

VSRA SECONDARY COUNCIL

Plan now to attend the
Virginia State Reading
Conference in Richmond.
March 15-17, 2012.

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Virginia Reader's Choice Middle School and High School

So, how many of the VRC books have you read so far? We have a chart in our library, Cedar Lee Middle School, listing each of the titles on the MS list, one chart for teachers and staff and one chart for students. We have several teachers who are almost done, and the great part, not all of them are English or Reading teachers. We encourage everyone to read from the list. Our school attendance officer read all of them last year. It's a great example for students when they see staff members are reading these books.

Last year at the VSRC, Dr. Marianne Baker from JMU book-talked all the books on the High School list. The review you will see in each newsletter is from her presentation. Thank you Dr. B.

Due to a miscommunication, there was not a representative from the Middle School committee to "talk" the books at the VSRC last year. That problem has been solved, so plan to attend the session this year. I've read seven of the ten. I understand a lot of time goes into reading the books for the final selection; it is a huge commitment. I served on the Florida selection committee for three years. There are some gems on the list—THE STRANGE CASE OF ORIGAMI YODA by Angleberger, WHEN THE WHISTLE BLOWS by Slayton, WAYS TO LIVE FOREVER by Nicholls (pass the tissues) and POP by Gordon Korman. However, BYSTANDER by Preller was a disappointment—could have ended on a much stronger note. LEANIN' DOG was also a disappointment—several things just weren't believable for the time period and setting. There is also a big dose of dysfunction and tragedy on the list. We want students to want to read, not be depressed after reading. Let's see, a boy dies of leukemia, a girl with severe Cerebral Palsy is trapped inside her brain, a girl with Aspergers' brother is shot and killed in a school accident, and a former pro-football father is running around town as if he's a teenager because of Alzheimer's brought on by his numerous head injuries during his career and (spoiler alert) dies tragically at the end. Oh, and another girl has her ears almost frozen off from exposure and her mother dies after going into a diabetic coma. I'm all for real life problems—a book is a great place to explore real life. But, really, we need to lighten up next year. The statements herein reflect the opinions of the author and do not represent VSRA or the Secondary Council –B. Spencer

Encourage your Secondary co-workers to join VSRA Secondary Council

This newsletter is going out to members only. Please encourage your co-workers and friends to join the Secondary Council. We also hope to get posted on the VSRA web-site.

We will have a time to meet during the VSRC in March. It will be very informal this year—probably during a lunch break. Please try to come. We would love to get your ideas and input.

VRC High School Reviews By Dr. Marianne Baker—JMU

BECAUSE I AM FURNITURE by Thalia Chaltas 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 wonders 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 RED NECKLACE by Sally Gardner 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.

***Start a tradition—
pick a wonderful
picture book to
share with your
family on Christmas
Eve -***

***WINTER'S GIFT by
Donovan***

***THE CHRISTMAS
DAY KITTEN by
Herriot***

***THE POLAR
EXPRESS by Van
Allsburg***

***A CUP OF
CHRISTMAS TEA by
Hegg***

***From all of us to you
- rest, reflect and
have a very,***

Happy Holiday!

Put these under the tree for yourself or some lucky teen.

OKAY FOR NOW by Schmidt, author of the WEDNESDAY WARS

WONDERSTRUCK by Selznick, author of HUGO CABERETT

THE CHRONICLES OF HARRIS BURDICK by Van Allsburg and others—finally those strange pictures are explained, or are they?

MICHAEL VEY: THE PRISONER OF CELL 25 by Evans

BREAD CRUMBS by Ursu

Holiday Movies to share with your tweens and teens.

MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET—Natalie Wood edition

ELF—new classic

A CHRISTMAS STORY—timeless

DR. SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS—Jim Carey edition

SCROOGED—Bill Murray at his best

HOME ALONE and HOME ALONE 2