murder.

The novel gave me chills and kept me guessing until its very end, when the identity of Jack the Ripper is finally revealed.

Greg Hamilton
New York City

A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Miserable Mill
HarperCollins Publishers, 2000, 195 pp., $15.95

The Baudelaire children were orphaned when their parents were killed in a fire. Violet (14), Klaus (12) and Sunny, the infant, are being sent to yet another place (#4) in the hopes of securing a permanent home. Each adventure has them being tracked by the dastardly Count Olaf and his cronies, who want to swindle the children out of their substantial inheritance.

The Miserable Mill was the Lucky Smells Lumbermill in the Finite Forest in Paltryville.

The children live an unhappy existence. They have no breakfast, chewing gum for lunch, and a casserole for dinner. They must debark trees, saw planks, share the space of one bunk bed, and overcome adults who will not listen to them - because we all know that children "should be seen …" They find disaster and danger lurking everywhere. They just cannot win.

The Baudelaire children are upbeat, smart, lovely, and optimistic. Readers become optimistic all the while predicting (optimistically) success for them.

The Miserable Mill was written in the style of Dahl and Dickens. Although the story is predictable, the narrator (Lemony Snicket) keeps young readers guessing and giggling. The Baudelaire children are upbeat, smart, lovely, and optimistic. Readers become optimistic all the while predicting (optimistically) success for them.

This is the fourth of a series of events that chronicle the eventful mishaps of the children.

Linda Broughton
Mobile, Alabama

Shakespeare's Scribble by Gary Blackwood
Dutton Children's Book, 2000, 265 pp., $15.99

In Shakespeare's Scribble, Gary Blackwood leaps back in time once more to explore the life of Widge, an orphan struggling to survive in Elizabethan England.

In the earlier book, Widge struggles against wicked men trying to use his skill of charactery. In the sequel, Widge's struggles are more with his own identity and with the vicious threat of the Black Plague tearing through the land. But, amid such absorbing issues, the teenager finds time to treat Shakespeare's broken arm and help the bard create some of the greatest lines from his plays.

With touches of tragedy and humor, Blackwood walks us through effects of the deadly Black plague and a gritty view of life back then. While this book takes on a more soapopera tone, the Black Plague tears through the land. But, amid such absorbing issues, the teenager finds time to treat Shakespeare's broken arm and help the bard create some of the greatest lines from his plays.

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Lori Atkins-Goodson
Wamego, Kansas

Dancing With An Alien by Mary Logue
HarperCollins Publishers, 2000, 134 pp., $14.95

Tonia is seventeen and at a statuesque six feet, she is certain that she will never meet a boy tall enough for her. But she loves summer and swimming and when she meets a new and very tall boy at the lake, she begins to hope. Unbeknownst to Tonia, though, her knight in shining armor turns out to be an alien from outer space.

Alien Branko, our alien in question, has come to Earth for a special quest—he is to find a female and convince her to come back with him to his home planet. Staying with a host family who

Logue's crisp and captivating narrative alternates between Branko and Tonia and focuses on how their feelings grow and become powerful. Dancing With An Alien is not exceptional science fiction but it is lovely and lyrical romance. Our teen protagonists come alive when they are with each other and their fate propels readers quickly to an unexpected ending. This is perfect for those who normally shy away from science fiction.

Jane Halsey
McHenry, Illinois

My Father's Birthday by Avi
HarperCollins, 2000, 180 pp., $15.95

Disappointed that friends have forgotten his birthday, the curmudgeonly porcupine Ereth skulks off through Dimwood Forest in search of his favorite food, salt. Along the way he discovers a mother fox caught in a trap. Obeying her dying wish, Ereth locates her three lively kits and reluctantly cares for them.

When the kits' father returns, Ereth unwillingly recognizes his strong feelings for them: love and jealousy intertwined. Heading home, his journey almost comes to a premature end when he meets the fisherman who has stalked him since the beginning of the novel.

Middle school readers may not be surprised by the final plot twists, but they will delight in the way that good is triumphant and love is rewarded. The predatory nature of the animals in the final scenes adds a bit of realism, yet does not overwhelm. Ereth Birthday is a fine sequel to Ragweed, Poppy and Poppy and Rye.

Kathy Pounds
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

A Mystery story with a dash of humor and some suspense. The Black Plague tearing through the land. But, amid such absorbing issues, the teenager finds time to treat Shakespeare's broken arm and help the bard create some of the greatest lines from his plays.

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Jane Halsey
McHenry, Illinois
Dreamland by Sarah Dessen
Viking, 2000, 250 pp., $15.99

When sixteen-year-old Caitlin's older sister Cass runs away, Caitlin feels a great void in her life. She's lost the person in her life with whom she's been closest. Deciding she needs a major change, Caitlin enters into her first serious, romantic relationship. Rogerson is brilliant and charming, but also dangerous. He sells drugs and, as Caitlin soon learns, he is physically abusive to her - the legacy of the abuse he receives from his own father. Not heeding Cass around for the advice and support she needs, Caitlin retreats into "Dreamland," a half-sleep state where she can keep her problems at a safe distance.

In her fifth novel, Dessen again demonstrates her astonishing talent at creating memorable characters with authentic voices and psychological depth, and her remarkable ability to craft subtle but riveting stories, exploring rich themes which young adult readers are sure to find compelling.

