

## RISD Secondary Library Top Picks with Annotations

**Airhead**, Meg Cabot (Point, 2008, Grade 7 and up) Sixteen year-old Em Watts hates girly –girls and anything to do with brainless celebrities. Then an accident occurs and in an attempt to save part of her and the biggest female starlet, Nikki Howard, Em’s brain has been embedded into Nikki’s body. Dealing with being a celebrity and losing her identity is much harder than she could have ever imaged. Being Nikki, the next in the series, will be out May 5, 2009.

**American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House**, John Meacham (Random House, 2008, Grades 9 and Up) Andrew Jackson, his close group of friends, and his tumultuous times are at the heart of this remarkable book about the man who rose from nothing to create the modern presidency. One of our most significant yet dimly recalled presidents, Jackson was a battle-hardened warrior, the founder of the Democratic Party, and the architect of the presidency as we know it. Those who enjoyed Meacham’s *Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship* will find this a great story as well.

**Artichoke’s Heart**, Suzanne Supplee (Dutton, 2008, Grade 8 and up) When she is almost sixteen years old, Rosemary decides she is sick of being overweight, mocked at school and at Heavenly Hair—her mother’s beauty salon—and feeling out of control, and as she slowly loses weight, she realizes that she is able to cope with her mother’s cancer, having a boyfriend for the first time, and discovering that other people’s lives are not as perfect as they seem from the outside.

**Austenland**, Shannon Hale (Bloomsbury, 2007, Grade 11 and up) Thirty-something Jane Hayes is single and obsessed with finding her Mr. Darcy. When her rich aunt sends her on a trip to Austenland, Jane finds herself living out her dreams in the Regency time period, trying not to blur the lines between fantasy and reality.

**Beauty Shop for Rent: Fully Equipped, Inquire Within**, Laura Bowers (Harcourt, 2007, Grades 7 and up) 14 year-old Abbey spends most of her time with the "gray widows," her great-grandmother & cronies. She is afraid to date - afraid she'll end up like her mom, pregnant & forced to struggle to make a living. She has a "master plan" to be a millionaire by the time she's 30. She works every chance she gets & invests her money religiously. Despite her intentions, there is some romance in the story. Abbey's conflicting emotions are quite realistic for a girl her age who has had unhappy events in her childhood.

**Birmingham, 1963**, Carole Boston Weatherford (Wordsong, 2007 Grades 4-8) A fictionalized poem about a tragic historical event, the Birmingham, 1963, bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Although the narrator is fiction, the events are not. A poignant poem about a disturbing part of our history. Each verse/poem is opposite a page of a black and white photo of a 1960's event that mirrors the words. Each verse begins, "The year I turned ten . . ." There is a memorial to each of the four girls who were killed in the church bombing. This is a simple but very powerful book.

**Carlos is Gonna Get It**, Kevin Emerson (Arthur A. Levine Books, 2008, Grades 6-8) In typical middle school fashion, Carlos is teased for being different than the other kids. Making fun of him gets them into trouble, so they’ve decided that Carlos is “gonna get it” on their overnight field trip. While a couple of the kids are feeling hesitant about the prank and the weather turns bad, Carlos is in more danger than they ever imagined.

**Chains**, Laurie Halse Anderson (Simon & Schuster, 2008, Grade 5-8) After being sold to a cruel couple in New York City, a slave named Isabel spies for the rebels during the Revolutionary War.

**Cricket Man**, Phillis Reynolds Naylor (Atheneum, 2008, grade 8-12). Kenny Sykes wants to be his own person and make a difference in his neighborhood and school. He realizes that his compassion holds the key to life and death after saving crickets in his family's pool during the summer. Christening himself "Cricket Man", he creates a t-shirt that holds the secret to his power, choosing to wear it underneath his clothes, as Clark Kent does. When the new school year begins, he slowly realizes that, in everyday life, Kenny Sykes, not Cricket Man, must sometimes become the hero. The protagonist is well-developed by the middle of the book, and the end, though unexpected, was actually hinted throughout the novel.

