

**NEW ENGLAND
CHILDREN'S BOOKSELLING
ADVISORY COUNCIL
FALL 2008 REVIEWS TOP TEN**

This is our bi-annual attempt to identify as many high-quality titles as possible from among the numerous middle-grade and young-adult fiction books of that season. The list was produced by soliciting reading copies from as many publishers as possible, sharing the contributed books among NECBA members, reading and reviewing and rating as many as possible.

From these titles a Top Ten list has been selected as a service to our general bookstore colleagues who are less familiar with the genre. The full text will be available on the NEIBA website, www.newenglandbooks.org.

As is ever the case, contributions are uneven, with some publishers supplying a very large fraction of the galleys, and a few reviewers supplying a very large fraction of the reviews. Such reviews are, by their nature, never soon enough or inclusive enough. Nevertheless, this list is bound to alert the reader to at least one or two — and probably more — excellent titles s/he might have missed.

The Chittenden Rating Scale

10 A desert island book for all time:
Charlotte's Web, Frederick, Bridge to Terabithia.

9 One of the best of the season, and/or solid Newbery or Printz honor contender, whether I like it or not.

8 One of the best of the season, probably saleable in hardcover, can recommend with honest enthusiasm to customers, will have legs in paperback. Might be a solid Newbery or Printz honor contender, especially if kids were on the selection committee.

7 I will handsell it well in hardcover, but others might or might not.

6 An entertaining read of mixed quality. May have some fine points. Probably can recommend in paperback if not hardcover; OR kids will go wild for it but the enduring literary quality is mixed.

5 Will likely have a small audience. Or, suitable for some school library situations, but unlikely to sell in hardcover as a child's choice or as a gift.

4 An honest but unsuccessful effort, probably an editor's hope that better things will follow. Also unlikely to sell in hardcover as a child's choice or as a gift.

3 Not a book I would want on my store's shelves if I could help it.

2 A book I'd have a hard time embracing even if a friend's child wrote it.

1 Waste of a good tree.

FALL 2008 TOP TEN (plus ONE)
annotations are from the Library of Congress
or publishing description when LOC data was unavailable

The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing Vol. II: The Kingdom on the Waves, by M.T. Anderson

(Candlewick Press) 978-0763629502 / \$22.99 October 2008

The conclusion to the National Book Award winner and "New York Times" bestseller (*Vol. I: The Pox Party*) recounts Octavian's experiences as the Revolutionary War explodes around him. (Ages 16+)

Black Box, by Julie Schumacher

(Random House) 978-0-385-73542-1 / \$15.99 September 2008

When her sixteen-year-old sister is hospitalized for depression and her parents want to keep it a secret, fourteen-year-old Elena tries to cope with her own anxiety and feelings of guilt that she is determined to conceal from outsiders. (Ages 12-17)

Brooklyn Bridge, by Karen Hesse

(Feiwel & Friends / Simon & Schuster) 978- 0312378868 / \$17.95 September 2008

In 1903 Brooklyn, fourteen-year-old Joseph Michtom's life changes for the worse when his parents, Russian immigrants, invent the teddy bear and turn their apartment into a factory, while nearby the glitter of Coney Island contrasts with the dismal lives of children dwelling under the Brooklyn Bridge.

Down Sand Mountain, by Steve Watkins

(Candlewick Press) 978-0763638399 / \$16.99 October 2008

In a small Florida mining town in 1966, twelve-year-old Dewey faces one worst-day-ever after another, but comes to know that the issues he faces about bullies, girls, race, and identity are part of the adult world, as well. (Ages 12+)

Hate That Cat, by Sharon Creech

(Joanna Cotler / Harper) 978-0061430923 / \$15.99 September 2008

Hate That Cat continues the story of Jack from *Love That Dog*. It is a new school year, and once again, Miss Stretchberry introduces Jack and his classmates to poems that intrigue and entice Jack, allowing him to talk about things that are on his mind: mean cats, sound, silence, worry and joy. (Ages 8-12)

The Hunger Games (Hunger Games Trilogy #1), by Suzanne Collins

(Scholastic) 978-0439023481 / \$17.95 October 2008

In a future North America, where the rulers of Panem maintain control through an annual televised survival competition pitting young people from each of the twelve districts against one another, sixteen-year-old Katniss's skills are put to the test when she voluntarily takes her younger sister's place. (Ages 12+)

Jellicoe Road, by Melina Marchetta

(HarperTeen) 978-0061431838 / \$17.99 September 2008

Abandoned by her drug-addicted mother at the age of eleven, high school student Taylor Markham struggles with her identity and family history at a boarding school in Australia. (Ages 14-17)

Masterpiece, by Elise Broach (illustrations by Kelly Murphy)

(Henry Holt) 978-0805082708 / \$16.95 September 2008

After Marvin, a beetle, makes a miniature drawing as an eleventh birthday gift for James, a human with whom he shares a house, the two new friends work together to help recover a Durer drawing stolen from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (Ages 8-12)

The Other Side of the Island, by Allegra Goodman

(Penguin) 978-1595141958 / \$16.99 September 2008

Born in the eighth year of Enclosure, ten-year-old Honor lives in a highly regulated colony with her defiant parents, but when they have an illegal second child and are taken away, it is up to Honor and her friend Helix, another "Unpredictable," to uncover a terrible secret about their Island and the Corporation that runs everything. (Ages 12+)

The Porcupine Year, by Louise Erdrich

(HarperCollins) 978-0060297879 / \$15.99 September 2008

In 1852, forced by the United States government to leave their beloved Island of the Golden Breasted Woodpecker, fourteen-year-old Omokayas and her Ojibwe family travel in search of a new home. (Ages 8-12)

Rapunzel's Revenge, by Shannon & Dean Hale

(Bloomsbury) 978-1-59990-070-4 / \$14.99 September 2008

Rapunzel and her amazing hair team up with Jack (of beanstalk fame) to gallop around the wild and western landscape, changing lives and righting wrongs. (Ages 10-14)