Gallo, Donald, editor

No Easy Answers: Short Stories about Teenagers Making Tough Choices

Reviewed by William R. Mollineaux
English Teacher
Sedgwick Middle School
West Hartford, Connecticut

Delacorte Press, 1997. 323 pp. $16.95

How did I get myself into this? It seemed like a good idea at the time. What do I do now? How do I get myself out of this? I'm sorry. Teenagers frequently utter these questions and statements when they "find themselves in situations that test the strength of their character," and Gallo masterfully uses them as the five sections into which teenagers have "to make moral choices, to face the consequences of their actions, to consider what it means to 'do the right things.'"

As in his previous works, Gallo includes superb writers such as Alden Carter, M. E. Kerr, David Klass, Ron Koertge, Gloria Miklowitz, Walter Dean Myers, Lensey Namioka, Graham Salisbury, Will Weaver, and Virginia Euwer Wolff. While there are no easy answers to the problems and issues raised – computer blackmail, peer pressure, parental pressure, gang violence, drugs, sex, pregnancy, war, retaliation, and atonement – this book provides an easy and fruitful place to start pondering answers.

The ALAN Review, Winter 1998
William R. Mollineaux; Sedgwick Middle School, Connecticut

Vivelo, Jackie

Chills in the Night: Tales That Will Haunt You


Reviewed by Lisa R. Wroble
Librarian
Redford Twp. District Library
Redford, Michigan

Though the eight short stories in this volume are not nightmarishly scary, they are tales that will haunt you, just as the subtitle states. Two stories are set in old houses with suspicious pasts. A ride on a dumbwaiter traps two boys in the 1930s with the crazy lady who once owned the house. What eerie nothingness lurks in a house that was once a funeral parlor? Is the schoolhouse in a coal mining town really haunted? A boy is given a haunted book of short stories by his
parlor? Is the schoolhouse in a coal mining town really haunted? A boy is given a haunted book of ghost stories by his uncle, who claims the stories disappear and change. If this is true, why does he impulsively reread the same story until he feels he lives it? Then why can't he find that same story so a friend can read it? Each story provides clues to the puzzle, so each conclusion is satisfying. Reluctant readers may enjoy these quick, captivating tales.

The ALAN Review, Winter 1998
Lisa A Wroble; Redford Twp. District Library, Michigan

Chan, Gillian
Golden Girl and Other Stories
Reviewed by Gary D. Schmidt
Professor of English
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan


If a work of young adult literature is to succeed, it must speak with a true voice. And therein lies the strength of these two collection of short stories by Canadian writer Gillian Chan. Each collection holds five first-person narratives that capture a young adult voice in very different, very moving, and very authentic ways. The stories are all about students at Elmwood High School, set near Hamilton, Ontario; and the characters interweave among them, giving new perspectives, yielding new insights as each character tells his or her own story. The stories often end at a crossroads, as the speaker, having come to certain realizations, must decide how to proceed. This is true for the klutz who is set up by the golden girl, for the jock who is manipulated, for the young girl consumed by jealousy, for the young boy hurt by a father's selfish goals, for the girl whose mother has moved into a cloying madness, for the school bully who, in the most moving of the stories, is granted unexpected grace. Avoiding the easy stereotypes, Chan has focused on real characters who are rounded into complexity, whose motives are challenged by self-revelations that startle them. Readers will recognize not just the types; they will recognize themselves.

The ALAN Review, Winter 1998
Gary Schmidt; Calvin College

Mazer, Harry
Twelve Shots: Outstanding Short Stories about Guns Reviewed by Chris Crowe
Associate Professor of English
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah

Twelve Shots: Outstanding Short Stories about Guns, Edited by Harry Mazer; ISBN: 0-385-32238-0;
Delacorte, 1997. 229 pp. $15.95

One might expect a collection of short stories about guns written for young adults to take one side or the other on gun control. Mazer has managed to avoid taking sides by pulling together a batch of short stories by notable YA writers (Walter Dean Myers, Chris Lynch, Richard Peck, Ron Koertge, and others) that fairly cover the gun control continuum. Myers' "Brief Case" takes readers inside the head of an inner-city kid who finds a pistol he sees as an "equalizer." Nancy Springer's "Fresh Meat" shows that, used properly, guns can serve a valuable purpose. "Shotgun Cheatham's Last Night above Ground" by Peck uses a gun in a comic ending, while Lynch's "Cocked and Locked" reminds readers how scary guns can be in the hands of unbalanced kids. If I had to choose a favorite story, it would be Frederick Busch's "Custody," a tale of a young boy's pain and confusion over his parents' divorce and his
Frederick Busch's "Custody," a tale of a young boy's pain and confusion over his parents' divorce and his contemplation of suicide as a means to solve his problems. These stories are well written by some of the best authors in the business and are sure to appeal to a wide range of readers. This book, read with Paulsen's *The Rifle*, would lead to interesting class discussions about guns and gun ownership in the United States.

