



# under THE COVER



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

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Welcome to the final 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 Fairview South and McCracken Middle Schools. 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.

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## Absolutely Maybe

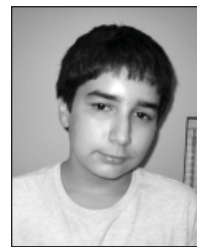
by Lisa Yee

Reviewed by Kelsey O.  
Fairview South School

*Absolutely Maybe* by Lisa Yee is about a teenage girl named Maybelline, also known as Maybe. She likes to be different, but her mom, Chessy, doesn't really care for Maybe or Maybe's feelings. When Chessy pushes Maybe too far after an incident with Maybe's soon to be eighth step-dad, she goes out on a quest with her two best friends, Ted and Hollywood (a.k.a. Daniel), to find Maybe's biological father. While they were in Hollywood, California, Ted finds a job and discovers his real nationality, while Hollywood enters a film contest. They find many surprises on the way, but will Maybe ever find her biological father?

I recommend this book to pre-teens and teens who are girls because it shows another side of life that only girls would understand. Anyone who likes to be different and has parents who treat you like you're a disgrace to them will

relate to this book. This book really offered me a view of another side of life. (Youth Junior High Fiction YEE)



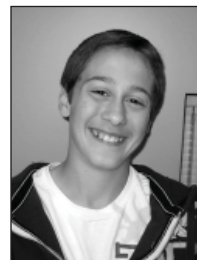
## Antsy Does Time

by Neal Shüsterman

Reviewed by Alexander M.  
Fairview South School

What does "living on borrowed time" really mean? To Gunnar Ümlaut, it means knowing your own expiration date. When Gunnar finds out he has less than 6 months to live, Antsy, his best friend, needs to find a meaningful thing to do for him. After a verbal fight with Gunnar, Antsy decides to do the one thing he can do to make Gunnar's 6 months last that much longer – he gives Gunnar 1 month of his life. This passionate idea soon spreads throughout the school, and everything just goes downhill from there...

In this realistic fiction narrative, Neal Shüsterman supplies a great balance of comedy and romance, along with a strong message about life and death throughout the book. *Antsy Does Time* consists of many twists and turns all the way through the novel and even a little surprise for the reader towards the end. Knowing from experience, any young adult exploring the depths of this comedic tale will without a doubt be unable to set the book down. I recommend this book for any teenager aged 12 to 15 so that the reader can relate and make connections throughout the story more easily. The next time you're looking for a humorous read, pick up *Antsy Does Time*, recline on a couch, and get reading! (Youth Fiction SHU)



## The Battle of the Red Hot Pepper Weenies

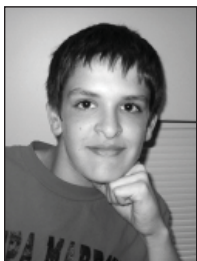
by David Lubar

Reviewed by Jordan G.  
Fairview South School

Have you ever been chased by mannequins? Or have you ever been on a carnival ride that suddenly turned into a blender grating you into chili? Well, the children in *The Battle of the Red Hot*

*Pepper Weenies* have similar experiences. In these deranged whacked out stories anything can happen. Instead of candy, a man-eating spider can come out of a piñata at a child's birthday party. Even blood sucking bugs can make you smarter (or not).

This is an interesting but disturbing book full of surprises. Teens between the ages of 12 to 16 would enjoy these warped and creepy tales. You'll never know what will happen next. One moment you're walking down a hallway, you turn a corner, and a new twist of events will jump out to spook you. Anyone who enjoys a good thriller of the mind will appreciate the newest collection of chilling and electrifying stories written by David Lubar. *The Battle of the Red Hot Pepper Weenies* will grasp you by the wrists and direct you into a world of madness. It is as addicting as a sweet bar of chocolate, but as mesmerizing as a shimmering ghost. Just remember to pick up a copy of this spine-tingling collection; it won't let you down. (Youth Fiction LUB)



### **The Best Bad Luck I Have Ever Had**

by Kristin Levine

**Reviewed by Tommy G.**

Fairview South

Even your most hated enemy could become your friend. Discover this account by opening the front page of *The Best Bad Luck I Have Ever Had* by Kristin Levine. One day a little African American girl named Emma Walker and her family move to Alabama. To welcome the new neighbors a mother of ten sends her 12-year-old son, Dit, to show Emma around and do some fun activities. Because of the community's racism, Dit hates this girl just as much as all his other friends, such as Big Foot the Sheriff. Over time as Dit hangs around with Emma, he begins to actually have fun. But as the beginning of school approaches, his relationships will change forever. Sure you have friends, but which ones are the good kinds?

