



under THE COVER



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Book reviews by teens. For teens. Pass it on.

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Welcome to the third issue of **UNDER the COVER** for the 2008-2009 school year. **UNDER the COVER** is a happy partnership between Skokie Public Library, local junior high schools, and several book publishers who give us a sneak peek at the newest new books for young readers.

This issue features book reviews written by students from **McCracken Middle School** and **Old Orchard Junior High School**. The student reviewers in this issue were chosen by their teachers to read, write, and start the buzz about some of the best new books. All of the titles in this issue of **UNDER the COVER** are (or will be!) available for checkout at Skokie Public Library. Stop by and check our shelves for any or all of these books that your friends recommend.

Pssst... be sure to pass it on and share **UNDER THE COVER** with friends and family! Find it on the Web at www.skokielibrary.info/direct/underthecover.asp.



1001 Cranes

by Naomi Hirahara

Reviewed by Karli G.

McCracken Middle School

In the book *1001 Cranes* by Naomi Hirahara, Angela's life is perfect until the day her parents begin to fight and decide to send her to her Grandma Michi and Gramp's house. Angela barely knows her Gramps and Grandma. Angela spends most of her time folding origami cranes for her grandfather to sell as displays for weddings. Being away from her parents shelters Angela for a while, but the pain of them splitting apart is still there.

Soon Angela is thrown into the sad world of separating parents where the only way out is a good-looking neighborhood boy named Tony who she meets while he is skateboarding outside of school. Will Angela

escape her world of misery or fall under the pain of her about-to-be-divorced parents? Will Tony ever be more than a friend? All of these questions and more will be answered when you read this phenomenal book. I'd recommend this book for people 12 and older. I also think it is geared more towards girls with some feminine detail in it. All-in-all, you should definitely read this wonderful book! (Youth Jr. High Fiction HIR)



All the Broken Pieces

by Ann E. Burg

Reviewed by Tony G.

McCracken Middle School

All the Broken Pieces by Ann E. Burg is a story in poetry about a little Vietnamese boy who was sent to a foster home in America from his mother in Vietnam. He got adopted by new parents and as he grew up, his dad gave him a passion for baseball. He left Vietnam because of the war and has since been having flashbacks. He will never forget Vietnam, but he doesn't want to go back.

He joined the school baseball team and was an excellent pitcher. Kids on his team called him frog face and made fun of him. One day their coach was diagnosed with cancer and could no longer coach the team. At this time Matt was going to these gatherings with people from the war. When their baseball team finally gets a new coach, it is an old man that had been in the war. He had them do an activity for team building and Matt gets paired with the biggest bully! To see what happens, you'll have to read *All the Broken Pieces* by Ann Burg. It was a really great book for people 12+ years of age. You should definitely read this book. (Youth Fiction BUR)

UNDER the COVER: BOOK REVIEWS by TEENS

McCracken Middle School project leadership: Tori Gammeri, Director of Learning Center; Judy Kopp, Assistant Director of Learning Center; Annie Monak, Technology Teacher; Eva Tillmann, Database Coordinator; Kim Favor, Language Arts and Literature Teacher; Samantha Fields, Language Arts and Literature Teacher

Old Orchard Junior High School project leadership: Judy Martin, retired Reading teacher; Rebecca Borree, Librarian; Cliff Dahlgren; Mark Gaffney; Rachel Anderson; Ed Boundy

Skokie Public Library project leadership: Linda Sawyer, Youth Services Programming Coordinator; Ruth Sinker, Youth Services Technology Coordinator



Allie Finkle's Rules for Girls: Best Friends and Drama Queens

by Meg Cabot

Reviewed Abby R.

McCracken Middle School

Allie Finkle's Rules for Girls: Best Friends and Drama Queens, written by Meg Cabot, is about a girl named Allie Finkle who goes to Pinewood Elementary school and lives in her own lovely little world. But that perfect world is torn into little pieces and tossed away by the new girl Cheyenne O'Mally. Suddenly, Cheyenne controls the fourth grade girls, and you can't even meet someone who isn't "going" with somebody else. It's up to Allie to restore order to her beloved life and school before Cheyenne fully takes over with her high heel zip-up boots and lying t-shirts. Can Allie and her four friends pull it off? You'll have to read the book to find out!

Meg Cabot made Allie into a girl anyone can trust and depend on. She is the ideal role model for girls from 5-100. She has a kind heart and knows every trick in the book. Once again Meg Cabot has outdone herself in this realistic fiction story of true friends and standing up for yourself. So look for *Allie Finkle's Rules for Girls: Best Friends and Drama Queens* on your library shelf! (Youth Fiction CAB)



Crossing to Paradise

by Kevin Crossley-Holland

Reviewed by Megan C.