*The ALAN Review*, Winter 1998
Chris Crowe; Brigham Young University

**Clip and File Reviews of New Hardcover Fiction**

Gary M. Salvner, editor

Cadnum, Michael

*Edge*

Reviewed by Jim Brewbaker
Chair, Curriculum and Instruction
Columbus State University
Columbus, Georgia

*Edge* by Michael Cadnum Crime/Families in Crisis

*Edge* is a well-crafted nailbiter reminiscent of Robert Cormier. On the edge of the gang world in Oakland, rebellious Zachary, sixteen years old, drops out of high school but may have passed his GED exam. His scientist father – divorced and remarried to the much younger Sofia – is seriously wounded in a carjacking. This incident brings Zachary, his mother, and Sofia closer together by necessity – in spite of ill feelings. The likely assailant is arrested but released due to inadequate evidence. Zachary stalks the suspect, contemplating murder.

Michael Cadnum is a strong new voice in YA lit. His characters are exceptionally well drawn, both adults and teenagers. *Edge* deals with a gritty contemporary phenomenon; yet Zachary's decision to throw away his weapon is believably on the side of the angels. On the downside, Zachary, Cadnum's creation, has the insights, even the phraseology, more often associated with savvy adults than the most precocious teen. On balance, *Edge* is a winner from the talented Cadnum – for ages 14 and above.

*The ALAN Review* Jim Brewbaker
Winter 1998 Columbus State University

Lyon, George Ella

*With a Hammer for My Heart*

Reviewed by Ted Hipple
Professor of Education
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee

*With a Hammer for My Heart* by George Ella Lyon Family Troubles

Set in rural and impoverished Appalachia, this novel of many voices (nine different first-person narrators) centers on Lawanda, a headstrong fifteen-year-old daughter of unlettered but very decent parents. Selling magazines for school money, Lawanda becomes friends with old Amos Garland, a reclusive drunk who lives in an abandoned school bus and
who later writes in his diary suggestive comments about Lawanda that permit the inference of sexual activity between them. The reader knows that this is a false inference, but the police and Lawanda’s family do not; and, when the diary is discovered, all hell breaks loose. This is a powerful novel, compelling, engagingly written, with strongly painted characters, including Lawanda’s Mamaw, who heals by the laying on of hands and proclaims that God is a woman. I recommend this one highly.

The ALAN Review
Ted Hipple
Winter 1998 University of Tennessee

Voigt, Cynthia

Bad, Badder, Baddest

Reviewed by Elizabeth Poe
Associate Professor of English
Radford University
Radford, Virginia

Bad, Badder, Baddest by Cynthia Voigt Friendship/Divorce

Michelle Angela (Mikey) Elsinger and Margalos Epps, of Bad Girls fame, are back; and their friendship is as strong, tumultuous, and entertaining as ever. Mikey is distressed because her parents are talking divorce, and she does not want them to ruin her life by making her move again. She and Margalo attempt various strategies to save the Elsingers’ marriage. Mikey tries to lessen the strain in her parents’ relationship by living up to her middle name and becoming the perfect child. When this plan fails, she decides to cause havoc by running away. This act does not work either. In fact, it brings her parents’ problems to a head because Gianette St. Etienne, the new (and very bad) girl in their sixth-grade class, blackmails Mr. and Mrs. Elsinger with information about Mikey and Margalo’s whereabouts. Mikey’s parents do end up separating, but Mikey will not have to change schools and can remain best friends with Margalo.

Readers who enjoyed Bad Girls will welcome these eleven-year-olds’ perspectives on their parents’ relationships.

The ALAN Review
Elizabeth Poe
Winter 1998 Radford University

Pierce, Tamora

Circle of Magic #1: Sandry’s Book

Reviewed by Joanne Peters
Teacher-Librarian
Kelvin High School
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Circle of Magic #1: Sandry’s Book by Tamora Pierce Fantasy/Magic

Magic can take many forms: craft, enchantment, and prognostication. Lady Sandrilene fa Toren (the Sandry of the title) is fascinated by magic and, in particular, the magic that turns fibers into yarn and thence into embroideries and cloth. As the daughter of nobles, the weft of her life has been set. However, plague and civil war in her home country of Hatar alter the fabric of her life: orphaned, she arrives in Emelan, home to the Winding Circle Temple, a renowned center of magic and learning. At the temple, Sandry meets three other young cast-offs, and together they share the
experiences of adapting to the discipline of their new community, learning their individual crafts, and becoming initiates in magic. Younger readers may find the multiple points of view a bit confusing at first, but once underway, the many strands of the story intertwine like the threads of Sandry's spindles. A promising first volume in a new fantasy/magic/adventure series.

