

Too Good to Miss: Teri Lesesne's Books for 21st Century Teens—2002

Suggested titles from NCTE Middle Level Steering Committee member Teri Lesesne

Pushing The Format Envelope

AMBER WAS BRAVE, ESSIE WAS SMART by Vera B. Williams. Greenwillow. ISBN 0-06-029460-4. A story of two sisters told in poems and pictures. (INT/MS)

BREATHING UNDERWATER by Alex Flinn. HarperCollins. 0-06-029198-2. Sixteen year old Nick, convicted of hitting his former girlfriend, is instructed by the judge to write a journal. (HS)

BRIMSTONE JOURNALS by Ron Koertge. Candlewick Press. 0-7636-1302-9. A series of startling and disturbing poems tells of an unforgettable year at Branston High School. (HS)

CAPTAIN UNDERPANTS AND THE WRATH OF THE WICKED WEDGIE WOMAN by Dav Pilkey. Scholastic. 0-439-04999-7. Another installment of the crazy Captain Underpants saga. Graphic novel type of format. (I/MS)

ECHO by Francesca Lia Block. HarperCollins. 0-06-028128-6. Block employs multiple viewpoints to tell the magical story of a little girl hurtling toward womanhood. (HS)

EMPRESS OF THE WORLD by Sara Ryan. Viking. 0-670-89688-8. Nicola's summer at a camp for gifted teens results in some unexpected changes in her life. (HS)

FAT CAMP COMMANDOS by Daniel Pinkwater. Scholastic. 0-439-15527-4. This graphic novel looks more like a comic book. The zany humor is perfect for middle school readers looking for some light, fun reading. Don't dismiss it too easily, though, as there is plenty of tongue in cheek jokes for grown up readers, too. (I)

FIGHTING REUBEN WOLFE by Markus Zusack. Scholastic. 0-439-24188-X. Two brothers become involved in a boxing competition in order to help out the family. What happens when they must face each other in the ring? (HS)

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE: A GUIDE TO SURVIVING DIVORCE FOR PRETEENS AND THEIR FAMILIES by Janet Bode and Stan Mack. Simon and Schuster. 0-689-81945-5. The title pretty much says it all. This is a must have in the collection. Have multiple copies and urge the public library in the area to stock the shelves as well. (ALL)

KISSING TENNESSEE AND OTHER STORIES FROM THE STARDUST DANCE by Kathi Appelt. Harcourt. 0-15-202249-X. This story collection tells of all of the hopes and dreams of an 8th grade class. (MS)

LOVE THAT DOG by Sharon Creech. HarperCollins. 0-06-029287-3. This slim novel tells the story of Jack and his beloved dog Sky in a series of poems. (I/MS)

MISFITS by James Howe. Atheneum. Sticks and stone may break my bones, but names will break my spirit. (MS)

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, I AM NOW THE GIRLFRIEND OF A SEX GOD by Louise Rennison. HarperCollins. 0-06-028813-2. This is the sequel to the Printz Honor Medalist, **Angus, Thongs and Full Frontal Snogging**. (MS/HS)

PRINCESS IN THE SPOTLIGHT by Meg Cabot. HarperCollins/ 0-06-0294655. Sequel to **Princess Diaries**. (MS/HS)

THE RUMPLESTILTSKIN PROBLEM by Vivian Vande Velde. Houghton Mifflin. 0-618-05523-1. Here are 6 alternative versions of the familiar fairy tale. (MS)

RUNNING BACK TO LUDIE by Angela Johnson. Scholastic. 0-439-29316-2. A slender novel, told in verse, of a young girl's reunion with a long absent mother. (MS/HS)

TAKEOFFS AND LANDINGS by Margaret Peterson Haddix. Simon and Schuster. Story about relationship between absentee mother and two teen children told during airplane takeoffs and landings. (MS)

TRUE BELIEVER by Virginia Euwer Wolff. This is a long awaited sequel to **Make Lemonade**. More books about LaVaughn are to follow. (MS/HS)

WITNESS by Karen Hesse. Scholastic. A brilliantly conceived and written novel which uses 9 points of view to tell about the Klan's arrival in a New England town in the 1900s. (MS)

Breaking Topic Taboos

ALL THAT REMAINS by Bruce Brooks. Simon and Schuster. This collection of novellas all deal with loss. (MS/HS)

ALL THE OLD HAUNTS by Chris Lynch. HarperCollins. 0-06-028178-2. This story collection demonstrates once again an author at the top of his game. (HS)

BLACK ANGELS by Rita Murphy. Delacorte. 0-385-32776-5. In the summer of 1961, Celli notices angels

no one else can see. Perhaps the angels are in Celli's life for a reason? (MS)