I would say this book is best for 12- to 15-year-olds. It is very suspenseful, but at times there are boring parts; however, when that clincher catches you, you never free yourself from this great book. This novel has great descriptions and it shows deep thoughts and feelings about the characters. Kristin Levine is an author who writes great books that everyone should read. I think that this is one journey that many kids would like to embark on. This is one awesome book. (Youth Fiction LEV)



### **The Chosen One**

by Carol Lynch Williams

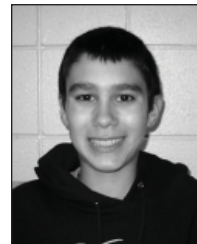
**Reviewed by Emma L.**

Fairview South School

*The Chosen One* is about a thirteen year old girl, Kyra, living in a polygamous community. Her father has three wives and many kids. She is living a decent life, doing chores, taking care of her family, playing piano, and praying. Everything is

going smoothly until the prophet declares she is to marry her 60-year-old uncle. It's gross but she can't do anything about it. Her father's pleading doesn't help at all. Will Kyra stay and face the doom of marrying her uncle?

I highly recommend this book. It was interesting to learn the lifestyle of Polygamists through the eyes of an innocent girl. The story was realistic but sad. It made me realize how lucky I am to have the family into which I was born. It was compelling to fight your way through the book with Kyra. This book is good for Junior High students because they are the same age as Kyra and they can relate to her. (Youth Junior High Fiction WIL)



### **Dying to Meet You**

by Kate Klise

**Reviewed by Eli G.**

Fairview South School

The book I read was *Dying to Meet You* by Kate Klise. Have you ever tried to write a book, poem, essay, or anything writing wise at all? If so, have you also gotten "writers' block?" Did something happen like a divorce? Well that's what happens to Mr. Grumply. He has written a whole series of books, called the Ghost Tamer Series. He has written 12 books so far. But now he is on a race against time to finish his 13th book. Maybe it's the unlucky number in his series. His agent suggested a summer home to finish the 13th book. After a couple of choices he chooses a house on 43 Old Cemetery Road. When he gets there, he finds out he has a house mate. A young boy named Seymour also lives in the house with Mr. Grumply now and there is someone mysterious in the house as well. So read the book to find out if he finishes the book and who the mysterious house mate might be.

I would recommend this book because it's a nice, short book that keeps moving--no really long boring parts like some other longer books. Also, it is part realistic and part fantasy. You will find out how it blends together when you read it, then you will get it. Someone will like this book if they enjoy books that move quickly without having slow parts. That is why I chose this book, because it is an easy read and very interesting. (Youth Fiction KLI)



### **Eternal**

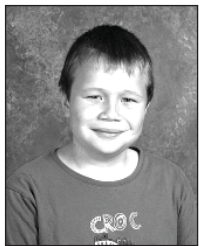
by Cynthia Leitich Smith

**Reviewed by Khatool H.**

McCracken Middle School

Do you love tragic love stories? If so, you really should read *Eternal* by Cynthia Leitich Smith. This story is like *Romeo and Juliet* with a vampire and an angel as the main characters! Miranda is a newly formed vampire who has no idea that her guardian angel Zachary, who has been trying to keep her safe since her birth, is in love with her. In fact, she doesn't even know he exists until he breaks all the rules and shows himself to her. Now it is up to Zachary to try to save Miranda from the dark forces she is involved in.

