

Summer Recommended Book List for 4A/4B

I. Follow up titles from our curriculum:

1. **Honey, Cheese, Oggie Cooder, So B. It**, (all by Sarah Weeks)
2. **Zia** by Scott O Dell (sequel to Island of the Blue Dolphins- NOTE: challenging independent read)
3. **What is the Panama Canal?** (follow up to our Gold Rush study, as we learned about the isthmus of Panama and the challenge of getting from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean)
4. **The Ballad of Lucy Whipple** - historical fiction novel about a girl who moves out west with her family during the time of the Gold Rush
5. Anything by **Kate DiCamillo, Beverly Cleary, or the Tucker books** (sequels to The Cricket in Times Square)

II. Great Series:

1. by author **Wendy Mass- 11 Birthdays, 12 Finally, 13 Gifts, The Last Present** (NOTE: increases in tween content as the books progress)
2. **What Was/Is** (some titles include: The Superbowl , The Worldseries, The Summer Olympics, The Twin Towers, Pompeii, The Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Pearl Harbor, The Hindenburg, and others)
3. **Where Is** (some titles include: The Grand Canyon, The Great Wall, Niagara Falls, The White House, Alcatraz, The Great Barrier Reef, Mount Everest, Mount Rushmore, The great Pyramids, and others)
4. **I Survived** (These are gripping stories that often hold the interest of reluctant readers. They are based on true stories of people who survived disasters like Hurricane Katrina, The Titanic, September 11th, The sinking of the Titanic, The San Francisco Earthquake, The Nazi Invasion, and others)
5. **The Sisters Grimm**- fairytale/fantasy- supposedly **very addicting** series
Stuart Gibbs- Spy School Series- About a middle school boy who acts as a cool undercover agent and goes through a series of hilarious misadventures.
6. **The Mysterious Benedict Society**- for "high" readers- about four gifted children who go on a secret mission

III. Popular Authors:

Andrew Clements, Dan Gutman, Roald Dahl, Judy Blume, Kate DiCamillo, Beverly Cleary

IV. A Variety of Titles taken from a blog called The Teaching Thief:

Dexter the Tough

by Margaret Peterson Haddix

Margaret Peterson Haddix is one of my favorite authors. She wrote the Shadow Children series which I loved. Have you read it? Fantastic! So... when I saw Dexter the Tough at Half Price Books one day I just knew I had to read it.

Dexter is tough. On his first day at his new school, he beats up a kid in the bathroom and then writes a story about it in class. He hates his new school, his new teacher, his new principal, the janitor, and everyone and everything else at his new school and his new life at his grandmother's house. He misses his parents, is worried about his father, and wants life to go back to normal. Is he bully or is he just trying to navigate an awful lot of changes in his life?

As Dexter's story unfolds the reader uncovers why Dexter is so angry and Dexter figures out that things may not always be what they seem. Just like the reason for his own anger, people act one way for many reasons, and often those are reasons we cannot see.

This is a great middle grade novel (3-5) for teaching the 7 Habits and starting a discussion on bullying and empathy. Dexter is reactive in the beginning of the story and looks at the world through a lens of anger and hurt. As the story progress, Dexter must seek first to understand, then be understood to work through his own anger and forgive himself for his actions. He's a likable, believable, honest character, who children will root for from page one!



Book Information:

- 142 pages
- Realistic Fiction
- Topics: Bullying
- 690 lexile
- Guided Reading Level - Q
- Grade Level Equivalent - 4.4

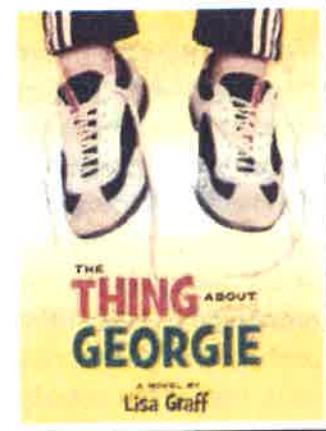
The Thing About Georgie

by Lisa Graff

You may recognize Lisa Graff from some of her other books: Umbrella Summer, Double Dog Dare and Sophie Simon Solves Them All (which I blogged about [here](#)), but The Thing About Georgie was actually her first novel. The thing about this book is... it's all about Georgie and Georgie is dwarf. Knowing nothing about this book when I first picked it up, this grabbed my attention right away and I couldn't wait to get reading.