*The ALAN Review* Joanne Peters
Winter 1998 Kelvin High School, Winnipeg

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**Clip and File Reviews of New Fiction and Nonfiction Hardbacks**

*Gary M. Salvner, editor*

Rabe, Berniece

*Hiding Mr. McMulty*

Reviewed by Laura M. Zaidman
Professor of English
University of South Carolina
Sumter, South Carolina

*Hiding Mr. McMulty* by Berniece Rabe Historical Fiction

The Depression has made life difficult in rural southeastern Missouri in 1937, but a devastating flood makes hard times even worse by destroying homes and farm animals. When a white landowner unjustly evicts black sharecropper Mr. McMulty to provide lodging for the Whitleys, a white family, the man exacts his revenge on the landowner’s prized calf. To protect him from being lynched by the Ku Klux Klan, eleven-year-old Rass Whitley hides McMulty in the barn and puts his own family in danger of the Klan’s retribution.

Recommended for older adolescents who enjoy stories about family and racial conflicts, this novel explores with intelligence and sensitivity the complexities of human relationships. Readers will find this historical account far from boring, for it is rich in detail with graphic descriptions – a cow being butchered, an abscess being lanced, a man tarred and feathered. Having grown up in this region of Missouri, Rabe succeeds with authentic setting, realistic dialect, believable characters, and a fast-paced, suspenseful plot.

*The ALAN Review* Laura M. Zaidman
Winter 1998 University of South Carolina

Wisler, G. Clifton

*Mustang Flats*

Reviewed by Jennifer Moreland
Media Specialist
Redlands Middle School
Grand Junction, Colorado

*Mustang Flats* by G. Clifton Wisler Fathers and Sons/Civil War

Fourteen-year-old Alby’s childhood came to an abrupt halt four years ago when his father left to fight in the Civil War. Now Pa has returned, bitter at the loss of a leg and haunted by nightmares of the conflict. Alby bears the brunt of his father’s unhappiness, until a wild horse roundup at Mustang Flats brings issues to a head.
father's unhappiness, until a wild horse roundup at Mustang Flats brings issues to a head.

The plot moves along briskly, but one gets the impression that 116 pages are inadequate for the author to flesh out the story, its Texas setting, and the characters. While Alby's family is financially devastated by the long-term effects of the war, a tornado, and unwise investments in Confederate bonds, the consequences never quite seem to hit home. The roundup proceeds without a hitch, Pa and Alby arrive at an understanding, and all's well that ends well.

Better readers may feel slighted, but reluctant readers will find sufficient action to hold their interest without the burden of long descriptive passages.

The ALAN Review Jennifer Moreland
Winter 1998 Redlands Middle School, Colorado

Rinaldi, Ann

*An Acquaintance with Darkness*

Reviewed by Joan Nist
Professor Emerita
Auburn University
Auburn, Georgia

*An Acquaintance with Darkness* 1860s Medicine/Assassination Conspiracy

by Ann Rinaldi

Historical novelist Ann Rinaldi sets *An Acquaintance with Darkness* in Washington at the time of Lincoln's assassination. Fourteen-year-old Emily's Union officer father has been killed at Chancellorsville, and her consumptive Southern-belle mother has just died. Living with her dedicated doctor uncle, Emily learns about the backward medical knowledge of the times and concurrent research need for cadavers, often procured illegally, sometimes by body snatching. Her friendship with Annie Surratt gives added plot dimension by showing the "Secesh" (Southern Secessionist) conspiracy, led by Booth, which resulted in the hangings of Annie's mother and others. Rinaldi integrates real people from history such as Mrs. Lincoln's black dressmaker, Elizabeth Keckley, with the fictional characters. An appended "Author's Notes" and a one-page bibliography indicate Rinaldi's research in both medical and conspiracy backgrounds, and the novel includes authentic details such as the Sultana riverboat disaster and the Grand Review parade.

The ALAN Review Joan Nist
Winter 1998 Auburn University

Meyer, Carolyn

*Jubilee Journey*

Reviewed by John H. Bushman
Professor of Education
University of Kansas
Ottawa, Kansas

*Jubilee Journey* by Carolyn Meyer Interracial Marriage/Identity

Is she black? Is she white? Emily Rose Chartier is both, or "double" as Mother Rose tells her. Growing up in a biracial family, she has always felt out of place. As she grows up and starts to think about her identity, she begins to question the reasons behind her parents' marriage and the consequences of her biracial heritage.

