

Norah McClintock has the reader hooked from the opening pages of her first graphic novel, *I, Witness*. As 17-year-old David Boone gets more and more tangled up in the thread of lies he keeps spinning in order not to reveal what he witnessed, he also finds himself becoming more and more isolated. McClintock makes readers see the way this secret is eating Boone up, throwing him off course at school and putting up walls between him and his friends because, for them, he's become a living jinx. She is relentless in forcing Boone deeper and deeper into the web he's created, making readers see that his only choice is to tell the truth. But Boone can't.

McClintock's storyline is compellingly illustrated by Mike Deas's exceptionally rendered drawings. His strong simple black-and-white images have the feel of quick on-the-spot sketches with the occasional use of red to highlight the violence that is slowly engulfing Boone's world. Deas's drawings not only give us a real sense of Boone and the terrible dilemma he faces, but help create the raw tension that is at the very heart of McClintock's story. He makes readers feel that sense of Boone's being out-of-control and pushes us, as McClintock's story does, towards a surprising but very satisfying ending. It's far-and-above the work he's done for Orca's Graphic Guide Adventure series and *Dalen and Gole*. McClintock and Deas make reading *I, Witness* a truly mesmerizing and deeply rewarding graphic experience.

Jeffrey Canton



**The White Bicycle**

written by Beverley Brenna  
Red Deer Press, 2012  
978-0-88995-483-0 (pb) \$12.95  
for Grades 8 and up

Fiction | Independence | Disabilities

Nineteen-year-old Taylor Jane Simon has very specific goals for her summer. She is spending the season in France working as a personal care assistant, an accomplishment that she hopes to put on her resume. This will help with one of her life goals, which is to find a full-time job — so that she can someday be independent of her mother — despite the fact that she has Asperger's Syndrome. But her mother has come to France too and Taylor resents her efforts to dictate her activities.

Taylor is also keeping a journal in which she recalls her childhood experiences — to see if it is true that understanding her past may help her to deal effectively with her present and future. As these months unfold, Taylor is finally able to reassure herself that a) she will not allow herself to be controlled by her fears and b) that she has developed strategies to cope with things that upset her and to make wise choices for herself. She also finally finds the words to explain to her mother her need to be free to make her own decisions.

Like her previous two books, Brenna's latest novel offers a keen and revelatory glimpse into the inner workings of Taylor's carefully ordered mind. Told entirely from her perspective, the book affords readers the opportunity to see how seemingly ordinary experiences can be perceived completely differently by someone like Taylor, who interprets the world in a much more literal fashion.

In spite of her condition, or more accurately, *because* of her condition, Taylor is able to develop admirable ways of coping with her

emotions and confronting obstacles head-on. While her processing of events and situations may be different from the norm, her search for independence and her desire to be responsible for herself is what all young people strive for. Perhaps the main difference lies in her ability to succinctly define her goals and the clarity with which she is able to articulate her journey. Readers of all ages will enjoy accompanying Taylor as she — and her white bicycle — navigate the ever-twisting path to adulthood.

Lisa Doucet is Co-Manager of Wozzles, the Halifax bookstore.



**Under the Moon**

written by Deborah Kerbel  
Dancing Cat Books, 2012  
978-1-77086-090-2 (pb) \$14.95  
for Grades 7 and up

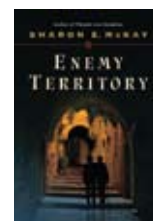
Fiction | Death | Friendship | Family | Sleep Deprivation

Eighteen days. That is the longest any human has managed to go without sleep. But 15-year-old Lily is shaping up to break that record. She hasn't slept a wink since the death of her vibrant Aunt Su — a kindred spirit, and the only one who really seemed to get Lily. Now she has only the moon for company in her nocturnal wanderings — that is, until a yearning to hear another human voice brings her to a fateful encounter at a drive-through window with a mysterious (and undeniably handsome) new transfer student.

It's a classic setup, lent a quirky charm by Lily's lively narration — a pleasing blend of realistically-rendered teenage emotion and writerly inclinations. Nothing is quite what it seems in this book; Lily's introversion is perceived as standoffishness by her classmates, and only we are privy to the richness of her inner life. Prospective love interest Ben seems rude, even hostile — but that attitude is hiding a deeper sense of loss and anxiety. Even Lily's domineering mother "General MacArthur" conceals surprising motivations beneath her flinty exterior.

Everyone longs to be understood by others, and it is this deep loneliness, rather than the simple absence of companionship, that truly drives our heroine in this 2012 Governor General's Literary Award nominee. The process of discovering these hidden depths is also Lily's adventure in making meaningful contact with the people around her, and it is this central thread that really makes the story shine. The result is a gently touching, often funny story of grief, anxiety and loneliness — and of the surprise and pleasure of those rare points of contact that drive that loneliness away.

Lynette Terrill is a librarian and freelance writer.



**Enemy Territory**

written by Sharon McKay  
Annick Press, 2012  
978-1-55451-431-1 (hc) \$21.95  
978-1-55451-430-4 (pb) \$12.95  
for Grades 7 and up

Fiction | Friendship | Adventure | War | Middle East

Sam and Yusuf are teens in modern-day Israel, patients at Hadassah Hospital — a facility that promotes peace, equality and reconcilia-

tion by treating both Israeli and Palestinian youth. Due to a freak accident, Yusuf has lost one eye and has an infection in the other; after being injured in a suicide bombing, Sam may lose one leg. The boys have grown up on opposite sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and now find themselves grudging roommates. After a spur-of-the-moment escape from the hospital, they also become grudging allies in an outside world fraught with dangers.