**Eat This Not That! Supermarket Survival Guide**, David Zincenko (Rodale, 2009, Grade 9 and Up) Brought to you by the editor-in-chief and the food and nutrition editor at Men's Health magazine, this insider's guide to smart, healthy, low-cost food helps the average Joe (and Jane) pick the right foods at the supermarket. Why would one need such a guide? Food manufacturers think you're stupid; their marketing strategies rely upon it. In fact, many food products are deceptively labeled. A snack labeled "fat free" is often loaded with sugar. Did you know that a bowl of some of Quaker Oat's "Heart Healthy" hot cereals has the same amount of sugar as a bowl of Fruit Loops or that Keebler's Reduced Fat Original Club Crackers, while boasting of a 33% reduction in fat, have more carbs and sugar than the original? Fear not, young supermarket shopper, this book will safely guide you to healthy choices as you navigate each aisle. Our library also has *Eat This Not That! For Kids* and the original *Eat This Not That!* It's fascinating reading from those guys at Men's Health. Great for dieters, fitness gurus, or anyone who wants to make better food choices.

**Factory Girl**, Barbara Greenwood (Kids Can Press, 2007, Grades 4-8) 12-year-old Emily has a bright and promising future. She has opportunities that girls before her never had: teacher, nurse, clerk...wonderful careers with a future. Emily finds instead that her family's sudden poverty causes her to abandon everything and become a "Factory Girl." The story reads as an autobiographical account of life in 1910's sweat shop. Authentic pictures and images take the reading back to a different time and firmly ground Emily in the heartache of child labor.

**Finding Daddy**, Louise Plummer (Delacorte Press, 2007, Grade 7 and up) Mira, a 15 year old, has lived her whole life wondering who her father is. She lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, with her high school teacher mother, and her successful real estate mogul grandmother. Each time she inquires about her father, both her grandmother and mother give her no information. Mira secretly tracks down her father, but days before she is to meet him, someone breaks into their home, and the crimes escalate. This is a "do not stop reading until you finish" book.

**Frankenstein Takes the Cake**, Adam Rex (Harcourt, 2008, Grade 3-up) With his best man Dracula afraid of the garlic bread being served and Headless Horseman fearful that a guest will eat his pumpkin head for dessert, Frankenstein's wedding to his undead bride is turning into a drama bigger than the main event in this picture book for all ages – English teachers will love it.

**Frannie in Pieces**, Delia Ephron (HarperTeen, 2007, Grades 7-10) 15 year-old Frannie finds a homemade jigsaw puzzle in a beautiful box that was made by her artist father who has recently died unexpectedly. Believing the puzzle has some hidden message to her from her father, she becomes obsessed with finishing it. Strangely enough, Frannie begins to get "sucked into" the puzzle, which is a landscape of another time & place. The novel reads like realistic fiction, but has this fantasy-like twist.

**Generation Dead**, Daniel Waters (Hyperion, 2008, Grade 9 and up) When dead teenagers who have come back to life start showing up at her high school, Phoebe, a goth girl, becomes interested in the phenomenon, and when she starts dating a "living impaired" boy, they encounter prejudice, fear, and hatred. The sequel, *Kiss of Life*, will be out May, 2009.

**Gone**, Michael Grant (HarperTeen, 2008, Grade 6 and up) In a small town on the coast of California, everyone over the age of fourteen suddenly disappears, setting up a battle between the remaining town residents and the students from a local private school, as well as those who have "The Power" and are able to perform supernatural feats and those who do not.

**Good Enough**, Paula Yoo (Harper Teen, 2008) Patti Yoon is a high school senior whose parents expect nothing less than the best from her. They expect her to get accepted into all the Ivy League colleges - not just one, expect a 2300 score on her SAT, and expect her to not like boys, etc. Patti is more than willing to comply until she meets a really cute boy at her All-State try-outs and also discovers that music might mean more to her than academics.

**Graceling**, Kristin Cashore (Harcourt, 2008, Grade 9-up) In a world where some people are born with extreme and often-feared skills called Graces, Katsa struggles for redemption from her own horrifying Grace, the Grace of killing, and tams up with another young fighter to save their land from a corrupt king – a great romantic fantasy.

**The Graveyard Book**, Neil Gaiman (HarperCollins, 2008, Grade 5-9) An orphaned boy is raised by ghosts and other denizens of the graveyard – Stephen King meets *Oliver Twist*!