The ALAN Review Joan Nist
Winter 1998 Auburn University
family in New England, thirteen-year-old Emily believes it is a privilege to be a "double." But during her trip to Texas to visit her great-grandmother, Rose Lee Jefferson, Emily discovers that no one cares about her father’s white heritage or her progressive Connecticut school. In Jubilee Journey Carolyn Meyer introduces a new generation of Jeffersons – first started in Meyer’s White Lilacs. On her family’s visit to Texas, Emily Rose learns through her great-grandmother of the strength and love that still exists even though racism is still as strong as ever. Emily and her brother Steven can attest to the prevalent racist attitudes. Meyer gives her readers a compelling story about four generations of one family’s history and an honest and frank portrayal of the issues many biracial teenagers encounter.

The ALAN Review John. H. Bushman
Winter 1998 University of Kansas

Clip and File Reviews of New Poetry and Prose Hardbacks

Gary M. Salvner, editor

Glenn, Mel

Jump Ball: A Basketball Season in Poems

Reviewed by Mike Angelotti
Professor of English Education
University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma

Jump Ball: A Basketball Season in Poems by Mel Glenn Sports/Poetry

Characteristic of Mel Glenn’s approach to telling a story, the narrative unfolds mainly through a series of stream-of-consciousness poems titled simply by character names. Interspersed are news broadcasts, school public address announcements, and conversations between townspeople. There is no mystery to the plot. The reader knows early on that the bus carrying the Tower High School Tiger basketball team overturns on an icy upstate road enroute to the state playoffs. At book’s end is a chilling list of injuries and deaths, made more tragic by the reader’s intimate knowledge of the life stories of those on the bus. None anticipated the suddenness and the ironies of accidental death and personal loss. Life and sports become the same thing, at different times each the metaphor for the other. There are good poems that will resonate with students, and good lines: “Swish, swish, the sound of the street./Basketball, basketball, move to the beat.”

The ALAN Review Mike Angelotti
Winter 1998 University of Oklahoma

Bolden, Tonya

And Not Afraid To Dare: The Stories of Ten African-American Women

Reviewed by Edna Earl Edwards
Professor Emerita
State University of West Georgia
Carrollton, Georgia

And Not Afraid To Dare: The Stories of Ten Biographical Sketches

African-American Women by Tonya Bolden
In a straightforward manner, Bolden tells the stories of ten daring African-American women who broke ground in overcoming problems such as poverty, racism, and sexism. She also includes thumbnail sketches of 21 other outstanding ground breakers.

All 31 women were born in the 1800s or the early 1900s, some as slaves or the children of slaves. All battled against societal ills such as slavery, lynchings, ignorance, and prejudice. They took varied roles as educator, stagecoach driver and mail carrier, opera singer, writer, foster mother for drug babies and AIDS victims, and athletes. The featured ten range from Ellen Craft (1849), who risked her life to be free from slavery, to writer Toni Morrison and Olympic medal winner Jackie Joyner-Kersee.

This enlightening collection, including a bibliography and an index, provides a beginning study of African-American women who dared and achieved, some well known, others deserving attention.

*The ALAN Review* Edna Earl Edwards
Winter 1998 State University of West Georgia

Mazer, Anne, editor

*Working Days*

Reviewed by Wendy Bell
ESL Teacher
Buncombe County Schools
Buncombe, North Carolina

*Working Days* edited by Anne Mazer Short Stories

In this anthology of fifteen, nearly all original, contemporary short stories, teenagers enter the adult world through the experience of work. Along the way, all find the unexpected and end up wiser if not richer.

What makes this collection so readable is the variety of protagonists and their workplaces. From a sixteen-year-old girl who wants to run off to Spain to become a flamenco dancer like her grandmother to a seventeen-year-old boy who passes through the crucible of a job in "the crash room" of a hospital – all have stories to tell that are worth listening to. The voice in each is true; there is not a false one in the bunch.

This multicultural collection would fit any high school curriculum. Senior high school students and adults will identify with many of these protagonists while being challenged at the same time.

*The ALAN Review* Wendy Bell
Winter 1998 Buncombe County Schools, North Carolina

Haskins, Jim

*Separate But Not Equal*

Reviewed by Charles R. Duke
Dean, Reich College of Education
Appalachian State University
Boone, North Carolina

*Separate But Not Equal* by Jim Haskins Nonfiction/History
Separate But Not Equal by Jim Haskins Nonfiction/History

Beginning with the court-ordered enrollment of nine African-American teenagers in Little Rock, Arkansas, on September 3, 1957, Jim Haskins traces the roots of that event to Colonial days. He paints a compelling picture through a combination of historical documents, pictures, and narrative of how African-Americans systematically have been denied educational opportunities. Highlighted are a number of African-Americans who served as teachers and educational leaders during these difficult times. The vocabulary may be beyond many students in grades 4-8; but, since most American history books pay scant attention to the impact of segregation on education, the text could be a useful supplement in American history courses, grade 7 and above.

