



What Is the Young Adults' Choices Project?

The 2009 Young Adults' Choices list is the 23rd that U.S. teenagers (Grades 7–12) have helped create. This project began in 1986, funded by a special grant given to the International Reading Association (IRA), and is supervised by the Association's Literature for Young Adults Committee.

The goals of the project are to encourage young people to read; to make teens, teachers, librarians, and parents aware of new literature for young adults; and to provide middle and secondary school students with an opportunity to voice their opinions about books being written for them. The participants who wrote the annotations are identified by their initials following the review. Their full names can be found in the sidebar at the end of the Choices list.

Young Adults'

Choices

2009



Logo illustration © by Natalie Babbitt

The Alchemyst (The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel)

Michael Scott. New York: Delacorte Press.

The Book of Abraham the Mage, or the Codex, contains all the information in the world, including the secrets to immortality and alchemy. Twins Sophie and Josh Newman unwittingly become involved in trying to protect the book from those that would use it for evil. Their normal lives become extraordinary as they befriend Nicholas Flamel, who is over 600 years old, and other mythological beings. However, was their involvement really coincidental or was it foretold by Abraham? This fast-paced fantasy, the first book in a series, seamlessly intertwines the past, the present, and the future with enduring and memorable characters. AAR

Beastly

Alex Flinn. New York: HarperTeen.

Incredibly handsome Kyle Kingsbury relies on his looks and his father's money to get everything that he desires. If you are ugly in Kyle's world you don't exist or you only serve as something to be toyed with. Kyle crosses the wrong "ugly" girl who turns him into a beast in order for his outward appearance to reflect his inner self. Kyle has two years in which to reverse the witch's curse by finding true love. This retelling of *Beauty and the Beast* is from the beast's perspective and includes many relevant modern details and themes. AAR

Bunker 10

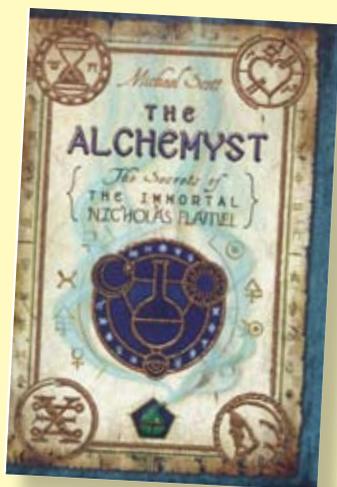
J.A. Henderson. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Children's Books.

The lines between reality, fantasy, and the completely impossible are shattered in this compulsively readable novel. Seven children are killed in an explosion at a secret military base. *Bunker 10* introduces us to these children, describes their last day and explores the explosion. However, the story is not that simple because all of the children are geniuses. And maybe they don't really exist in the first place. Or maybe these events took place during a different time and we are witnessing them from the future. Or maybe... you will just have to read the book and find out for yourself. AAR

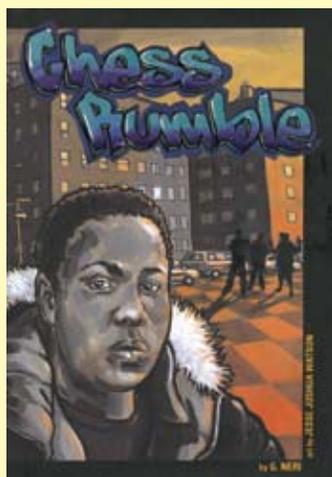
Chess Rumble

G. Neri. Ill. Jesse Joshua Watson. New York: Lee & Low.

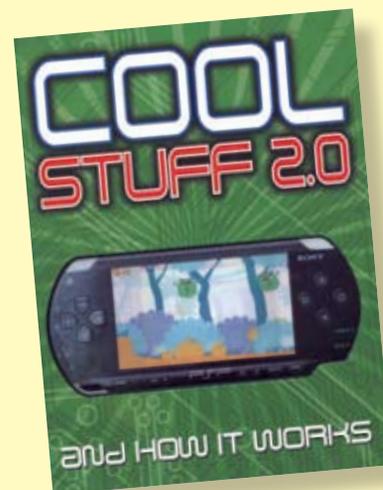
Marcus lets his fists deal with his problems. The death of his sister and his father's abandonment of the family have resulted in Marcus doing a lot of talking with his fists lately. Fighting at school has pushed him to the brink of expulsion. Marcus refuses the help of all who reach out to him until he is introduced to CM who patiently shows Marcus how to play chess and thus how to live life. Neri tells Marcus's story in free verse that is filled with the language and the flavor of the streets; Watson's illustrations enhance Marcus's story. AAR



From *The Alchemyst (The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel)* by Michael Scott. New York: Delacorte Press.



