

The Century recommends

selected by [Mary Harris Russell](#) in the [December 16, 2008](#) issue

In Review



Ten Little Fingers, Ten Little Toes

Mem Fox
Harcourt



Old Bear

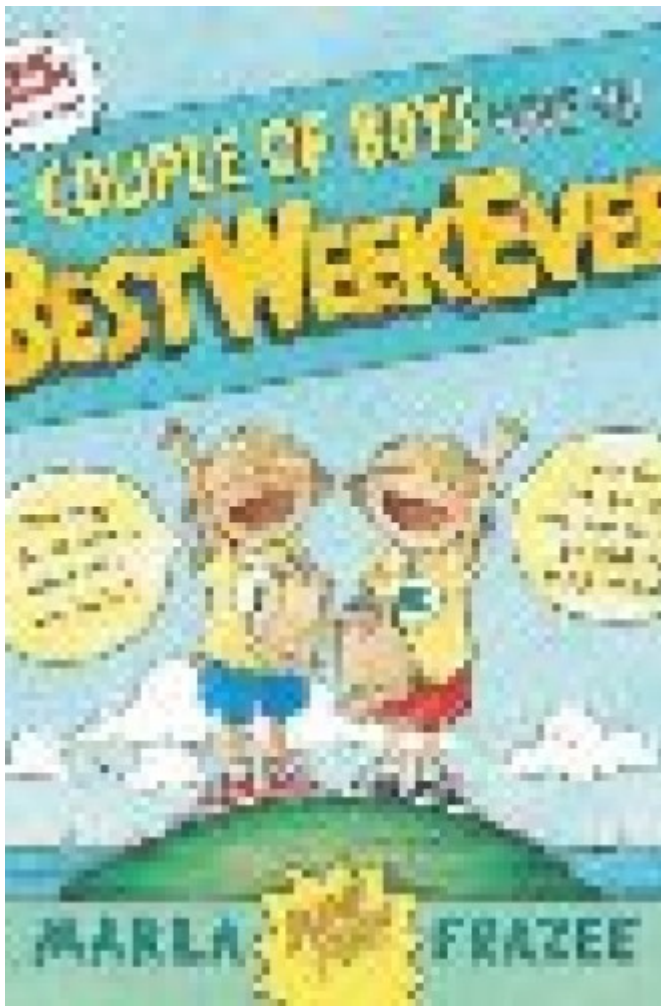
Kevin Henkes
