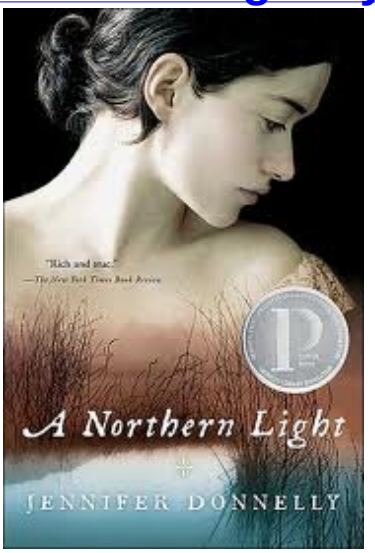
Coming of Age

Northern Light by Jennifer Donnelly



Grace Brown, a 20 year old skirt factory employee, was murdered in 1906 just outside an Adirondack mountain resort by Chester Gillette. Gillette was arrested soon after Grace?s body was recovered in a lake and he was later executed in a New York prison.

This gruesome true story serves as part of the backdrop for the very non-gruesome and excellent young adult novel, *A Northern Light* by Jennifer Donnelly. The main character, Mattie Gokey, receives a bundle of letters from a guest at the resort and makes a promise to burn them. But when Grace?s body is later pulled out of the lake, Mattie becomes unsure what the right thing to do. Maybe the letters hold answers?

Mattie is also torn between her duty to her family and her dream of going to college. Her family lives in a rural area and they work extra hard making a living off of the land, made especially difficult since her mother has passed away and there are three younger girls to look after.

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Posted by Sarah B. on May 30, 2012 Sarah B.'s blog Add new comment

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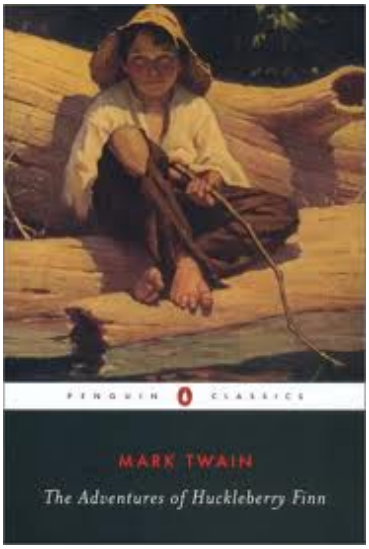
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn



In 1885 the year of its US publication, a number of public libraries banned *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from their stacks. According to the American Library Association, it was the fifth most-frequently-challenged book in the United States in the 1990s. Despite strong arguments that the book supports positive racial themes, Huck Finn has been controversial from the beginning. Last year NewSouth Books published a sanitized edition, effectively keeping this book in the news and on the minds of both those who have loved and hated this classic American book. When was the last time you visited Huck Finn? Interested in learning more and sharing your ideas?

Join us next week for a panel discussion of this story that continues to both attract and repel members of our community. Does Huckleberry Finn belong in the literary canon and in our schools? What does it reveal about race relations, art and the power of language?
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Posted by Sarah B. on Apr 27, 2012 Sarah B.'s blog Add new comment

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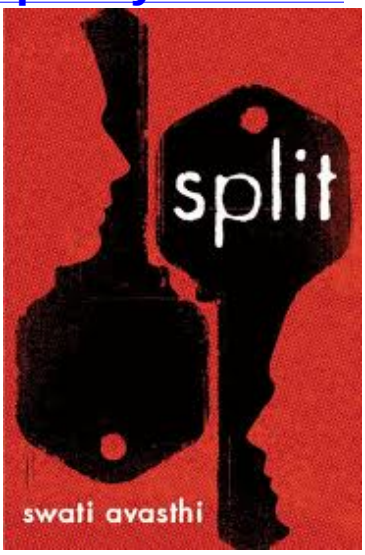
Split by Avasthi



Some of the best fiction books take a situation of which you have very little first-hand knowledge and through sympathetic characters and solid storytelling

create some sort of understanding of what living that life would be like. Swati Avasthi's first Young Adult novel about domestic violence and abuse, Split, is a great example. Avasthi is able to allow the reader to care about the main character and his struggles with both the violence of his father and the legacy he is hoping to avoid.
Teenage Jace leaves his parents? house with almost nothing after a particularly brutal fight with his father. He sets off from Chicago with his camera and the New Mexico address of his older brother who disappeared several years earlier. Jace's brother Christian is less than thrilled to see him with a bruised face despite having come from and escaped the same back ground. Their transition is rocky and a lesser book would have trivialized this time. Instead their difficulties felt genuine.

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Posted by Sarah B. on Apr 11, 2012 Sarah B.'s blog Add new comment

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Because I Am Furniture by Thalia Chaltas

Thalia Chaltas? *Because I Am Furniture* is the story of Anke, a quiet, lonely freshman who feels helplessly invisible at home and at school. She compares herself to furniture, because whereas her abusive father pays far too much attention to her older brother and sister (and Mom pretends it?s not happening), he treats her like part of the background at home, ignoring her completely. Dad is a very charismatic professor at the local university, loved by everyone outside, and feared by his family at home, where his anger and need to rule his children with an iron fist literally paralyzes them. Meanwhile, Anke risks his wrath and makes the school volleyball team, and is soon learning to feel accepted, and becoming a center of attention.

