The House on Stone's Throw Island

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ERIC WALTERS

It’s 1964 and life is about to change for seven teen girls when the orphanage they call home burns to the ground.

SECRETs

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is determined to ignore anything extraordinary. Her resolve weakens, however, when she stumbles upon a hidden room and a long-forgotten diary, which may contain an explanation for the increasingly dangerous phenomena. This latest in a string of paranormal mysteries from Poblocki is as well written as it is eerie. As the realistic setting slowly morphs into something more nightmarish, the main characters are fleshed out through inner dialogue and snap decisions, sustaining the tense mood while progressing the plot. Short chapters divided into sections and peppered with plot twists drive the pace, vivid descriptions clearly depict even the strangest occurrence, and start-to-finish suspense keeps readers on edge for the entirety of the work. VERDICT Perfect for readers who enjoy mysteries with a paranormal twist.—Maggie Mason Smith, Clemson University R. M. Cooper Library, South Carolina

POUNDER, Sibéal. *Witch Wars*. illus. by Laura Ellen Anderson. 272p. Bloomsbury. Jan. 2016. Tr $16.99. ISBN 9781619639256. Gr 3-6–Tiga Whicabim doesn’t know she’s a witch until Fran the fairy shows up in her tiny shed of a home, shows her that her name is an anagram for I Am A BIG WITCH, and takes her down the sink pipes to Ritzy City. There she discovers that witches’ hats are only pointy due to the journey up the pipes to our world, that witches love jam, and that she is one of nine girls slated to battle it out in the Witch Wars. The winner of Witch Wars gets to rule Ritzy City as top Witch, but the stakes are higher for Tiga. If she loses, she’ll have to go back to her shed with her horrible caretaker, who feeds her only cheese water. Not to mention the fact that she doesn’t know a single spell. She’ll have to work hard to outsmart mean girl witches Felicity Bat and Aggie Hoof, but luckily her new friend Peggy vows to help. The young witches, along with the sassy little fairies, make for a colorful and unpredictable cast of characters. Whimsical black-and-white illustrations throughout help readers envision this fantastical locale. VERDICT Silliness, riddles, puns, and many magical mishaps make this a great choice to help fill the elusive “funny book” hole that exists in many collections.—Mandy Laferriere, Fowler Middle School, Frisco, TX

HREAU, Laura. *The Lightning Queen*. 356p. Scholastic. Oct. 2015. Tr $16.99. ISBN 9780545800846; ebk. $16.99. ISBN 9780545800860. Gr 3-6–If books were written in black and white, *The Lightning Queen* would be written in color. Esma, a young Romani girl, meets Teo, a young Mixtec living on the Hill of Dust in the mountains of Mexico, when her traveling caravan makes a stop in Teo’s small village. The Romani bring with them the magic of cinema films, and after the loss of Teo’s father and sister, Esma gives him a reason to feel alive again. When Esma’s grandmother, the Mistress of Destiny, reveals Teo’s true fortune—that he and Esma will be lifelong friends and will save each other—Esma and Teo work hard to make sure their fortune comes true. Esma gives Teo the courage to save others and ultimately helps him to save himself. In return, Teo lifts Esma up just when she believes that her own dream is an impossibility. Esma and Teo go their separate ways; she becomes a shining star admired by the world, while he becomes a healer like his grandfather—and it is not until they are both in old age that they meet again. With the help of Teo’s grandson Mateo and Esma’s granddaughter Ruby, Teo and Esma rekindle their lifelong friendship. Like surviving a lightning strike, this book is rare