

EVOLUTION, ME & OTHER FREAKS OF NATURE
ROBIN BRANDE

Brande, Robin. *Evolution, Me and Other Freaks of Nature*. Knopf. 272p. Grades 6 and up.

Annotation

Mena, a high school freshman who has been kicked out of her church, has no friends and even her parents aren't speaking to her, when she is paired up with a super smart lab partner, Casey, and her science teacher adds more drama to her life by teaching evolution in school.

Booktalk

"I knew today would be ugly. When you're single-handedly responsible for getting your church your pastor, and every one of your former friends and their parent's sued for millions of dollars, you expect to make some enemies. Fine.

It's just that I hoped my first day of school—of high school, thank you, which I've only been looking forward to my entire life—might turn out to be at least lightly better than eating live bugs. But I guess I was wrong.

I knew I'd be seeing some of these people today, but in first period already? And it has to be none other than my former best friend and the pastor's daughter—two of the people who have cause to hate me the most.

Having Teresa and Bethany in English might not be so bad if they'd just ignore me, but at the start of class when Mr. Kuhlman called, "Mena Reece," and I croaked out my "Here," Teresa had to turn her blond, spiky head around and shoot me the Look of Death, and I got that combined feeling of needing to throw up and possibly pee my pants.

Think positive, Think positive.

Why didn't my parents let me transfer? There are plenty of charter schools around, or they could have sent me to live with my aunt in Wyoming or with strangers in Alaska for all I care. But I know they want to see me punished. They pretend they've forgiven me, but I know deep down inside they hate me for writing that letter, just like everybody else.

It's only been half an hour, and already I can tell this is going to be the worst day of my life. I don't know why I'm so surprised. I knew seeing everyone today would be hard. It's only been a month since they were all served with the lawsuit, and even though I've gotten plenty of hate e-mails and phone messages since then, it's not the same as having to deal with these people in person.

I just didn't realize I'd be so scared. It's pathetic. What do I have to be afraid of? My conscience is clear. I didn't do anything wrong.

No, correction: I did the right thing. And someday the truth shall set me free.

Just not, apparently, today.

This is what starting high school is like for Mena Reece when she is paired with super smart lab partner, Casey, in science class and begins to think it's possible to have at least one friend. That it is until Ms. Shepherd, her science teacher, decides to teach Evolution. Once again, Mena finds herself caught up in the controversy involving science, religion and freedom. Read *Evolution, Me & Other Freaks of Nature* by Roben Brande to find out how Mena's life evolves and changes through the challenges that she faces.

Reviews

- Booklist. 07/01/2008
- Horn Book. 09/01/2007
- Kirkus Review. 07/15/2007
- Publishers Weekly. 08/06/2007
- School Library Journal. 04/2008
- Voice of Youth Advocates. 08/2007

Author website

<http://robinbrande.com/>

<http://www.randomhouse.com/author/results.pperl?authorid=74022>

Other Books by the Author

Fat Cat

Awards or Honors

Michigan Library Association Thumbs Up! Award 2009
South Carolina Young Adult Book Award Nominee 2009
Texas Lone Star Reading List 2009-2010

DIAMONDS IN THE SHADOW
CAROLINE B. COONEY

Cooney, Caroline B. *Diamonds in the Shadow*. Delacorte Press: New York. 2007. 228p. Grades 6 and up.

Annotation

When a family of African refugees comes to live with his family, Jared learns through hard lessons that not everyone is exactly as they seem, and he has to make a difficult decision that could have a profound impact on his family and the community in which he lives.

Booktalk

Jared Finch and his family have agreed to provide temporary shelter to the Amabos, a family of four refugees from Africa. While the other members of his family are excited by this opportunity, Jared has major reservations about the entire situation. The refugees act nothing like a family and teenager Mattu clings to mysterious box which he claims holds the ashes of his deceased grandparents. A fifth refugee enters the picture, causing Jared to wonder about the four people living in his house, and with his family. As the mystery and intrigue pull Jared further in, he has to make some difficult decisions that could change the fate of both his family, as well as that of the refugee family. Find out what Jared learns about the Amabos, the community, and himself in this thriller.

Reviews

- Booklist. 09/01/2007
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books. 09/01/2007
- HornBook. 11/12/2007
- Kirkus Review. 09/01/2007
- Publisher's Weekly. 09/17/2007 (*Starred Review)
- School Library Journal. 09/01/2007
- Wilson's Junior High. 11/01/2008
- Wilson's Senior High School. 01/01/2009

Author's Website

<http://www.teenreads.com/authors/au-cooney-caroline.asp>

Related Books on Topic

Fiction:

Williams, Mary. *Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan*. New York: Lee and Low. 2005.

Eight-year old Garang, orphaned by a civil war in Sudan, finds the inner strength to help lead other boys as they trek hundreds of miles, seeking safety in Ethiopia and then Kenya, before being offered sanctuary in the United States many years later.

Garland, Sherry. *Shadow of the Dragon*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace. 1993.
High School sophomore Danny Vo tries to resolve the conflict between the values of his Vietnamese refugee family and his new American way of life.

Giff, Patricia Reilly. *Lily's Crossing*. New York: Delacorte Press. 1997.
During a summer spent at Rockaway Beach in 1944, Lily's friendship with a young Hungarian refugee, causes her to see the war and her own world differently.

Stine, Catherine. *Refugees*. New York: Delacorte Press. 2005.
Dawn, a California teen, who has run away to New York, tries to contact her foster mother, Louise, a Red Cross doctor in Pakistan, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and instead reaches Louise's assistant, Johar, a refugee from Afghanistan, and the two form a bond that gives them both hope and courage to face the future.

Nonfiction:

Deng, Ayuel Leek. *Courageous Journey: Walking the Lost Boys' Path from Sudan to America*. Far Hills, N.J.: New Horizon Press. 2008.

This book traces the lives of two young boys from the Sudan, Ayuel Leek and Beng Ngor Chol, who flee persecution in the form of starvation and violence, walk to Ethiopia, survive in refugee camps, and eventually reach the United States, where they are mentored in college, so they can achieve their goal of helping other Sudanese.

Wilkes, Sybelle. *One Day We Had to Run: Refugee Children Tell Their Stories in Words and Pictures*. Brookfield, Conn.: Millbrook Press. 1994.

This is a collection of personal stories, paintings, and folktales by refugee children in Kenya, who fled their homelands of Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia because of civil war.