*The ALAN Review* Charles R. Duke
Winter 1998 Appalachian State University

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**Clip and File Reviews of New Fiction Hardbacks**

*Gary M. Salvner, editor*

Clark, Clara Gillow

*Willie and the Rattlesnake King*

Reviewed by Jeffrey Kaplan
Assistant Professor of Education
University of Central Florida
Daytona, Florida

*Willie and the Rattlesnake King* by Clara Gillow Clark Coming of Age

When you were young, did you ever want to run away? Leave home and see the world? Thirteen-year-old Willie does, and one day he runs away from his farm and joins a traveling medicine show. There he meets "Abraham Minckler – Rattlesnake King Extraordinaire," a huge bull of a man who can handle a sackful of rattlers with amazing ease. Longing to be his eventual partner, Willie tries to ingratiate himself with the extraordinary rattlesnake handler, but Doc Granger, who runs the traveling road show, has other plans.

Set in the late 1800s in northeastern Pennsylvania, this is a thoughtful and colorful coming of age novel which young people, experiencing their own first desire for independene, will enjoy. We follow Willie as he grows into his own, experiences first hand that life is never as romantic as it often seems. Befriended and tutored by the road show owner's daughter, Blanche, Willie learns some of life's hardest lessons and slowly begins his long trek home.

*The ALAN Review* Jeffrey Kaplan
Winter 1998 University of Central Florida

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Giberga, Jane Sughrue

*Friends To Die For*

Reviewed by Ruth K. J. Cline
Professor Emerita
University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado

*Friends To Die For* by Jane Sughrue Giberga Privileged Teens
This novel, a first by this author, reveals life in the fast lane in NYC with private schools, high rise living, limos, and friends with questionable reputations. Christina is sixteen; and, although she made the decision at eleven not to "do drugs," her school friends were not as wise. A party at her friend's apartment ends in the murder of one of the guests, and Christina's life is changed forever. Her family is so perfect that a television station features them in a segment, but it means Christina has to elude prying reporters thereafter. The story is told from Christina's viewpoint and with smudged type from an old typewriter, and the reader follows the investigation by the inept police and the confused thinking of one of her girlfriends. Readers who do not know this world will find it interesting; the plot has suspense, and the characters are developed in a respectable manner.

The ALAN Review Ruth K. J. Cline
Winter 1998 University of Colorado

Crew, Linda

Long Time Passing
Reviewed by Connie S. Zitlow
Associate Professor of Education
Ohio Wesleyan University
Delaware, Ohio

Long Time Passing by Linda Crew Identity/Romance

It is 1966, and Kathy is a sophomore in high school. If she can find her true talent, she thinks she will know where she belongs. But she is not chosen as a rally girl, doesn't get a part in The Miracle Worker, and gives up folk singing. When she is accepted as part of the drama crowd because of her talent painting backdrops for school plays, she replaces her plaid skirts with smock dresses, has "an official position on the stage known as the cafeteria," and ignores her twin brother at school because he's part of the "sosh" crowd. Yet her life is dark until she fall in love with James, the boy everyone in town knows as the protester.

Antiwar sentiment and references to the music and events of the sixties will be interesting to some readers, but this predictable story is primarily about a girl who is unhappy until she finds a boyfriend. She even hides her achievements as an author because it offends James, who thinks of himself as a writer. Kathy's parents and other people in the story are described as stereotypes. Readers, expecially those who objected to the way the romantic interest was handled in Crew's more gripping story Children of the River, will certainly be disappointed with Long Time Passing.

The ALAN Review Connie S. Zitlow
Winter 1998 Ohio Wesleyan University

Fox, Paula

Radiance Descending
Reviewed by Marjorie M. Kaiser
Professor of Secondary Education
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

Radiance Descending by Paula Fox Family/Disabilities
This is the tender story of eleven-year-old Paul Coleman as he learns to accept and love his younger brother, Jacob, a Downs Syndrome child. As a result of his regular confrontations with Jacob and with his parents over Jacob, his embarrassment and humiliation, Paul withdraws, enures himself against admitting the child's existence, and finally seeks isolation outside the home and inter-generational family. While Fox’s language is easily readable by youngsters in grades 4 through 8, even younger readers will be able to connect with this parable-like story and respond to it. It will make a powerful read-aloud experience for almost any young reader. In its leanness, Radiance Descending invites us all to celebrate the complexity of Paul’s feelings and his ultimate growth. Through the artful use of interwoven flashbacks and perfect over-arching metaphors, Fox captures real family life in a near classic beauty of style.