COLOR OF ABSENCE: STORIES ABOUT LOSS AND HOPE edited by James Howe. Atheneum. Twelve stories about loss and grief by some of the best YA authors around. Included in the collection are: Avi, Naomi Nye, Angela Johnson, and Chris Lynch. (MS/HS)

DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN by Sharon Draper. Atheneum. 0-689-83080-7. Keisha is in her senior year at Hazelwood High School. When the principal's son comes in as a student teacher, he manages to sweep Keisha off her feet and into danger. (HS)

EVERY TIME A RAINBOW DIES by Rita Williams-Garcia. HarperCollins. 0-06-029202-4. From the safety of his rooftop, Thulani watches the world go by. One day he witnesses an event which will change his life forever. (HS)

GIVE A BOY A GUN by Todd Strasser. Simon and Schuster. 0-689-81112-8. It is unthinkable that someone would come to school with a gun intent on killing a classmate. However, as recent events have demonstrated, sometimes the unthinkable occurs. Here is a book to open honest dialogue about bullying and violence. (HS)

GYPSIES NEVER CAME by Stephen Roos. Simon and Schuster. 0-689-83147-1. Augie has always felt as if her were accepted by his peers despite the fact that he was born with a stump for a left hand. Now that he is in 6th grade, though, things are changing. Enter the eccentric and fascinating Lydie Rose Meisenheimer. (MS)

LOSER by Jerry Spinelli. HarperCollins, 2002. ISBN 0-06-000193-3. Zinkoff has always been a loser at school. However, being a loser does not seem to bother him much. (INT/MS)

LOVE AND SEX by Michael Cart (ED.). This is a story collection subtitled "Ten Stories of Truth." Authors include Joan Bauer, Chris Lynch, Laurie Halse Anderson, and Sonya Sones. (HS)

OF SOUND MIND by Jean Ferris. FSG. 0-374-25580-0. Theo is the only hearing person in his family. As a result of this, he has been the chief means of communication for his deaf parents and brother. When he meets Ivy, he discovers a friend in a similar situation. (MS/HS)

ON THE FRINGE by Donald R. Gallo (ED). This collection of stories examines what it is like to be a teen pushed to the fringe by bullies. Outstanding stories by Joan Bauer, Jack Gantos, Chris Crutcher, and others. (MS/HS)

PLAYING FOR KEEPS by Joan Lowery Nixon. Delacorte. 0-385-32759-5. Another winning mystery this time set aboard a cruise ship.

THE RAG AND BONE SHOP by Robert Cormier. Delacorte. ISBN 0-385-72962-6. This is the final novel which is vintage Cormier. Jason is a young man facing a clever police interrogator who will not stop until he secures a confession about a brutal murder. How far is the police willing to go for a conviction? (MS/HS)

SAY YES by Audrey Coulombis. Putnam. ISBN 0-399-23390-3. (2002). A young girl, abandoned by her one living relative, must take chances in order to stay free from the child welfare system. (MS)

SPELLBOUND by Janet McDonald. FSG. 0-374-37140-7. A teen mother has the opportunity to win a college scholarship. (HS)

WHALE TALK by Chris Crutcher. Greenwillow. 0-06-029369-1. Crutcher's long awaited novel offers a provocative look at how violence begets violence. It also leaves readers knowing that, if violence is to end, it is up to them to do something to stop it. (HS)

YOU DON'T KNOW ME by David Klass. FSG. Though the book deals with the serious topic of abuse, the humorous narrative of the protagonist provides much needed comic relief. (MS/HS)

Distinctive Voices

ANNA CASEY'S PLACE IN THE WORLD by Adrian Fogelin. Peachtree. 1-56145-249-1. Anna has been shuttled from home to home since the death of her parents. She hopes this next home may become permanent even if it means sharing it with scrawny little Eb.

BAD BOY: A MEMOIR by Walter Dean Myers. HarperCollins. 0-06-029523-6. Myers' childhood was not an easy one. (MS)

BLACK BOOK: DIARY OF A TEENAGE STUD by Jonah Black. HarperCollins. Jonah is in all sorts of trouble not the least of which is that he is a junior once again. (HS)

BORN BLUE by Han Nolan. Harcourt. 0-15-201916-2. When Janie is a child, her addict mother sells her for drugs. Thus begins her life of abuse and neglect. How can she survive? (HS)

CALEB'S STORY by Patricia MacLachlan. HarperCollins. 0-06-023605-1. Another of the stories from **Sarah Plain and Tall**. Here Caleb's journal tells of a mysterious visitor to the farm. (I/MS)

CIRQUE DU FREAK by Darren Shan. Little Brown. 0-316-60340-6. Darren is lured to an abandoned house one evening to see what is billed as a one-of-a-kind freak show. What he sees that night alters the course of his life and of those he loves most. (sequel: **The Vampire's Assistant**) (I/MS)

CRAZY LOCO by David Rice. Dial. 0-8037-2598-1. This collection of stories, set in the Rio Grande Valley cover the gamut from pets to relatives to school, all with a fresh new outlook.