From *Chess Rumble* by G. Neri. New York: Lee & Low.



From *Cool Stuff 2.0: And How It Works* by Jon Woodcock and Chris Woodford. New York: DK Publishing.

Cool Stuff 2.0: And How It Works

Jon Woodcock and Chris Woodford. New York: DK Publishing.

Curious about how things work? Want to see the inside story? Great photographs and illustrations let you see how kids' shoes can grow with the child with the push of a button, boats can imitate the movement of dolphins, toilet lids pop up when someone approaches, and beds can float on air. If you are interested in saving the environment, you can learn how candy wrappers can become purses and pipes can turn in to modern lamps. This is a great book to explore the future in objects that are here today. KS

Cross My Heart and Hope to Spy

Ally Carter. New York: Hyperion.

Back for an encore, Cammie is now a sophomore at Gallagher Academy for Exceptional Young Women, a school for spies. When boys invade Gallagher, Cammie and her friends do their best to out-spy them, figure out what makes them tick, and flirt every chance they get. Between learning 14 languages, breaking complicated codes, and practicing being a chameleon, Cammie tries to find out what her mother, the principal, is hiding. Is one of the boys using her to bring her school to disgrace? Strong female characters prevail in the end. KS

Deep and Dark and Dangerous

Mary Downing Hahn. New York: Clarion.

The title is creepy enough to stand up to the plot of this book. A picture-perfect artist's cottage on a

lake in Maine, a charming aunt, and a cute cousin to babysit should make a lovely summer vacation for Ali, the main character. But then she encounters Sissy, a strange girl with connections to Ali's mother's and aunt's past. Did Ali's mom murder Sissy? Did her aunt? How can Ali help this remarkably solid ghost to rest in peace? Intermediate and middle school readers will devour this easy but chilling read. KS

Diary of a Wimpy Kid

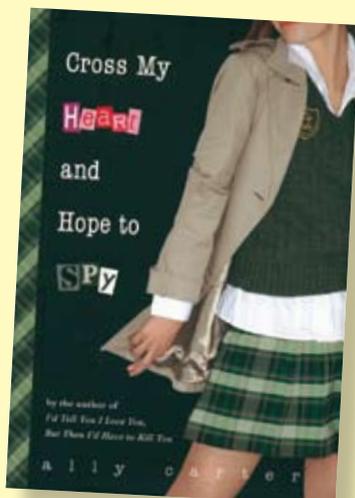
Jeff Kinney. New York: Abrams.

This is a laugh-out-loud novel in cartoons about middle school student Greg Heffley, who takes readers through an academic year worth of drama. The author has a gift for believable preteen dialogue and narration that skewers familiar aspects of junior high life. The novel is an excellent choice for reluctant readers, and more experienced readers will enjoy and relate to one seventh grader's view of the everyday trials and tribulations of middle school. KS

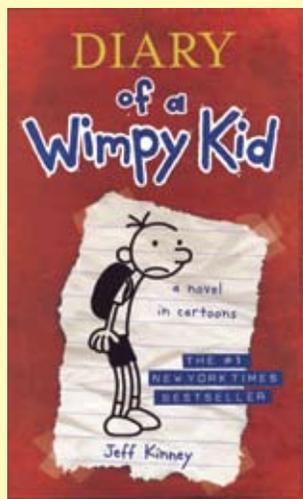
Epic

Conor Kostick. New York: Firebird.

Finem facere mundo—"to make an end to the world." Which world will end? The "real" world where people lead drab and increasingly desperate lives? A world ruled by committee in which violence is forbidden? Or will it be the "fantasy" world where gamers face dragons, ogres, and monsters—a world in which violence rules? Epic is the game, and 14-year-old Erik enters the fantasy world accompanied by friends, first to avenge his



From *Cross My Heart and Hope to Spy* by Ally Carter. New York: Hyperion.



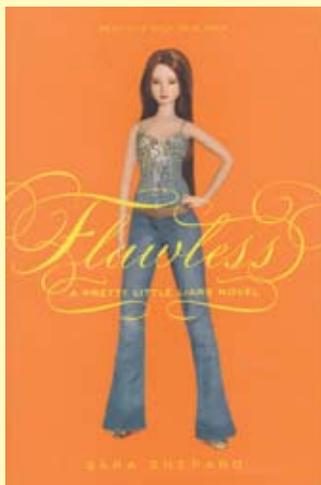
From *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney. New York: Abrams.