Will Zachary be able to save Miranda? Can a relationship between opposites as extreme as an angel and a vampire work out? What will happen to these star-crossed lovers? To find out, you'll have to read *Eternal* by Cynthia Leitch Smith. It is thrilling, supernatural romance that you won't regret reading! (Adult Fiction Teen SMI)



### Football Champ

by Tim Green

Review by Nelson C.  
McCracken Middle School

How would you like to be lied to and have your face plastered all over the news because a reporter thinks you are helping an NFL team to cheat? You wouldn't, would you? Well, step into the world of Troy White, a 12-year-old kid whose life has gone topsy turvy in only a couple of months.

*Football Champ* is Tim Green's third book about football. Tim Green also happens to be a retired NFL player, so he knows about the sport. *Football Champ* picks up where his first book, *Football Genius*, leaves off. In *Football Champ* Troy has some trouble with the media. A reporter named Brent Peele thinks that Troy is stealing plays for the Atlanta Falcons and will stop at nothing to expose Troy, the Falcons' ball boy. On top of this Troy is preparing for a playoff game for the Duluth Tigers, the peewee football team he quarterbacks for, which only adds to the excitement.

I would recommend this book to anyone that loves football, and it might also help to read *Football Genius* before you pick up this great book, *Football Champ* by Tim Green. (Youth Fiction GRE)



### Geek Chic: The Zoey Zone

by Margie Palatini

Reviewed by Matthew H.  
McCracken Middle School

*Geek Chic: The Zoey Zone* by Margie Palatini is about the girl Zoey who is almost 11 years old and has 198 days until 6th grade starts. Zoey desperately wants to become popular or "chic" before 6th grade starts, so she can sit at the primo lunch table. Zoey feels that the only way to become chic is to get a makeover from a fairy godmother. While she waits for her godmother to come, she tells past school experiences and other funny stories.

Then one day at school, people from *U Girl* magazine come to do an article on Zoey's school. They meet Zoey and later ask her to come to *U Girl* magazine headquarters in New York! But why? Read this book, and you will find out. It is a hilarious book with a good lesson in the end. If you like humor, then *Geek Chic: The Zoey Zone* is a good book for you. (Youth Fiction PAL)



### Jane in Bloom

by Deborah Lytton

Reviewed by Julia O.  
Fairview South School

The book, *Jane in Bloom*, is a great book with which to cuddle-up and read! Thirteen-year-old Jane has never gotten much attention; the attention always went to her older sister, Lizzie, who seems perfect, gets straight A's, is very athletic, and behaves well. Now it's Jane's 13th birthday and she thinks she will finally get some attention now that she's older, but Jane was wrong. Lizzie is getting even more attention now that she has an eating disorder. When that eating disorder turns fatal, Jane has to overcome the loss of her beloved sister, but she will get some help on the way from a few great friends!

I really loved this book because I couldn't stop turning the pages. This book made me cry and made me laugh. I couldn't stop reading until I finished the book! I would recommend this book to anyone who is not afraid to cry. It's a book for teenagers because it might be harder to understand if you're under 13. This was a great story and I highly recommend this novel. (Youth Junior High Fiction LYT)



### Just One Wish

by Janette Rallison

Review By Abby R.  
McCracken Middle School

*Just One Wish* by Janette Rallison, is about a girl named Annika Truman. Annika's little brother Jeremy has a brain tumor and has to have surgery to remove it. But Jeremy is 6 and thinks he may die. So, to make sure her little brother has faith about the surgery, Annika tells him to wish for something, and a "genie" Annika met will make it come true. But Jeremy's wish will be harder to grant than Annika thinks! Her brother wishes that Robin Hood (the actor Steve Raleigh), from his favorite TV show Teen Robin Hood would come and visit him. So Annika, along with her best friend Madison, set off for Hollywood. But seeing, let alone talking to, Steve Raleigh will be harder than they think. Join Annika and Madison on their bumpy and adventurous ride, as they set off to get a "hunky" TV star to visit Jeremy before his surgery. Trust me, you won't regret reading this book.