Ed Sullivan
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Mystic Uncle and the Magical Bridge by Jeffrey Winters
Writers Club Press, 2000, 155 pp., $9.95
ISBN: 0-9659746-4

After violent trespassers invade the gentle planet Ahnu, Bobby and Jeremy are recruited to help save the parallel world. Mathen, a shape-shifting teacher who travels between worlds, instructs the boys in combat, breathing and utilizing fear as part of their warrior training. Mathen (nicknamed "Mystic Uncle") helps the boys explore family relationships, self-identity, and friendship while saving Ahnu.

Mystic Uncle uses realistic language and simple sentence structure appealing to reluctant readers. Most chapters are three pages in length and easy to read. This book may also appeal to fans of Madeline L'Engle and other fantasy novels. Using the archetypical "hero's quest," Winters' novel is formulaic at times, though always spirited.

Joshua James Keels
San Francisco, California

No Cafes in Narnia by Nikki Tate
Sono Nis Press, 2000, 172 pp., $4.95
ISBN: 1-55039-107-0

Thirteen-year-old Heather Blake's world seems to be falling apart. She has moved with her family from the city of Toronto to the small island of Tarragon in British Columbia. As a result of her parents' divorce, Heather finds it difficult to cope with her feelings. Once out of jail, Johnny struggles to provide for his mother and younger siblings, until as promised, O'Shaunnessey contacts Johnny. Johnny begins training at the New York Athletic Club. When Johnny finally wins a challenging match, he realizes the challenges in this sport include more than defeating one's opponent.

While geared at a young adult market, the unaffected language and didactic style of Mystic Uncle may be better suited for middle grade readers. Many chapters have "lessons" or morals that could also be the forum of a classroom discussion.

Katherine MiFarland
Shippenburg, Pennsylvania

Battle Dress by Ann Efaw
Harper Collins, 2000, 291 pp., $15.95

Seventeen-year-old Andi Davis doesn't know why she wants to be at West Point Military Academy, other than that she doesn't want to be at home. But slowly, she's learning. Like all new cadets, Andi Davis receives abuse from her regiment leader. Yet, she reasons, his abusive demeanor has a purpose - to help her develop character. At home, though, the verbal abuse and neglect she gets from her parents, she figures, is just that - abuse and neglect.

Suddenly, she finds purpose in her military life during a storming, mud-soaked, twelve-mile hike to Lake Frederick. Exhausted, yet elated, she sees herself for the first time as belonging to a group - and a cause larger than herself. Amy Efaw uses her own West Point experience to write this realistic, engaging coming-of-age story. The strength of this work - with its detailed look at preparing for army life - is its gripping self-reflective look at the central character's growth. This book is for anyone who is struggling not just with the angst of surviving an abusive household, but for those who want to learn more about becoming a strong moral leader.

Ann Reddy Damon
North Baltimore, Ohio

The Effects of Knut Hamsun on a Fresno Boy
by Gary Soto
Persea Books, 2000, 224 pages, $12.95

Penelope, yet light-hearted, Soto chronicles tales from his childhood and adulthood. Childhood moments in time that take place in a Mexican barrio rich with music, food and emotion are intricately explored. Soto describes such moments as trying to help a starving dog, or getting a cheap, ugly green jacket with humor and reflection. Essays from Soto's adulthood are just as fun, and beautifully explain the surface reality of life's fragments while Soto gives his own perspective of the underlying story.

Lauren Groot
Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida

The Bowler by Kathleen Kerr
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000, 160 pp., $16.00
ISBN: 0-374-30921-3

Before Johnny Woods, fifteen, gains the name, "The Chopper," he finds himself in jail for boxing illegally at Brodie's Saloon in at Brodie's Saloon in the New York City's Lower East Side of the late 1800s.

In jail, he meets Mr. O'Shaunnessey, who teaches Johnny how to train and box. Once out of jail, Johnny struggles to provide for his mother and younger siblings, until as promised, O'Shaunnessey contacts Johnny. Johnny begins training at the New York Athletic Club. When Johnny finally wins a challenging match, he realizes the challenges in this sport include more than defeating one's opponent.

This story "tells the story of a young man's struggle to make it in the nineteenth century boxing world" and is a realistic, engaging story of a young man's struggle to make it in the nineteenth century boxing world. This book is for anyone who is struggling with the angst of surviving an abusive household, but for those who want to learn more about becoming a strong moral leader.

Sheila Gallicchio
Moorhead, Minnesota

Before Wings by Beth Goobie
Orca Book Publishers, 2000, 203 pp., $16.95
ISBN: 1-55143-161-0

Confronting One's Own Death
Fifteen-year-old Adrien may have physically endured the brain aneurysm that almost killed her when she was thirteen, but the emotional effects of the trauma still haunt her. Hoping to lift Adrien out of her depression, her parents send her to spend all summer with her Aunt Erin, who runs Camp Lakeshore. Aunt Erin, a no-nonsense kind of manager, treats Adrien just like any camp counselor; nonetheless, each serves at the other’s personal counselor of sorts.

In this captivating fantasy-mystery-story, readers will be reminded of the award-winning movie Sixth Sense, as Adrien sees “dead people” and befriends another teenager who shares his own sixth sense with her. Besides a good read, there is much to explore in this novel: depression, the afterlife, friendship, peer pressure, choices and consequences, first love, to name a few.

Joan Kaywell
Tampa, Florida

Reference Citation: Kaplan, Jeff (2001) “Young Adult Books In Review: Recently Published Titles” The ALAN Review, Volume 28, Number 2, p. 31.