McCracken Middle School

Crossing to Paradise by Kevin Crossley-Holland lives up to it's title. Gatty, a young teenager, goes on a pilgrimage with eight others. Imagine going on a long journey where looking death in the face wouldn't be an uncommon thing. She and the eight other pilgrims (including her lady, Lady Gwyneth, who arranged the journey) were heading for Jerusalem. The journey could take months. Each had their own reason for coming, although they all wanted to ask forgiveness for all their sins...if they make it.

If you enjoy books with danger and love intertwined, you'll love *Crossing to Paradise*. I recommend this book to kids ages ten and up because of the reading level. I warn you, girls, this book isn't lovey-dovey. Love is intertwined, but you might have to wait awhile. And guys, don't get too worried; the romance isn't huge. I hope you enjoy this book as much as I did. Pick up a copy of *Crossing to Paradise* and see for yourself if Gatty and her friends make it to Jerusalem...alive. (Youth Junior High Fiction CRO)



Dear Julia

by Amy Bronwen Zemser

Reviewed by Sonia C.

McCracken Middle School

Dear Julia by Amy Bronwen Zemser is a book filled with laughter, tears, friendship, aggravation, drama, and French cuisine. It is about a special bond between two unique girls. Elaine is a shy woman who rarely speaks her mind. One day, she meets an unusual girl with a name like no other, Isadora Wilhelminetta Fischburger, who prefers to be called Lucida. The girls become best friends. When they find out that Croton Harmon, the school dreamboat and Lucida's arch enemy in show business, has a secret audition for a television show, they decide to audition too.

The girls put both of their passions into the television audition tape. Elaine's love of cooking and Lucida's desire to be in front of the camera were a perfect match! They taped a cooking show with the help of Elaine's brothers. Finally, they were ready to turn in the tape! The problem is...Croton finds out about their plan and decides to sabotage them right in front of their eyes! *Dear Julia* will bring you to tears and joy at the same time. It is a wonderful book for all ages and will leave you wondering—what will happen next?

(Youth Junior High Fiction ZEM and Adult Fiction-Teen ZEM)



Discordia: The Eleventh Dimension

by Dena K. Salmon

Reviewed by Amanda L.

McCracken Middle School

Discordia: The Eleventh Dimension by Dena K. Salmon is a wonderful book! It is about how two boys named Lance and Adam struggle to find their way back to Earth after a character in the computer game called Discordia transported them into the world of the game. So the game became their reality! Along the way, Lance and Adam meet a girl named Rayva, and they all travel together searching for an evil sorceress's wand. In their journey, they face many dangerous monsters and thieves. But they don't know Lance might be their greatest danger!

I really liked this book, but some parts were confusing. I would recommend this book to anyone ten years and older. Some parts might scare younger readers. If you like a lot of action and a surprise ending, then *Discordia: The Eleventh Dimension* is a good book for you!

(Youth Fiction SAL)



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Everything is Fine

by Ann Dee Ellis

Reviewed by Hannah S.

McCracken Middle School

Everything is Fine by Ann Dee Ellis is a book about a girl named Mazzy and her seriously depressed mother. Mazzy's dad is on a long business retreat, so Mazzy is stuck alone with her mother. Her neighbors try to help in a way that makes Mazzy think they are trying to take over her life. Her life may not be fine, but Mazzy doesn't want to be bothered anymore, so she says things are fine.

I thought the book was very well written and helped me understand what it would be like to have your mother depressed like that. I also thought that the book was depressing enough that I almost didn't want to finish reading it. In my opinion, the ending of the book was unsatisfying and left me with many lingering questions. Overall, I think it was an okay book. If the ending explained more of the details of what happens later, I would have enjoyed *Everything is Fine* more.

(Youth Junior High Fiction ELL)



Impossible

by Nancy Werlin

Reviewed by Megan P.

McCracken Middle School

Impossible by Nancy Werlin is a novel of love and fantasy which brings the ballad "Scarborough Fair" to life. Usually girls of Lucy's age would be worried about boys, like Zach the boy next door and her best friend since age six. Instead, Lucy focuses on her college applications and schoolwork. Then Lucy learns something that will change her life. Lucy discovers that there is a prophecy that she will get pregnant and become mentally unstable at the age of seventeen (her current age!).