Related Websites on Topic

www.diamondfacts.org/conflict/index.html

www.refugeesinternational.org

www.hias.org/immigration/refugees.php

Other Books by the Author

Both Sides of Time
Burning Up
Code Orange
Driver's Ed
Enter Three Witches
The Face on the Milk Carton
Family Reunion
Flash Time
Flight #116 Is Down
For All Time
A Friend at Midnight
The Girl Who Invented Romance
Goddess of Yesterday
Hit the Road
I'm Not Your Other Half
Out of Time
Prisoners of Time
The Ransom of Mercy Carter
The Terrorist
Tune In Anytime
Twenty Pageants Later
The Voice on the Radio
What Child is This?
What Janie Found
Whatever Happened to Janie?

Awards or Honors

ALA Quick Read Pick for Reluctant Readers. Winner/2007
NCSS/CBC Notable Children's Trade Books in the Field of Social Studies. Winner/2007
Christopher Award. Winner/2007
Edgar Allen Poe for the Best Young Adult Novel. Nominee/2008

GYM CANDY
CARL DEUKER

Deuker, Carl. *Gym Candy*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 313 p. Grades 6 and up.

Annotation

Freshman, Mick Johnson, will stop at nothing to earn a starting position on the varsity football team even if it means ruining his health and social life or risking death.

Booktalk

For all you football players – listen up and learn a lesson from Mick Johnson. Mick was good but not good enough so he thought, always living in the shadow of his father’s failed NFL career. So to make his dad prouder he works harder in practice, on the field, in the weight room. But even working this hard was not good enough to make the winning touchdown in a play-off game. In the summer months, Mick takes to the gym with more determination and drive to become even better than last season. Mick meets up with a trainer who introduces him to steroids “gym candy”. When a teammate discovers Mick’s secret and Mick reaches his breaking point. He reaches for a gun to resolve the matter.

Carl Deuker tells this athlete’s story who is willing to do anything to gain an edge. It’s a moral tale as Mick realizes he has risked everything to gain nothing. He risked his life, ruined his social life and possible death for nothing.

Reviews

- Kirkus Review 08/2007
- Horn Book Magazine 09/2007
- Booklist 09/01/2007
- KLIATT 09/2007
- School Library Journal 10/2007
- Voice of Youth Advocates 10/2007
- Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books 09/2007
- Wilson Junior High Catalog 2008
- Wilson Senior High Catalog 2008

Author website

<http://members.authorsguild.net/carldeuker/>

Other Books by the Author

Heart of a Champion

High Heat

Night Hoops

On The Devil's Court

Painting the Black

Runner

Awards or Honors

Abraham Lincoln Illinois High School Book Award 2010

Texas Tayshas Reading List 2009-2010

DRAGON SLIPPERS **JESSICA DAY GEORGE**

George, Jessica Day. *Dragon Slippers*. New York. Bloomsbury Children's Books. 2007
Grades 5-8.

Annotation

Creel, left by her family to a dragon as a damsel in distress, instead befriends the dragon and unknowingly acquires a pair of shoes that may either save or destroy her kingdom.

Booktalk

It seemed like the perfect plan, in a weird sort of way. Creel's Aunt was sure it would work. Creel would just go into the cave on the mountain near the village where a dragon was said to dwell. Thus she would become a "damsel in distress". A knight (preferably a rich one) would therefore be honor bound to come rescue her and slay the dragon. It's win-win! Dead dragon, Creel married, family rich. What's not to like? But Creel has other ideas. She has no intention of being dragon bait, let alone a "wife" for some glory seeking knight. So she plans to wait in the cave for a few hours then simply sneak away, maybe to the capital city, where she can become an apprentice to work on her sewing skills. But when the family deposits her at the mouth of the cave and goes away to notify any potential knights, she explores the cave and lo and behold there actually is a dragon inside! Worst, it doesn't seem particularly happy about being given a princess. After all, now he has to go about killing knights and other nonsense for no good reason. And even if the knight did manage to slay the dragon and rescue Creel, his entire treasure consists of nothing but shoes – thousands and thousands of them.

Creel however becomes friends with the dragon (whose name is Theoradus). And offers to fix the potential problem of fried knights and slain dragons, all in return for one of the thousands of pairs of shoes the dragon owns. She decides on just an ordinary looking (but nice) pair of slippers, but what special slippers they are.

How does this play out? And how do those slippers eventually lead to an all out war between human and dragons? Find out in *Dragon Slippers* by Jessica Day George.

Reviews

- Kirkus Review - 04/15/2007
- Voice of Youth Advocates 6/2007
- Booklist 5/15/2007
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books 6/2007
- School Library Journal 10/1/2007
- Hornbook Guide to Children 7/1/2007
- Wilson Junior High Catalog 2008

Author Website

www.jessicadaygeorge.com

Book Website

www.dragonslippers.net

Other Books by the Author

Sun and Moon, Ice and Snow
Princess of the Midnight Ball
Dragon Flight
Dragon Spear

Related Books on Topic

The book's heroine becomes famous at sewing, sewing clothes for nobility and even dragons.

Cherry, Winky. *My First Sewing Book: Hand Sewing*. Portland, OR. Palmer/Pletsch. 1995. Basic book on beginning sewing.

Dawson, Imogen. *Clothes & Crafts in the Middle Ages*. Milwaukee, WI. Gareth Stevens Publishers. 2000. Although *Dragon Slippers* is fantasy, the setting is decidedly Middle Ages in technology and customs. This book shows the styles of that time period as well as crafts kids can do that were also done during that time period.

Sadler, Judy Ann. *Simply Sewing (A Kids Can Do It Book)*. Toronto. Kids Can Press. 2004. Projects for kids using both hand and machine sewing.

Drake, Ernest. *Dragonology: The Complete Book of Dragons*. New York. Candlewick Press. 2003. All about the folklore of dragons.

Awards or Honors

Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award | Nominee | Grades 3-6 | 2009
Capitol Choices: Noteworthy Books for Children | Recommended | Ten to Fourteen | 2008
Utah Beehive Awards | Nominee | Fiction | 2009

GAMES
CAROL GORMAN

Gorman, Carol. *Games*. HarperCollins. 288p. Grades 6-9.

Annotation

After one fight too many, the new principal has sentenced enemies, Boot Quinn and Mick Sullivan, to a small room with only a stack of board games and the two of them alone.