The novel follows Georgie through his 4th grade year and all the ups and downs that go along with it. His height is a recurring issue making school furniture uncomfortable, playing an instrument impossible and making payphones just out of reach. Georgie does not like change and many things in his life get turned upside down throughout the novel.

Through the year (and the novel) Georgie learns to focus on his strengths, not his limitations. His talents and gifts are exactly what makes him unique and special. And the thing about Georgie is... *there's so much more than one thing!*



Graff does an incredible job telling Georgie's story. He is such a real character in every way. There is an anonymous narrator who speaks directly to the reader throughout the novel. At first, these vignettes show how Georgie's height limits his abilities. As the novel progresses the vignettes change, highlighting things we can all do to things only Georgie can do. His strengths, his talents, his gifts. The message from this beautiful book is clear...celebrate your skills and your gifts. They are one piece of a puzzle that makes you - you! The anonymous narrator actually turns out to be one of the characters in the story, but I won't tell you whom. You will just have to read the book to find out. :)

I would recommend this novel for third grade and up. It would make an excellent read aloud and spark great discussion on stereotypes, snap judgments, empathy, kindness, and accepting and celebrating the differences in others. Put this book on your shelf with Wonder, Rules, and El Deaf because this novel gives students an opportunity to truly walk in someone else's shoes.

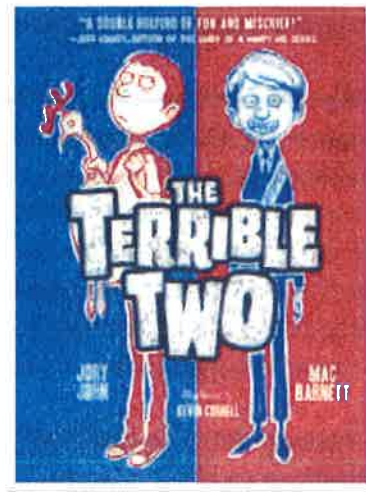
Book Information:

- 220 pages
- Realistic Fiction
- Topics: Challenges/Friendship
- 770 lexile
- Grade Level Equivalent - 3.8

The Terrible Two

Written by Jory John and Mac Barnett
Illustrated by Kevin Cornell

- This was the perfect book to follow Pickle from last week. The Terrible Two is the story of Miles Murphy, a prankster by nature, who moves to a new town and has to reestablish his pranking reputation. The only problem is there is already a prankster at his new school in his new town and this prankster is good... REALLY good. The best part about this notorious new prankster is he is the person nobody would suspect. He keeps it all secret and wants to team up with Miles to create the ultimate school prank.



The back of the book sums it up perfectly. *"From friends and bestselling authors Mac Barnett & Jory John comes this deviously funny new series about fitting in, making your mark, and finding a friend where you least expect one. Oh, and cows."*

The Terrible Two is simply a good time in 224 pages. The chapters are quick and filled with illustrations that help the story come alive. Miles and Niles (aren't the names great?) are hilarious characters. At first trying to out do each other, Miles finally gives in and they join forces for the prank of the century that made me laugh out loud. This was a big hit in my classroom last year and I can see why. Students that enjoy Diary of a Wimpy Kid or Stick Dog will love this book! I'm so pleased it is a battle book this year for my 4th graders because they are going to eat this up!

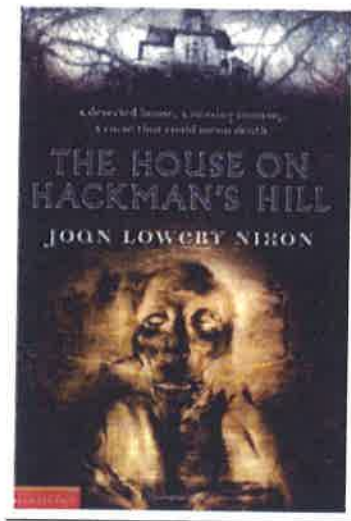
The House on Hackman's Hill

by Joan Lowery Nixon

This is an oldie but a goodie. Have you read it? The house on Hackman's Hill was once the home of an eccentric Egyptian art collector and is said to be cursed by the Egyptian god, Anubis. Years ago Dr. Hackman suddenly disappeared and so did his famous mummy. Years later, there is a \$10,000 reward to recover the lost mummy and Jeff and Debbie just know they can find it. However, when a blizzard traps them inside the spooky mansion, they find they may have underestimated the truth behind the stories they were told.