After learning how to break this curse, Lucy sets out on a journey to save herself and her baby. She must do impossible tasks and think outside the box, like making a seamless shirt. She scours books and searches online for unheard of materials. Will she be able to unlock the mysteries of the ballad? Will family and friends help save her? And will Zach fall in love with her? Find out in this page-turner that will keep you on the edge of your seat! Fantasy is not one of my favorite genres, but this book was the exception—I loved it. If you like anything to do with elves or fairies, folklore or myths, *Impossible* is the book for you.

(Adult Fiction-Teen WER)



The Kind of Friends We Used to Be

by Frances O'Roark Dowell

Reviewed by Kayla G.

McCracken Middle School

The Kind of Friends We Used to Be by Frances O'Roark Dowell is a wonderfully written novel that will take you back to your fun-filled years in middle school. Kate and Marilyn were best friends in fifth grade, but then everything changed when they got to middle school. Their friendship started to tear apart the year before when Marilyn and another girl, Flannery, decide to give Kate the silent treatment. Now that seventh grade is starting, Kate and Marilyn still talk to each other, but they're not friends like they used to be in 5th grade. On top of it all, Marilyn is going to be a cheerleader, and she thinks that talking to Kate (who isn't as cool) might ruin her popular reputation.

But even though the other cheerleaders might never forgive her for hanging out with Kate, Marilyn still does. As they try to sew their friendship back together, they also try new things. Kate starts playing guitar and writing songs about an imaginary boy named Dallas; while Marilyn decides to run for Student Council. Now Kate and Marilyn are really going to be put to the test—will they ever be able to be the kind of friends they used to be?

I would recommend this book to girls from ages 9 to 13, because the perspective is always from a girl's point of view. It is actually a sequel to *The Secret Language of Girls*, but you don't really have to read that first. Overall, you just have to like good realistic fiction that is easy to connect to, then you'll enjoy *The Kind of Friends We Used to Be* by Frances O'Roark Dowell. (Youth Fiction DOW)



Love, Meg

by C. Leigh Purtill

Reviewed by Dianne M.

Old Orchard Junior High School

What would you do if you found out that your life was based on lies? Well, in *Love, Meg* by C. Leigh Purtill, 16-year-old Meg Shanley knows that her sister Lucie is the only family that she has. When her 30-year-old sister finds a new job in Los Angeles, Lucie and Meg move into a small apartment in that city. Meg has to leave her best friend and start all over again. Although they frequently move from city to city, Meg finds it difficult to get settled in a new place.

For the past 6 years, Meg has been writing to Jennifer Aniston, a television star, and looking forward to her letters. Jennifer's advice has been a big help to Meg over the years, but, after the move to Los Angeles, Jennifer's letters suddenly stop.

One day a man comes to Meg's apartment and claims he is her twin brother. He also reveals that Lucie is Meg's mother and not her sister. In addition Meg learns that she

has a grandmother, an uncle, and a father who doesn't even know she exists. Meg is furious at Lucie and the lies she had told Meg. Although Lucie forbids it, Meg decides to move to New York to live with her uncle and grandmother, because she believes that having a real family will make her happy.

While living in New York, many things happen to Meg. She meets her real father and learns a lot about the people in her family. Does she find the happiness she had hoped for, now that she is with her real family? What happened to Jennifer Aniston? Did she get tired of writing back and all of Meg's drama? The author makes the book really interesting by making Meg's problems realistic and all of the things that happened to her. I kept reading more to find if Meg would be able to survive without Lucie by her side. Some weaknesses are that the author doesn't include feelings and reactions of Meg's real father when he learns that Meg is his daughter. This is one of the books I would recommend teenagers to read. I'm sure that all teens will be able to connect to *Love, Meg* and will enjoy reading it like I did. (Adult Fiction-Teen PUR)



Mascot to the Rescue

by Peter David

Reviewed by Luc W.

McCracken Middle School

What if a comic book author decided your fate? This is what happened to Josh Miller, in the book *Mascot to the Rescue* by Peter David. Josh reads a comic book called Captain Major. Captain Major has a side kick named Mascot. Josh is hooked on the comic! He soon notices something strange in the relationship between reality and fantasy. What happens in the comic starts to happen to Josh in real life!

Suddenly, Josh needs to save his own life by changing the comic after he finds out Mascot will die in the next issue. Kelsey, a friend Josh saved from being bullied, goes on a mission with him to find Stan Kirby, the author of Captain Major. After escaping from the cops a few times, they get to Stan Kirby's house. Josh now has to decide his own fate! You'll have to read *Mascot to the Rescue* to find out how Josh avoids or faces death. You won't be sorry...Read! Read! Read! (Youth Fiction DAV)



Moribito: Guardian of the Spirit

by Nahoko Uehashi

Reviewed Brad S.