*Just One Wish* is a book that brings a mix of different emotions. It is part comedy, part sorrow, part happiness and a big part faith. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes a good funny and witty book, because this is a laugh-out-loud kind of book. So look for *Just One Wish* at your library today! (Youth Junior High Fiction RAL and Adult Fiction-Teen RAL)





### Marcelo in the Real World

by Francisco X. Stork

Reviewed by Mahnoor B.  
Fairview South School

*“The term ‘cognitive disorder’ implies there is something wrong with the way I think or the way I perceive reality. I perceive reality just fine. Sometimes I perceive more reality than others.”*

Marcelo Sandoval is different from others. He can hear some type of music nobody else can hear and calls it “IM.” His father, Arturo decides to let him take a job at the law firm in the mailroom so he can understand what it is like living in the real world. His coworker dislikes him at first but seems to like him step by step. When he finds a picture of a girl with a face that is different from others, he learns that the world is made for happiness and danger and he wants to help fight danger. Soon, Marcelo learns about love, hatred, jealousy, and more.

I would recommend *Marcelo in the Real World* by Francisco X. Stork because this theme is very different from other books I’ve read. Many books talk about fitting in and saving the world except this book talks about someone who wants to help others even if they don’t know him. I like this book because the main character is so nice and I wished more people could be like Marcelo. In our world, there are not many people who could risk their life for others. (Adult Fiction-Teen STO)



### Peace, Love, & Baby Ducks

by Lauren Myracle

Reviewed by Megan P.  
McCracken Middle School

*Peace, Love, & Baby Ducks* by Lauren Myracle is the heartwarming and funny story of 15-year-old Carly, who has grown up in a world of pink and purple Southern Girls, and her younger sister, Anna, who has always kept her older sister grounded. That is, until now. When Carly gets back from nature camp, 14-year-old Anna has changed. Instead of being down to earth, she has turned into the plastic-pink girlie-girl that they both promised each other would never happen to them. Add boys into the situation, and you’ve got a whole new problem!

Through their problems and adventures, Carly and Anna show both the humorous and the serious side of sisterhood throughout the book. They are realistic characters that you can easily relate to, especially if you have a sister yourself! If you’ve enjoyed Lauren Myracle’s other books (or even if you haven’t), you’ll love *Peace, Love, & Baby Ducks* by Lauren Myracle. (Youth Junior High Fiction MYR)



### The Princess and the Unicorn

by Carol Hughes

Reviewed by Rachel B.  
Fairview South School

Do you like stories with unicorns, fairies, and princesses? If you do, then this is the book for you! This story takes place in present day England. A fairy named Joyce, and a Princess named Eleanor, seem to live in different worlds. Even though Joyce lives in a forest near the Swinley Castle where Princess Eleanor lives, none of the fairies have ever gone outside the forest, and they think humans are only a myth in the forest. Meanwhile, Eleanor lives in the Castle and doesn’t know anything about the existence of fairies.

Living in the forest is a unicorn, and if it leaves the forest, the forest and the unicorn will die. But one day, Joyce is watching the unicorn when she sees the Princess Eleanor with her governess just outside the forest. Joyce is horrified. The princess sees the unicorn and takes it to the palace. Joyce knows she must get the unicorn back, so she sets off to the palace to return it to the forest before the forest dies.

*The Princess and the Unicorn* is a fantasy story, mainly for girls from ages 10 to 13, since it is a pretty easy read and doesn’t have huge vocabulary. However, this may not be the right book for all 10 to 13-year-old girls. I didn’t really like this book, because it was too girly for me and I know not all girls are girly enough to like this book. There are some girls who enjoy stories with fairies and unicorns, but this book wasn’t the book for me. (Youth Fiction HUG)



### Seeing Red

by Anne Louise MacDonald

Reviewed by Summer B.  
Fairview South School

*Seeing Red* is about a boy named Frankie Uccello who believes he can dream the future. Throughout the story he gets to know the “weird girl,” Maura Lee, and her father. Frankie learns that looks may be deceiving. He also has a fear of horses and he, out of all people, gets stuck working with them. He sneaks behind his mom’s back and takes time to heal an injured bird. He risks his life and saves others. If you’re the type of person who likes horses and wants to know what it’s like dreaming the future then *Seeing Red* is the book for you.

I would recommend this book to anybody between the ages of 12 and 16. The reason I would only recommend it to people at this age is because it talks a little about suicide and I don’t think that that would be appropriate for children under the age of 12. Other than that *Seeing Red* was an amazing book that you’ll love! So read it. (Youth Fiction MAC)



## The Smell of Old Lady Perfume

by Claudia Guadalupe Martinez

Reviewed by Karli G.