Does it sound spooky? It is a little spooky and very suspenseful. I wouldn't call it a really scary book, but I probably wouldn't hand it over to all my 4th graders. That being said, I know kids who would devour this book. One of the things I liked most about the novel was how the original story of the house gets told to the children almost as a completely separate story in itself. By the time the children explore the house, you can already see parallels and connections as the story starts to almost relive itself with them. There is also a great opportunity to learn about Egyptian history and culture throughout the novel in a kid-friendly way.

The story is very well done (especially in 126 pages) and ends just perfectly. I would recommend this book for fourth graders and up. It's a great book for kids who like to read those Scary Stories books or loved Coraline and The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman. It would also make a very spooky October read aloud if you are feeling brave. The kids would be on the edge of their seats for sure.



Book Information:

- 126 pages
- Scary Stories/Supernatural
- 780 Lexile Level
- Guided Reading Level - T
- Grade Level Equivalent - 6.4

Always Abigail

by Nancy J. Cavanaugh

Okay, truth on this one. I wasn't thrilled to read it at first. It just not my kind of book because it's sooooo girly and I'm just not that girly. I wasn't sure I could handle it, but the book was filled with so much heart and truth about being a girl in 6th grade, it completely won me over!

Abigail is in 6th grade and devastated that her year has NOT turned out how she thought. She didn't get put into the same classroom as AllyCam (Alli and Cami), her two best friends, and she's an alternate for the pom-pom squad! Abigail is feeling left out and hating everything about 6th grade, including her English teacher Miss Hendrick and her stupid friendly-

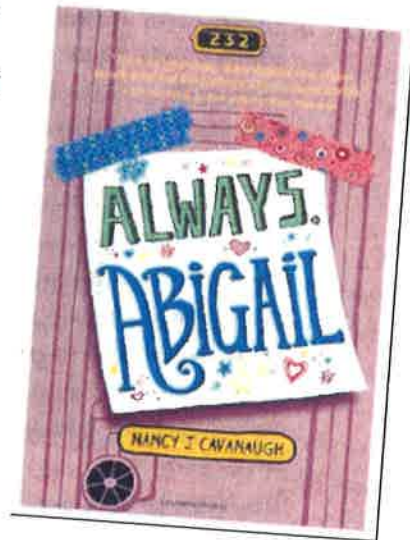
letter assignment. Matters only get worse when her friendly letter assignment partner turns out to be the biggest outcast in 6th grade - Gabby! The story continues with Abigail getting to know her friendly letter partner and unintentionally finding a true friend.

The unique aspect of this novel is that it is written exclusively in lists. It's pretty remarkable how the entire story is told a dairy list format. Abigail's inner monologue clearly reflects the struggles of a 6th grade girl and her struggle to choose the right path. How do you stand up for someone that is being bullied? What do you do about the guilt you carry around when don't? What if taking a stand it makes you the next target? Is it all worth it to be popular? How do you stay true to yourself, stand up for what you believe in, and redefine your friendships in middle school?

I was genuinely surprised by this book I really enjoyed it! I think many girls in 5th and 6th grade would relate to Abigail. And hopefully they will find the courage to follow in Abigail's footsteps. I would recommend this book for 4th graders and up. Great story for those going into middle school or those already there.

Book Information:

- 320 pages
- Realistic Fiction
- Topics: Bullying/Adolescent Issues/Friendship
- 790 lexile





The Lost Planet

by Rachel Searles

In The Lost Planet, Chase wakes up on a unknown planet surrounded by unknown people with a wound to the back of his head and his memory completely wiped. The only thing he knows is "Guide the star" but nobody (including Chase) knows what that means. He sets out on a great adventure to uncover his mysterious past and figure out who and what he is that makes him so special. Chase is different and his strange gift may be exactly the thing that saves him.

Filled with tons of questions, creative alien worlds, and non-stop action, The Lost Planet is a true blue legit science fiction read for children. For students who can suspend reality and stick with a book even though they have a million questions, they will love how everything starts to fall into place in the end and builds beautifully towards the sequel, The Stolen Moon.

I was very impressed with the vocabulary in this book. Lots of great words used and some repeated several times throughout the novel. It didn't feel repetitive in any way, but it did give readers time to infer the meaning from context, practice the word, and learn the word. As a teacher, I love that!

