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13 Days of Midnight

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place bets on race participants to the catchphrase spoken to start the race, “May you live to see the sky,” there are numerous undeniable parallels to Suzanne Collins’s “The Hunger Games” (Scholastic). But there is also the feel of the old Westerns, but with bikes instead of horses, slingshots instead of guns, vigilant justice, and, of course, a beautiful girl. The gritty, nonstop action and violence will appeal especially to reluctant readers. VERDICT A dystopian title that is worth adding to already packed shelves.—Cary Frostick, formerly at Mary Riley Styles Public Library, Falls Church, VA

Gr 9 Up—Huffaker’s novel centers around his personal experiences as a missionary in Eastern Europe. The work follows two missionaries who find themselves caught up in an underworld effort to bring chaos to the country. When they “see a little too much,” they are soon labeled as foreign terrorists in the media. The remainder of the narrative tracks their journey toward potential safety. The story is told through alternating chapters presenting the viewpoints of about 10 characters. The plotting still flows very well and it is fast-paced and engaging enough at its core. However, a major flaw lies within the somewhat inconsistent and unbelievable dialogue, which will often take readers out of the story. There are also deep religious undertones that feel overly preachy. Some readers may feel put off by this, others who are so inclined, might willingly embrace it. VERDICT A well-crafted adventure with a Christian-heavy message.—Chad Lane, Easton Elementary, Wye Mills, MD

Gr 9 Up—Luke Manchett lives in a small town in northeast England where his life consists mainly of rugby; tending to his headache-prone, New Age–advocating mother; and attempting to hide the fact that his father, who walked out when he was six, exorcises spirits on a paranormal television show. But when Luke’s estranged father unexpectedly dies, he leaves the teen with a Host of eight unhappy spirits, a set of incomprehensible notes, a locked book, and a collection of rings. With school outcast Elza Moss’s help, Luke has until Halloween—just 13 days—to figure out how to use this miscellany to control or banish the Host; if he fails, the entire town will be in danger. Dark and witty, Hunt’s debut novel is like an eerie episode of Ghost Hunters merged with an Edgar Wright comedic film. A well-constructed, truly unique plot and perfect pacing combine to immediately hook readers, who will be invested in Luke’s fate after only a few pages. Luke and Elza are credible and convincing characters: He is funny, likeable, and though inexperienced with the paranormal, he is determined. Independent and outspoken Elza shows a spark of her own humor. By the end of the book, readers will not only be cheering for the teens’ survival but also hoping for a budding romance as well. VERDICT Fans of Jonathan Stroud’s “Lockwood & Co.” series (Disney-Hyperion) are certain to appreciate this unusual and enjoyable title.—Maggie Mason Smith, Clemson University R. M. Cooper Library, South Carolina

Gr 9 Up—A moving coming-of-age story set in 1993 New York City. A great time capsule of the decade, replete with pay phones, Nirvana, mixtapes, the 9 train, and Connect Four, this novel makes the ordinary extraordinary. Bets on race participants to the catchphrase spoken to start the race, “May you live to see the sky,” there are numerous undeniable parallels to Suzanne Collins’s “The Hunger Games” (Scholastic). But there is also the feel of the old Westerns, but with bikes instead of horses, slingshots instead of guns, vigilant justice, and, of course, a beautiful girl. The gritty, nonstop action and violence will appeal especially to reluctant readers. VERDICT A dystopian title that is worth adding to already packed shelves.—Cary Frostick, formerly at Mary Riley Styles Public Library, Falls Church, VA

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