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23 Minutes

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MAXWELL, Lisa. *Unhooked*. 352p. ebook available. S. & S./Simon Pulse. Feb. 2016. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9781481432061.

Gr 7 Up—In this dark retelling of *Peter Pan* we meet Gwendolyn Allister, who is moving again, this time to London. Her best friend, Olivia, is coming with them for the summer to help with Gwen's slightly crazy mother, who is trying to keep them away from the monsters. Gwen has never lived anywhere long enough to have a home, and when they settle in their first night in London, they are captured by dark shadowy creatures and taken to Neverland. When Gwen awakens, she finds herself in the presence of Captain Hook on his ship of boy pirates, sea hags, and a Neverland island filled with magic and Fey creatures who are anything but fairylike. Gwen quickly finds a distaste for Hook and is "rescued" by Pan and taken to the magical island that Gwen feels she can connect with. After finding Olivia, Gwen comes to realize that things are not what they seem with Pan and his fortress filled with Lost Boys. Through a series of perilous adventures and battles where countless lives are sacrificed, the teen realizes that she is being used by both sides. She discovers her own magical heritage and Pan and Hook's sinister plot. Readers will be surprised and satisfied with the outcome. Even though the pacing is awkward at times and Gwen tends to get lost in interior monologue throughout, this gruesome retelling will be a hit with teens. **VERDICT** A general purchase where fractured fairy tales and fairy fantasy is popular.—*Nancy Jo Lambert, Reedy High School, Frisco, TX*

MOGER, Susan. *Of Better Blood*. 272p. ebook available. Albert Whitman. Feb. 2016. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 9780807547748.

Gr 6-9—Rowan is the youngest daughter in the affluent Collier family living in Manhattan a century ago. Though the girl grows up without a mother, her childhood is comfortable and carefree. That is, until Rowan is struck by polio. As the family struggle to cope with their own prejudice, the protagonist is sent away. She befriends Dorchy, another young girl with her own set of problems, in her journey to find the inner strength to cope with her new disability and the raw rejection of her family. As their summer unfolds, the friends uncover the horrific plans of their wardens to create a "fitter" society. They vow to save their friends, but they aren't even sure if they will be able to save themselves. Moger crafts likable characters who mature over the course of the book. A few characters are downright villainous, and most follow predictable paths of personal growth. The story touches on delicate subjects, such as forced sterilization, with sensitivity. While the account of Rowan is fictional, Moger explains the historical context of her story in the notes at

the end of the book. Despite a slow start to the story, the pace of the plot picks up with unexpected challenges and heartbreaking results. Readers will enjoy the mystery as it mounts in the final chapters but may be frustrated with the realistic conclusion.

VERDICT This book is an engaging work of historical fiction that would be a great addition for any middle school library.—*Paige Rowse, Needham High School, MA*

PITCHER, Annabel. *Silence Is Goldfish*. 352p. ebook available. Little, Brown. May 2016. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9780316370752; ebk. \$9.99. ISBN 9780316370745.

Gr 7 Up—Tess becomes mute after accidentally discovering that her dad isn't her biological father in this captivating UK import. Having spent the past several years telling white lies about her social life to her father so he'd be proud of her, Tess hits her breaking point when she reads a blog post draft on his computer about the baby he couldn't love because she was the product of a sperm donor. She decides to stop pretending to be whom he expects, which leads to her becoming mute when she realizes it's easiest to not say anything at all. Tess becomes determined to find her biological father, and the new substitute math teacher, Mr. Richardson, seems the perfect candidate. However, with her silence come more problems. She loses her best friend, bullies start taunting her even more, and her perfect image of Mr. Richardson slowly begins to erode. With the help of her goldfish flashlight, who talks to her in her head, Tess must find the courage to reclaim her voice and face the truth. Although the story takes a while to find its footing, the plot is intriguing enough to push readers through until the latter half picks up. While Tess's naïveté can be frustrating, it is nicely balanced with the realist voice of "Mr. Goldfish." Tess's struggle as she discovers her parents and teachers are flawed human beings will ring true with teens coming to their own similar realizations. **VERDICT** A recommended purchase where contemporary coming-of-age stories are in demand.—*Jenna Friebel, Deerfield Public Library, IL*

RULE, Adi. *The Hidden Twin*. 336p. ebook available. St. Martin's Griffin. Mar. 2016. Tr \$18.99. ISBN 9781250036322.

Gr 7-10—In this coming-of-age fantasy, the nameless teenage narrator has spent her life in hiding because her society would put her to death as an evil monster. She's a human-appearing Redwing, the magical offspring of a powerful Other who emerged from a volcanic lava pool to save her human father's life. When the Redwing disguises herself as her human twin to destroy a plant that will reveal her true nature, she's drawn into a conspiracy to seize a volcano god's power.

The author has concocted an unusual setting in the ash-strewn shadows of the volcano Mol, where birds are the only animal life in evidence and the wealthy ride giant striches through grimy city streets. Many characters have hidden motivations and agendas for the Redwing and her powers, and the climax comes as a surprise, validating the protagonist's essential goodness. The contemporary-sounding commentary of the characters is occasionally jarring against the otherworldly tone of the story, but liberal helpings of mystery and danger help to pull readers along. Two potential romances with a conspirator and with the son of the Empress add to the appeal. **VERDICT** Purchase where Tamora Pierce's books are popular.—*Beth Wright Redford, Richmond Elementary School, VT*

STRAND, Jeff. *The Greatest Zombie Movie Ever*. 268p. ebook available. Sourcebooks/Fire. Mar. 2016. pap. \$9.99. ISBN 9781492628149.

