

Open Shelf

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mesa public library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

letter from the editor



Here at YAAC, we're too cool to have dates on Valentine's Day...at least that's what we tell ourselves. If your love life's not very exciting, we have eight action-packed books to fill up those empty Friday nights. We even have – gasp! – a comic book (oh, excuse me, a “graphic novel”) review for all you manga fans out there. Happy Valentine's Day and (more importantly) happy reading!

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rating system

bad ★
so-so ★★
good ★★★
excellent ★★★★★

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The Caine Mutiny

By Herman Wouk

So...excruciatingly...long. And yet, so good. Willie Keith, the main character, is a WWII sailor. He goes through all the trials and tribulations of Navy life before getting onto the minesweeper *Caine*. Then, he experiences the Navy.

Wake up, wake up. Sounds boring, but it's not! Yes! Shocking. It's actually funny. Honestly, I read this book for school and chose it only because I linked mutiny to pirates to action. The mutiny (which happens about 100 pages from the end – everything else just “leads up” to it) isn't like that at all. Oh well. Still, surprisingly good, for a WWII novel. If you must read one, read this.

—Alyssa Ratledge ★★ ★

Trickster's Choice

By Tamora Pierce

16-year-old Aly doesn't know what to do with her life. Never mind that most noblewomen her age are either betrothed or married already. All Aly likes doing is spying. During Tortall's war with Scanra, Aly's been breaking coded messages from her father's agents. All she wants to do is be a spy, but her mother, the king's champion and first female knight in a century, and her father, the king's spymaster, are not about to let their only girl become a spy and die in some god-forsaken place. When Aly is captured by pirates and made

This month:

The Caine Mutiny by Herman Wouk
Trickster's Choice by Tamora Pierce
Marmalade Boy Series
by Yoshizumi Wataru
The Lord of the Rings Trilogy
by J. R. R. Tolkien
The Wolves of Calla by Stephen King
Martyn Pig by Kevin Brooks
The DaVinci Code by Dan Brown
Harrison Bergeson by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

a slave on the Copper Isles, the trickster god makes her a wager: “Keep these noble children alive until mid-summer and I'll talk your father into letting you be a spy.” How can she refuse? *Trickster's Choice* combines the political struggles of Tudor England and Indonesia, giving this thrilling story a taste of the exotic that makes it a wonderful book.

—Patricia Langevin ★★ ★

Marmalade Boy series

By Yoshizumi Wataru

I have come to realize that there are far, far too few reviews concerning manga out there. So, I set out on my mission to change that! (Well, at the least, I'm reviewing these because they are incredibly good. More on that in a minute.)

One day, Miki Koishikawa's parents come home and tell her with bright, happy faces that they're getting a divorce. Well, needless to say, Miki is a little shocked and demands an explanation. It turns out that while on a vacation cruise in Hawaii, her parents had met up with another couple and decided to switch partners. Both families would move into one big house and live together, so that “nothing will change.” Right, Mom. The other couple, the Matsuuras, also have a son, and that's when things get interesting...

Yuu Matsuura is apparently sweet as a strawberry, but underneath this kind exterior he is not quite ripe. Miki discovers this one day during breakfast and decides

to give him the nickname, "Marmalade Boy." But Miki still falls in love with him. (All sigh—ready: "Aw...")

Things take off from there in this Brady-bunch family, going everywhere from teacher/student romances to illegitimate children. But despite the rather soap opera-ish quality, these eight books kept my interest and my laughter going. Guys out there may not enjoy the series as much as girls, but hey, they'll never know until they try... So, do just that! Pick up a copy of *Marmalade Boy* and enjoy!

—*Jenny Knatz* ★ ★ ★ ★

The Lord of the Rings Trilogy

By J. R. R. Tolkien

In honor of the premiere of the *Return of the King* movie, I went on a mission to read the entire trilogy in one week. I lost sleep, I failed a final exam, but the books just kept getting better. For those sorry folks out there who have not read the books or seen the movie, the basic plot is that there is a hobbit, a really short person with hairy feet, named Frodo, along with three other hobbits, an elf, a dwarf, two men, and a wizard, who go on a journey to destroy the One Ring of Power to keep evil from taking over Middle Earth. Ah, beautiful!