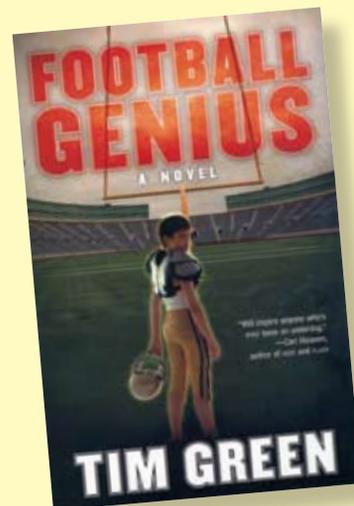
From *Epic* by Conor Kostick. New York: Firebird.



From *Evolution, Me & Other Freaks of Nature* by Robin Brande. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.



From *Flawless* by Sara Shepard. New York: HarperTeen.



From *Football Genius* by Tim Green. New York: HarperCollins.

father's exile, but ultimately to change the world. Epic is a classic battle between good and evil, played out through a series of moral and ethical dilemmas. KR

Evolution, Me & Other Freaks of Nature

Robin Brande. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

When Mena writes a letter that causes her to be shunned by her church, her family, and her friends, she's troubled by the response but never in doubt that she did the right thing. Evolution vs. creationism, religion vs. science, the separation of church and state—Brande's story thoughtfully takes on a debate both timeworn and current. This book makes one ponder: Does God exist, and is evolution real? KR

Flawless

Sara Shepard. New York: HarperTeen.

Spencer, Aria, Emily, and Hanna are four “frenemies” who have it all—the exclusive prep school educations, the Mercedes-Benzes, and the designer wardrobes. But these girls are anything but flawless, and someone knows their secrets. Teens will relish the glamorous and scandalous world of these “pretty little liars.” Suspenseful, with plenty of plot twists, *Flawless* keeps even the savviest gossip girl guessing! KR

Football Genius

Tim Green. New York: HarperCollins.

Twelve-year-old Troy White's natural athleticism and his unnatural talent for predicting football plays are going to waste as he is stuck playing second-string on his team. Harassment by a bully

pushes him to take a game ball from local Atlanta Falcons football player Seth Holloway. A developing relationship with Holloway gives Troy the chance to use his play-predicting ability to help bring the Falcons to victory, and eventually Troy gets his chance to prove himself on the field as well. KR

Get Well Soon

Julie Halpern. New York: Square Fish.

Julie Halpern's first novel is a humorous look into Anna Bloom's short stay in a mental institution. Through a series of letters—or rather one long letter written over 21 days—to her best friend, Anna paints a picture of the institution and the people she meets there. Through her colorful language and young adult voice, we see Anna begin to realize who she is with the help of Justin, her first crush; Sandy, her pregnant roommate; and a variety of other kids. This is a great read for anyone who has ever felt a little crazy. RB

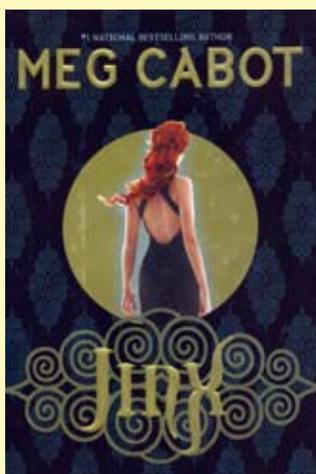
Gym Candy

Carl Deuker. New York: Graphia.

In this cautionary tale for older readers, Mick Johnson is a high school football player who constantly strives to live up to his father's athletic example. The pressure leads him to steroids—and the instant gratification of success on the field. Eventually, however, he experiences the consequences of his drug use: rage, paranoia, and alienation from close friends. When his illicit activity is discovered moments before the title game, Mick is forced to face his growing dependency, with potentially deadly consequences. The riveting football scenes in this fast-paced story are guaranteed to hook boy readers! RB



From *Homeboyz* by Alan Lawrence Sitomer. New York: Hyperion.



From *Jinx* by Meg Cabot. New York: HarperTeen.



From *Masquerade* by Melissa de la Cruz. New York: Hyperion.

Homeboyz

Alan Lawrence Sitomer. New York: Hyperion.