Booktalk

That's when I see Mick Sullivan coming down the hall. He's watching me, and he's got this big smile on his face that says he thinks he's better than everybody else. That smile alone makes me want to smash him.

Instead of hitting him, I look up his nostrils and say, "you got a booger up there." Everybody laughs loud now, so on the scorecard in my head, I give myself a point. Mick takes a step back and laughs. "That's it?...That's no insult. You should've said something really insulting like..." "Hey, is that your face, or did your neck throw up?"

Even my friends laugh at that one. I suddenly feel hot, and my armpits are sweating.

"How about this one?" I ask him. "I hear your dad was thrown in the slammer for drunk driving again. He might as well be lying in a gutter somewhere with the rest of the garbage."

That gets him like I thought it would. He freezes a second, then lunges at me.

From *Games* by Carol Gorman

The school year has barely started, and Boots Quinn and Mick Sullivan have started fight number two. That's at school; they've really had five or six. Mr. Jefferson is once again hauling them to the principal's office. The boys know they are about to be suspended by Mr. Block—just like last week.

Wait, Blockhead (that's what most of the students call him) isn't here. He had a heart attack, and there's a new guy. So what? They'll be kick out of school anyway. That's what principals do, especially to perpetual troublemakers. After all, Mick and Boots are archenemies. Each boy has set his goal to torment and taunt the other. There is nothing more fun so this fighting will probably go on all year. And the other students love it; some are even betting on their conflicts.

In the principal's office, Boots and Mick discover that the new guy is huge with a big, booming voice. They are surely doomed! But no, this guy isn't yelling; he's talking quietly and calmly. Seeking the problem between them, he questions the boys and finally reaches a conclusion. Mick and Boots need to learn how to get along together.

This new principal, Mr. Maddox, also thinks he has a solution. Boots and Mick will come to the office everyday at lunch. Here they will be left in a small room with a ratty couch, lumpy stuffed chair, beat-up coffee table, a stack of board games and no adult.

Play games? That's it. Did they hear him right? Is he kidding? They get their lunches, come to the room and play games for an hour every day until they learn to get along. This guy is out of his mind because that's never going to happen!

Follow Mick and Boots as they play games, try to impress the same girl, entertain their classmates and strive to win the approval of their parents in *Games* by Carol Gorman.

Reviews

- Kirkus Review – Children 12/15/2006
- School Library Journal 01/2007
- KLIATT 01/2007
- Booklist 01/01/2007
- Voice of Youth Advocates 02/2007
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books 04/2007
- Hornbook Guide to Children 07/2007
- Wilson Junior High Catalog 2008

Author Literary Awards

New York City Public Library's "Books for the Teen Age," 2008, 1998, 1997.
Honorable Mention, 2005 Outstanding Books Award, Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights.
Mark Twain Award, Missouri, 2002.
Sequoyah Children's Book Award, Oklahoma, 2002.
Washington State Sasquatch Reading Award, 2002.
South Carolina Junior Book Award, 2002.
West Virginia Book Award, 2002.
NJ State Library Pick of the Decade 1995-2005, 4th grade list.
American Booksellers Association "Pick of the Lists," 1995.
International Reading Association Young Adult Choice winner, 1993.
International Reading Association-Children's Book Council Children's Choice winner, 1994.
Ethical Cultural Book Award, 1988.
ALA Recommended Book for the Reluctant Reader, 1988.

Author's website

<http://www.carolgorman.com/>

Find information about the author and her books. Also Gorman has included Curriculum Connections, giving other sources to use in the classroom with her books.

Other Books by the Author

Chelsey and the Green-haired Kid. Houghton Mifflin 1987. 110 p.

Dork in Disguise. Harper Collins. 1999. 164 p. *winner of the 2002 Sequoyah Children's (Oklahoma) Award and 2002 Mark Twain Award (Missouri)*.

Dork on the Run. Harper Collins 2002. 184 p.

Jennifer-the-Jerk Is Missing. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. 1994. 135 p.

Lizard Flanagan, Supermodel?? HarperTrophy. 1998. 209 p.

The Miraculous Makeover of Lizard Flanagan. HarperTrophy. 1994. 185 p.

A Midsummer Night's Dork. Harper Collins. 2004. 184 p.

Stumptown Kid. Peachtree 2005. 224 p. *Nominated for several state awards and reading lists.*

Related Books about Bullies and Bullying

Almond, David. *The Savage*. Candlewick Press 2008. 80 p.

After his dad's death, Blue Baker finds comfort in writing about a savage living alone in the woods near his home, but when the savage pays a night-time visit to the local bully, boundaries become blurred and Blue begins to wonder where he ends and the savage begins.

Brewer, Heather. *The Chronicles Of Vladimir Tod :-Ninth Grade Slays*. Dutton Children's Books c2008. 278 p.

High school freshman Vlad Todd, having a hard time with bullies and his grades, takes the opportunity to study abroad in Siberia, where he meets other vampires and learns how to use his mind-control abilities.

Cormier, Robert. *The Chocolate War*. Pantheon Books 1974. 253 p.

A high school freshman discovers the devastating consequences of refusing to join in the school's annual fundraising drive, and arousing the wrath of the school bullies.

Langan, Paul. *The Bully*. Townsend Press. 2002. 190 p.

After Darrell Mercer and his mother move from Philadelphia to California in the middle of the school year, the ninth-grader quickly becomes a target for the freshman class bully, Tyray Hobbs.

Koja, Kathe. *Buddah Boy*. Frances Foster Books 2003. 117 p.

Justin spends time with Jinsen, the unusual and artistic new student whom the school bullies torment and call Buddha Boy, and ends up making choices that impact Jinsen, himself, and the entire school.

Watkins, Steve. *Down Sand Mountain*. Candlewick Press 2008. 336 p.

In a small Florida mining town in 1966, twelve-year-old Dewey faces one worst-day-ever after another, but comes to know that the issues he faces about bullies, girls, race, and identity are part of the adult world, as well.

Winerip, Michael. *Adam Canfield, watch your back!* Candlewick Press. 2007. 329 p. A much-welcomed snow day turns into an embarrassing nightmare for middle-grader Adam Canfield when, after being mugged by high school bullies for his snow-shoveling money, he becomes the focus of major media attention just as his co-editors at The Slash are launching a contest to out bullies at their school.