I would recommend this book for grades 4-8. I enjoyed it and will be looking to pick up the sequel to add to my classroom collection. I can't wait to see what my 4th graders think of this novel, because for many it will be unlike anything they have read before. :)

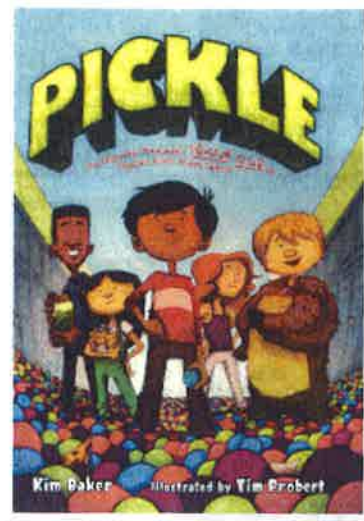
Book Information:

- 400 pages
- Science-Fiction
- 750 Lexile level
- Grade Level Equivalent - 4.6

Pickle

By Kim Baker & Tim Probert

Ben loves to pull a good prank and he's good at it too. He managed to sneak an entire set of indoor playground balls into his classroom through a window just for fun! His class loved it! His teacher... not so much. Ben's pranks are all in good fun and they make 6th grade so much more entertaining. That's why he starts the Pickle Club - a super secret prank club of Fountain Point Middle School and he's recruiting select members. The only problem is that Ben can't include his best friend in the club. He's the principals grandson and would probably nark. Together, the Pickle club brings an unlikely group of friends together and fills the school with laughter, but the one member they left out may be exactly the one member they need.



Pickle is hilarious and fun! It would make a great read aloud for grades three and up. My students loved reading this book last year, so if you don't have a classroom copy go grab one. It is definitely teacher and student approved! I think it's going to make my classroom read aloud stack this year.

The Great American Dustbowl

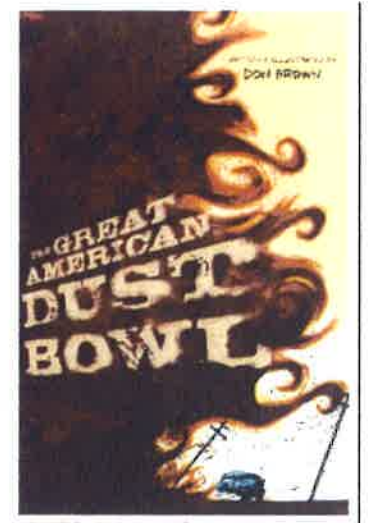
by Don Brown

Book Information:

- 256 pages
- Realistic Fiction
- 700 Lexile Level

This informational graphic novel made my list because it is one of the Texas Bluebonnet Nominees this year and it was excellent. Putting history in a graphic novel format is one of the best ways to help history come alive for kids, and this book did not disappoint. The book was filled with fascinating information and facts like when a dust storm blew in, the temperature would drop 50 degrees! What?!

The bold and colorful illustrations clearly demonstrate the devastation and tragedy of the Great American Dustbowl and the will and endurance it took to survive on the plains. The novel captures the essence of the American spirit... to pull one's self up by your bootstraps and keep on going. Loved it! I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys American history and grades 4 and up.



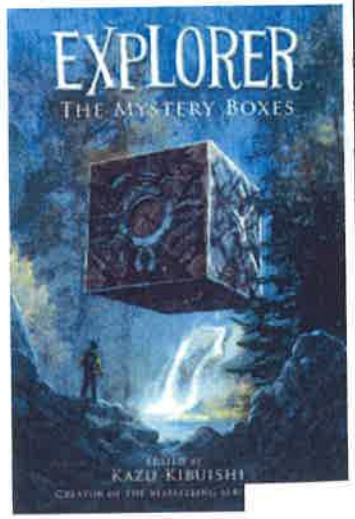
Book Information:

- 80 page
- Informational
- 860 lexile level
- Grades 4 and up

Explorer: The Mystery Boxes

Edited by Kazu Kibuishi

The Mystery Boxes was a unique graphic novel because it is actually a collection of short stories in graphic novel format. Each story is completely different but they all have a mystery box. This would be a fun one to study closely and compare and contrast the stories. Not only are the illustrations vastly different, but the stories range from mystical to spooky to silly space pranks. I enjoyed the diversity of each story and cruised through the book. This graphic novel is a beautiful nod to the genre, showing us how a graphic novel can be so many different kinds of wonderful.



