

High School Annotations---DRAFT

Because I Am Furniture

Chaltas, Thalia. Speak, 2010.

High-schooler Anke, unnoticed in her own dark home, wishes to play volleyball to feel alive. She witnesses her father's abuse faced by her mother, brother, and sister and can do nothing about their hell but wonder why she is not hit, not fondled, not loved. Providing strength and time to think, volleyball becomes the place where Anke finds her voice and confidence in seeking to release all of the prisoners in her home. This evocative free verse novel is ultimately empowering, even hopeful.

The Knife of Never Letting Go (Book One of the Chaos Walking series)

Ness, Patrick. Candlewick Press, 2008.

What if you could hear everyone else's thoughts - their "noise"? What if the price of that was that everyone could hear yours? That's the world that Todd lives in. He's thirty days away from officially becoming a man, a landmark for him and for all the men in Prentisstown, since he's the last boy there. Women were killed off long ago. On a trip to the swamp one day, he hears...silence. This translates to trouble for the town, and Todd's guardians send him away, hoping he'll be able to escape the madness of Prentisstown. The enraged town leaders assemble an army to find and kill Todd. And thus, Todd's quest to find his new role in this world which is soon engulfed in a violent civil war with unimaginable repercussions.

Marcelo in the Real World

Stork, Francisco X. Scholastic, 2009.

Marcelo isn't like other 17 year olds. He has Asperger's syndrome, he hears "internal music" and he goes to a special school, where next year he'll be a senior. He has a summer job lined up at his school to work with the ponies, something he loves. Then his dad decides that Marcelo has to spend the summer working at his law firm instead, to learn what it's like "in the real world." At the law firm,

Marcelo learns much more than either he or his father expected. He learns about understanding people, even though they can be very confusing. He has to make choices about trusting people, about love and about loyalty. And in the end, he learns how to stand up for himself, and see a future for himself in the real world.

The Orange Houses

Griffin, Paul. Dial, 2009.

Set in the Bronx, this powerful tale of friendship, fear, and hope is told from the points of view of three characters: Mik, a hearing impaired girl who hides from the violence and despair of her neighborhood by shutting off her hearing aids; Jimmi, an Iraq War veteran struggling with PTSD and drug addiction, and Fatima, a recent illegal immigrant from a war-torn African nation who finds joy in her new-found freedom. As anti-immigration sentiments grow, the friends become locked in a life and death struggle. Mik is wounded in a fight with the neighborhood bully, and Jimmi and Fatima come to Mik's aid. Jimmi rescues Mik, but the witnesses think he has abducted her and start a rescue party that quickly turns into a witch hunt. Fatima is arrested by immigration police and faces deportation. Will their friendship be enough to save them?

The Red Necklace

Gardner, Sally. Dial Books, 2007.

The French Revolution, 1789: "They are arresting all aristocrats as traitors. The prisons are full. It will end in a bloodbath." Yann, a poor orphan boy with a gift for magic, tries to assist Sido, an heiress with a cruel father. But the villainous criminal, Kalliovski, once deceived by Yann's magic, is looking for revenge. Yann tries to prevent further violence as Kalliovski profits from others' desperation and fear. A necklace of blood red garnet stones appears in suspicious places, adding to the intrigue of this tale set amidst a fearful episode in history.

Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty

Neri. Geri. Lee and Low, 2010.

The winner of the 2010 Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award chronicles the last days in the life of Robert Sandifer (nicknamed Yummy for his love of sweets) through the eyes of his friend Roger. We meet smiling Yummy with his teddy bear and learn, as a member of the Black Disciples Nation gang in Chicago, he fired the gun that killed a 14 year old girl in crossfire. Yummy was 11 at the time. He runs from police and from his own gang before meeting his demise. This true story shook the nation in 1994, capturing the attention of then President, Bill Clinton. The front and center perspective on Yummy's life, starkly illustrated by Randy DuBurke in graphic novel format, leaves readers with troubling and unresolved questions.

The Secret Story of Sonia Rodriguez,
Sitomer, Alan. Hyperion, 2008.

Sonia's life is chaotic. Her parents are illegal immigrants from Mexico. Her father works 3 jobs, and her mother has just had another baby. Sonia is expected to cook, clean house, help with the baby, cater to her older brother, please her conservative religious aunt, and somehow dodge her lecherous drunken uncle. Meanwhile, Sonia's main goal is to graduate from high school, which seems almost impossible with the demands of her family. To keep Sonia away from a Salvadoran guy who interests her, she is sent to Mexico for the summer to stay with relatives. There Sonia learns about her Mexican heritage and culture from her grandmother and cousin. Back at home, the pressures mount. Will Sonia be able to graduate and achieve her dreams of success?

Boot Camp
Strasser, Todd. Simon Pulse, 2008

Boot Camp is a fast-paced story about the hidden side of teenage incarceration. Strasser depicts the awful violence and wrongs suffered by teenagers sent to boot camp for disciplinary reasons by their parents. Teens taken under the cover of darkness, handcuffed in the back of a car, such as Garrett. He has no idea why he is being sent to a facility for troubled teens. Convinced that there has been some kind of terrible mistake and that he does not belong at Lake Harmony, he does not comply with the camp requirements. As a result, he has to suffer the consequences of non-compliance which include severe physical and mental abuse. Garrett takes part in an ambitious plot, with two other students, to escape the "behavior modification" program. The ending is both realistic and disturbing as his

fate at Lake Harmony is revealed. Strasser creates characters that will provoke strong emotions in readers who will be outraged by the brainwashing and torture the teens suffer at Lake Harmony.

After

Efaw, Amy. Viking, 2009.

Fifteen-old-Devon Davenport hasn't been feeling well lately. She is staying home from school when police enter her apartment, throw back her blankets, and find her wearing blood-soaked clothes. How did this happen? Devon doesn't remember being pregnant or having a baby and then throwing it into the dumpster behind her house. Even after being confronted with evidence, she maintains her innocence. This is an incredible story about denial and responsibility which will leave a lasting impression on its readers.

Hold Still

LaCour, Nina. Dutton Books, 2009.

As the new school year starts, Caitlin faces probing questions from her classmates, teachers' awkward behavior toward her, and her parents' overbearing attentiveness. Each moment of her day she confronts the gaping hole left by her best friend Ingrid's suicide. Ingrid has left Caitlin her journal, which gradually opens Caitlin's eyes to the world of mental illness that Ingrid kept secret. Through the journal, new friendships and her artistic talents, Caitlin makes a tender yet arduous journey of understanding and growth.