Awards or Honors

Nominated to Kansas State Reading Circle 2008 Recommended Reading List.
Nominated for the 2009-2010 Truman Reading Awards (Missouri).

DO NOT PASS GO KIRKPATRICK HILL

Hill, Kirkpatrick. *Do Not Pass Go*. Margaret K. McElderry/S&S. 240p. Grades 6-10.

Annotation

While Deet's dad is in prison, Deet's ideas of prison and the people there are challenged.

Booktalk

Remember that game, you know the one, where you land on the "Go To Jail" space. "Go to Jail, go directly to jail, do not pass go...." Deet's dad is working two jobs to support the family, when he is arrested for drug use. His dad's arrest turns everything upside down. What happens now? How will Deet face his classmates? How will the family make money? And finally, will his dad be okay in prison? While Deet's dad is in prison, he learns some unexpected things about his dad, his friends, and himself.

Reviews

- Kirkus Review 12/2006
- Publishers Weekly 01/15/2007
- Booklist 12/15/2006
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books 02/2007
- School Library Journal 03/2007
- Voice of Youth Advocates 04/2007
- Wilson Junior High Catalog 2007
- Hornbook Guide to Children 07/2007

Author website

<http://authors.simonandschuster.com/Kirkpatrick-Hill>

Other Books by the Author

Dancing At the Odinochka

Toughboy and Sister

Winter Camp

The Year of Miss Agnes

Award or Honors

Georgia Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's Book | 2009

Nevada Young Readers' Award | Nominee | Intermediate | 2009

Vermont Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's | 2009

CRACKER! THE BEST DOG IN VIETNAM

CYNTHIA KADOHATA

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Cracker! The Best Dog in Vietnam*. Simon & Schuster/ Atheneum Books: 2007. 312 p. Grades 5-8.

Annotation

Based on a true story that follows the life of Cracker, a German Shepherd, who was trained by the U.S. Army to sniff out booby traps in Vietnam.

Booktalk

Firecracker – Cracker for short – leads a pampered life as the beloved pet of a young boy. But the German Shepherd's life changes when the boy's father loses his job, and the family is forced to move to an apartment that doesn't allow dogs. The boy's parents give Cracker to the U.S. Army to become a scout dog for the Vietnam War. Scout dogs sniffed out bombs, booby traps, weapons caches, and enemy troops for the Army.

Meanwhile Rick Hanski, just seventeen years old, is supposed to be in training to take over his father's hardware store in a small town in Wisconsin. Instead, Rick announces one night after dinner that he would like to join the Army. After much deliberation – and some protests – Rick's father agrees to let Rick join up. Rick becomes a dog handler assigned to Cracker.

The two don't get along at first, but they must learn to work together if they're going to survive in the tough jungles of Vietnam. Learning to survive teaches both of them a lot about themselves in this action-packed historical novel.

Man's Best Friend takes on a completely different meaning in this book by Cynthia Kadohata.

Reviews

- Kirkus Review 12/15/2006
- Publishers Weekly 01/15/2007
- School Library Journal 02/2007
- Horn Book Magazine 03/2007
- Booklist 02/15/2007 - *Starred Review
- Bulletin of Center for Children's Books 04/2007
- Voice of Youth Advocates 06/2007
- Wilson Junior High Catalog 2007
- Wilson Children's Catalog 2007

Author website

<http://www.kira-kira.us/>

Other Books by the Author

Kira-Kira

Outside Beauty

Weedflower

Related Websites on Topic

War Dogs

<http://www.war-dogs.com/>

A memorial website dedicated to dogs who served in combat throughout American history.

K-9 History: the Dogs of War

<http://community-2.webtv.net/Hahn-50thAP-K9/K9History/>

A history of dogs in combat with stories and pictures from around the world.

Quartermaster Review: Wars Dogs-U.S. Army

http://www.qmfound.com/War_Dogs.htm

The journal Quartermaster Reviews website of its articles on war dogs in American History.

Awards or Honors

Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award | Nominee | Grades 6-8 | 2009

Parents Choice Award (Spring) (1998-2007) | Winner | Recommended | 2007

South Carolina Childrens, Junior and Young Adult Book Award | Nominee | Junior Book | 2008 – 2009

Vermont Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's | 2009

Arizona Grand Canyon Reader Award | Nominee | Tween Books | 2010

Kansas William Allen White Childens Book Award | Nominee | Grades 6-8 | 2010

SCHOOLED **GORDON KORMAN**

Korman, Gordon. *Schooled*. Hyperion. 208 p. Grades 5 and up.

Annotation

Capricorn Anderson faces a whole new reality when he is forced to leave the compound and the protection of his hippie grandmother, Rain, to enter Claverage Middle School where bullies abound and problems are dealt a blow in “Zen” style.

Book talk

A wise man makes his own decisions, an ignorant man follows public opinion.—
Chinese Proverb.

The same can be said of Capricorn Anderson. Raised by his hippie grandmother in a commune that is not longer useful to anyone but Cap and his grandmother Rain, Cap has never seen television, had to exchange money for merchandise, socialized with other kids his age, or had to face criticism or sarcasm and realize exactly what is meant by the word spoken.

When Cap’s grandmother, Rain, falls and breaks her hip, she is set for a short stay in the local hospital and “the man” steps in to assist Rain and her grandson. Cap is whisked away to a foster home for safe keeping while his grandmother recuperates. This could be a harrowing experience all by itself but Cap is fortunate enough to have a foster parent who has had commune experience....and valuable Rain experience.

Cap is enrolled at Claverage Middle School, better known as C-Average by the kids who attend and he arrives just in to for the eighth grade class officer’s election. Eighth grade presidents are elected, by tradition, by the popular kids. But way, there’s a twist, it isn’t the popular kids who are elected...no, they give that honor to the biggest loser in eighth grade. Hugh Winkleman was destined to be the biggest loser-winner, but the arrival of Capricorn Anderson and Zach Powers’ desire to have the most fun, be the most impressive jerk of the school leads to a load of laughs and fun.

Read Gordon Korman’s *Schooled* for a look back into the sixties and a lesson in making your own decisions.

