

6-7-8 Book Club
Summer 2012 Reading Options

Kira-Kira

by Cynthia Kado

Grade level: 5-6

ISBN: 0689856407 / 9780689856402

When Katie, a young Japanese girl, moves from Iowa to Georgia in the early 1960's, her once-secure life begins to unravel. Her security is further shaken when her sister is diagnosed with a terminal illness. Working long hours just to make ends meet, Katie's parents struggle to support the family in this trying time. Kira-Kira readers will get a glimpse into the turbulent life of an immigrant family trying to survive a family crisis.

The House of the Scorpion

by Nancy Farmer

Grade level: 6

ISBN: 0689852231 / 9780689852237

Matteo Alacrán was not born; he was harvested. His DNA came from El Patrón, lord of a country called Opium--a strip of poppy fields lying between the United States and what was once called Mexico. Matt's first cell split and divided inside a petri dish. He is a boy now, but most consider him a monster--except for El Patrón. El Patrón loves Matt as he loves himself, because Matt is himself. As Matt struggles to understand his existence, he is threatened by a sinister cast of characters, including El Patrón's power-hungry family. Escape is the only chance Matt has to survive. But escape from the Alacrán Estate is no guarantee of freedom, because Matt is marked by his difference in ways he doesn't even suspect.

The House on Mango Street

by Sandra Cisneros

Grade level: 5-6

ISBN: 0679734775 / 9780679734772

In small vignettes, Esperanza Cordero tells the tales of all the people and experiences she has with her little sister, Nenny, on Mango Street. As Esperanza meets people, tries to fit in, feels like an ugly duckling, and craves the touch of a man, she realizes that the neighborhood she hates and the house of which she is ashamed is not terrible. After the three sisters advise her to remember her family and remember where she came from, Esperanza realizes that she will leave Mango Street. However, despite the impending travels and stories she will create and tell, Mango Street will never leave her.

The Egypt Game

by Zilpha Keatly Snyder

Grade level: 6

ISBN: 1416990518 / 9781416990512

Megan is sent to live with her grandmother Caroline in a large university town in California. Megan makes friends with Ryan, a classmate who shares her fascination with reading and imagination. The Egypt Game begins in September in the storage yard of A-Z Antiques. The owner of the store "The Professor", is a mysterious man of whom the neighborhood children are afraid. Megan and Marshall research actual Egyptian belief systems and practices, and they create their own rituals. Then all of a sudden they hear that there has been a murder in the neighborhood, which results in them being restricted from playing outside for a few months. When the murderer's identity is discovered by Megan and Marshall, after a horrific incident, "The Professor" reveals that he has been watching the children's game the whole time. The children must decide whether or not to continue playing the game.

Hatchet

by Gary Paulsen

Grade level: 6

ISBN: 1416936467 / 9781416936466

Thirteen-year old Brian Robeson is on his way to visit his father when the single engine plane in which he is flying crashes. Suddenly Brian finds himself alone in the Canadian wilderness with nothing but his clothing, a tattered windbreaker, and the hatchet his mother has given him as a present -- and the dreadful secret that has been tearing him apart ever since his parent's divorce. But now Brian has no time for anger, self-pity or despair -- it will take all his know-how and determination, and more courage than he knew he possessed to survive.

To Kill A Mockingbird

by Harper Lee

Grade level: 8

ISBN: 0446310786 / 9780446310789

To Kill a Mockingbird is a coming-of-age story of Scout Finch and her brother, Jem, in 1930's Alabama. The summer when Scout was six and Jem was ten, they met Dill, a little boy who spent the summer with his aunt who lived next door to the Finches. Dill and Jem become obsessed with the idea of making Boo Radley, the neighborhood recluse. Scout and Jem's God-like father, Atticus, is a respected and upstanding lawyer in small Maycomb County. He takes on a case that pits innocent, black Tom Robinson against two dishonest white people. Atticus knows that he will lose, but he has to defend the man or he won't be able to live with himself. The case is the biggest thing to hit Maycomb County in years. Through the events of those two years, Scout learns that no one person is better than any other.