—*Lora Eubanks* ★ ★ ★ ★

The Wolves of Calla

By Stephen King

As the fifth installment in Stephen King's *Dark Tower* series, *The Wolves of Calla* is the continuing story of Roland of Gilead and his journey to find the Dark Tower. In this story, Roland and his companions, Eddie, Susannah, Jake, and Oy, find themselves in a small town plagued by a huge problem. Roughly once a generation, creatures called the Wolves ride through the town and steal children. The gunslingers are asked by the townspeople to help stop this event.

The Wolves of Calla is an excellent book, but to fully understand it, the other four novels in the series need to be read. There are frequent references to the previous

books, and it would be generally confusing if *The Gunslinger*, *The Drawing of the Three*, *The Wastelands*, and *Wizard and Glass* were not in the back of a reader's mind. These stories are more adventure/science fiction than horror, but of course being by Stephen King, there are some violent and frightening scenes. This series is rumored to be the last of King's books.

—*Elizabeth Dormady* ★ ★ ★ ★

Martyn Pig

By Kevin Brooks

Martyn Pig has a horrible name, a horrible house, a horrible father, and what seems like a horrible life. His dad is a drunk. He spends all the money he gets from his former wife for Martyn's support on drinks. Generally, he is aggressive and tries to hit Martyn. When a freak accident occurs, and Martyn tries to push away his father's violence, his father hits his head on the mantle and dies.

Traumatized, and by some means insane, Martyn decides not to call the police for fear that they would accuse him of murder. He finds himself, hours later, with the body still on the floor, afraid of a "crime" that was really an accident. When he tells his beautiful neighbor, Alex about what happened, she agrees to help him to conceal the body.

In a strange series of complicated events, the world turns upside down and there is no straight ending. As Martyn states himself: "Most mysteries are a ball of wool. You pull one end and you know that eventually you'll get to the end. But this story is like a bunch of chaotic knots. You pull one end and it all moves at the same time."

Apart from a compelling mystery and great storyline, the book contains a lot of theories. These include theories about life, and thoughts on random subjects. These things make you consider the storyline, and within it Martyn's own thoughts which are some of the most interesting and mystifying things you can read. The descriptions of life and the theories are almost as good as the plotline. I recommend it for all readers, as I think this is one of the greatest books in YA fiction.

—*Rosalinda Albrecht* ★ ★ ★ ★

The DaVinci Code

By Dan Brown

This book has everything you could possibly want. From swords to planes to conspiracies, this is your book. *The DaVinci Code* is about a two millennia Vatican cover-up of Jesus' and Mary Magdalene's "relationship." The two main characters go on a quest to find the truth, and on the way find the Holy Grail.

Read this book! Not only will you want to sleep on it, there are so many plot twists you can't put it down.

—*Matt Stone* ★ ★ ★ ★

"Harrison Bergeson"

by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

A short story from *The Flying Sorcerers* collection, edited by Peter Haining

Wouldn't you like to live in a world where everybody is equal? If you're in Harrison's world, you probably wouldn't.

Harrison's world is not different from ours (in that it's called planet Earth). But time wise...it's a lot different. The year: 2081. He lives in this time where beautiful ballerinas wear masks to conceal their beauty; where hot guys are a walking junkyard with scrap metals hanging all over them to hide their perfect bodies; where the smart ones wear earplugs that send hard, annoying beeps to prevent them from using their intelligence (they're not supposed to think at all). All of these are for just one thing: to make everybody equal. Everybody's equal, nice and even. You're not smarter than your little sibling, and you're not prettier than anybody.

I had to read this story for my English literature class and it was very interesting. Read it!

—*Geraldine DelRosario* ★ ★ ★ ★

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