Reviews

- Booklist Starred Review August 07, Grades 6-9
- Kirkus Review July 07, Ages 9-14
- Library Media Connection November/December 07
- School Library Journal August 07, Grades 6-9

Author website

<http://www.gordonkorman.com/>

Other Books by the Author:

The Chicken Doesn't Skate

Liar, Liar Pants on Fire

The Sixth Grade Nickname Game

No More Dead Dogs

Maxx Comedy: The Funniest Kid in America

Jake, Reinvented

Born To Rock

Swindle

The Juvie Three

Related websites on Topic

Stop Bullying Website

http://www.kzoo.edu/psych/stop_bullying/

No Bully Site

<http://www.nobully.com/>

Sixties commune site with other info on the sixties

http://www.sfheart.com/sixties_communes.html

Awards or Honors

Vermont Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's | 2009

Texas Lone Star Reading List | Commended | Young Adult | 2008 – 2009

Arizona Grand Canyon Reader Award | Nominee | Tween Books | 2010

Kansas William Allen White Children's Book Award | Nominee | Grades 6-8 | 2010

New Hampshire Great Stone Face Book Award | Nominee | Grades 4-6 | 2008 – 2009

NIGHT OF THE HOWLING DOGS

GRAHAM SALISBURY

Salisbury, Graham. *Night of the Howling Dogs*. Wendy Lamb Books. 191p. Grades 5-8.

Annotation

The survival skills of eleven Boy Scouts, their leaders and some fellow camping companions are put to the test as Mother Nature unleashes her fury and terror on the group and forces two boys to find the inner strength necessary to save them all.

Booktalk

“First came the sound.

Somewhere far, far below. Under me. A groaning, like a stubborn nail being pulled out of wood. My eyes popped open as the earth trembled. I sat up on my elbows. My sleeping bag was jiggling. Then it jerked, leaped, and tossed me into the air. The dirt floor came up and hit me like a hammer. “Uhhhn!”

Get out! Get out!

I kicked my way out of my sleeping bag, tearing at the zipper. Broke free, tried to stand. Fell. “Casey!”

Outside, the night was black as tar. I fumbled for my flashlight, but the earth belched again and threw me up with a violence I would never have thought possible. Then it rolled under itself and sucked me into it, went down like a broken elevator.

“Caseyyy!”

It rolled back up and tossed me into the air. I hit the ground hard.

I could see the black shadow of Casey ripping at his bag. The earth was slamming him around like a pebble in a tin can, shuddering, making a terrible noise. He freed himself and tumbled out into the night.

The world was tearing itself apart. Ripping, twisting. The whole island screamed and howled and rattled like a monstrous jackhammer.

I could hear Casey grunting and gasping as he banged around on the hard dirt, air rushing out of him. Outside the shelter a new sound, terrifying beyond any other: the roar of an army of dump trucks dropping gravel from their beds over all of Halape. The cliff.

No, no, no! The cliff is coming down!

My glasses! My glasses! Where are my glasses!

I felt around, slapping my hand on the ground. There! I gripped them as if they were life itself. Without them I’d be nearly helpless. I put them on and thanked God they were tied to the fishing-line cord.

Casey shrieked, his voice nearly lost in all the noise.

“Casey!” I called.

I yelped as the shelter’s rock walls started caving in. The tin roof clanked down, nearly hammering me on the head. I rolled out onto the sand. Casey called, but his voice was swallowed by the darkness, by the shrieking earth. “Here! Casey, over here!”

The ground slowed and shivered, straining, the popping sound of a ship pulling at its dock ropes.

Then the boulders. Boom! Bam! The cliff was coming apart, huge chunks were falling away in the darkness.

“Casey, we got to get to the water! The boulders!” His shape crawled toward me.

“Flashlight!” he shouted. “Where’s my—“ He found it and turned it on. Its beam wobbled in his shaking hand. He dropped it, and the light bounced on the dirt, the earth now shaking like a dog with a rat. The light went out.

Boulders pounded down, their concussions vibrating through dirt, sand, and rock.

Over in the coconut grove someone screamed, and horses shrieked.

My hands trembled wildly, but I managed to stand and scramble away from the shelter with Casey. Again, the earth slammed me down, Pain stabbed my shoulder. My glasses came loose and fell off my face and would have been lost in the blackness if not for the cord.

Casey bounce up and came down hard. “Ayii! My knee, my knee!” I crawled over to him. He was rolled into a ball, both hands gripping his knee, moaning.

“We got to get away from here, Casey. We got to move. . . The Boulders—“

“I can’t”

I gripped him under his arms and dragged him across the sand toward the ocean. Thundering vibrations buzzed through me as boulders slammed down from the cliff and bounced toward the sea.

I looked up, remembering Zach. “Zach! Zach!” A car-sized rock careened toward the sea, a giant shadow crossing the trail between our shelter and the coconut grove. The island shook, as if laughing. Earth broke under me. I lost my grip on Casey, because we were falling. The earth sucking down. I tried to scream but nothing came out. Casey bounced into me, and the earth tossed us back up. Somebody cried out, not far away. “Zach!” I howled. No answer.

Far below, I could hear the earth shifting into some new place, and the noise would not stop, the land was coming and it would not stop.

I heard Casey crying. I couldn’t help him. I couldn’t help myself. “Zach!” I shouted “Where are you!”

More boulders tumbled toward the sea.

I covered my head with my arms. Any one of them would crush my like a bug. My throat burned with grief: we would all die. We would be smashed.

Then it stopped. . .”

This night of terror has only begun for Dylan and his troop. You’ll have to read to find out if they can survive the *Night of the Howling Dogs* by Graham Salisbury.

Reviews

- Kirkus Review 7/2007
- Voice of Youth Advocates 08/2007
- School Library Journal 08/2007
- Booklist 08/01/2007 - *Starred Review
- Horn Book Magazine 09/2007
- Wilson Junior High Catalog 2008

Author website

<http://www.grahamsalisbury.com/>

<http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/catalog/author.pperl?authorid=26744>

Other Books by the Author

Blue skin of the sea : a novel in stories

Eyes of the emperor

House of the red fish

Island boyz : short stories

Jungle dogs

Lord of the deep

Under the blood-red sun

Awards or Honors

North Carolina Children's Book Award | Nominee | Junior Book | 2009

Nevada Young Readers' Award | Nominee | Young Reader | 2009

Oregon Book Awards | Finalist | Young Adult | 2008

Maryland Black-Eyed Susan Award | Nominee | Grades 6-9 | 2008

Texas Lone Star Reading List | Commended | Young Adult | 2008 – 2009

Tennessee Volunteer State Book Awards | Nominee | Young Adult | 2009 – 2010

Hawaii Nene Award | Recommended | Children's Fiction | 2009

Kansas William Allen White Children's Book Award | Nominee | Grades 6-8 | 2010

West Virginia Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's | 2009

THE WEDNESDAY WARS
GARY D. SCHMIDT

Schmidt, Gary D. *The Wednesday Wars*. Clarion Books: New York. 2007. 264p.
Grades 5-8.