**hippie chick**, Joseph Monninger (Front Street, 2008, Grade 7 and up) Fifteen year old Lolly Emerson is a free spirit and is called a "hippie child of a hippie woman" by others. She loves to sail her sailboat in the Florida Keys. One night while sailing, her boat makes contact with something underwater that capsizes it. Lolly is knocked unconscious; and when she comes to, is separated from her sailboat. During the boat's capsize and Lolly's floating in the keys, she ruminates about life and is she ready to face death. Her thoughts go from one extreme to another but are very realistic in context. Once she decides she could face her fate, a trio of manatees arrive. She grabs hold of one and goes with them to an isolated inlet where Lolly stays with them for days watching a helicopter fly over but too far away to see her. Finally, she leaves with the manatees as they seek other feeding grounds and is then spotted by a helicopter. She is finally saved but this only begins another adventure for Lolly.

**Insider Nonfiction Series** (Simon & Schuster, 2007-2009, gr. 5 & up) This 13 book series has a virtual reality look to the illustrations. My students come in asking for these books – they don't stay on the shelves! Some titles in the set are *Egypt*, *Sharks*, *Volcanoes & Earthquakes*, *Human Body*, and *Dinosaurs*.

**The Luxe**, Anna Godbersen (Harper Collins, 2007, YA). Elizabeth Holland, the most desirable socialite in Manhattan in the late 1800's is faced with a dilemma. She must make a choice between love and family responsibility when it comes to marriage. Does she marry the wealthy, womanizing Henry in order to help her family financially or follow her heart and marry the social outcast, the stable boy Will? Several love triangles are woven in this delicious fantasy—one including her younger sister and one including her best, but jealous friend, Penelope. If a young girl loves romance, sabotage, and intrigue, she will devour this juicy page turner, *The Luxe*.

**Newes From the Dead**, Mary Hooper (Roaring Brook, 2008, Grade 9 and up) In 1650, while Robert, a young medical student, steels himself to assist with her dissection, twenty-two-year-old housemaid Anne Green recalls her life as she lies in her coffin, presumed dead after being hanged for murdering her child that was, in fact, stillborn.

**Skin**, Adrienne Maria Vrettos (Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2006, Grades 8 and up) 14-year-old Donnie comes home to find his 16 year-old sister dead on the living room floor, struggling to give her CPR. Karen has finally done it; she starved herself to death...literally. Donnie looks back over the last few months and years to discover what really happened. Did it begin the day Coach said she was curvy, or was that "fat"? Was it Donnie's fault for not putting enough protein powder in her drinks? Donnie narrates the story as the family comes apart and Karen slowly dies...one day at a time.

**Someone Like Summer**, M. E. Kerr (Harper Teen, 2007, Grade 7 and up) Annabel is the 17 year-old daughter of the owner of a construction company. Esteban is a 20 year old undocumented construction worker hired by Annabel's father. Annabel and Esteban fall in love in spite of their families mutual disapproval. Teen readers will enjoy this modern Romeo and Juliet story.

**The Ultimate Teen Book Guide**, Daniel Hahn & Leonie Flynn, ed. (Walker & Co., 2008, Grade 6-12) Includes recommendations from teen reviewers and authors in fantasy, horror, chick lit, graphic novels, sci-fi, crime, true classics, and cult fiction. Includes a special genre feature written by E. Lockhart on Love and Relationships, and Patrick Jones on Short and Gripping Books – plus Top Ten Lists by genre, top award-winners, and up-to-the-minute bestsellers. Timely and a must-have resource for both teens and librarians/teachers – could easily be used as a booktalking tool.

**Undercover**, Beth Kephart (Laura Geringer Books, 2007, Grade 7 and up) Elisa, a high school sophomore, has inherited her father's intuitive look at the world as it really is. She is an introvert who is a talented writer, and she pens love poems for guys who want to impress their girlfriends. This works fine until she develops a relationship with one of her "clients". This is a beautiful coming of age story.

**Walkaway**, Alden R. Carter (Holiday House, 2008. Grades 9 and up) Fifteen-year-old Andy embarks on a "walkaway" into the wooded area surrounding his family's lodge, thereby leaving his dysfunctional family behind. He also leaves behind the medication designed to combat depression, anxiety and delusions.

**The Whale Scientists : Solving the Mystery of Whale Stranding**, Fran Hodgkins (Houghton Mifflin, 2007, Grades 5-8) A brief history of the whale is explained as is whaling that killed so many of the whales around the world before stranding is discussed. Stranding is discussed in the context of explaining theories of why this happens and how rescues are implemented. The whaling industry and its effects on cetaceans captures one's interest and leads the reader to sympathize with the task of scientists to save the whales while studying them and trying to find answers to why cetaceans strand, especially in pods.