

Branches



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

Letter from the Editor!



What seems like only moments after I put away the last Christmas ornament, I stepped outside my door to a bright and sunny 80°F! It's time to break out the beach chairs and sunglasses, kids, and soak up some mild rays while our Arizona spring still lasts. It's the perfect time to go for a bike ride around the neighborhood, or start planning a garden. When Valentine's Day comes around, take your family, your friends, or your sweetheart out for a picnic to enjoy the sunshine. Of course, nothing can beat spending a sunny afternoon enjoying the company of a good book, however – and we've got some great ones picked out, just for you! Whether you want to curl up with a romantic tale on February 14th, or read about what winter feels like for the *rest* of the world, we've got you covered. Read, discover, and enjoy!

– Hilary Waterman
Branches Editor

Rating System

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

Pop Princess

By Rachael Cohn ★★★★★

This book is about a 16-year-old girl named Wonder. Her sister, Lucky, was going to be a star singer, until her tragic death. Lucky's manager, Tig, finds Wonder singing at her job and takes her under his wing to make her become the new Pop Princess. Follow Wonder through her maze of star life; parties, drinking, fans, and love. I read this book because I thought it would be fun to see what the life of a Pop Princess is like.

– Jasmine Olson

Someone Like You

By Sarah Dessen ★★★★★

Someone Like You, by Sarah Dessen, is a story about two best friends and the many hardships that they experience as juniors in high school. In this novel, Dessen uses a simple, easy-to-read style compelling the reader to help the characters and engaging them emotionally in the unfolding story. Many teens can relate to the plot and the message of this sad, yet powerful book about friendship, love, and the difficult consequences of both. Scarlett and Halley are best friends, and Halley always "leans on" Scarlett to help her through tough times until Scarlett's boyfriend, Michael, is killed in a motorcycle accident. The day after his death, Scarlett discovers that she is carrying Michael's baby. It is now Halley's responsibility to take care of Scarlett and act as her guide. In addition to taking care of and supporting Scarlett, Halley struggles with her own problems. This novel is very down-to-earth and has a realistic plot. It is very easy to relate to, and I recommend it to all

teenagers, struggling in life or not.

– Ania Grodzinski

Boy Proof

By Cecil Castellucci ★★★★★

The cover was the first thing that I caught my eye; I mean, bright orange eyebrows – who wouldn't notice them? And then there's the inside jacket: "Her name is Egg." By that time, I knew I'd have to read the book. Her name isn't *really* Egg, but she refuses to call herself by her real name (Victoria), preferring to go by her favorite movie character's name. She even dresses like her (white trench coat) and quotes her constantly ("they tear down everything that's human"). She won't conform – won't even try – but her uniqueness is a mask that hides her fears from everyone, even herself. Until, of course, a boy named Max enters the scene...

The book reminds me immensely of Meg Cabot's *All American Girl* (which is great, by the way) because of the main characters' kooky-but-cool personality, and the fact that they both live in awesome places (Washington D.C. and Hollywood). Their version of "normal" just isn't the same. *Boy Proof* is incredibly funny, but also honest, and I kept finding myself thinking, "*I know what she means.*"

– Shaoyuan Wu

The Call of the Wild

By Jack London ★★★

Buck was a pampered dog living on the farm in Santa Clara Valley, untouched by all things hard and harsh, until he was sold and began a journey that changed his life.

On the icy terrain of the Klondike in Alaska, Buck grew into an incredible sled dog, becoming surprisingly accustomed to the unrelenting cold and laborious work of pulling a dog sled. But things took a turn for the worse and Buck is near death from exhaustion and weakness when the sled stopped at the camp of a man named John Thorton, who buys Buck and saves his life.

On an exciting adventure with Mr. Thorton, Buck begins to hear a strange call from deep within the woods that beckoned him to leave his comfortable life and begin something new, again. One night Buck leaves the camp and meets a mysterious wolf who seems to be the source of the strange call. Buck returns to his life with John Thorton, to later finally answer the irresistible call. Buck returns again to camp, only to find out that every man there has been savagely killed by Indians, and Buck must decide what to do next.

The Call of the Wild is a powerfully written story with strong and vivid descriptions, but it lacks a lasting impact or and uplifting plot. When reading a book, it should take your mind off the problems of this world and throw you into a thrilling or captivating adventure somewhere else.

The Call of the Wild was depressing because of the constant presence of death, cruelty, and the tangible lack of any true happiness. Although a classic piece of literature, someone looking for a book to bring encouragement or delight should read something other than the Call of the Wild.

- Kierstyn Lyts

What Is Goth?

By Voltaire ★★★★★

From cackling skulls and flaming tattoos to every drop of nauseating "Fake Fang Glue" ever manufactured, the Goth scene has taken America by storm. Thousands have flocked to their nearest Hot Topic to cloak themselves in this macabre, cynical style of existence. I was wandering through Changing Hands Bookstore when this slim red-and-black caught my eye. Hardly a Goth myself, there was nevertheless something about the book that called to me. Before I knew what was happening, I was chuckling to myself and casting otherworldly glances at any poor clerk who happened to walk by. However, I plead a temporary enchantment with the sinister side of the soul. Like the vampires

and dark princes it lauds, there is a tantalizingly dark and mysterious air surrounding the Gothic Way of Life, ensnaring us all for a while...although, when you think about it, the most mystifying thing is what that Way of Life (and Death?) actually *is*.

Imagine, if you will, that I come from a small, pleasant, and tragically isolated little town somewhere in the northern Yukon. If I were to walk up on the street and ask you, "what was *that?*," pointing at some black-shrouded death rocker across the street at Walgreen's, what would you say? Certainly there are vast arrays of (monotone!) images that come to mind when we think of the word "Goth." We all recognize the signs.

However, when you get right down to it, the average person has a surprising amount of difficulty figuring out what Goths are actually trying to *tell* us with those fishnet gloves and outrageously bad haircuts. Little is known, - or rather, *defined* - about their spooky, reclusive ways. The physical manifestation of subculture (and you probably shouldn't read this book if you didn't understand that phrase), Goths are both blessed and cursed with the ability to appreciate the more somber side of life, as the author, himself a Gothic performance artist for the past decade, explains in strangely warm, unbelievably funny language.

Dividing the book up into something like a handbook, Voltaire takes readers on a hilarious, somewhat self-deprecating journey as our guide through the New Underworld. His chapters range from the serious matter of Vampire Bar etiquette and the handy Gothic Name Generator (just use your own death-dice...) to a heartwarming ode to his favourite skull sweater. The divisions alternate Gothic philosophy with Gothic history and culture, showing us everything from how the name came to be (it's a loooooong story) to different types of gothic style. Whew! Could there *be* anything more deliciously dark and entertaining?

All in all, a great, amusing, and exceptionally informative read to curl up with on a creepy stormy evening...or, at least, any sunny Arizona afternoon that you *wish* was a creepy stormy evening. So grab this book, break out your eyeliner, and let your dark side out to roam for a bit.

- Hilary Waterman

What is YAAC?



Join other teens at the Dobson Ranch Library who love reading! Share your thoughts and ideas on what you have read by presenting book reviews at our monthly meetings and writing reviews for *Branches*, our bimonthly publication written and edited by teenagers. Members are considered official library volunteers. Group meets once a month. Applications are available in the Teen area. For ages 12-18 or grades 7-12.

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Teens

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City of Mesa Library on the Web

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