Annotation

While all the other students in his class leave every Wednesday to attend religion classes, seventh-grader Holling Hoodhood spends the time with his teacher, reading the plays of William Shakespeare, and learning more about the world in which he lives.

Booktalk

“Of all the kids in the seventh grade at Camillo Junior High, there was one that Mrs. Baker hated with heat whiter than the sun. Me!”

And so begins Holling Hoodhood’s seventh grade year. When the other students in his class leave to attend either Catechism classes or Hebrew school, Holling is left behind with Mrs. Baker, his teacher, who he is convinced hates him. During the course of this year, Holling has to deal with cream puff disasters, is forced to read the plays of William Shakespeare, has an embarrassing incident while wearing yellow tights and experiences personally the effects of the Vietnam War. But he also gets to meet the New York Yankees, makes the school’s cross-country team, and learns more about himself and his world than he ever thought possible. Come join Holling on his wild ride through the seventh grade and his coming of age in 1968.

Reviews

- Booklist. 06/01/2007 (*Starred Review)
- Hornbook. 09/2007 (*Starred Review)
- Kirkus Review. 05/15/2007 (*Starred Review)
- Publisher’s Weekly 04/16/2007 (*Starred Review)
- School Library Journal 07/07/2007
- Wilson’s Junior High 11/01/2007
- Notable/Best Books (ALA) 01/01/2008

Related Books on Topic

Major, Kevin. *Hold Fast*. Berkley, CA: Douglas and McIntyre. 2003.
Fourteen-year old Michael struggles to adjust to his new life after his parents are killed in an automobile accident and he is sent to live with relatives in a city hundred of miles away.

Bell, William. *Crabbe*. Allston, Mass.: Fitzhenry and Whiteside. 2003.
Franklin Crabbe, an angry, rebellious, eighteen-year old, skips his final exams and disappears into the Canadian wilderness, where a woman with her own reasons for hiding, teaches him how to survive as well as how to live.

Flake, Sharon. *Bang!*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children. 2005.
A teenage boy must face the harsh realities of inner city life, a disintegrating family, and destructive temptations as he struggles to find his identity as a young man.

Abbott, Tony. *Firegirl*. New York: LittleBrown. 2006.
A middle school boy's life is changed, when Jessica, a girl disfigured by burns, starts attending his Catholic school, while receiving treatments at a local hospital.

Nemeth, Sally. *The Heights, the Depths, and Everything In-Between*. New York: Knopf. 2006.
In 1977, best friends, Lucy Small, a seventh-grader from Wilmington, Delaware, who is five foot, ten inches tall, and Jake Little, a dwarf, try unsuccessfully to go unnoticed during their first year of high school.

Padian, Maria. *Brett McCarty: Work in Progress*. New York: Knopf. 2008.
Eighth-grader Brett McCarthy finds herself redefining her life after a practical joke gets her suspended, ruins her friendships, and forces her to discover what is really important in her life.

Other Books by the Author

Anson's War
The Blessing of the Lord
First Boy
In God's Hands
Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy
Mara's Stories
Pilgrim Progress
Poetry for Young People: Robert Frost
Saint Cirian
Straw into Gold
Trouble
William Bradford
The Wonders of Donal O'Donnell

Awards or Honors

Newbery Medal | Honor Book | Children's | 2008
Society of Midland Authors Award | Winner | Children's Fiction | 2008

California Young Reader Medal | Nominee | Middle School | 2010
Georgia Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's Book | 2010
Vermont Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's | 2009
Texas Lone Star Reading List | Commended | Young Adult | 2008 – 2009
Capitol Choices: Noteworthy Books for Children | Recommended | Ten to Fourteen | 2008
Arizona Grand Canyon Reader Award | Nominee | Tween Books | 2010
Tennessee Volunteer State Book Awards | Nominee | Young Adult | 2009 – 2010
Utah Beehive Awards | Nominee | Young Adult | 2009

UNWIND NEAL SHUSTERMAN

Shusterman, Neal. *Unwind*. Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing. 2007. 352p. Grades 8 and up.

Annotation

In an unstable future, Connor Lassiter, 16, must run away from home after his parents decide to have him "unwound," or dissected and used for parts, a practice that has been made legal after the Second Civil War.

Booktalk

After the Heartland Wars divided the nation, the two sides (pro-life and pro-choice) came together to form a resolution. Abortion would be strictly banned, but parents could choose to "unwind" their children once they reached the age of reason, thirteen, if they proved to be a burden on society. Pro-lifers agreed to these measures, since the teens would not really die from the unwinding process. 99.44% of their body parts would be grafted into thousands of other people, and in this way they would continue to live on, only in a divided state.

16-year-old Connor has always been a troublemaker, but he never expected his parents to sign the orders to unwind him. Rather than be sent to a harvest camp and sold for parts, Connor runs away. Soon, fate leads him to meet state ward, Risa, a piano virtuoso who wasn't quite good enough to warrant any more government funds, and 13-year-old Lev, a tithe, who has spent his entire life preparing for the day he might make the ultimate sacrifice to god. Will the three teens escape and survive another day, or will they be captured and cut apart in the name of science? Find out, in *Unwind*, the latest heart-racing sci-fi adventure from Neal Shusterman.

Reviews

- Booklist. October 15, 2007
- Kirkus Reviews. October 1, 2007
- Publisher's Weekly. November 26, 2007
- School Library Journal. January 1, 2008

Author Website

<http://www.storyman.com/>

Related Books on Topic

Morgan, Nicola. *Fleshmarket*. Delacorte. 2004. 224p. Grades 8 and up.

Nix, Garth. *Shade's Children*. HarperCollins. 1997. 352p. Grades 6 and up.

Westerfield, Scott. *Uglies*. Simon Pulse. 2005. 448p. Grades 6 and up.