The Golden Compass

by Philip Pullman

Grade level: 7

ISBN: 0812696719 / 9780812696714

Lyra Belacqua's carefree life among the scholars at Oxford's Jordan College is shattered by the arrival of two powerful visitors. First, her fearsome uncle, Lord Asriel, appears with evidence of mystery and danger in the far North, including photographs of a mysterious celestial phenomenon called Dust and the dim outline of a city suspended in the Aurora Borealis that he suspects is part of an alternate universe. He leaves Lyra in the care of Mrs. Coulter, an enigmatic scholar and explorer who offers to give Lyra the attention her uncle has long refused her. In this multilayered narrative, however, "nothing is as it seems. Lyra sets out for the top of the world in search of her kidnapped playmate, Roger, bearing a rare truth-telling instrument, the compass of the title. All around her children are disappearing--victims of so-called "Gobblers"--and being used as subjects in terrible experiments that separate humans from their daemons, creatures that reflect each person's inner being. And somehow, both Lord Asriel and Mrs. Coulter are involved.

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Native Son

by Richard Wright

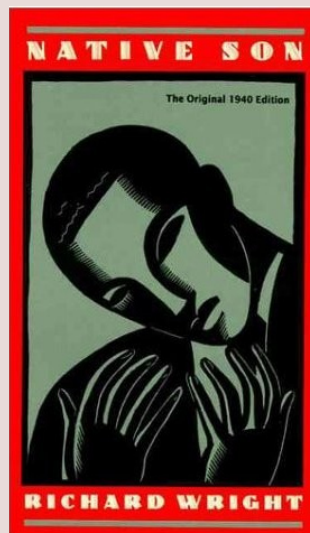
Reviewed by David Morel, age 15

Native Son by Richard Wright is, without a doubt, one of the most powerful pieces of literature I have read. Through this narrative, Wright vividly exposes the horrors of racial oppression in 1930s Chicago.

Bigger is a misguided African American youth who has committed his share of small crimes. When the relief threatens to cut off his family's support checks, Bigger is forced to seek employment with Mr. Dalton, a wealthy and charitable white businessman. Bigger is hired as a chauffeur. On his first night on the job he drives Mary, a rebellious youth with a communist agenda, to a bar. She insists that Bigger go out drinking with her and her communist friends, and quite a few drinks later, Bigger drives Mary back to her room. As he's helping Mary, Mrs. Dalton, who is Mary's blind mother and Mr. Dalton's wife, walks down the corridor. Afraid of what would be assumed from the

sight of him carrying a young, drunk white girl into her room, he tries to quiet Mary with a pillow. That's when events spiral out of control.

In this masterpiece Wright does a magnificent job of portraying the immense racism that was directed toward the Negro population in 1930s Chicago. Despite certain provocative, offensive, and disturbing scenes, *Native Son* remains a compelling piece of literature. I definitely recommend it to any high school student.



Silent to the Bone

by E.L. Konigsburg

Reviewed by Taylor Kilgore, age 14

In the book *Silent to The Bone*, Conner is Branwell's best friend. When Branwell's baby sister, Nikki, goes into a coma after a head injury, Branwell is put in a Juvenile Behavioral Center. He might be tried for reckless endangerment, or perhaps even murder.

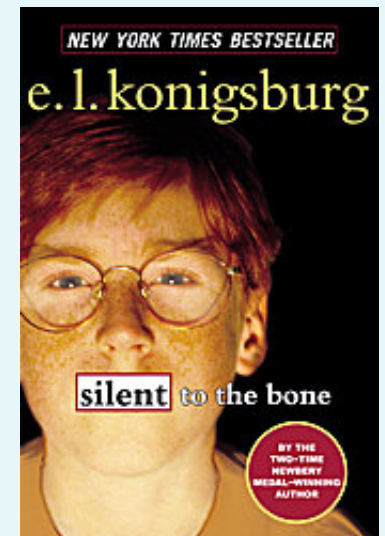
The problem is that Branwell is suddenly struck dumb and can no longer talk. It is now Conner's duty to do everything he can to figure out a way to communicate with his friend. Otherwise he will stand accused of something he did not do.

Silent to The Bone is a New York Times bestseller. It is filled with many interesting and unexpected plot twists. It also has plenty of fascinating characters. Will Conner find out that there is more to his friend than he thought?

My favorite part of the book is the insight the author gives us into the various thoughts of the main characters. As a reader you can often feel

their emotions, most times without them saying a single word.

Silent to The Bone is exciting and everything tells you not to put the book down. It seems to be directed toward middle school and high school readers. I highly recommend this book for anyone who likes a good story, and anyone who likes to watch interesting characters develop.