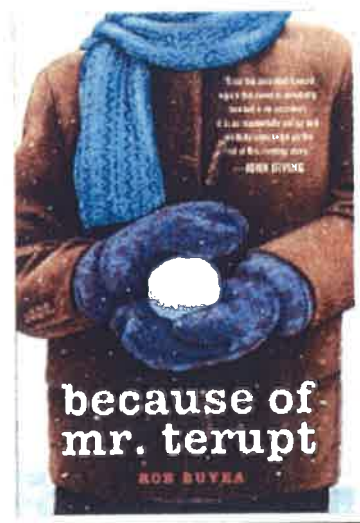
Book Information:

- 128 pages
- Fantasy/Science Fiction
- 370 lexile level
- Grades 4 and up

because of mr. terupt

by Rob Buyea

I'm sure you guys have seen this book all over Instagram and blogs this summer, because it seems like everyone is reading it and I can see why. I finally jumped on board, and LOVED IT! **Seriously, every teacher needs to read this book. It reminds you why we teach.**



I don't want to give too much away, but the story is told from 7 different perspectives of 5th grade students in Mr. Terupt's class. The chapters are separated by month and each month (typically) includes at least one entry from the different students. The students each have their own character role to play (the impulsive one, the smart one, the quiet observer, etc.) and I guarantee you will read and see many of your own past students within these characters. Together they tell the story of their 5th grade class including everything from the girl drama to the projects they did in class, to their thoughts on each other and

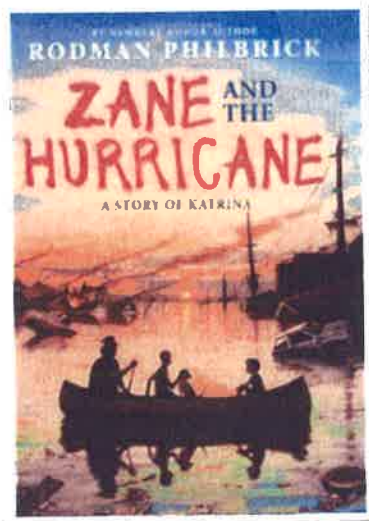
their teacher. Beautifully woven together, these 7 vastly different students tell the story of a teacher who inspired his students to be kind, to never give up, to hope, to be strong, to stand up for others, to stand up for

Zane and the Hurricane

by Rodman Philbrick

This is the book I was talking about last week. I was so impressed with the story, the quality of writing, and the honest yet thoughtful way the story was told. Seriously...such a good book and it addressed some tough issues! Great for 4th and 5th graders!

Zane Dupree lives in New Hampshire with his mother. Feeling it is important for Zane to know his family on his father's side and hear about his father's childhood, his mother encourages him to go visit Miss Trissy, the woman who raised his father in New Orleans. Zane is willing to go but if and only if he can bring along Bandit, his beloved dog.



Zane's timing in New Orleans couldn't be worse. He arrives just days before Tropical Storm Katrina crosses Florida and turns into a category 5 hurricane. Desperate to get out of the city, Miss Trissy and Zane pile into a church van to fight the traffic out during evacuation when suddenly Bandit freaks out, jumps out of the car, and makes a run for it across the highway. And Zane follows him! They end up all alone back at Miss Trissy's house when the storm hits full force, flooding the house and forcing Zane to go into survival mode. The rest of the story follows Zane and Bandit

as they navigate a ravaged city and survive the days after the storm and the flood.

The book is written with incredible description that helps the reader understand the true devastation and horror that came in the days after the flood. Philbrick also does a beautiful job of addressing racial tension in the city and captures the culture, flavor, and heart of New Orleans.

I would recommend this book to 4th graders (selective group) and up. It opens the door for some powerful discussions in the classroom.