Other Books by the Author

Antsy Does Time
Dark Side of Nowhere
Darkfusion series
Darkness Creeping
Dissidents
Downsiders
Dreadlocks
Everlost
Eyes of Kid Midas
Full Tilt
Kid Heroes
Mind Benders
Mind Quakes
Mind Storms
Mind Twisters
Same Time Next Year
Schwa Was Here
Scorpion Shards
Shadow Club
Shadow Club Rising
Shattered Sky
Speeding Bullet
Thief of Souls
What Daddy Did

Awards or Honors

American Library Association Best Books for Young Adults
American Library Association Popular Paperbacks for Young Readers
American Library Association Quick Picks for Young Adults
California Young Reader Medal
Indiana Young Hoosier Award
Minnesota Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award Master List
Texas Lone Star Reading List
Capitol Choices: Noteworthy Books for Children Recommended Fourteen and Up 2008
Arizona Grand Canyon Reader Award Nominee Teen 2010

PEAK
ROLAND SMITH

Smith, Roland. *Peak*. Harcourt. 2007. 256p. Grades 8 and up.

Annotation

An adventurous trek to the top of Mt. Everest with his long-lost father, changes everything in Peak's life.

Booktalk

Peak Marcello is a born mountain climber. Climbing in New York City is often done by illegally climbing skyscrapers. Imagine Peak's excitement when his long-lost father calls and wants him to climb Mt. Everest. If they make the top before his birthday, he will be the youngest person to stand higher than 20,000 feet. During this treacherous and enlightening adventure, *everything* in Peak's life changes.

Reviews

- Voice of Youth Advocates 04/2007
- Kirkus Review 05/2007
- Booklist 04/01/2007- *Starred Review
- Horn Book Magazine 05/2007
- KLIATT 05/2007
- Publishers Weekly 06/04/2007 - *Starred Review
- School Library Journal 06/2007
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books 07/2007
- Wilson Junior High Catalog 2007

Author Website:

www.rolandsmith.com/

Other Books by the Author

Cryptid Hunters

Elephant Run

Jack's Run

Jaguar

The Last Lobo

Sasquatch

Thunder Cave

Zach's Lie

Awards or Honors

National Outdoor Book Awards | Winner | Children's | 2007
Florida Sunshine State Young Reader's Award | Nominee | Grades 6-8 | 2009
Georgia Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's Book | 2009
North Carolina Children's Book Award | Nominee | Junior Book | 2009
Nevada Young Readers' Award | Nominee | Young Adult | 2009
Oregon Book Awards | Finalist | Young Adult | 2008
Maryland Black-Eyed Susan Award | Nominee | Grades 6-9 | 2008
Texas Lone Star Reading List | Commended | Young Adult | 2008 – 2009
Capitol Choices: Noteworthy Books for Children | Recommended | Ten to Fourteen | 2008
Tennessee Volunteer State Book Awards | Nominee | Young Adult | 2009 – 2010
Colorado Children's Book Award | Nominee | Junior Novel | 2009
Isinglass Teen Read Award | Nominee | Grades 6-8 | 2008 - 2009
Miami Herald Best Kid's Books for 2007.
Booklist Editor's Choice, 2007
ALA 2008 Best books for Young Adults
ALA 2008 Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers
ALA 2008 Selected Audiobooks for Young Adults
New York Public Library's 2008 Books for the Teen Age List

FIRST LIGHT
REBECCA STEAD

Annotation

First Light is a gripping, sci-fi mystery, set in remote Greenland, which takes the reader on an adventurous journey under the ice to a hidden world.

Booktalk

Peter is 12 years old, a native New Yorker, and on a six week expedition with his parents to Greenland to study global warming. Peter is camping up on the ice sheet in a state-of-the-art tent complete with a bread maker!

Thea is 14 years old and lives in Greenland, under the ice in a hidden community called Gracehope.

Beautiful red bracelets with a winding intricate design: seven on Thea's arm and one suspended in the ice between their two worlds.

How will Peter and Thea meet? How are they connected? What is the importance of the bracelets? How will life, as they know it, change forever?

Reviews

- Booklist 04/15/2007
- Voice of Youth Advocates 06/2007
- Kirkus Review 06/2007
- Publishers Weekly 06/18/2007
- Horn Book Magazine 07/2007
- School Library Journal 08/2007
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books 09/2007
- Hornbook Guide to Children 07/2007
- Wilson Junior High Catalog 2008
- First Light is a Junior Library Guild Selection
- A Summer 2007 Children's Book Sense Pick

Author website

<http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewProfile&friendID=158438273> (Myspace page)

<http://www.randomhouse.com/author/results.pperl?authorid=74019>
(Random House's author website)

<http://www.firstlightbook.com> (Book website)

Other Books by the Author

When You Reach Me (2009)

Related Web Sites on Topic

- *Marian Koshland Science Museum of the National Academy of Sciences*
- <http://www.koshland-science-museum.org/exhibitgcc/index.jsp>
- Global Warming Facts & Our Future

- *National Geographic's Adventure Travel*
- <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/adventure-travel/greenland/global-warming.html>
- Adventure Guide: Greenland

Awards or Honors

Parents Choice Award (Fall) (1998-2007) | Winner | Recommended | 2007
Texas Lone Star Reading List | Commended | Young Adult | 2008 – 2009
Rhode Island Children's Book Awards | Nominee | Grades 3-6 | 2009

FAERIES OF DREAMDARK: BLACKBRINGER
LAINI TAYLOR

Taylor, Laini. *Faeries of Dreamdark: Blackbringer*. Putnam Juvenile. 2007. 437p.
Grades 5-8.

Annotation

Magpie Windwitch and her band of thespian crows must battle to defeat an unkillable devil set on unmaking the world.

Booktalk

In a time when most faeries have forgotten the old ways (and the old evils), little Magpie Windwitch and her band of crows travel the world hunting devils. Much has changed since the Dawn Days when faeries held their greatest power. The seven Djinn (the creators of the world) have gone to sleep, tired of the world they dreamed. Mannies (i.e. humans) have come into the world to plunder, destroy and let loose the devils that were captured long ago by the faeries. Magpie is the only thing that stands between the world and the devils, but when she meets a devil she cannot slay, can an already failing world survive?

Formed of darkness and shadow, this unkillable devil consumes everything in its path. After a failed attempt at killing it, Magpie returns to the Faerie realm of Never Nigh to seek help. On the way, she learns that the devil may in fact be the ancient Blackbringer of nursery lore. Once a Djinn, the Blackbringer fell from glory and is set on unmaking the world it once helped create. Magpie decides that the only way to stop the demon is to awaken the ancient Djinn, Magruwen, who captured it in the first place. However, awakening the Djinn proves to be almost as dangerous as fighting the demon.