Drugs, sex, gang violence, painful poverty, and in-your-face language confront the reader in this all too realistic portrayal of life for many teens in America. The content isn't overdone in an attempt to shock the reader; it doesn't need to be. The affront of reality is enough. *Homeboyz* is a masterfully crafted novel, which follows the struggles and successes of the Anderson family. Underneath the desperation and despair of the gang environment, the reader comes away with a sense that hope lives everywhere. For mature readers. RB

How to Take the Ex Out of Ex-Boyfriend

Janette Rallison. New York: Speak.

Giovanna, the new girl in a small Texas town, has no desire to be a part of the in crowd. Ironically, her boyfriend Jesse is one of the most popular boys in town. When they are pitted against each other as campaign managers for the two Student Council president candidates, Giovanna rashly breaks up with Jesse and soon realizes it was a mistake. She sets out to rectify the situation. Witty dialogue and smart characters make this a must-read book for teen girls. RB

Jinx

Meg Cabot. New York: HarperTeen.

Jean Honeychurch, nicknamed Jinx because of her incredibly bad luck, has inherited an ancestor's gift for witchcraft. When her first spell—a love spell—goes horribly wrong, turning her boyfriend into a stalker, Jean leaves Iowa to live with her aunt and uncle in New York. Her troubled, sophisticated

cousin Tory, however, does not want to share her home and friends, especially when the object of her own love spell, Zach, shows a growing interest in Jean. As Tory's jealousy takes a dangerous turn, Jean must find a way to protect them all while helping her cousin in the process. KMS

Masquerade

Melissa de la Cruz. New York: Hyperion.

In this sequel to *Blue Bloods*, New York socialite and teen vampire Schuyler Van Alen, with her human Conduit (vampire's assistant) Oliver, searches for her grandfather Lawrence on the advice of her recently deceased grandmother. But when they return from Venice to New York for the Four Hundred Ball, an exclusive Blue Bloods event, new danger lurks in the city for the glamorous undead. The Silver Bloods, corrupted vampires who feed on other vampires, continue to prey on the Blue Bloods as Schuyler and Oliver search for a way to stop them. KMS

Memoirs of a Teenage Amnesiac

Gabrielle Zevin. New York: Square Fish.

When a head injury erases four years of her memory, 16-year-old Naomi Porter has difficulty fitting back into her life. She has little in common with her popular boyfriend Ace, she no longer enjoys being coeditor of the yearbook with her best friend Will, and she cannot remember why she and her mother aren't speaking. Only James, the boy with a mysterious past, seems to understand Naomi's need to find what really interests her now. As she reconciles who she was before with who she is now, Naomi discovers that sometimes when we lose something, we gain something better instead. KMS

Peak

Roland Smith. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.

As a sentence for climbing the Woolworth Building in New York City, 14-year-old Peak—named for his parents' passion for climbing—must leave his mother, stepfather, and sisters in New York to live with his father Josh in Nepal. To gain publicity for his climbing expedition company, Josh takes Peak to Mt. Everest, where, if he reaches the summit, Peak will be the youngest person ever to make the climb. But as he ascends the mountain, Peak reconsiders his priorities and the selfishness required to reach the top. KMS

Reef

Scubazoo. New York: DK Publishing.

Reef is a gorgeous photographic display of the largest living structures on earth. Created by Scubazoo, a leading team of underwater photographers and filmmakers, this book is filled with interesting facts that detail animal behavior, the relationships that exist between species, and the daily life of these underwater worlds. However, these worlds are currently threatened with extinction by 2050, and the many causes of this danger are outlined for the reader. Beautiful photographs and fascinating text are sure to make *Reef* a favorite for teens. A DVD with additional images is also included with the book. LMW

Repossessed: A Novel

A.M. Jenkins. New York: HarperTeen.

Kiriell, a fallen angel, decides to take a break from the business of monitoring the suffering and pain

of others. He finds a home in Shaun's body and begins a journey of discovery into human sensation. Kiriell particularly anticipates committing the highly popular seven deadly sins. Surprising insights into human nature and compassion for those who struggle are intermixed with wry observations about teenage life. Particularly touching is Kiriell's concern for Shaun's struggling younger brother, Jason. Kiriell learns that experiencing human emotions is far different from clinically understanding the motivations behind human actions. For advanced readers. SAB

Right Behind You

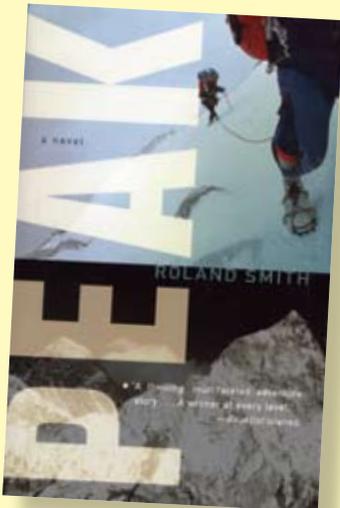
Gail Giles. New York: Little, Brown.