DANCING IN THE CADILLAC LIGHT by Kimberly Willis Holt. Putnam. 0-399-23402-0. Whenever life closes in on Jaynell, she simply climbs inside one of the cars in the local parts junkyard. (MS)

DON'T YOU KNOW THERE'S A WAR ON? by Avi. HarperCollins. 0-06-0292148. As World War II rages overseas, those at home make the necessary adjustments to their lives as well. Howie and his best friend Denny are on the lookout for spies. What they discover instead is a secret about their favorite teacher. (I/MS)

HERO by Ron Woods. Knopf. ISBN 0-375-80612-1. (2002). A simple trip on a raft leads to an accidental drowning. (MS)

FAIR WEATHER by Richard Peck. Dial. A trip to the Chicago's World Fair changes the lives of two young girls and their family. (MS)

FREEWILL by Chris Lynch. HarperCollins. Gifted readers will appreciate the almost stream of consciousness writing and the delicious symbolism in a story about death and loss and its aftermath. (HS)

A GROUP OF ONE by Rachna Gilmore. Holt. 0-8050-6475-3. Tara gains new pride in her Indian heritage when she learns of her grandmother's involvement in the QUIT INDIA Movement.

GUTS by Gary Paulsen. Delacorte. 0-385-32650-5. Here are all of the true stories behind Paulsen's action-adventure novels. What is it like to eat a raw turtle's egg? How does one survive a moose attack? Those and other answers await readers of this nonfiction book. (MS)

HOLE IN THE SKY by Pete Hautman. Simon and Schuster. 0-689-81759-2. The year is 2028 and most of the population has been wiped out by a flu epidemic. Few have survived the flu; those survivors and the uninfected have formed armed camps. Ceej joins with a Hopi girl to find his sister, Harryette, who has been abducted by a group of Survivors. (MS)

THE ISLAND by Gordon Korman. Scholastic. 0-439-16456-7. Six kids board a sailing vessel. Each has been sent along on this journey in order to learn more about themselves. A sudden storm and a shipwreck cause a handful of teens to face incredible odds. (I/MS)

LORD OF THE DEEP by Graham Salisbury. Delacorte. 0-385-72918-9. Mikey works the fishing boat with his stepfather Bill. He wants so much to learn the ropes, to become a good fisherman. Wrestling with giant marlin and other sport fish makes for adventure and danger. (MS)

THE MAKING OF A WRITER by Joan Lowery Nixon. Delacorte. ISBN 0-385-73000-4. Autobiography of the queen of mysteries for YA readers. (INT/MS)

MEMORY BOY by Will Weaver. HarperCollins. 0-06-028811-6. The year is 2008 and volcanic eruptions have altered the environment of the Pacific Northwest. Volcanic ash has affected crops, and the hoarding has begun. Violence is soon to follow as homeless, hungry people scavenge for food. Miles and his family must leave the city and find safety elsewhere. (MS)

MOTHER TO EMBARRASS ME by Carol Lynch Williams. Delacorte. How embarrassing to have parents who show up at your birthday party in their disco clothes. Now Mom is pregnant and doing an ad for the local health club. Could you just die? (I/MS)

NO MORE DEAD DOGS by Gordon Korman. Hyperion. 0-7868-2462-X. Wallace has vowed that he will read no more books in which a dog dies. When his teacher requires a book report on OLD SHEP, MY PAL, Wallace responds with his honest appraisal. The results are utterly unpredictable and utterly hilarious. (MS)

MY LIFE AND DEATH BY ALEXANDRA CANARSIE by Susan Heyboer O'Keefe. Peachtree. Allie has moved from town to town and never done well at school or much else. This last move, back to her mother's hometown, proves to be a bit different.

