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Seed

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Jacob's faith is tested as he struggles to reconcile what he knows to be The Truth and what is happening around him. Hautman delivers a captivating character study, studiously demonstrating the reasons why some people are drawn into cults and quietly revealing how unquestioned power turns rotten. Jacob is a realistic and relatable protagonist and his complex relationships with those around him—and himself—ring true. *Eden West* is both quiet and loud, understanding and judging, and absolutely engrossing. Readers will be quick to judge the Grace but may find themselves looking inward to their own beliefs as they move through the story. **VERDICT** A heartbreaking, uplifting, and fantastic read.—*Emily Moore, Camden County Library System, NJ*

HEATHFIELD, Lisa. Seed. 336p. Running Pr. Teen. Mar. 2015. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 9780762456345. LC 2014949872.

Gr 9 Up—Seed is at the center of 15-year-old Pearl's life: it is the isolated family of which she is part, it is the house in which she lives, and it is the remote patch of land around that house where she sows and gathers crops for her family's sustenance. Pearl is happy at Seed. She does not often leave because according to Papa S., the leader of Pearl's family, Seed is pure and leaving risks contact with poisoned Outsiders who may taint Pearl's spiritual core. The teen knows Papa S. is truthful, but when three Outsiders unexpectedly join the family, the patriarch's word—and Pearl's entire reality—is challenged. Heathfield's debut novel is the first in a two-book series. Pearl's development over the course of the novel is realistic and relatable, and readers will become attached and even frustrated with the heroine. The smooth pacing and sophisticated yet age-appropriate style of the work lend credence to the story as it transforms the everyday activities of Seed into complex issues of physical and emotional abuse, budding self-esteem and increasing self-reliance, fear as a means of control, and belief as an expression of faith or as a means of deception. **VERDICT** *Seed* will hold readers' attention as the story's mood slowly changes and the work builds to an ultimately stunning conclusion.—*Maggie Mason Smith, Clemson University R. M. Cooper Library, South Carolina*

HESIK, Annameekee. Driving Lessons. 264p. (The You Know Who Girls: Bk. 2). Bold Strokes. 2014. pap. \$11.95. ISBN 9781626392281.

Gr 9 Up—Abbey's sophomore year is already in trouble. She's scared to learn to drive after her father's fatal accident, afraid to come out to her mother, and is suddenly targeted by the meanest girl in school. That, plus baggage from her last not-girl-

friend, confusing dynamics with her very straight BFF, and a flirtatious straight girl all mean that this year will be one for the books. A fun, contemporary, lesbian heir to Alex Sanchez's "Rainbow Boys" trilogy (S. & S.), this series seems to be a wonderful and relatively light realistic look at the specific trials of being a teenaged girl who likes girls. Hesik does a good job of filling new readers in on the relationships and plot points established in *Freshman Year* (Bold Strokes, 2012) without bogging down the opening chapters. Although some of the references are dated (*The Butchies; Late Night with Dr. Drew; Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), that doesn't deter from the book's quality. There is also a very well-handled relationship between a Deaf character and the hearing protagonist. Although the speed with which Abbey becomes comfortable signing is surprising, the interactions ring true to the way that Deaf and hearing individuals and culture rub up against each other. The characters are delightfully affectionate and frank, and go through the tensions and changes typical of teen girl friendships in a realistic way. **VERDICT** A strong read for girls just coming out who want to see their own experiences reflected back at them.—*L. Lee Butler, Hart Middle School, Washington, DC*

★ **HOGAN, Edward. The Messengers.** 224p. Candlewick. May 2015. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 9780763671129; ebk. ISBN 9780763676988. LC 2014939364.

Gr 9 Up—After her older brother almost kills someone in a bar fight and disappears, Frances, a promising young artist, starts seeing strange things in her drawings. They materialize out of nowhere after she blacks out. She can't figure out why these images are hazy and imprecise—until she puts one of them under a scanner, and learns with the help of her mentor Peter, another "messenger," that each one reveals where and when someone is going to die. Peter's convinced that they're just a couple of killers, but Frances might have a plan to change all that, using their premonitions to save lives rather than end them, and maybe find her brother, presumed dead, in the process. But do they have the power, or the right, to change fate? That's only one of the weighty questions explored in this clever page-turner. **VERDICT** A mash-up of philosophy, mystery, and horror, this haunting YA novel takes on all of these subjects with satisfying results.—*Georgia Christgau, Middle College High School, Long Island City, NY*

HOYLE, Tom. Thirteen. 240p. Holiday House. May 2015. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 9780823432943; ebk. ISBN 9780823433827. LC 2014028416.