*The ALAN Review* Marjorie M. Kaiser
Winter 1998 University of Louisville

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Clip and File Reviews of New Fiction Hardbacks

*Gary M. Salvner, editor*

Soto, Gary

*Buried Onions*

Reviewed by Bonnie O. Ericson
Professor of Secondary Education
California State University, Northridge
Northridge, California

*Buried Onions* by Gary Soto Violence/Multicultural

This is not the Gary Soto of *Baseball in April* or *Living Up the Street* – although like those works, this short novel is set in Fresno and includes a helpful glossary of Spanish words and phrases. *Buried Onions* features nineteen-year-old Eddie, a community college dropout whose cousin and best friend have died young, victims of street violence. Readers see only a small slice of Eddie’s life, but there can be no doubt it is a life of struggle and uncertainty. To explain the hardships of life, Eddie has a theory that the vapors from buried onions rise into the air, causing tears and immense sadness.

This is a gritty, often bleak story, yet readers will care about Eddie and understand his sadness and anger. *Buried Onions* will have special appeal for urban adolescents, who should discuss and critically analyze the connections between the book and their own life experiences.

*The ALAN Review* Bonnie O. Ericson
Winter 1998 California State University, Northridge

Nolan, Han

*Dancing on the Edge*

Reviewed by Rick Williams
English Teacher
Hubbard High School
Hubbard, Ohio

*Dancing on the Edge* by Han Nolan Family Problems/Supernatural
Her father's disappearance, her mother's death, her grandmother's divinations, her grandparents' disassociation, and her own dreams seem to drive Miracle McCloy inexorably to dance. But hers is not the dance of little girls in frilly costumes; it is a desperate, nearly self-destructive, high energy exercise. Yet, it is only in dance that Miracle feels she is "real...a real, whole person" while the rest of her confused world is a search for the truth about herself. Author Han Nolan surrounds Miracle with characters whose pursuit of their own dreams subordinate hers: Grandma Gigi trusts mysticism as the only way to knowledge, Aunt Casey trusts psychology as the only way to a happy marriage, and Grandaddy Opal trusts bicycles as the only way to anywhere. No one can offer her any truthful explanation of her famous father's mysterious departure or her mother's life and death.

When Miracle predictably dances over "the edge," she must receive professional help to reclaim her own life. This process of reclamation, defty crafted, mixes choices with changes and setbacks with successes.

The ALAN Review Rick Williams
Winter 1998 Hubbard High School, Ohio

Nix, Garth

Shade's Children

Reviewed by Diana Mitchell
Williamston, Michigan

Shade's Children by Garth Nix Survival in a Post-nuclear World

In this post-nuclear world only children under fourteen are left to battle the forces of the Overlords, who seize them as they turn fourteen and turn them into obedient robot-like creatures. Just one adult, Shade, who lives only in a computer, is available to help the young renegades who have escaped from the Overlord's creatures. This gripping, fast-paced novel focuses on the efforts of four of "Shade's children" as they work to overthrow the cruel, sadistic rulers. These resourceful youngsters scramble through old drainage tunnels and hide behind the cars and buses that remain where they were abruptly left when the "change" took place. They show their humanness when they insist on rescuing one of their number in spite of Shade's forbidding it. Although bloody and often violent, this novel raises issues worth thinking about and will appeal to students who like novels of adventure or science fiction.

The ALAN Review Diana Mitchell
Winter 1998 Williamston, Michigan

Krisher, Trudy

Kinship

Reviewed by Rebecca Barnhouse
Assistant Professor of English
Youngstown State University
Youngstown, Ohio

Kinship by Trudy Krisher Family

In alternating chapters told by fifteen-year-old Pert Wilson and her adult trailer park neighbors, we hear of the arrival of Pert's long-absent daddy and the fight to save the trailer park from destruction by town officials. The story takes place in 1961 in Kinship, Georgia, the town readers once knew in Spite Fences. But Maggie, the main character of
place in 1961 in Kinship, Georgia, the town readers came to know in *Spite Fences*. But Maggie, the main character of that book, has moved to Atlanta, and few other characters overlap. This is new territory, and Pert’s story is unconnected with the racial maelstrom sweeping the rest of the country. She has her own storms within the confines of the trailer park and inside her heart and conscience as she deals with the effects her beloved father’s arrival has on her mother, her brother, and her trailer-park friends. Not as suspenseful as *Spite Fences*, *Kinship* is more lyrical and makes more artful use of Southern dialect and folklore.