Sam leaves the hospital, limping on crutches, with Yusuf in tow. Yusuf has already experienced Sam's prejudices and definitely has his own. He also has no travel papers and is terrified of the implications of being caught, but desperately wants to experience the Arab Quarter of the Old City — a privilege hitherto withheld from him because of travel restrictions placed on Palestinians.

The boys face many scary risks and dangers, several of them life-threatening. However, stresses and tension come not only from outside threats. Sam and Yusuf also struggle between themselves, wrestling with the anger they feel about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the stereotypes and ignorance they've been exposed to. Yusuf and Sam make the journey from peril to safety, but most of all, they go from deep suspicion to solid friendship in a very realistic process. It is important to note that Yusuf has only one eye, and Sam thinks of his injured leg as "bad," but it is their impairments that teach them to lean — literally — on each other, and to work through their mistrust.

Full of grit and bursts of well-placed humour, *Enemy Territory* is a characteristically bold, thought-provoking, important novel from an author and Canadian war artist unafraid to use controversial issues as a platform to educate and enlighten. McKay's artistic canvas here is an unlikely friendship used to show the real grassroots work it will take to resolve the conflict in the Middle East — one hard-won bond and one honest dialogue at a time. *Enemy Territory* is another of McKay's engrossing, superbly researched must-reads for mature teens.

Christina Minaki is working on her second novel.



**The Friday Society**

written by Adrienne Kress  
Dial Books/Penguin Canada, 2012  
978-0-80373-761-7 (hc) \$18.00  
for Grades 7 and up

Fiction | Steampunk | Mystery

Cora, Nellie and Michiko are three extremely talented young women, assistants to powerful men in Edwardian London. When a chance meeting at a ball ends with the discovery of a murdered mystery man, it's up to these three to solve the murder, and the crimes they believe may be connected to it, without calling too much attention to their bosses — or to themselves!

This debut steampunk young adult novel from Adrienne Kress literally begins with a bang, and continues on at an explosive pace.

In Cora, Nellie and Michiko, readers will discover three very different, but extremely well-crafted characters. Cora, an amateur inventor, is a personal assistant to a Member of Parliament and scientist. Nellie is an assistant to a world-renowned magician, and Michiko is a Samurai in training. All three girls work for important men, yet each is intelligent, ambitious and has unique strengths. These girls are not sniveling passive heroines. They are at times self-doubting (particularly Michiko, who wonders if she really has

what it takes to be a Samurai), but they are also capable and able to fend for themselves. It is also a refreshing change to see three women who genuinely get along and respect and care for each other. Strangers at the start of the novel, they quickly discover that they work best by combining their strengths and working as a team, and the dynamic works perfectly for the story.

The writing is sharp, witty, and seamlessly alternates between the three main characters' points of view. Set in an alternative London, the book perfectly captures the contrasting nature of the metropolis — thriving, bustling city by day, and a grimy, dimly lit, dangerous place at night. A perfect mix of romance, humour and action, this highly entertaining novel will keep teens reading late into the night.

Rachel Seigel



**Pirate Cinema**

written by Cory Doctorow  
Tor Teen, 2012  
978-0-76532-908-0 (hc) \$21.99  
for Grades 9 and up

Fiction | Speculative Fiction | Internet | Creativity and Intellectual Property

Trent McCauley is 16, brilliant, and obsessed with making movies on his computer by reassembling footage he downloads from the net. In near future Britain, where Trent is growing up, this is more illegal than ever. The punishment for being caught three times is that your entire household is cut off from the Internet for a year — with no appeal. When Trent's family gets cut off, it nearly destroys them. Shamed and shattered, he runs away to London, where he connects with a demimonde of artists and activists who are trying to fight the bill that will criminalize digital copying. Things look bad, but the powers that he didn't count on the power of a movie to change people's minds...

In Cory Doctorow's third novel for teens, he deftly explores the hot-button topic of Internet piracy and copyright, and how much power the government should and does have to limit creativity.

In Doctorow's Britain, the Internet is more essential than ever. Everything from school to medical to business is Internet based, and functioning without it is virtually impossible. Trent, a typical tech-savvy teenager, knows that the penalties are stiff, but like most teens, he thinks he's too smart to get caught. But he does and the effects are devastating. Is what he's doing wrong? While downloading has, technically, been made illegal by the government, Trent is creating something original out of pre-existing content, and the question of whether or not art should be proprietary makes up the central theme of the novel.

Doctorow is an excellent ideas man, and his viewpoint is made extremely clear both in and outside of his writing. Unfortunately, at times the message verges on preachy, and it makes it difficult to ever be fully drawn into the story. The narrative also gets bogged down by the technical, and though Doctorow's expertise is evident, that level of detail detracts from the reader's enjoyment.

Those problems aside, there is a lot right with the novel. The setting is well-detailed, the characters are richly drawn and likeable, and the computer-savvy, socially conscious teens to whom Doctorow's works appeal, will enjoy the teens vs. the corporation motif.

Rachel Seigel