Greenwillow



Dinosaur vs. Bedtime

Bob Shea

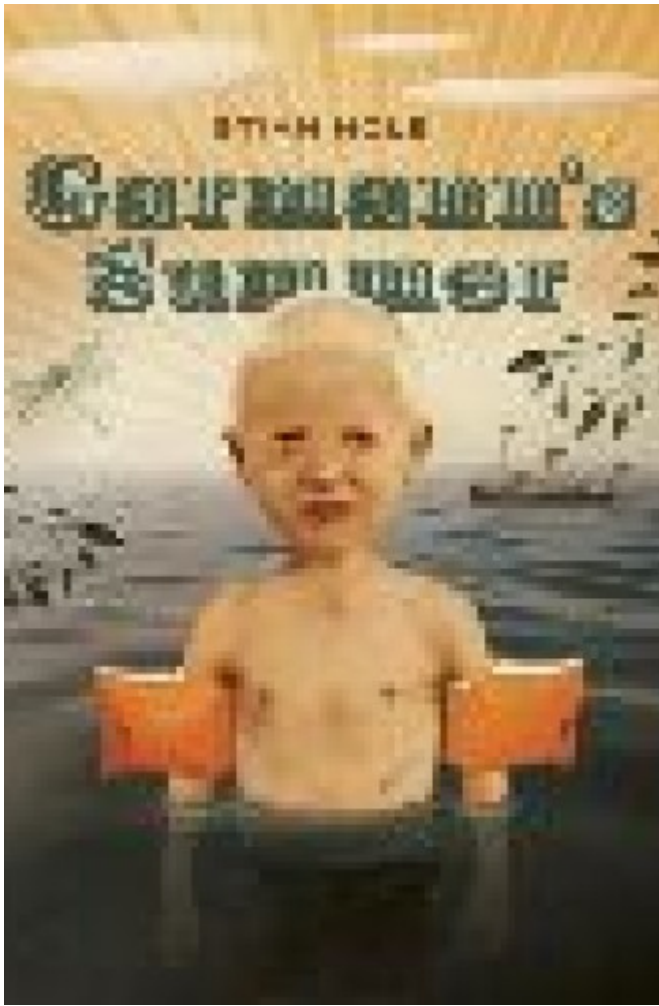
Hyperion



A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever

Marla Frazee

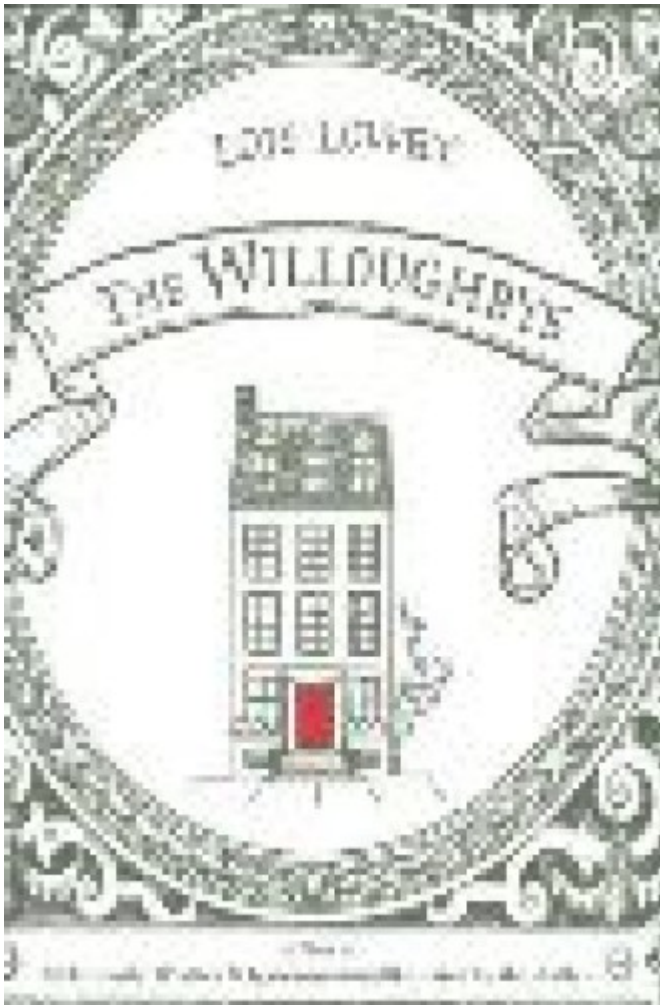
Harcourt