*The ALAN Review* Rebecca Barnhouse
Winter 1998 Youngstown State University

**Clip and File Reviews of New Historical Fiction Hardbacks**

*Gary M. Salvner, editor*

Fisher, Leonard Everett

*The Jetty Chronicles*

Reviewed by Hugh Agee
Professor of English Education
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia

*The Jetty Chronicles* by Leonard Everett Fisher Coming of Age

In 1934 twelve-year-old Leonard regards a man-made rock jetty near his seaside home as a source of constancy in a changing world. From it he observes ships from around the world moving to and from New York City. On it he encounters year by year individuals whose experiences affect his world view. Among them are an aging geologist who teaches Leonard about geologic time; an ex-convict who sees parallels between the con men he has known and the con man who rules Germany; an artist who sees rocks symbolically; an international journalist hoping to recapture a time of innocence. As a new world war begins, the journalist reminds Leonard that the past never dies, that the jetty “is anchored to reality.”

Fisher’s autobiographical novel of growing up in the 1930s in the Lower New York Bay area blends factual events with fictionalized characters in a sensitive coming of age story that will appeal to middle school readers. Fisher’s text illustration and jacket painting capture the reflective mood of this unique account.

*The ALAN Review* Hugh Agee
Winter 1998 University of Georgia

Martin, Nora

*The Eagle’s Shadow*

Reviewed by Nancy E. Zuwiyya
English Teacher
Binghamton City School District
Binghamton, New York

*The Eagle’s Shadow* by Nora Martin Native American/Search for Identity

This first-person narrative begins in 1946 as Clearie tells her story of how she lost her father but found her family in a
small village near Juneau, Alaska. Through Clearie's eyes, we absorb much about the Tlingit Indians as she learns about their customs, language, and traditional stories. She has much to overcome here in this small isolated village: her father's departure for Japan, her mother's disappearance, her own low self-esteem, the wrath of the local liquor broker, and the bone chilling cold. The story sweeps ahead smoothly, pulling the reader along as the plot thickens and Clearie becomes more and more immersed in the local traditions and events of her own people. Eventually, she also learns the truths about those she left behind. This novel contains lots of local color and enough suspense to keep readers interested until the fire at the end pulls everyone together and Clearie emerges triumphant.

The ALAN Review  Nancy E. Zuwiyya

Heneghan, James

Wish Me Luck

Reviewed by Susanne L. Johnston
Senior Lecturer in English
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menominee, Wisconsin

Wish Me Luck by James Heneghan World War II/Family/Friendship

One year into World War II Jamie Monaghan and his friends wait impatiently for bombing to arrive in Liverpool, England. Each night while their parents wait in dread, the boys listen eagerly for air raid sirens, hoping for real enemy planes rather than more false alarms. When the war finally does reach Liverpool, parents scramble to send their children away from the city to safety, and Jamie finds himself aboard the City of Benares, a passenger ship of evacuees headed for Canada.

Though a little slow in the beginning, readers will learn of mischief, fighting, and pride in British schools; alcoholism and abuse during time of rationing and austerity; and friendships born of the struggle to survive. Based on true events, Heneghan's story realistically tells a young teen's perspective of war and the toll that it takes on innocent families.

The ALAN Review Susanne L. Johnston
Winter 1998 University of Wisconsin-Stout

Jiang, Ji-Li

Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution

Reviewed by Connie Russell
K-12 Reading/Language Arts Coordinator
Eau Claire Area School District
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution by Ji-Li Jiang Communism

This memoir is set in China in the year 1966, when the author was twelve years old. Ji-Li is an outstanding student excited about China's Cultural Revolution. Asked to audition for the Central Liberation Army Arts Academy, Ji-Li has
no idea that her family will hold her back because of her grandfather’s being a landlord. Ji-Li struggles with mixed feelings about her family and her place in the Cultural Revolution. As her extended family becomes persecuted as enemies of Communism, Ji-Li must make momentous decisions. Her father’s detention is a turning point. This simple but powerful memoir clearly portrays the fear and courage of this young girl and her family. The book is a welcome addition to multicultural collections and social studies classes.

The ALAN Review  Connie Russell
Winter 1998 Eau Claire Area School District, Wisconsin

Clip and File Reviews of New Fiction Hardbacks

Gary M. Salvner, editor

Hobbs, Will

River Thunder

Reviewed by Virginia Monseau
Professor of English
Youngstown State University
Youngstown, Ohio

River Thunder by Will Hobbs Adventure/Survival

Once again Will Hobbs invites us to climb into the raft with Jessie, Troy, Adam, Pug, Rita, and Star in this adventure-packed sequel to Downriver. A year has passed, and the former "Hoods in the Woods" have returned to the Grand Canyon to conquer the Colorado River rapids. But this time things are different — or at least they appear so. Each member of the group seems more mature and ready to face life's challenges. The task of conquering the thundering rapids proves to be the ultimate test.