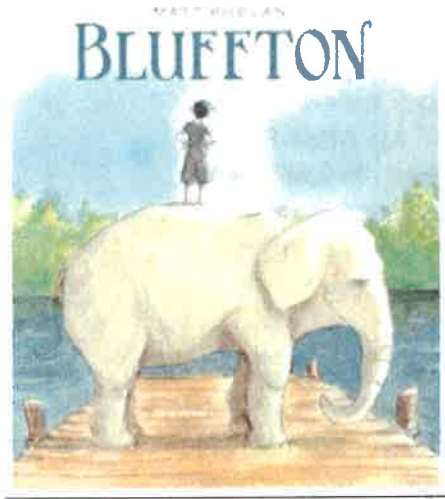
Book Information:

- 192 pages
- Historical Fiction/Survival Story
- Topics: Prejudice & Tolerance
- 860 lexile
- Guided Reading Level - V
- Grade Level Equivalent - 5.0

Bluffton: My Summers with Buster Keaton

by Matt Phelan

I choose to read Bluffton for the incredible watercolor illustrations alone. I totally judged a book by its cover, and was pleasantly surprised with how much I enjoyed the story and the history behind the story.



Set in 1908, a troupe of vaudeville performers come to summer in Bluffton, Michigan. Henry, the main protagonist of the story, lives a quiet life in a nearby town and becomes fascinated by the exciting life of the vaudeville performers he meets, especially Buster Keaton, a young boy about his age. Buster has been a star since he was three and part of his family's big act, "The Three Keatons,"

where Buster is referred to as the human-mop. However, Buster clearly yearns for the quiet normal life Henry has. As the years pass and summers come and go, Bluffton becomes a place of freedom and escape from the ordinary for a few fleeting months.

The story then follows the boys to adulthood and although Harry's character is fictional, Buster Keaton was real and he really did spend his summers in Bluffton. In the Author's Note, it explains that Buster Keaton ended up going to Hollywood at the start of black and white movies and created some of the most innovative silent films of the age. His film *The General* made the American Film Institute's 100 greatest American films list.

The illustrations in this book will mesmerize you, but the story will captivate you. I couldn't wait to close the book and google more on Buster Keaton, his fascinating story, and his legendary movies.

Book Information:

- 240 pages
- Historical Fiction

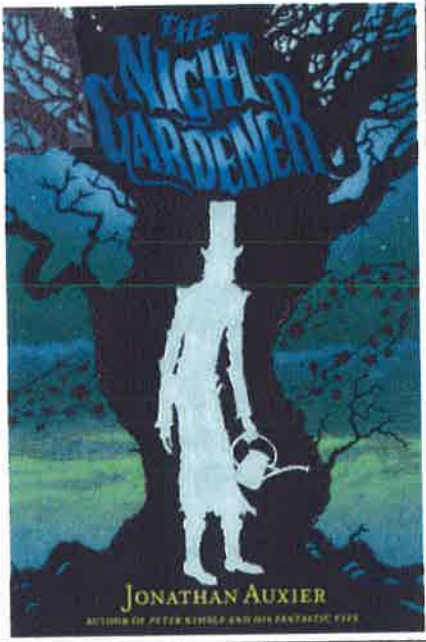
- 370 lexile level
- Grades 4 and up

The Night Gardener

by Jonathan Auxier

Wow! Let me just say... wow! I seriously loved this book!

The Night Gardener follows the story of two Irish orphans, Molly and Kip, who travel to the sourwoods to work as servants in a creepy old English manor that has a very big secret. Not only is the eerie manor built around a dark and sinister looking tree, but something stranger is happening to the family inside. They are changing and Molly is starting to change too. The children soon realize they are dealing with something much more menacing than simply an old tree, for when the Night Gardener



comes, he threatens their very survival. Molly and Kip must find the courage and strength to walk away from their desires and save the Windsor family from the tree, the gardener, and themselves.

Eloquently written, The Night Gardener is a captivating page turner. I was impressed from page one. You are pulled into Molly and Kip's world with just the right amount of mystery, intrigue, and creepiness. Jonathan Auxier is clearly a master storyteller and he has just become one of my top five favorite authors!

The description and character development within the story was flawless. The characters, just like the story, are complex. You see it is not simply a spooky ghost story, but a haunting tale about human wants and desires that will resonate with readers of all ages. Woven within this tale, Auxier demonstrates the power of a good story. One of my favorite quotes in the novel, comes from Molly, a storyteller in her own right. She tells her brother Kip, "We'll never know. And maybe that's the best. It's a bad tale that has all the answers." Well said Molly. And this novel surely does not give you all the answers, but it does give you a lot to ponder. The story and characters will stick with the readers long after the pages have been read and the book has been closed. I know they have for me.

I would recommend this book to upper elementary students and beyond. Like the Harry Potter series, this book is not just for children. :)

Book Information:

- 350 pages
- Fantasy/Fable
- 690 lexile
- Guided Reading Level - X