Garman's Summer

Stian Hole

Eerdmans



The Willoughbys

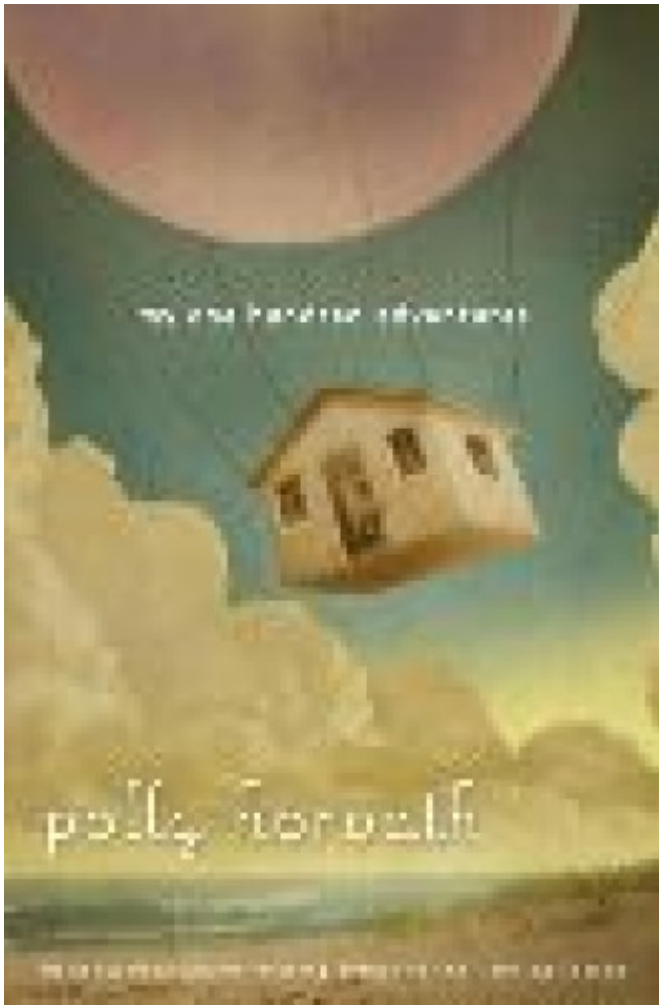
Lois Lowry

Houghton Mifflin



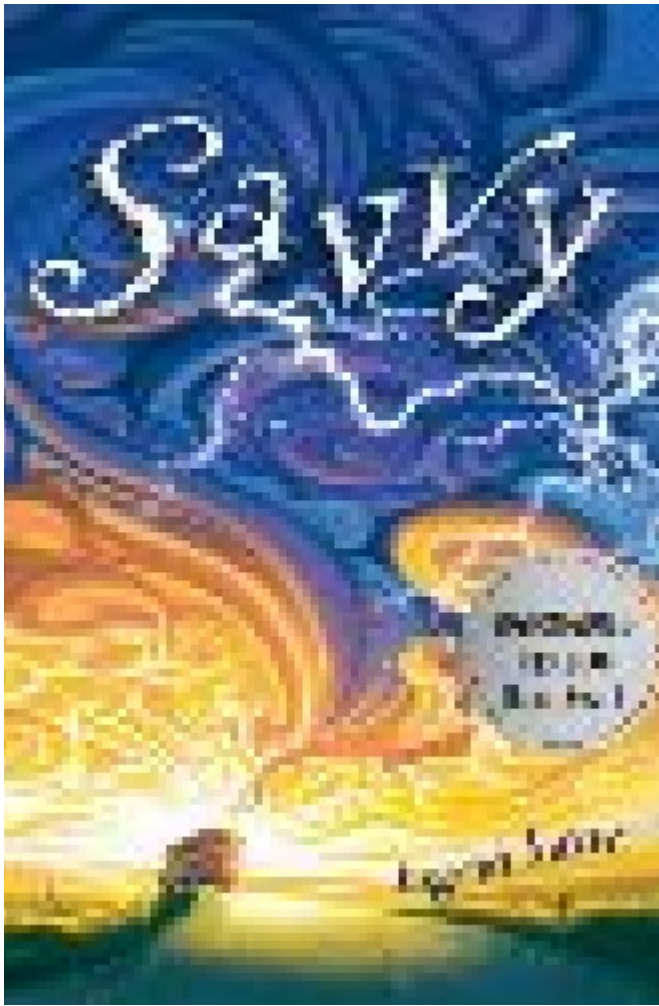
A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams

Jen Bryant
Eerdmans



My One Hundred Adventures

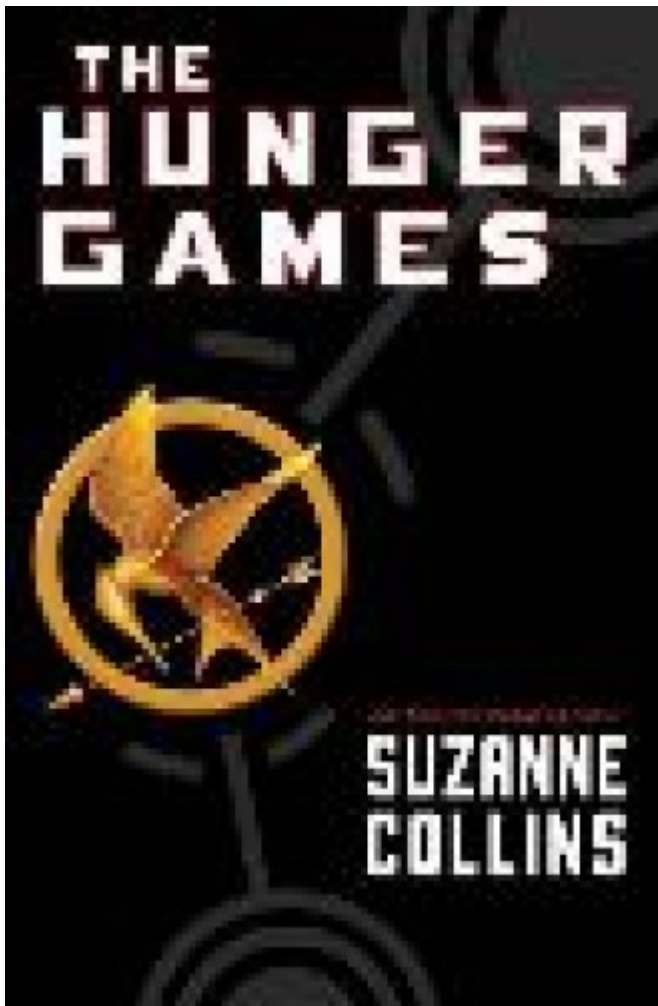
Polly Horvath
Schwartz & Wade



Savvy

Ingrid Law

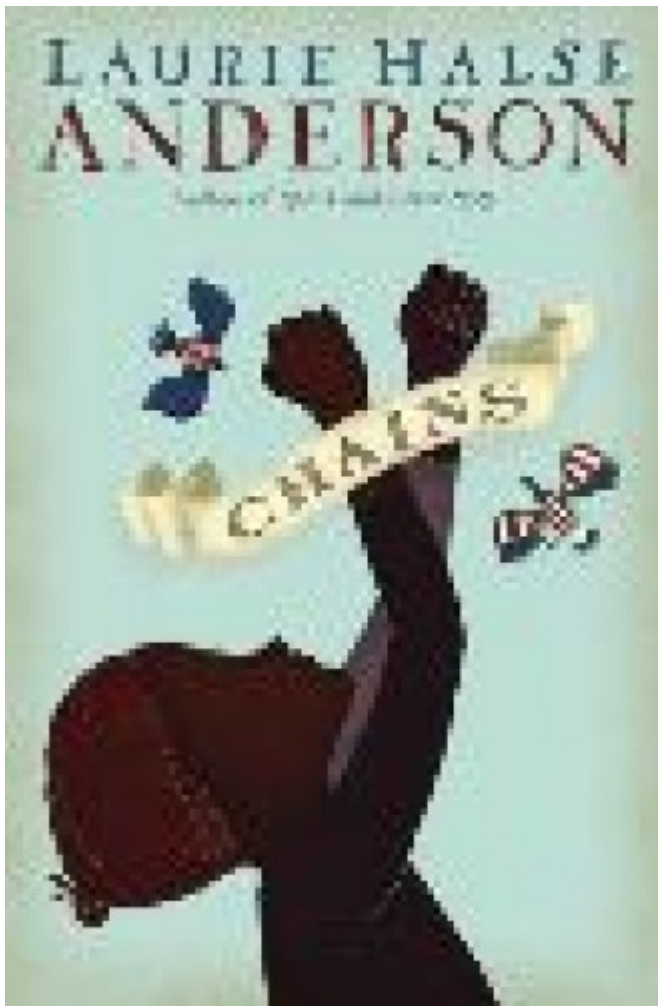
Dial



The Hunger Games

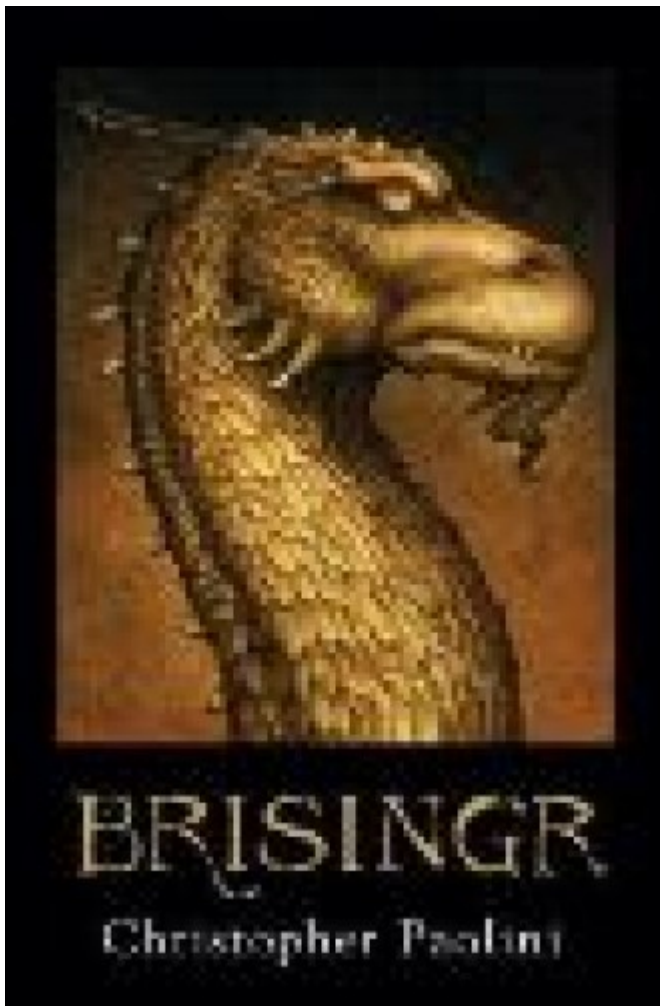
Suzanne Collins

Scholastic



Chains

Laurie Halse Anderson
Simon & Schuster



Brisingr: Inheritance, Book III

Christopher Paolini

Knopf



Breaking Dawn

Stephenie Meyer

Little, Brown

For five and under:

Babies from around the world form their own community of joy, and each one, “as everyone knows, had ten little fingers and ten little toes.” Fox and Oxenbury are working together for the first time here. The story ends with “a sweet little child who was mine, all mine.” Recommended for gift giving.

Old Bear is old, which means he has many memories as he gets ready to hibernate. Bear is warm and brown, with thick brush lines making a roundness we’d like to touch. The seasons are shown in a variety of light-filled pastels. This simple story affirms both memory and newness.

This little red dinosaur is fierce and appears to win just about every combat. But being fierce can make anyone tired, even a dinosaur. Children will love the action-filled pictures and the dino hero, but everybody needs bedtime sometime.

Eamon and James are staying with Eamon's grandparents, who offer "camping out" fun, banana waffles and "quiet meditation" (check the picture of that). There are humorous gaps between what the words say and the pictures show. Grandparents will enjoy this book, especially if their grandchildren have ever stayed with them for a week.

For 11 and under:

Though Garmann is starting school, this isn't really a picture-book for preschoolers; it's a book to read with children ages six to nine. Garmann is worried about whether he is as ready for school as his next-door neighbors. His three elderly aunts come for their annual visit, and Garmann discovers that they have fears too—of winter, of using a new kind of walker and so on. The overall effect is neither fake gloom nor fake sunshine; people just get on with life. Particularly unusual are the visual and verbal portraits of the aunts.

With its straight-faced tone and humorous narrative, this parody would be a great family read-aloud as it follows the four Willoughby children, who have read all the classic children's books and decided they'll have more fun if they're orphans. Their parents, meanwhile, inspired by "Hansel and Gretel," decide to abandon their children. Add a "melancholy tycoon," "an affable baby" and a gritty nanny for much fun.