Gr 7 Up—In this dark thriller by a first-time

British author, a sadistic self-appointed messiah leads his brainwashed cult in murdering boys born on New Year's Day of 2000. Now 2013, only a few remain, including protagonist Adam, who runs, fights, and kills for his life, aided by his love interest and neighbor, Megan. Interspersed with Adam's action-packed running around are various scenes of gruesome murders, torture, and cinematically threatening posturing by the cultist leader, Coron, and his fit teenage disciples. Hoyle removes Coron's mystique fairly early by explaining that the "Master" he serves is merely a "shadowy production, a sort of echo, in Coron's sick mind." He also ends the novel with a list of real-life cults gone bad. Descriptive passages ("Gasoline was spilled carefully, thoughtfully, arteries linking to veins") and well-formed chapters, which almost all end in dramatic single-sentence cliff-hangers, keep this work thrilling, if readers can keep track of the very large cast of dispensable bad guys. **VERDICT** Though characterization and dialogue are a bit weak, this gruesome survival story will most likely garner a readership among violence-craving, action-loving anglophiles.—*Rhona Campbell, Georgetown Day School, Washington, DC*

JACOBS, John Hornor. The Conformity. 312p. (The Twelve-Fingered Boy Trilogy: Bk. 3). ebook available. Carolrhoda Lab. Apr. 2015. Tr \$18.99. ISBN 9780761390091. LC 2013028517.

Gr 9 Up—The conclusion to the thrilling "Twelve-Fingered Boy" trilogy (Carolrhoda Lab) has it all: explosions, romance, mental telepathy, hellish creatures comprised of living humans, and a crazy religious cult. This final installment opens immediately after its predecessor ends with little summation of what has led up to the opening scene. The nation is being attacked by horrifying creatures made up of swarms of terrified humans, controlled by the Conformity: an evil, bodiless entity that feeds on the psychic energy of those with special abilities. Shreve and a small band of "extranaturals" are faced with the task of saving humanity. Like the first two books, there is plenty of action, mature language, and a darkness that pervades the work. The narration is told from several perspectives, which enhances the storytelling and help develop the lead characters (particularly giving insight as to why the young adults have become so jaded). This conclusion wraps up quickly and is not as concrete as the previous entries. For the story to work, readers must be willing to embrace the notion of Shreve using his astral body to perform supernatural feats. **VERDICT** Fans of the series will be satisfied.—*Sherry J. Mills, Hazelwood East High School, St. Louis, MO*

in 2008, McGann's novel sometimes feels dated, but makes for an entertaining pick for mature readers. In her second year at university, Amina Mir lands an internship at the *Chronicle*. Her mother is a well-known and respected journalist, but Amina intends to make her own way. She expects the internship to start out as making coffee and keeping the copier working. When she is asked to do a human interest story on a veteran who has won the lottery but is not spending any of the money, she is glad just to have received a story assignment. What she does not expect is to find herself in the middle of a huge government conspiracy. Ivor McMorris, the veteran, tries to convince Amina that someone has manipulated his memories of how and why he lost an eye in Sinnostan. Then Chi Sandwith, a conspiracy investigator, gives her even further reason to believe it just might be true. Has Ivor concocted his story of brainwashing or could it really be true? The characters are well developed and believable. Hovering UFOs, a rogue surgeon, and mindwashed schoolchildren are just a few of the pieces that readers will need to put together to figure out what is really going on in this suspenseful tale. Those who are ready to move beyond Gabrielle Lord's "Conspiracy 365" (Kane Miller) series or Anthony Horowitz's *Stormbreaker* (Philomel, 2001) will enjoy this one. **VERDICT** This fast-paced and cinematic conspiracy thriller will keep teens' attention.—*Deanna McDaniel, Genoa Middle School, OH*

MAMATAS, Nick & Masumi Washington, eds. *Phantasm Japan: Fantasies Light and Dark From and About Japan*. tr. from Japanese. 300p. Viz Media/Haikasoru. 2014. pap. \$14.99. ISBN 9781421571744. LC 2014024324.

Gr 10 Up—Written by different authors, the short stories in this collection are an exploration of speculative fiction in the context of Japanese culture, and will be enthusiastically received by a niche audience that enjoys genre fiction and is familiar with Japan. Newcomers to sci-fi/fantasy and Japanese culture may find the collection tedious and confusing, but the intended audience will revel in discovering the intricacies of each tale's world-building and delight in the appearances of creatures from Japanese myth and folklore. The entries, ranging from humor to horror with a dose of the surreal, are literary and often somewhat experimental in writing style—several use the second-person narrative voice, or switch from present to past tense for effect. Some are translated into English from Japanese; others are written in English about Japan. Standouts include "Shikata Ga Nai: The Bag Lady's Tale" by Gary A. Braunbeck, a haunting story about memory, family, and

belonging amid the Japanese American incarceration during World War II, and "For Those Who Hunt Monster Hunters" by Tim Pratt, which explores themes of race, stereotypes, and female empowerment. Most of the stories have fairly minimal teen appeal, with the exception of "Girl, I Love You" by Nadia Bulkin, which focuses on high school bullying and suicide. Buy this unique collection where it will have an audience. **VERDICT** This atmospheric collection of short stories weaves a mesmerizing web of science fiction and fantasy for the right reader.—*Allison Tran, Mission Viejo Library, CA*