Nine-year-old Kip set a boy on fire, killing him. After four years in a mental institution, Kip (now known as Wade) and his family try to put the past behind them by changing their names and moving, but Wade can't hide from himself or his past. Despite his crime, Wade earns readers' respect as he struggles to find out who he has become while living with his past. Wade and the reader will find that there are no easy answers. This highly recommended novel of self-discovery for advanced readers provides new insights on redemption, trust, and forgiveness. KM

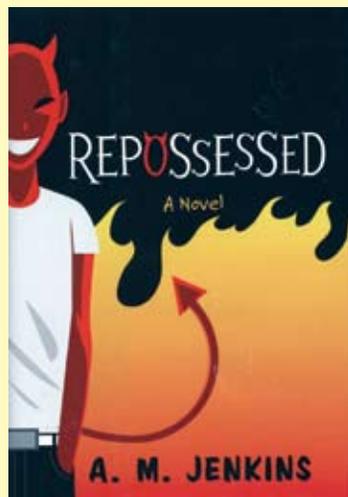
Schooled

Gordon Korman. New York: Hyperion.

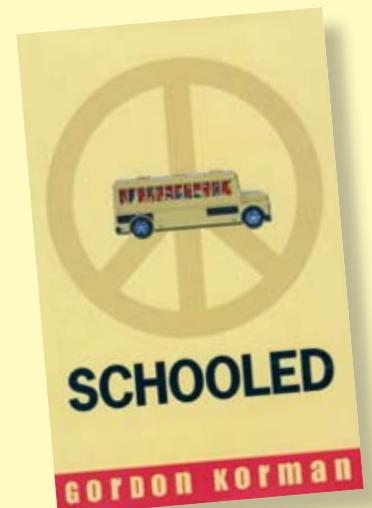
Thirteen-year-old Capricorn "Cap" Anderson lives on an isolated farm with his grandmother, a former hippie. He's been home-schooled and has never seen TV or handled money. When his grandmother



From *Peak* by Roland Smith. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.



From *Repossessed: A Novel* by A.M. Jenkins. New York: HarperTeen.



From *Schooled* by Gordon Korman. New York: Hyperion.

breaks a hip, Cap is sent to a foster home where he first experiences the modern world and public school. Cap reacts in unexpected ways to the pranks of unkind classmates and, in the end, he changes their hearts. Cap's story unfolds from multiple perspectives and charms the reader with its simple lesson—persistent, innocent goodness can overcome entrenched, traditional middle school meanness. KM

Skulduggery Pleasant

Derek Landy. New York: HarperTrophy.

When 12-year-old Stephanie Edgley's Uncle Gordon wills his property, possessions, assets, and royalties to Stephanie on her 18th birthday, little does Stephanie realize what a scary new world she is entering. It does not take long for reality to set in after Stephanie is attacked by an unknown man seeking the "key." To her rescue comes Skulduggery Pleasant, a bony detective, who provides Stephanie with experiences that are not humanly possible in a world where dark and dangerous is common. Stephanie's involvement in this new scary world leads her to find out her true self. MFL

Story of a Girl

Sara Zarr. New York: Little, Brown.

Deanna doesn't belong. She's unfairly earned an enduring reputation as the school slut. Alternatively ostracized and harassed, she has few friends. Deanna's home life is unhappy. She's lost the trust of her underemployed father and communicates little with her overworked mother. Adding to the

stress, her teenage brother and his girlfriend live unhappily in the basement with their baby. Deanna takes a job in the local pizza shop and is forced to confront her past mistakes. When she betrays her friends, Deanna finds her voice and realizes the powerful need to forgive and be forgiven. SAB

Thirteen Reasons Why

Jay Asher. New York: Razorbill.

