

# open shelf

May 2000

## mesa public library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

### letter from the editor



Well, my year as your editor has come to a close and I won't be back next year — the best news you've ever heard, I'm sure. Yes, my high school years have come to a close and I'm leaving you all, passing on the torch to eternal glory...

Anyhow, in this, my last letter, I wished to go into philosophies and theories—but there is no time. (Because time is of the essence, whatever that means.) So as my farewell I will say: Read books. They have redeeming values.

**Rolland LaHaie**  
open shelf Editor



### rating system

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

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### The Cobra Event

By Richard Preston

From the beginning of the book you are drawn into the story about terrorism in New York. A man known as Archimedes has started biological testing on humans there. He uses a new virus called Cobra, which has a bunch of different viruses in it. The government forms a research-defense team called Reachdeep.

I only have one warning. The book does get into very explicit detail about an autopsy, and the effects of Cobra. Overall, it is a terrifying book because you can imagine if you had the disease or how easy it would be for terrorists to launch such attacks.

—**Joey Brennan** H H H H

### A Long Way from Chicago

By Richard Peck

This is a fairly good book. It has no real time or chronological order. It skips months and years and hours and days. But altogether it is pretty good. It focuses on two children from Chicago who go to stay with their Grandma every year. She is not the kindly little old lady you would expect. She works, and takes nothing from anyone. It was good, because their grandmother does lots of things she shouldn't.

I would recommend it to most, but if you like a lot of action, romance, etc. you wouldn't like it.

—**Thomas Alonge** H H H

### This month:

*The Cobra Event* by Richard Preston

*A Long Way from Chicago* by Richard Peck

*The Dark is Rising* by Susan Cooper

*War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy

*The Andromeda Strain* by Michael Crichton

*Briar Rose* by Jane Yolen

*Tangled Webs* by Elaine Cunningham

*The Three Musketeers* by Alexander Dumas

*When Kambia Elaine Flew in from Neptune*

by Lori Aurelia Williams

### The Dark is Rising

By Susan Cooper

Will Stanton is the last of a race of moderately good guys called Old Ones. On his eleventh birthday, his powers are awakened and he is pulled into a world outside of time where he meets Merriman. Merriman informs him of who he is, that the Old Ones are fighting against the forces of the Dark, and that the Dark is rising. In order to keep it from subduing men he has to collect six signs and keep them from the dark. Because the Old Ones have power over things (they can command logs to burn without actually saying anything), they are constantly traveling back and forth through time and locations. Most of the story takes place through the twelve days of Christmas (our time) in fairly modern England. Between duties as a member of the Stanton family and avoiding the Dark so he can keep the six signs safe as he is collecting them, Will has a bizarre but good adventure.

—**Elizabeth Steimle** H H H H

### War and Peace

By Leo Tolstoy

First of all, this book is long. Loooong. It took me two months to read it. The characters speak French all the time.

If the past four sentences don't discourage you, then you ought to consider reading **War and Peace**. I mean, hey, it's only

the greatest novel ever written.

There are approximately five plot lines in *War and Peace* involving: the Rostov family; the Bolonsky family; Pierre Bezukhov; the armies and their commanders; and the history of Russia as a whole, including Tolstoy's commentary. The narrative switches around from plot line to plot line; some are more interesting than others. In a volume this expansive, that covers so many topics, there are bound to be sections that do not hold your attention at all. I preferred the parts of the book concerning the Rostovs and Bolonskys. At times, Tolstoy's prose is especially vivid, describing sumptuous balls and fetes and tender moments between lovers (sigh) with astounding skill. Of course, you may enjoy the fast-paced descriptions of battles if you are a military buff, and historians will revel in the insider's view of history Tolstoy presents. (Historical figures such as Napoleon are characters in the book.)

The only part that feels flat are Tolstoy's long-winded theories on history, etc. The man desperately needed an editor. A little bit is okay, and gives you some good insights, but fifty laborious, tedious pages on some dry subject that does nothing to advance the plot is a little much. Still, this is only a minor problem.

As far as character development goes, this book blows anything I've ever read out of the water. You come to know these characters inside and out: some you love, and some you despise. Everyone has their favorite.

Reading *War and Peace* is similar to running the marathon—rough while you are doing it, but deeply gratifying in the end. If you want a book that inspires you to hug it one minute, and throw it across the room the next, then pick up *War and Peace*.

—**Erin Hutchinson** H H H H

## The Andromeda Strain

By Michael Crichton

Imagine a world where simply breathing is hazardous to your life. This world is a reality in *The Andromeda Strain*. A satellite crashes down in the small town of Piedmont, Arizona. Three seconds later, everyone in the town is dead. Within 24

hours, four carefully selected men arrive in a helicopter in Piedmont with a mission: find what killed Piedmont, examine it, and exterminate it.

I enjoyed this book, but there were many things I didn't understand. For one thing, there are many graphs/charts with amazingly complicated chemical equations. Also, the first three or so chapters can really turn you off because they are completely irrelevant. Overall, though, this was an excellent science fiction novel.

—**Janel Torkington** H H H

## Briar Rose

By Jane Yolen

*Briar Rose* is about a young woman named Becca—trying to find out about her grandmother's past. Gemma, Becca's grandmother, claims that she is a princess. So, after Gemma dies, Becca goes to Poland where Gemma was last recorded living. Upon arriving, Becca realizes Gemma had escaped from a Nazi Death Camp during WWII. Becca meets one of Gemma's old friends who recounts the part he played in Gemma's escape. He also explains why Gemma said she was a princess. Contented, Becca goes back to America. In an interesting subplot, it flashes back to when Becca was a little girl. You periodically learn, through the flashbacks, the real story of *Sleeping Beauty*, or *Briar Rose: Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*.

This book is one of the best books I have read in a long time. It is excellent, but it is a bit disturbing. Because a good part of it is set in WWII, it is graphic in certain areas, especially concerning the Death Camps, but that was reality. Excellently written, I couldn't put it down after the first page. I recommend this for mature readers.

—**Elizabeth Dormady** H H H H

## Tangled Webs

By Elaine Cunningham

This book picks up where *Daughter of the Drow* left off. Liriel Baenre and Fyodor of Rashemen continue the Rune Quest for the rune to control Fyodor's beserker rages and Liriel's Drow magic. Their quest takes

them to the sea and up against the mysterious Kraken Society for control of the island home of Yggdrasil's child, the source of rune magic.

The book was great. I couldn't put it down. It has excellent material for those readers who dream and those readers who think.

—**Chris Carbone** H H H H

## The Three Musketeers

By Alexander Dumas

This book is very enjoyable. Although it is a bit tougher book it was written for everyone. Actually there are four musketeers. Throughout the novel we follow the four friends through the challenges and adventures of their lives. This book includes plenty of fighting and sword play along with tense moments. Although it might seem rather long it is well worth the time it takes to read it.

—**Lonica Drain** H H H H

## When Kambia Elaine Flew in from Neptune

By Lori Aurelia Williams

This new book is about Shayla, a young girl with so much to say. No one will listen, so she fills her journal. Things are so bad at home and she misses her sister who was kicked out. Then a new girl moves in next door, Kambia Elaine. She's a girl of many crazy stories that start to get scarier by the minute. Her imagination is off the wall. These messed up stories are actually based upon what's going on in her life. When Shayla starts to get concerned she keeps on writing. She is beyond scared for her new friend. As time passes things get worse and worse.

Then something major happens to Kambia. This event changes everything. Kambia's stories were cries for help, Shayla realizes.

To find out what went on and what then happens, read this!

—**Becky Melohn** H H H H



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