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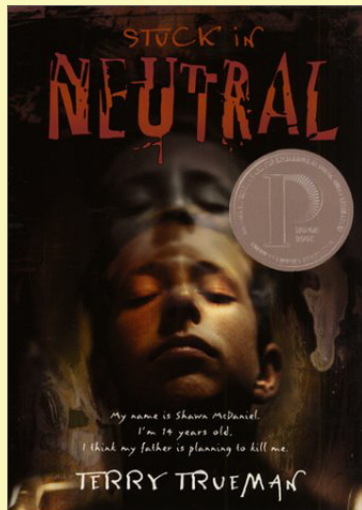
Free Press Book Reviews: Stuck in Neutral by Terry Trueman

Book Reviewed by Shreya Dahal, age 13

Stuck in Neutral is a book by Terry Trueman. The book tells the fascinating story of a 14-year-old boy named Shawn. Shawn has cerebral palsy, a condition that occurs at birth, and results in

severe muscular dysfunction. His condition is so bad that Shawn cannot control any parts of his body. Trueman is an excellent writer and his words are both touching and convincing. In fact, Trueman's own son suffers from cerebral palsy.

Although he is the main character, Shawn is static, meaning he stays the same throughout the entire book. Typically, the main character in any book or story goes through an emotional journey. This is what is called character development, an important theme in literature. Everyone sees Shawn as an emotionless "retard" who doesn't understand anything. The other characters are dynamic.



They undergo emotional and intellectual changes. This is what makes the book so different, and so interesting. It is the secondary characters that develop and go through changes.

Through the use of imagery the book shows us what Shawn is feeling about himself and others.

The first person account makes the reader sympathize with Shawn and understand what he is feeling. The book focuses a great deal on Shawn's disability and his relationship with his father.

The climax near the end of the book leaves the reader wondering how the

story actually ends. Readers must decide for themselves.

I recommend this book to anyone who likes realistic fiction. The story is sad in some ways, but it is also really engaging. It is a great way to learn about the real problems that some people face everyday. It's a book that is hard to put down once you pick it up!

The Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place by E.L. Konigsburg

Book Reviewed by Helen Zhang, age 12

The Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place written by E.L. Konigsburg tells a story about one girl, Margaret Rose Kane, and her mission to save three towers her uncles fondly constructed over a span of 45 years.

The year Margaret turns 12 is the year that her normal routine is broken. Her parents go to Peru and her beloved uncles refuse to take her in over the summer. So, Margaret chooses to go to Camp Talequa.

At Camp Talequa, it is expected that all the members will obey the instructors and be polite to others. Instead of blindly agreeing with what adults say, she decides there are many camp expectations she would "prefer not to" meet. However, Margaret has never been to camp before, making her an outsider and a perfect target for girls that have already experienced camp life. Her campmates bully her and get her into trouble with camp instructors.

After being tormented, Margaret starts to isolate herself even more from camp activities, causing the camp director, Mrs. Kaplan, to dislike her. After getting a call from Mrs. Kaplan regarding Mar-

garet's uncooperative behavior, her uncles decide to bring her to their home at 19 Schuyler Place.

At her uncle's house are the three towers that the uncles constructed over the past 45 years. Considered a masterpiece by artists and a redundant structure by city officials, the towers are created out of scrap metal, shards of glass and porcelain, and clock gears.

When Margaret arrives back home, she discovers that her uncles have fought a three-year battle with the city over the safety and historical integrity of the towers. Now, the towers are scheduled to be torn down.

When Margaret learns that

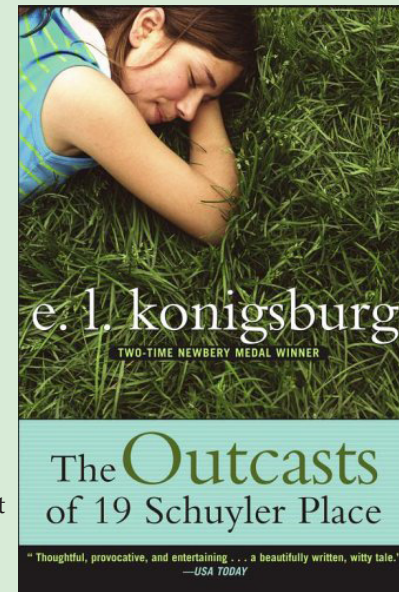
her cherished towers are being demolished, she is outraged. Along with some adult advocates for the towers, she forms the CPC,

Cultural Preservation Committee, to save the towers. Margaret's job-- stop the destruction.

In this book, Margaret learns about the struggles and responsibilities of becoming an adult. I highly recommend this book to other teenagers. The plot was riveting and well-written. I imagine that many teenagers at the same age as Margaret would be just as rebellious and solitary as she is. I think this makes the book very easy to relate to. I believe

that this book is targeted at middle school students. The vocabulary used in the book was age-appropriate, but also challenging.

I think that by reading this book, teenagers will view differently the difficult process of growing up.



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