To see what happens to Magpie, her loveable troupe of crows and the world as we know it, check out *Faeries of Dreamdark: Blackbringer* by Laini Taylor.

Reviews

Booklist. May 15, 2007
Kirkus Reviews. May 15, 2007
School Library Journal. August 1, 2007
Publisher's Weekly. May 14, 2007

Author Website

www.lainitaylor.com

Related Books on Topic

Black, Holly. *Tithe: a Modern Faerie Tale*. McElderry. 2004. 336p. Grades 6 and up.

Brennan, Herbie. *Faerie Wars*. Bloomsbury Publishing. 2003. 370p. Grades 5-8.

Datlow, Ellen. *The Faery Reel: Tales from the Twilight Realm*. Puffin. 2006. 544p. Grades 9 and up.

Simner, Janni Lee. *Bones of Faerie*. Random House Children's Books. 2009. 247p. Grades 7-10.

Other Books by the Author

The Drowned (graphic novel)

Fairies of Dreamdark: Silksinger (September 2009)

Awards or Honors

ALA Best Books for Young Adults nominee

Book Sense 2007 Summer Pick

Isinglass Teen Read Award Nominee Grades 6-8 2008 – 2009

WAY DOWN DEEP

RUTH WHITE

White, Ruth. *Way Down Deep*. Farrar, Straus, and Leroux. 208p. Grades 4-7.

Annotation

Wandering into town without parents, red headed Ruby June takes up residence in the local hotel with Miss Arbutus Ward, but the rantings of the senile Bird Reeder makes everyone begin to question the truth about Ruby June's family.

Booktalk

The town of Way Down Deep is shocked one June day in the summer of 1944 to discover a cute red-headed toddler sitting on the town's courthouse steps. No one has seen her come into town, no one has seen her with her family, and no family seems to be searching frantically for her. It's obvious that no family members seem to care about her.

The town begins the task of deciding who should get to keep her when Miss Arbutus Ward, direct descendant of the town's founding father, and sole proprietor of The Roost, the local boarding house, steps in and begs to be the one to take care of Ruby June (so named because of the color of her hair and the month she shows up). And so begins the unlikely matching of the town's old maid to the precocious, mysterious Ruby June.

Ruby next ten years are spent enjoying life with Miss Arbutus and wondering about who her real family might be. When a new family comes to town, they bring Old Bird Reeder with them and he begins to rant about a red-headed child on the other side of the mountain getting eaten by a mountain lion. Ruby June, Miss Arbutus, the sheriff and others begin to see that Ruby's mysterious appearance may not have been so mysterious. Soon Ruby June is meeting her real family and discovering that family means so many things.

This is the story of Ruby June. It is a story of love, respect, family, and new beginnings.

Reviews

- Publishers Weekly 02/19/2007
- Kirkus Review 03/2007 - *Starred Review
- KLIATT 03/2007
- School Library Journal 04/2007
- Booklist 03/01/2007 - *Starred Review
- Horn Book Magazine 05/2007
- Voice of Youth Advocates 06/2007
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books 06/2007
- Wilson Junior High Catalog 2007

- Wilson Children's Catalog 2007
- Booklist Editor's Choice Youth 01/01/2008)
- Book Link Starred May 07
- Book Links ALA June 07

Author website

<http://www.ruthwhite.net/index.html>

Other Books by the Author

Belle Prater's Boy

Memories of Summer

Buttermilk Hill

Tadpole

The Search for Belle Prater

Little Audrey

Websites and Resources

Activities (free and can be purchased)

<http://www.suzyred.com/2008waydowndeep.html>

Carol Hurst's website on Appalachia

<http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/appalachia.html>

An Introduction to Appalachia

http://www.as.wvu.edu/engl01/users/students/kmoore/public_html/

Coal Camps of Appalachia

<http://www.coalcampusa.com/>

Awards or Honors

Texas Bluebonnet Awards | Nominee | Children's | 2009

Pennsylvania Carolyn W. Field Award | Winner | Children's | 2008

Georgia Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's Book | 2009

Parents Choice Award (Spring) (1998-2007) | Winner | Gold | 2007

Vermont Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's | 2009

Hawaii Nene Award | Recommended | Children's Fiction | 2009

Kansas William Allen White Children's Book Award | Nominee | Grades 3-5 | 2010

West Virginia Children's Book Award | Nominee | Children's | 2008

Utah Beehive Awards | Nominee | Fiction | 2009

Evolution, Me and Other Freaks of Nature does have an awww-worthy romance included but it's not the thing the story mostly revolves around. IMO, the main topic is how to reconc My friend Janina recommended this to me after I had read Brande's other book Fat Cat and absolutely loved it and I must say that this was a really nice read as well. I didn't love it as much as Fat Cat but still, I enjoyed it thoroughly. You can see from the blurb what the story's about so I won't go into that any further. Evolution, Me and Other Freaks of Nature does have an awww-worthy romance included but it's not th Evolution, Me & Other Freaks of Nature (2007) is a young adult novel by Robin Brande. The story follows Mena Reece, a high school freshman. She has recently been kicked out of her evangelical Christian church for writing a letter that has exposed the church, and her parents' insurance agency, to a lawsuit for what members of the church's youth group did to a fellow high school student. She soon finds herself being abused by members of her former church, is permanently grounded by her parents, and in I'll preface this by saying I haven't read the book. But damn, it looks interesting. It's called Evolution, Me & Other Freaks of Nature and it is written by Robin Brande. Here's a trailer: Here is one reviewer's summary: Mena's friends are from her church. What kind of church, you may ask? The kind where you cannot read Harry Potter or watch Lord of the Rings. The kind where, when the biology teacher says "Evolution", all her old friends turn their seats "literally, turn their seats around" and sit with their backs towards the teacher. Mena did something that basically got her kicked out of I knew today would be ugly! It's the first day of high school for Mena, and already her world looks bleak: she's an outcast, all her former friends hate her, even her parents barely speak to her anymore. And why? Because she tried to do the right thing. And then everything went wrong. But can a cute, nerdy lab partner; his bossy, outspoken sister; and an unconventional, imaginative science teacher be just what Mena needs to turn her life around? Or will the combination of all of them only make things worse? As Mena is about to find out, it's the freaks of nature who survive! This book is curre