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Posted by Chris H. on Mar 12, 2012 Chris H.'s blog Add new comment

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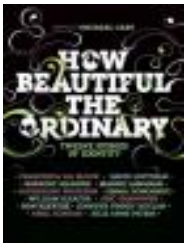
How Beautiful the Ordinary, edited by Michael Cart



How Beautiful the Ordinary, edited by Michael Cart, is a welcome addition to the small but growing collection of young adult fiction exploring gender identity and sexual orientation. Being a young person is difficult, what with all the changes physical, emotional, and social. Most of us spend our whole lives getting to know ourselves, and those initial explorations in our youth are some of the most confusing and painful (and exhilarating and profound) because they are so new. All of this can be overwhelming, and when you throw in societal condemnation of some of these identities and/or lifestyles it is especially hard. This collection of short fiction by well-respected young adult authors takes a loving and unrelenting look at the struggle not only to discover what we are as young women and men, but to accept and own that identity as well. **Read more »**

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Posted by Chris H. on Feb 28, 2012 Chris H.'s blog Add new comment

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Whip It

No, this post is not an ode to Devo (though I do love that song), but rather a look at the world of roller derby. I attended my first bout the other night and had the opportunity to see Bloomington's Bleeding Heartland Roller Girls win. Afterwards, I was inspired to pick up the feature film *Whip It*, a look at one teen's coming of age through the roller derby.
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Sights and SoundsInformation, Answers & ReviewsComing of AgeSportsWhip it [videorecording]

Posted by Library Intern on Jun 18, 2011 Library Intern's blog Add new comment

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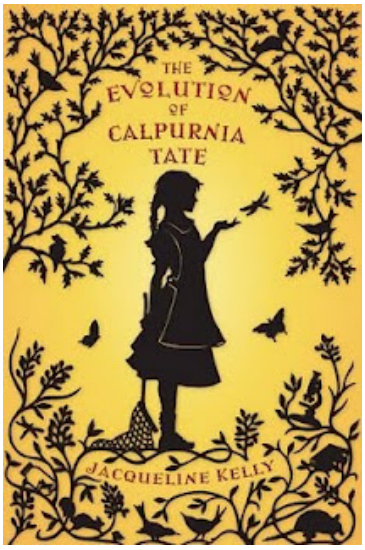
The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate



I admit to being a streaky reader - I think this time last year I was on a World War I fiction kick. And this winter I read three books in a row about the Johnstown Flood including both fiction and non-fiction titles - ***Three Rivers Rising***, ***In Sunlight In a Beautiful Garden***, and ***The Johnstown Flood***. The latter is by David McCullough, a famous historian and two time Pulitzer Prize recipient who is from Pittsburgh near the area where the flood occurred.

Recently though it seems I am reading a lot of coming of age novels featuring girls as the main character. E. Lockhart has written some wonderful contemporary coming of age novels, but for something historical I also have recently fallen for ***The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*** by Jacqueline Kelly.

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Posted by Sarah B. on Feb 22, 2011 Sarah B.'s blog Add new comment

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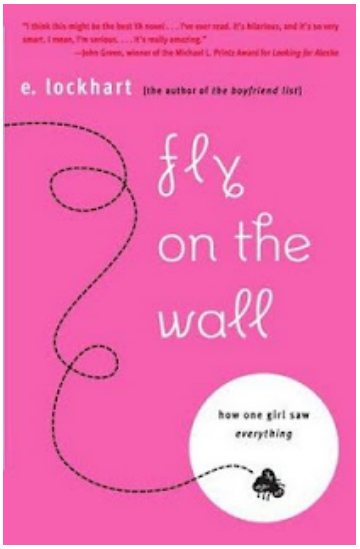
Newest Most Favoritist Young Adult Author



The teenage female protagonists of E. Lockhart's novels are funny, smart, interesting, questioning and underneath it all resilient and strong. They don't always make the best initial choices, but are willing to learn and adjust as they go. These coming-of-age novels feature a romance (or two), but not at the cost of ignoring other similar and frequently troublesome themes of any young life - parents, school, friendships and finding your niche.
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Posted by Sarah B. on Feb 16, 2011 Sarah B.'s blog Add new comment

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Scott Pilgrim vs. the World

I wasn?t sure what to expect when I first put *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* in my DVD player. It was not even close to what I got. For those who are not familiar with the plot Scott Pilgrim [Michael Cera], the bass player in a small band, has fallen for the new ?cool girl? in town, Ramona Flowers [Mary Elizabeth Winstead]. In order to date her he must first defeat her seven ?evil exes?. **Read more »**
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Scott Pilgrim vs. the world [videorecording]

Posted by Keith C. on Jan 17, 2011 Keith C.'s blog Add new comment