Gr 7 Up—Fans of comical books rejoice as Strand has hit the zombie trend on its head with this one. Justin just wants to make a perfect movie—no big deal, right? However, he is 15 years old, he has to shoot the film in one month, and his grandmother is funding his project. And his crush is the leading actress on the project. What ensues are laugh-out-loud moments of friends overcoming obstacles, and readers will be wondering if Justin will ever finish that film. From the warning at the beginning of the book through the double epilogue, Strand walks the line of balancing the right amount of humor without it overtaking the entire book. Fans of his previous work will not be disappointed by this title. Aspiring filmmakers, zombie movie fans, and reluctant readers should be entertained by this title. **VERDICT** A worthy addition to any library's collection.—*Stephanie Charlefour, Wixom Public Library, MI*

VANDE VELDE, Vivian. *23 Minutes*. 176p. ebook available. Boyds Mills. Apr. 2016. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 9781629794419.

Gr 6-9—When 15-year-old Zoe ducks into Spencerport Savings and Loan to escape the rain, she finds herself in the middle of a bank robbery. But Zoe is unique, and it isn't her blue hair, ragged clothing, and tendency to make the people around her uncomfortable that make her so. Zoe can play back time—but only the last 23 minutes and she only has 10 chances to get everything right before that window of time becomes permanent. The teen isn't sure that her ability will be enough to save the life of Daniel, the man in the bank who was nice to her. And she doesn't exactly have the best history when it comes to playbacks, anyway. With only two main characters and a simple plot told 10 different ways, *23 Minutes* could easily be a tedious read. But with new details in each playback,

a gradual explanation of Zoe's background, and a slowly forming bond between Zoe and Daniel, readers will remain engaged and invested in the story line. An open ending underscores that, as in each of Zoe's attempts at changing the bank robbery, anything is possible, while at the same time serving as a reminder to readers that things are always more complicated than they seem. **VERDICT** For middle school and early high school fans of speculative fiction.—*Maggie Mason Smith, Clemson University, SC*

High School

ALEXANDER, Sarah. *The Art of Not Breathing*. 288p. ebook available. HMH. Apr. 2016. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9780544-633889.

Gr 8 Up—A strong debut novel that tells an intriguing tale of grief and recovery, with just enough romance and reality to appeal to a wide variety of readers. Set in a beachside Scottish town, this tale is about 16-year-old Elsie, who foggily remembers the day her twin brother, Eddie, disappeared. Elsie struggles to recall the event, but her family members refuse to discuss it. Instead, each disappears in their own way. Mum drinks, Dad leaves, and older brother Dillon devel-

ops anorexia. With no friends, haunted by memories of Eddie, and virtually a magnet for the town mean girl, Elsie also needs an escape. She skips school to visit a vacant boathouse and surreptitiously indulge in chocolate and cigarettes, until Tay appears. A little messy, a little odd, and totally mysterious, Tay introduces Elsie to free diving (underwater diving, minus breathing gear). Underwater and oxygen deprived, Elsie feels reunited with Eddie. Free diving instills in Elsie confidence and introduces friends and a burgeoning romance with Tay. But when Elsie makes a heartbreaking discovery, she attempts the ultimate free dive. This proves to be the jolt her family needs to begin healing. Alexander covers wide ground with teen issues without any heavy-handedness or didacticism. **VERDICT** While the compelling plot, well-drawn characters, and page-turning conclusion will attract readers, what will linger most in their minds is the luxurious feel of the water and other details vividly evoked by Alexander's atmospheric writing.—*Laura Falli, McNeil High School, Austin, TX*

ALLGEYER, Amy. *Dig Too Deep*. 272p. ebook available. Albert Whitman. Feb. 2016. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 9780807515808.

Gr 8 Up—Liberty Briscoe has to move from Washington, DC, to the outskirts of Ebbsville, KY, because her single mom is in jail for a protest gone wrong. Liberty has to go to a new school during her junior year, and she knows no one her age. However, she is looking forward to living with her grandmother. Life in Ebbsville is an adjustment. Granny is sick, there's a mountaintop removal mine nearby, and the water coming from the faucets is orange. Liberty struggles with taking care of Granny, keeping up in school, and living on food stamps. She is convinced the mine is the reason why Granny and most of the people living on the mountain are sick, no matter who says the water is safe for drinking. As she starts to battle the mine, which provides jobs for the people living in town, she finds that drinking the water is not the only dangerous thing she could be doing. Told from Liberty's point of view, the story starts slow but picks up the pace as the teen starts to take action against the mine. The secondary characters are distinct from one another, but the focus is on Liberty and her family. The author brings important environmental issues to light without being didactic. **VERDICT** Recommended for fans of Carl Hiaasen.—*Natalie Struecker, Atlantic Public Library, IA*

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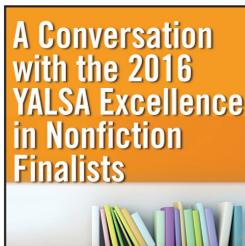
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