Old Orchard Junior High

Moribito: Guardian of the Spirit by Nahoko Uehashi was an amazing, action-packed book! I loved it.

When Balsa, a great bodyguard who is known throughout the land, rescued Chagum, the second prince of New Yogo, her troubles started. She expected a reward for rescuing the prince but was amazed when she was

invited to dine at the palace and stay overnight. While she was sleeping, she was approached by the queen and her son Chagum. The queen told Balsa that someone was trying to kill Chagum and make it look like an accident. In Chagum's sleep, he kept saying, "I want to go home." The queen wanted Chagum to leave the palace and asked Balsa to protect him. What will Balsa do? Will Chagum survive? What is really going on?

This book would definitely interest teens between the ages of ten and fourteen. The first part of *Moribito...* was so confusing that I had to reread it several times. After that, I was always anxious to keep reading and find out what would happen next. This was the best book I have ever read and I hope there will be a sequel. If you are one of those people who loves action-packed books with amazing plots, you will love *Moribito: Guardian of the Spirit!* (Youth Fiction UEH)



The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg

by Rodman Philbrick

Reviewed by Anthony J.

McCracken Middle School

What would you do if your older brother was sold to the army? That's what happened in the book *The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg* by Rodman Philbrick. When Homer's mom and dad died, Homer and his brother Harold were sent to his uncle's house. The bad part was his uncle did not take care of them. He treated them worse than the pig! When Harold was sold to the army, Homer did whatever he could to save him. He encountered two hunters that find slaves that have escaped. The two men threaten to kill him so he has to find a way to escape them AND save his brother.

If you like books with suspense, action, and characters that are eager to win, you will love this book. It's an easy read that will keep you wanting to read and read until you finish. If you are anything like me, you will want to read *The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg* over and over again. (Youth Fiction PHI)



The Mousehunter

by Alex Milway

Reviewed by Silvia B.

McCracken Middle School

My name is Silvia, and I read the book *The Mousehunter* by Alex Milway. This book is about a mousehunter named Emiline and her pet mouse Portly. Emiline and Portly are always up for an adventure, so they are very excited when they get to travel with the legendary Captain Drewshank and his crew in pursuit of the dreaded Captain Mousebeard.

On her journey Emiline makes some unlikely friends and learns about the past and secrets of her old master

Ishia Lovelock. This book is great for people who love adventure, comedy, suspense, and mice! I liked it so much--I wanted to have my own copy! So when you are looking for a new book, think about choosing *The Mousehunter* by Alex Milway; you won't be disappointed. (Youth Fiction MIL)



Oliver Nocturne

by Kevin Emerson

Reviewed by Paul R.

Old Orchard Junior High

Oliver Nocturne by Kevin Emerson, is about a vampire named Oliver, who looks like a teenage boy. He goes to a vampire school and lives in an underground world of vampires. During his regular medical check up, Oliver hears the doctor and his father talking about who Oliver really is and some sort of special responsibility he will have in the future. He doesn't understand what he overhears and is very curious about it.

Oliver becomes friends with two human teenagers: a boy named Dean and Emalie, a girl with a difficult life. They agree to help him learn more about his identity and what he has overheard. The three friends share danger and many adventures while trying to uncover the truth. What do they find out? Will they survive? You'll need to read the book to find out.

The beginning of the book was somewhat confusing to me, but that was not a big problem. The ending was not obvious from the beginning of the book, which would have spoiled it for me. Suspense kept building throughout the story, which actually made me want to read more and think, "Hmm, I wonder what will happen next?"

Oliver Nocturne would be good for those who enjoy vampire books. It also has a theme of teen friendships, like how a vampire teenager becomes friends with a human teenager. That's why I would recommend it to middle-school and high-school students. *Oliver Nocturne* is the first book in the series and would be a great book for you to read! (Youth Series Paperback OLIVER NOCTURNE)



The Roar

by Emma Clayton

Reviewed by Nelson C.

McCracken Middle School

How would you like having your twin sister kidnapped, not seeing her for a year, and not knowing if she's alive or not? Welcome to the world of Mika Smith who, even though he's told his twin sister, Ellie, is dead refuses to believe it. In the beginning of the book *The Roar* by Emma Clayton, you join Ellie (who is not dead) racing back home with her pet monkey, Puck. Because of an animal plague the whole world now thinks that animals are horrible things and now lives behind The Wall (which is bigger than the Great Wall of China). Ellie is bringing

Puck home to prove that the animal plague doesn't exist any more and people can move back to their homes on the other sides of the wall.