McCracken Middle School

Chela Gonzalez's life is perfect. She has the perfect life with her older brother, Angel Jr., a younger brother named Clark, older sister Sylvia, and mom and dad. Chela has her best friend Nora by her side, and the new school year is about to start. This was Chela's life until the one day her life became altered. Chela's mom woke Chela up for the first day of school. This is strange because Chela's dad always wakes her up for school. Later on that day, Chela's life takes a turn for the worse as she finds out what really happened to her dad. As if this wasn't enough, Nora has stopped her friendship with Chela because she wanted to hang out with the popular crowd instead of Chela, her lifelong friend.

Will Chela's friendship be repaired? What happened to Chela's dad? Will he be okay? What will happen to Chela??? You'll have to read this fantastic book to find out. I would recommend this book to 11-year-olds and up because anyone under this age would not comprehend it or connect to the characters. I also think this book is geared toward girls because the protagonist is a girl, so many feminine problems and details are incorporated into the text. Overall, I think *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume* by Claudia Guadalupe Martinez is an entertaining book. (Youth Fiction MAR)



## Sophomore Switch

by Abby McDonald

Reviewed by Emily T.

Fairview South School

*Sophomore Switch* by Abby McDonald is a really fun story! It is from the perspective of two very different girls, Emily and Natasha. Emily is English and goes to school at the prestigious Oxford University. She likes schedules and studying, and her boyfriend Sebastian has just ended their relationship. Emily feels suffocated from the controlled life she lives that has been planned out by her and her father. So, she signs up last minute for a semester abroad. What she did not expect was to be trading lives with Natasha, a sophomore at the University of California at Santa Barbara. She's pretty much the opposite of Emily; she's fun-loving, unorganized, and her GPA barely makes a 3.0. But Tasha has to leave home to escape her recent popularity in the tabloids over a big misunderstanding. *Sophomore Switch* follows Emily and Natasha on their adventures at their new schools, and through email, they give advice to one another on how to fit in better in their new environments.

I would recommend this book for teenage girls because it is more like a chick flick, and it also has some content that's not very appropriate for younger children. But, I would definitely recommend *Sophomore Switch* because

it's a great book to which many people can relate. I loved *Sophomore Switch* because the characters are very loveable, relatable, and you can see how they change and become better versions of themselves during their semesters abroad. (Adult Fiction-Teen MCD)



## Sophomore Undercover

by Ben Esch

Reviewed by Nancy H.

Fairview South School

Meet Dixie Nguyen, the only Asian kid in his town, Stilton, California, living with his adoptee family, the Prestos. He's also the one and only reporter for the school newspaper. Trying to get a big break and get a big scoop just in time for Homecoming week and for his college application, Dixie investigates the jocks of school for what he suspects, their "meth" use. While investigating, he somehow trips and stabs a syringe into a security guard and lands up in therapy. While there, he meets a Goth cheerleader and the school counselor "Huggy Bear." Will Dixie ever get his big break?

*Sophomore Undercover* is a good book for those who enjoy realistic fiction and comedy. It has a good amount of teenage humor and profanity, so I'd recommend it more for teenagers fourteen and up. With Dixie and all his experiences, it's hard to call this book a boring read; although, at a few parts it might lack a little action, but otherwise it's nicely balanced. For those who do decide to read *Sophomore Undercover*, I hope you enjoy this book as much as I did. (Adult Fiction-Teen ESC)



## Stop Me if You've Heard This One Before

by David Yoo

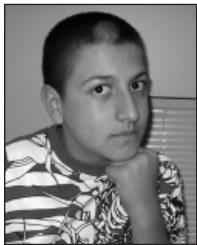
Reviewed by Sakinah R.