When, two weeks after Hannah Baker's suicide, Clay Jensen receives a package containing voice recordings she made, he is thrust into a suspenseful discovery of why Hannah killed herself. Hannah's detailed story leads Clay not only to the 13 painful reasons that lead her to committing suicide, but also shows Clay how he failed Hannah. Clay begins to see how his actions and the actions of others pushed Hannah to the point of suicide. This responsibility is difficult to accept, but it prompts Clay to make sure he is not a contributor to another's pain again. MFL

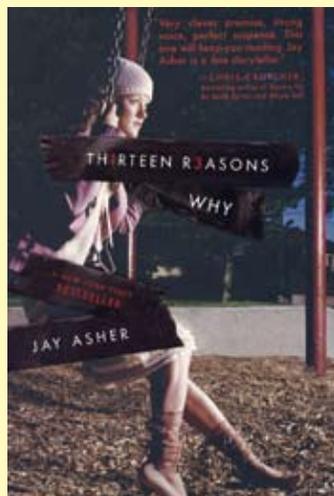
The Titan's Curse

Rick Riordan. New York: Miramax.

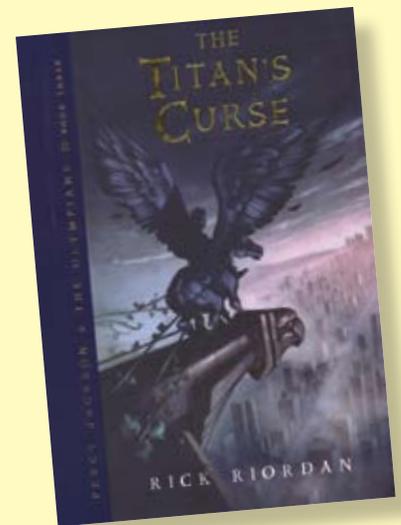
This third book in the Percy Jackson series continues the trials of young demigods in the modern world. Once again there is the helping out of old friends, meeting new characters, quests, evil curses, and the ever-menacing, yet sometimes helpful, interference from the adults on Olympus. A hint of romance, humor, and strong heroines blended with the action of young untried heroes battling an evil Titan draw the reader into its pages. LMW



From *Skulduggery Pleasant* by Derek Landy. New York: HarperTrophy.



From *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher. New York: Razorbill.



From *The Titan's Curse* by Rick Riordan. New York: Miramax.

Twisted

Laurie Halse Anderson. New York: Speak.

Tyler's 12th-grade year is irrefutably changed by his "bad boy" reputation, garnered through a conviction for vandalism the previous year. Now flattered by the highly charged flirtations of Bethany, Tyler pursues her to a party where the situation rapidly spins out of control. When compromising pictures of Bethany are distributed on the Internet, Tyler is suspected as the perpetrator. The accusation sparks the crisis that has been brewing between Tyler and his parents. Desperate and confused, Tyler contemplates suicide. Vindicated when the charges are dropped, Tyler clarifies his priorities and begins a journey toward reconciliation. SAB

The Wizard Heir

Cinda Williams Chima. New York: Hyperion.

The second book in Chima's fantasy trilogy introduces 16-year-old orphan Seph McCauley. He is an untrained wizard, and magical mishaps occur wherever he goes. When Seph is sent to the Havens, an exclusive boys' school, he finds the Alumni—a group of wizards led by Headmaster Leicester. By linking powers of student wizards to his own, Leicester plans to rule the Weir, an underground magical society. Seph resists linkage and must stop an impending war between the two great wizard houses. A dark page-turner, with violent depictions of Leicester's love of inflicting pain, this book is most appropriate for advanced readers. KM

Thank You to the Literature for Young Adults Committee

The Young Adults' Choices are coordinated by the Literature for Young Adults Committee of the International Reading Association. The 30 books on this year's list are the result of voting by students in five different regions of the United States. Trade books (books other than textbooks) published in 2007 were submitted by more than 50 publishers. Each book had to have at least two positive reviews from recognized sources such as *The Horn Book*, *School Library Journal*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *Booklist*, *Language Arts*, or *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)*. More than 11,000 ballots were counted for the books submitted for this year's project. The results were announced in May at the 2009 Annual Convention of the International Reading Association in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The following teams participated in the 2009 project:

Team 1: Aimee Rogers, Arizona

Team 2: Kathleen A. Sears, Maryland

Team 3: Karen Rubin (team leader), Florida; Rose Brock (trainee), Texas

Team 4: Kelly Stern, Iowa

Team 5: Maxine Levy (team leader), Tennessee; Raleigh Woods (trainee), Michigan

The project was directed this year by members of the Literature for Young Adults Committee and its co-chairs, Gretchen C. Hamilton, Oregon, and Lisa Morris-Wilkey, Arizona. For more information on the Young Adults' Choices or to learn how to become involved, visit www.reading.org/Resources/Booklists/YoungAdultsChoices.aspx.

