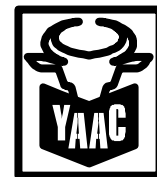




Branches

September/October
2004

Book Review Newsletter of the City of Mesa Library
Dobson Ranch Branch Young Adult Advisory Council



Letter from the Editor!



Ahhhh...autumn in Arizona! The thrill of roasting under the afternoon sun, trekking back and forth between classes as we begin the new school year! For those of you looking for something interesting to do in the heat of the day, you might try chilling out with some of these ice-cold picks, such as *Snow Crash*, or whisking yourself far, far away to Neverland with *Peter Pan!* Or, for those of you who are experiencing a little back-to-school culture shock, you may want to warm your mind up with some of these terrific tales before diving straight into Tolstoy. Whatever they say, you don't really need a "reason" to read a book, now do you?

--Hilary Waterman
Branches Editor

Snow Crash

By Neal Stephenson ★★★★★

If you've ever wondered what might happen if the Cosa Nostra Mafia took control of the pizza delivery business, if eccentric Texas businessmen began franchising churches, and if the skaters of today began using giant magnets to latch onto cars and surf the freeway, you should read *Snow Crash*. Part screwball comedy, part *reductio ad absurdum* of modern society, it is possibly one of the best satirical science fiction novels to come along since Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. The story deals with the adventures of the aptly named Hiro Protagonist and his sidekick, Y.T. It follows them through the craziness of the mid to late 21st century in southern California, and into the artificial world that the Internet has become by then, and finally to a gigantic raft of evangelical Southeast Asian refugees floating down the coast to L.A. Along the way they meet characters such as Arkady "Raven" Ravinoff, an Eskimo who has a nuclear bomb wired to his brain, L. Bob Rife, the man behind Reverend Wayne's Pearly Gates church franchise, and Da5id, the bizarre programmer behind the new and "improved" Internet.

I'm giving the book five stars for its attention-grabbing plotline and its sheer comic relief.

—Thomas Cong

Angels & Demons

By Dan Brown ★★★★★

Robert Langdon, a prominent Harvard symbologist, is summoned to a Swiss research facility after a peculiar phone call and a shocking photo. After donning his Harris Tweed suit jacket, Langdon arrives at CERN to aid in investigating the baffling implication branded upon a murdered physicist. Langdon discovers the horrific truth that an ancient brotherhood has resurfaced to claim its revenge upon the Catholic Church. This underground organization, the Illuminati, has re-emerged for one final time to create a devious plan with which to throttle their ancient enemies. Their weapon: antimatter, the most powerful energy source known to man. Antimatter is highly unstable, igniting when it comes into contact with anything – even air. The Illuminati's antimatter is set to go off, and poised to destroy Vatican City forever! With only a few hours left until detonation, Langdon and his colleague, Vittoria Vetra, set out together in an attempt to save Vatican City that takes them on an enthralling adventure full of hidden symbols, codes, and obscure messages.

Angels & Demons by Dan Brown is an intriguing and imaginative thriller that is extremely fast-paced and suspenseful. Dan Brown takes you on a whirlwind adventure through the walls of Vatican City and across Rome's piazzas, cathedrals, and hidden crypts. The action-

Rating System

start a fire	★
punishment for bad children	★★
decent	★★★
I would read it again	★★★★
masterpiece	★★★★★

packed plot feels precariously real and keeps you on the edge of your seat all the way down to the last shocking revelation. I strongly recommend this book; it is truly one of the most enthralling thrillers I have ever read. Extremely well written, it has many twists and turns, keeping you guessing right until the very end.

—Kellie Neilson

Peter Pan

By J.M. Barrie ★★★★★

From the beginning to the end, J.M. Barrie's novel, *Peter Pan*, is bursting with excitement. The main character, Peter Pan, is a carefree, fun-loving boy who refuses to grow up and spends his days gleefully roaming through Neverland with his group of friends, the "lost boys." Peter's world is one of mere bliss and endless joy that all children, save him, must leave behind as they grow up – a world filled with adventure, pirates, mermaids, magic, and Indians.

One day, however, Peter's world descends upon the real world of Wendy, John, and Michael Darling. These three English youngsters love to fantasize about all the fun that Peter gets to experience on a daily basis. On the night the tale begins, Peter appears in the children's nursery and invites Wendy to come away with him to be the "mother" of his lost boys and tell them all kinds of stories. Wendy can hardly resist, and soon Wendy and her two brothers fly off to Neverland (with the help of happy thoughts and fairy dust, of course!)

They fly through the sky about London, over vast oceans, and among glittering stars until they finally arrive in Neverland. Unexpectedly, they receive a rude welcome back from Captain Hook and his rough group of pirates. Also, right upon her arrival, Wendy is thrown into great danger. Things work out, but their whole experience in Neverland is just one adventure after another. The book describes all their fabulous times together, from Peter and Wendy's encounter with the mermaids to the group's rescuing of an Indian princess. But, as time passes, Neverland works its magic on the Darling

children and they begin to forget their real home and parents. Distraught, Wendy insists they must return home and the lost boys desire to go as well. Peter grants them permission, but refuses the invitation to come along. Just as the group is about ready to leave, they are all captured by Captain Hook and his pirates! The rest of the tale is the best yet, so you'll just have to read it for yourself.

I enjoyed this book because it riveted me with excitement and had me endlessly involved in the adventures on every page. This book is simply outstanding! Fascinating and thrilling, *Peter Pan* is an unforgettable journey that is sure to enchant readers for years to come.

—Kierstyn Lyts

Under the Same Sky

By Cynthia DeFelice ★★★★★

Under the Same Sky is a about a boy named Joe Pederson. For his 14th birthday, all Joe wants is a motorbike. His parents' response: "No way, it's too expensive!" When Joe tries to convince his parents that \$899 is not that expensive, his father suggests that Joe "finds out what a real day's work feels like." Joe's father puts him on the crew of migrant workers on his farm. Over the summer, Joe learns a lot more than what "a real day's work feels like," although that was a lot in and of itself. He makes friends with the workers that he's ignored his whole life. In doing so, he learns just what their lives are like.

In a quick run-in with the government, Joe learns that three of the workers, including Luisa, a beautiful girl his own age, are in America illegally. Suddenly, his world is flipped over. He must choose between what the law says is right, and what he knows in his heart to be right. I definitely recommend this book; it takes you out of your comfort zone into the lives of other humans, who, at heart, are much like yourself. I've read this book several times and I get something new out of it every time.

—Heidi Harriman

Pure Dead Brilliant

By Debi Gliori ★★★★★

The third and most recent installment in Debi Gliori's "Pure Dead" series is perhaps the best of all. As it nears Titus' thirteenth birthday and his huge inheritance, a titanic load of disasters crashes down upon StregaSchloss. His mother's witch classmates have come for a study week and one of the witches is not what she seems. He's getting strange emails, one of which contains a most disturbing video. His evil Uncle Lucifer is after his inheritance and will stop at nothing, and to top it all off, his baby sister Damp is wreaking havoc with her newly discovered magical powers. *Pure Dead Brilliant* is hilarious, suspenseful, and just an all-around great book.

—Shaoyuan Wu



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