I would recommend this book to all boys ages 6th grade and up. I wouldn't recommend this book to girls because most of the story is in Mika's perspective and he thinks about a lot of things boys do. Once you start reading *The Roar*, you'll be swept off your feet into instant action and won't be able to put the book down.

(Youth Fiction CLA)



The Season

by Sarah MacLean

Reviewed by Roselie M.

McCracken Middle School

If you love a mysterious romance, jam packed with action and mystery, you'll love the book *The Season* by Sarah MacLean. The book begins with Lady Alexandra Stafford living in London in the year 1815. She has her best friends Vivian and Ella who are also very important ladies of London. This summer they must find true love.

They also want to find out one very important secret. An earl has died and Alexandra wants to find out who killed him and why. Alex has two brothers and one very close friend, Gavin. Whenever she goes to balls, Gavin always escorts her. They get into an even closer relationship. Alex must face many facts as the book goes on.

Sarah MacLean is very good at catching a reader's attention. She pulls you in and has you reading, not able to put the book down! Reading this mysterious book makes you question everything that is going on. It is also very descriptive and can make you imagine you are actually in the story. The message is powerful and you might even want to read *The Season* over and over again! (Youth Junior High Fiction MAC)



Skeleton Creek

by Patrick Carman

Reviewed by Daniel S.

McCracken Middle School

Skeleton Creek by Patrick Carman is a mystery novel with a completely new format. The book is partly written as the journal of a boy named Ryan who writes about his mysterious accident involving a phantom at "the dredge" (a two-story machine that mines for gold). The other part of the story is made up of videos that his best friend Sarah posts online for Ryan to watch, since they are not allowed to contact each other since the accident.

Now, the book will actually tell you to go to a website, type in a password, and then watch Sarah's videos online. You're either going to hate this or love it.

Personally, I didn't like it. All of the sudden, I'd have to stop reading and get on the computer. Plus, the videos are super creepy, which some people might like, but I didn't. Aside from the format, this book will make you want to keep reading all the way through. I just couldn't stop (until a video forced me to). I also liked the way the journal style helped develop Ryan as a character, but since you see Sarah through videos, it's harder to tell what she is like. Finally, the ending has such a huge cliffhanger that it wasn't as satisfying as I wanted...If Patrick Carman doesn't write a sequel I think I'll scream! Ultimately, if you like creepy mysteries, you'll probably like *Skeleton Creek* by Patrick Carman. (Youth Fiction CAR)



Sunny Holiday

by Coleen Murtagh Paratore

Reviewed by Priyanka P.

McCracken Middle School

If there is a will, there is a way. If you believe this concept, then *Sunny Holiday* by Coleen Murtagh Paratore is a book for you. It is an inspirational, realistic story about a 4th grade girl named Sunny who belongs to a family that is in financial crisis. Her mother is taking college classes and working too. Her hard-working mother instilled the thought that happy hearts can not be bought, meaning money can't buy important things like happiness.

So, Sunny wanted to celebrate a holiday for kids in January and she had a logical reason for it. Luckily, the opportunity came and she was able to express her thoughts and helped her community. To find out exactly how, you'll have to read *Sunny Holiday* by Coleen Murtagh Paratore. This author is famous for her realistic fiction. (Youth Fiction PAR)

WAIT... there's more!

Surf to www.skokiellibrary.info/coolkidscollection and browse our collection of book reviews written by Skokie Public Library staff. You may already know some of the reviewers and if you don't, you're sure to learn something new about them. You might even get to see what they looked like when they were younger than you!

And we have booklists, too. Tons of booklists!

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Who Stole Uncle Sam?

by Martha Freeman

Reviewed by Gianfranco D.

McCracken Middle School

Who Stole Uncle Sam? by Martha Freeman is a story about a boy named Alex and his best friend Yasmeen. They were detectives, but after solving enough cases, they decide to stop being detectives. But then Alex's baseball coach gets kidnapped, and he and Yasmeen can't help but try to solve this mystery. It's funny because they always make conclusions way too fast before they even can try to figure it out.

The ending of this book is very interesting and really surprising. There are so many twists and turns. The one person you think wouldn't do the crime is, of course, involved! To find out who the criminal is, you'll have to read *Who Stole Uncle Sam?* I don't think you'll regret it! (Youth Fiction FRE)

Get your hands on previous issues of **UNDER the COVER: Book Reviews for Teens** to see what students are saying about other great books for young readers! Back issues are available at Skokie Public Library and on the Web at www.skokiellibrary.info/direct/underthecover.asp.

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