MAYSONET, Melody. A Work of Art. 240p. Adams Media/Merit. Mar. 2015. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9781440582547.

Gr 10 Up—Tera is a strong, passionate, and talented teenager. She is about to graduate high school and as an exceptional artist, has been accepted to an art school in Paris. She has been under the instruction and scrutiny of her father, who himself is a popular artist. The teen's whole life revolves around her father, so when he is arrested only weeks before she is to leave, her world is turned upside down. Tera decides to give up everything to come to his aid. As events transpire, Tera's relationship with her dad is forever changed, and all that she grew up knowing is shattered. The protagonist is repeatedly challenged by dark and disturbing situations, such as drugs and child pornography. While painting a work of art, Tera is able to reconcile what has gone terribly wrong. Readers may not find this entirely believable, especially since those who live through such troubling events often need to undergo some form of professional therapy in order to cope with the trauma. Furthermore, teens may not find it easy to sympathize with the main character because of the way that she handles the situations that arise. **VERDICT** A convoluted plot and confusing characterization make this a tough read for young adults.—*Caitlin Wilson, Brooklyn Public Library*

MOORE, Meredith. I Am Her Revenge. 336p. Penguin/Razorbill. Apr. 2015. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9781595147820; ebk. \$10.99. ISBN 9780698157743.

Gr 9 Up—The circumstances under which Vivian comes to The Madigan School are anything but typical. Arriving at the school in the British countryside midyear, she takes the place of a young woman reputed to have been fraternizing with a member of the faculty, a charge that few seem to believe, including the student's roommate. Nonetheless, Mother needs Vivian to attend this school and Mother is accustomed to getting what she wants. For her part, Vivian is accustomed to bending

to her mother's every whim, or suffering very real consequences for her disobedience. She has been bred to take on any role needed to further Mother's plans for revenge, but Vivian's task at Madigan is to cultivate a plot ending in the ultimate humiliation of the man who had betrayed Mother years before. While playing out this plan upon the man's son, also a student at Madigan, Vivian begins to unravel quite a bit of her mother's secret history. This journey of discovery will prove to be the undoing of each character's precariously balanced life. Moore leads readers through carefully constructed paths, set on the English moors, in her debut novel. The tightly concocted plotlines and clearly drawn characters are delivered in digestible pieces. The themes reinforce the idea that love does not have to be the undoing of any young female character. **VERDICT** A refreshing and dramatic tale with a fearless and fragile protagonist.—*Colleen S. Banick, Westport Public Schools, CT*

MORGAN, Page. The Wondrous and the Wicked. 352p. (The Dispossessed: Bk. 3). Delacorte. Apr. 2015. Tr \$18.99. ISBN 9780385743150; lib. ed. \$21.99. ISBN 9780375990977; ebk. ISBN 9780307980830.

Gr 9 Up—The complex rivalries and alliances among humans, gargoyles, demons, angels, and fallen angels come to a complicated head in the final volume of the trilogy. Morgan amps up the woozy, gothic drama that drove *The Beautiful and the Cursed* (2013) and *The Lovely and the Lost* (2014) to a place just shy of sensory overload. The rising action may become a little muddy, but hand-to-your-heart romance is the real focus here. Tension between Ingrid and Luc, the gargoyle she can never be with (their attraction is forbidden by the heavens, in addition to being physically complicated), builds to an absolute frenzy. If readers tire of that, there are two more romantic subplots to keep them blushing. The heroines remain plucky, smart, and strong even as they swoon. **VERDICT** A satisfying, exciting wrap-up to an immersive paranormal series for those already invested in the saga.—*Beth McIntyre, Madison Public Library, WI*

OAKES, Colleen. The Crown. Vol. 1. ISBN 9781940716022.

———. **The Wonder.** Vol. 2. ISBN 9781940716213.

ea vol: 222p. (Queen of Hearts). ebook available. BookSparks/SparkPress. 2014. pap. \$15.

Gr 9 Up—Readers get a peek into the story behind the darkly twisted world of Wonderland before Alice arrived. Fifteen-year-old Princess Dinah, heir to the throne of Won-

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