Though the exposition slows down the plot at first, the narrative gains momentum once the group boards the rafts and begins its trek down the Colorado. Anxiety and suspense are heightened by the knowledge that the Bureau of Reclamation has misjudged the rate of runoff from the snowmelt in the Rockies, causing the canyon water to rise to dangerous levels. Jessie and the crew are faced with some serious decisions as they navigate the thundering rapids and attempt to conquer their own fears.

Hobbs brings some new characters into the story, one of whom proves to be a positive role model for Jessie. We get the feeling that she may influence Jessie’s future — perhaps leaving the door open to another sequel? A river trilogy?

The ALAN Review Virginia R. Monseau
Winter 1998 Youngstown State University

Nixon, Joan Lowery

Murdered, My Sweet

Reviewed by M. Jean Greenlaw
Regents Professor
University of North Texas
Denton, Texas

Murdered, My Sweet by Joan Lowery Nixon Mystery
As a dedicated fan of Jessica Fletcher in *Murder, She Wrote*, I found this send up of the famous program to be a hoot. Nixon has created a ditzy character who writes mystery novels and coyly intimates that she helps police solve murder mysteries. In reality, when Madeline Jakes is faced with a murder in her own extended family, she needs all the help she can get from her teenaged daughter Jenny. Jenny does not want to see her mother humiliated, so she feeds her lines *sotto voce*, leading her mother to help a police detective solve the crime. The book is filled with action (including a chase scene along the River Walk in San Antonio), humor, and a bit of romance. It will provide a pleasurable light read for mystery fans.

*The ALAN Review*  
M. Jean Greenlaw  
Winter 1998 University of North Texas

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**Cochran, Thomas**

*Roughnecks*

Reviewed by Donald R. Gallo  
Adjunct Instructor  
Cleveland State University  
Cleveland, Ohio

*Roughnecks* by Thomas Cochran  
Sports/Redemption  

Travis Cody, Oil Field High School football team center, is focused and determined. Feeling responsible for his team’s only loss of the regular season – to long-time rival Pineview High – Travis gets a second chance to redeem himself when the Oil Field Roughnecks face the Pineview Pelicans for the Louisiana AA State Football Championship. Through the voice of Travis Cody, this first novel by high school teacher Thomas Cochran takes us through only one entire day, the day of that pivotal game, from his early awakening to his coming face to face with his highly-rated opponent, 6’2” 230 pound Jericho Grooms. The pain, the heartbreak, the minor triumphs, and the mental toughness that go into Cody’s preparation for this singular event ring true to those of us who have experienced them as athletes, and this memorable novel will inspire those young people who have not yet been there.

*The ALAN Review*  
Donald R. Gallo  
Winter 1998 Cleveland State University

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**Paulsen, Gary**

*The Schernoff Discoveries*

Reviewed by Gary M. Salvner  
Professor of English Education  
Youngstown State University  
Youngstown, Ohio

*The Schernoff Discoveries* by Gary Paulsen  
Growing Up/Humor  

As in his Culpepper Adventure Series books and in *The Boy Who Owned the School*, Gary Paulsen here plays the experiences of male early adolescence for laughs. Harold Schernoff is a fourteen-year-old “science whiz and social outcast” who, along with his best friend (the book’s unnamed narrator), courts disaster by applying his junior-high version of the scientific method to all sorts of social problems and new adventures. Harold and friend learn to snow
ski and fish, hatch a scheme to make money by retrieving golf balls from a river, and (of course) plan endlessly for how to meet girls. (Harold on sex: "What is it anyway?")

Paulsen understands the struggles of growing up and the value of laughter as an antidote to those struggles. Middle school students will find this an entertaining read.

_The ALAN Review_ Gary M. Salvner
Winter 1998 Youngstown State University

The top 25 titles, all appearing on 3 or more “Best Short Story” book lists, are ranked below by how many times they appear. The remaining 350+ books, as well as the lists we used, are in alphabetical order on the bottom of the page. Happy Scrolling! “A Manual for Cleaning Women compiles the best work of the legendary short-story writer Lucia Berlin. With the grit of Raymond Carver, the humor of Grace Paley, and a blend of wit and melancholy all her own, Berlin crafts miracles from the everyday, uncovering moments of grace in the Laundromats and halfway houses of the American Southwest, in the homes of the Bay Area upper class, among switchboard operators and struggling mothers, hitchhikers and bad Christians. A round-up of the best contemporary short story collections published this century, covering literary fiction, horror, fantasy, and more. Story collections are such a gift: a whole bunch of different stories in one convenient place! What fun! The following list is made up of the first 100 collections that popped into my head. I have read and loved each of them. (And I probably have enough titles to do a sequel—stay tuned!) And by “contemporary” I mean “published this century.” (Which still gave me eighteen amazing years to choose from!)