Williams as a little boy liked to observe nature—a trait that he retained as a medical student and then as a physician and poet. His goal was to write clearly, not abstractly. Jen Bryant's spare words are well crafted, and Melissa Sweet's multimedia collages help us see Williams's world with new eyes.

The summer that she turns 12, Jane would like something to be different in her life. Adventures, please—a hundred of them. Living with her poet mother and siblings by the seacoast in New England, Jane manages not quite a hundred but a good number, mostly involving neighbors in their little town. The book reads well adventure by adventure, but there's also an overarching plot that's pleasing.

Mibs Beaumont's family believes that on your 13th birthday your special power, or "savvy," is revealed. But on Mibs's 13th, her father is involved in a car accident. Mibs is an astutely realistic observer of life, and when she spends her birthday weekend on a road trip to the nearby hospital, in a pink school bus with a delivery load of pink Bibles, she changes everyone's life. Fun-filled truth.

For 14 and under:

Forget the current TV reality shows. Imagine an American future in which two children from each of 12 national districts compete for the prize of a life free from hunger. The 23 who don't win are dead at the end. Katniss, 16, volunteers to take the place of her frail little sister who is chosen to be in the contest. It's an adventure story that raises questions about self-interest and self-sacrifice. The first of a series.

The American Revolution as seen through the eyes of a young slave, Isabel, who's sold, along with her disabled sister, to cruel masters in New York. Both patriots and loyalists have slaves, and Isabel is solicited by a patriot's slave to spy on her master. Slowly Isabel begins pursuit of freedom in a world more complicated than one of good guys versus bad guys.

Two of the best-selling books for teens this fall. Each is the continuation or conclusion of a popular series—and not the best book with which to begin reading the series. *Brisinger*, which is about dragons, battles and growing up to find your own identity apart from family, will appeal somewhat more to boys, whereas *Breaking Dawn*, a teenage romance with vampires, is more for girls. Show your cool by knowing about these, and maybe even explore the first book in each series for yourself.

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