Fairview South School

Albert Kim is trying to survive high school when summer vacation finally gives him relief. His parents nag at him to get a job. He figured that maybe it will give him something to do over the summer. He gets a job at the hotel 10 minutes away. There he finds out that his co-worker is Mia Stone, the prettiest and most popular girl in the grade. Together they have to vacuum every single room for a wedding and it's been a long time since they've been cleaned. At first they don't talk, but then they do and they make each other laugh. Albert found out that Mia broke up with Ryan Stackhouse, the king of the grade, even though they have been together for 3 years straight. Now that they're not together Mia's parents keep on bugging her to get back together with him. That's why Mia got this job and needs it to last all summer. Then Ryan keeps on calling her every minute of the day. What will happen between the two co-workers and will that change? Read the book to find out.

I recommend this book because it's a very good page turner and there are surprises everywhere. If you like drama,

suspense, and funny books then you will like this one.  
(Youth Junior High Fiction YOO)



### A Taste for Red

by Lewis Harris

Reviewed by Arnold H.  
Fairview South School

Would you like to be a vampire? Svetlana Grimm is one; she just started a new school because she was always home-schooled. Svetlana only eats red food, sleeps under her bed, and can read people's minds. When Svetlana starts public school, people start disappearing; first her science teacher and then two girls at her school. Not only are people vanishing, but her teacher can also tap into people's minds. Who is responsible? Is her new teacher a vampire? You'll have to read the book to find out.

I would recommend this novel to people who enjoy reading suspenseful stories and who are over 11 years old because of some teen situations. This book becomes really addicting after you reach the juicy parts; you will not be able to put the book back down. I really enjoyed reading it; this book is full of suspense and the ending is action packed. So if you like suspenseful vampire books, this is the book for you. (Youth Fiction HAR)



### Wintergirls

by Laurie Halse Anderson

Reviewed by Megan P.  
McCracken Middle School

*Wintergirls* is the new book by celebrated author Laurie Halse Anderson (famous for *Speak*, *Fever 1793*, and others). In this excellent book, Lia and Cassie were once best friends, or so they said. Now an eating disorder has taken over their lives and they're in a race to be the skinniest girl at school, which turns out to be a race to the death. You can see the numbers slowly lowering: size zero, double zero, 101lbs., 96lbs., 89lbs.

When Cassie finally beats Lia in the race to death, Lia doesn't know what to do. After hospital stays and several rehab visits, everyone thinks Lia is getting better, but she is secretly getting worse. In this dark and heartbreaking story of anorexia, no one knows what will happen to Lia. I highly recommend *Wintergirls* by Laurie Halse Anderson to anyone who enjoys realistic fiction. (Youth Junior High Fiction AND and Adult Fiction Teen AND)



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### WAIT... there's more!

Surf to [skokieliibrary.info/coolkidscollection](http://skokieliibrary.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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### Join the conversation!



Earlier this year, Skokie Public Library launched its family of blogs. The entries are written by staff from all around the Library with a lighthearted lean toward wit, wisdom, information, and conversation. Whether it's a new book or movie release, tech tips from the Web, photo highlights of a stage performance, or little-known facts about how Skokie Public Library comes to life, you'll find it on the Web at [blogs.skokieliibrary.info](http://blogs.skokieliibrary.info).

- The **Answer** features facts, information, and interesting questions (with answers!)
- The **Bookshelf** discusses the best in books for adult and young adult readers
- The **Explorer** mixes it up for kids with reviews of our favorite books, fun stuff on the Web, and an occasional "backstage tour" of the Library
- The **Radar** points to cool websites and technology
- The **Soapbox** provides Library news and information
- The **Studio** shines a spotlight on the latest in music and movies

Meet us on the Web and join our staff, your friends, classmates, and the community for Library information and casual conversation. We'll be looking for you!

### What is a "blog," anyway?

In full, *Web log* or *weblog*. An online journal where an individual, group, or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts, or beliefs. Some blogs operate mainly as news filters, collecting various online sources and adding short comments and Internet links. Other blogs concentrate on presenting original material. In addition, many blogs provide a forum to allow visitors to leave comments and interact with the publisher. *To blog* is the act of composing material for a blog. Materials are largely written, but pictures, audio, and videos are important elements of many blogs. The *blogosphere* is the online universe of blogs.\*

\* "blog." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2009. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Library Edition. 12 Mar. 2009 <<http://library.eb.com/resources.skokieliibrary.info/eb/article-9404269>>.