PRAY HARD by Pamela Walker. Scholastic. 0-439-21586-2. When Amelia's father is killed in a plane crash, she blames herself for the accident. A mysterious visitor, Brother Mustard Seed, may have the answer to her prayers. (I/MS)

ROOSTER by Beth Nixon Weaver. Winslow. 1-58837-001-1. Kady is ashamed of her shabby house and hand me down clothes now that Jon is showering attention on her. (MS)

SIGHTS by Susanna Nance. Delacorte. 0-385-32761-7. Baby Girl can see the future. Her talent is sometimes more of a curse than a blessing, especially when it comes to the people she loves most. (MS)

SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELING PANTS by Ann Brashears. Delacorte. 0-385-72933-2. One pair of pants and four friends make for a memorable summer in this quirky coming of age story. (MS/HS)

6-321 by Michael Laser. Atheneum. 0-689-83372-5. For Mark, sixth grade is a time of great changes and challenges. (I/MS)

SLAP YOUR SIDES by M.E. Kerr. HarperCollins. It's tough when all the young men around you are enlisting to fight in World War II and you remain a Conscientious Objector. (MS/HS)

STUCK IN NEUTRAL by Terry Trueman. HarperCollins. The main character is a young man stricken with cerebral palsy. This unusual narrator faces a unique situation as well. He believes his father plans to kill him. (HS)

FROM LAUGHTER TO TEARS

19 VARIETIES OF GAZELLE: POEMS OF THE MIDDLE EAST by Naomi Shihab Nye. Nye proves again why she is an acclaimed poet in this collection of poems about people and war and peace. (MS/HS)

33 SNOWFISH by Adam Rapp. Not for the faint of heart, this story, told from 3 points of view, deals with the incredibly daunting life of 3 run away children. (HS)

ABARAT by Clive Barker. Fantasy about a girl's journey to Abarat. (MS)

ALL AMERICAN GIRL by Meg Cabot. When Samantha Madison saves the life of the President of the United States, it should be a GOOD thing, right? WRONG! (MS/HS)

ALMOST HOME by Nora Raleigh Baskin. Leah is now living with her father and his new wife (she refuses to call her stepmother) and misses her old life with her mother and friends. An unlikely savior in the form of a boy in her class helps Leah to find her way home. (INT/MS)

BOY WHO SAVED BASEBALL by John H. Ritter. Lyrical and lovely, here is a tale that combines baseball and family and community. (MS)

CATALYST by Laurie Halse Anderson. Kate plans to attend her mother's alma mater, MIT. She has no fall-back plan and has to deal with disappointment on the academic and personal front when she is rejected by the school. (HS)

CITY OF EMBER by Jeanne DuPrau. This futuristic novel contains elements of romance, adventure, and suspense making it an interesting read for a wide variety of audiences. Pair this one with **The Giver** and **Gathering Blue** and other Utopian novels. (MS)

CORALINE by Neil Gaiman. This chilling tale will be perfect for reading aloud. (INT/MS)

CUBA 15 by Nancy Osa. Violet Paz just turned 15. Her abuela insists on a quince party. Violet does not much care for this tradition until she is given permission to make this quince her own celebration. (MS/HS)

DEAD GIRLS DON'T WRITE LETTERS by Gail Giles. Sunny's older sister died in an apartment fire. Now, suddenly, she receives a letter from Jazz telling her she survived and is coming home. (MS/HS)

FEARLESS FERNIE: HANGING OUT WITH FERNIE AND ME by Gary Soto. This collection of poems details the friendship between two boys. (MS)

FIRE-US BOOK ONE: THE KINDLING by Jennifer Armstrong and Nancy Butcher. H. First part of a trilogy about a futuristic world in which only children seem to have survived. (MS/HS)

FRICTION by E. R. Frank. Alex loves her teacher until a new student begins to accuse Simon of inappropriate behavior. Alex does not know who to believe: the new kid or Alex's own instincts? (MS)

GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER: THE TRUE STORY OF THE EMMITT TILL CASE by Chris Crowe. Emmett Till's true story is credited with beginning some of the protests associated with the Civil Rights Movement. This is a companion to **MISSISSIPPI TRIAL, 1955** also by Crowe. (MS/HS)

GLASS CAFE OR THE STRIPPER AND THE STATE: HOW MY MOTHER STARTED A WAR WITH THE SYSTEM AND MADE US KIND OF RICH AND A LITTLE BIT FAMOUS by Gary Paulsen. OK, the title says it all. (MS)

HANGING ON TO MAX by Margaret Bechard. Sam's senior year should be a breeze. Baby Max complicates his life more than he could ever have predicted. Can Sam balance school and parenting? (HS)

HOW ANGEL PETERSON GOT HIS NAME AND OTHER OUTRAGEOUS TALES ABOUT EXTREME SPORTS by Gary Paulsen. Only Paulsen could tell these tall tales and make them seem perfectly believable. Perfect for reluctant readers and for reading aloud. (INT/MS)

IF I WERE IN CHARGE THE RULES WOULD BE DIFFERENT by James Proimos. This collection of poems, reminiscent of Silverstein and Dahl and Prelutsky, will be a welcome addition for intermediate libraries. (INT)

IF THE SHOE FITS by Laura Whipple. Cinderella told in verse from multiple perspectives. (MS/HS)

JINX by Margaret Wild. When two boyfriends die, Jinx begins to believe she will never be able to seek love again. (HS)

KEEPING YOU A SECRET by Julie Ann Peters. When Holland meets Cece, her life is changed forever. However, the two must keep their relationship a secret for fear of what others will think and do in reaction. (HS)

KING OF THE MILD FRONTIER: AN ILL-ADVISED AUTOBIOGRAPHY by Chris Crutcher. What can I say? It is vintage Crutcher. Some chapters beg to be read aloud. Some are better read silently. But DO read it all. (HS)

LOCOMOTION by Jacqueline Woodson. Novel in verse from a talented writer. Lonnie's teacher is helping him put words about his life on paper. The writing is cathartic and immediate. (MS)

NEW RULES OF HIGH SCHOOL by Blake Nelson. Max's life seems perfect good grades, lovely girlfriend. Why, then, is he so unhappy? (HS)

PARALLEL UNIVERSE OF LIARS by Kathleen Johnson. Robin's life is miserable. Not only does her mother hammer at her about her weight, but her father's new wife is cheating on him with Robin's next door neighbor. Robin herself is being pulled into Frankie's world, a world where lies appear to be truth. (HS)

PERIOD PIECES: STORIES FOR GIRLS edited by Erzsi Deak and Kristin Litchman. Stories about that brink moment when girls become women. (INT/MS)

PHINEAS GAGE: A GRUESOME BUT TRUE STORY ABOUT BRAIN SCIENCE by John Fleischman. Phineas Gage survives when a piece of iron shoots through his cheek and brain. He becomes a medical marvel. (INT/MS)

POOL BOY by Michael Simmons. Brett is a spoiled rich kid who now has no money. He whines about his status in life, especially about having to find work and help support the family. He is a wonderful example of anti-hero. (HS)

SECOND SUMMER OF THE SISTERHOOD by Ann Brashares. A fitting sequel to the **Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants** as once again the girls head off for summer adventures. (HS)

SEEING THE BLUE BETWEEN edited by Paul Janeczko. Poets offer advice and poems for young writers. (MS)

SHAKESPEARE BATS CLEANUP by Ron Koertge. A novel in verse tells of a young boy confined to bed rest for mono. While pining away for baseball, he learns much about poetry and about himself. (MS/HS)

SILENT BOY by Lois Lowry. Historical novel about a girl's befriending of a young developmentally challenged boy. This novel sings with lyrical prose. Katy is made real to the reader through meticulous detail. (MS)

SON OF THE MOB by Gordon Korman. Vince DeLuca's life in high school is made much more difficult because his father is a mob boss. (MS/HS)

SPLASH: POEMS OF OUR WATERY WORLD by Constance Levy. Lovely, lyrical poems and light verse about water in its various states. (INT/MS)

STAND TALL by Joan Bauer. Living between mom's apartment and dad's house proves a but more than he can bear. (MS)

STEPS by Rachel Cohn. Annabel needs a chart to keep track of her various siblings and parental combinations. She is vacationing with her Dad in Australia and hopes to convince him to come back and live in New York so she can be near him. (MS)

SWIMMING UPSTREAM by Kristine O'Connell George. Subtitled Middle School Poems, this collection really hits at the heart of those kids in the middle. (MS)

TRIBES by Arthur Slade. Think of high school as an anthropology assignment. (HS)

TRUE MEANING OF CLEAVAGE by Mariah Fredericks. One look at the cover and this book will fly from the shelf. Be happy for this is the kind of book that speaks volumes to adolescent girls. (MS/HS)

WHO THE MAN by Chris Lynch. Earl Pryor tends to settle any disagreements with his brute strength. After all, that's what a man does, right? Lynch explores the mind of a young man in turmoil, something he does incredibly well. (HS)

New and Notable for 2002

MATCHIT by Martha Moore (MS)

A HOLE IN MY LIFE by Jack Gantos (MS/HS)

SHATTERING GLASS by Gail Giles (HS)

GOOSE CHASE by Patrice Kindl (MS)

GOD OF BEER by Garret Kelzer (HS)

EVERYTHING ON A WAFFLE by Polly Horvath (INT/MS)

RAZZLE by Ellen Wittlinger (HS)

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LARRY by Janet Tsjian (MS/HS)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA by Paula Danziger (INT/MS)

BIG MOUTH AND UGLY GIRL by Joyce Carol Oates (MS/HS)