

Selected and annotated by Melissa Albarran
March 2015

Though most book covers aim to please, some cause visual discomfort; the following titles sport covers that are uncanny, creepy, or just plain weird. Both fiction and nonfiction are included and the age range spans all the way from 0 to 18.

Backderf, Derf. *My Friend Dahmer*. Abrams Comic Arts/Abrams, 2012. 224p. Gr. 10 up.
In this graphic novel, Derf Backderf depicts notorious serial killer, Jeffrey Dahmer, as he remembers him as an introverted high school classmate and detached friend. Combining teenage memories with later information extracted from news reports and interviews, Backderf examines why Dahmer transformed from a quiet, albeit odd, teenager into a depraved murderer.

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *They Called Themselves the K. K. K.: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group*. Houghton, 2010. 172p. Gr. 6-10
In 1866, Pulaski, Tennessee, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan began with a handful of Confederate ex-soldiers looking to occupy their free time. Bartoletti traces the formation of dens, the rise of political drive and the snowball of attacks, raids and lynchings against African-American voters that shaped the K. K. K. into the terrorist group it is today.

Burns, Loree Griffin. *Beetle Busters: A Rogue Insect and the People Who Track It*. Houghton, 2014. 64p. Gr. 4-7
This edition of the Scientists in the Field series focuses on an invader species, the Asian long horned beetle, and community efforts to prevent the spread of the insect. Tracking the beetle is only the first step for the “citizen scientists” who search for signals of infestation; once the beetles have landed, how can the trees be saved without destroying those that have been afflicted?

Cook, Eileen. *Getting Revenge on Lauren Wood*. Simon Pulse, 2010. 261p. Gr. 7-10.
Before the start of high school, a lie destroys a friendship that began before such things held weight. Helen escapes the impending humiliation when her family moves away, but she returns senior year and enters her final year of high school bent on revenge. Armed with anonymity and a nose job, Helen aims to destroy Lauren, her former friend, until she realizes her energy is wasted and maneuvering the tiers of popularity may not be the be-all and-end-all of high school.

Deem, James M. *Faces from the Past: Forgotten People of North America*. Houghton, 2012. 160p. Gr. 6-10.
In this assembly of archeological, historical, cultural and forensic studies, nine separate cases examining facial reconstruction lend understanding to moments in history that illuminate America’s past. Deem breathes life into cases that originate from a range of time periods, from the Paleo-Indian Period to the late nineteenth century.

Dunkle, Clare B. *The House of Dead Maids*. Holt, 2010. 160p. Gr. 6-8.
In this prelude to *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff, age four, exhibits the cruel characteristics

attributed to him in *Wuthering Heights*. However, Dunkle's work stands separate from Brontë's in that the plot concern is not Heathcliff's behavior, but a pesky poltergeist and the threat that Heathcliff and his new nursemaid, Tabby, may soon join the spirits haunting the manor.

Fisher, Catherine. *Darkwater*. Dial, 2012. 229p. Gr. 8-12

Years after Sarah's grandfather drunkenly gambled away Darkwater Hall, the Trevelyan family home, Sarah is offered an opportunity to cease struggling to support her family and live one hundred years of luxury. The catch: Lord Azreal, the man who obtained Darkwater Hall all those years ago, is the dealer and Sarah's soul is his payment.

Ford, Michael. *The Poisoned House*. Whitman, 2011. 319p. Gr. 8-10.

After a thwarted attempt to escape a cruel housekeeper, Abi becomes a scullery maid in the home her mother died in, working for a master with crumbling sanity. The estate's troublesome poltergeist ends up being the spirit of Abi's own mother, and the hauntings of the house are her attempts to shed light on the truth behind her death and to save her daughter from the same fate.

Grabenstein, Chris. *The Smoky Corridor*. Random House, 2010. 336p. Gr. 4-7.

Moving to his father's Connecticut hometown does not make Zack Jennings' ability to see ghosts any less distracting, especially when his school was built solely for a voodoo-practicing Civil War officer to possess one lucky child and return to life. Complete with a zombie, ghosts and a treasure hunter, this mystery has a plethora of action and intrigue.

Graham, Rosemary. *Stalker Girl*. Viking, 2010. 304p. Gr. 8-12.

Fueled by jealousy, Carly finds her curiosity turns into obsession as she shadows her ex-boyfriend's new girlfriend around New York City. Unable to curb her fixation with the "perfect" Taylor Deen, Carly spirals into a compulsion that may lead her toward a run in with authorities and a familiarity with restraining orders.

Healey, Karen. *Guardian of the Dead*. Little, 2010. 345p. Gr. 9-12.

Ellie lead a normal life as a boarding school student in New Zealand, until a beautiful boy pulls her into a world in which the myths of the M?ori of New Zealand are living legends. As a supernatural humanoid race conspires to regain immortality through human sacrifice, Ellie's mettle shines through.

Hellisen, Cat. *When the Sea Is Rising Red*. Farrar, 2012. 304p. Gr. 9-12.

Losing her best friend to a suicidal jump motivates Felicita to leave her privileged and pre-planned life in favor of a magicless, though self-controlled lower class lifestyle. After she is taken in by (and quite taken with) Dash, she realizes he is part of a larger plan to depose Pelimburg's ruling families.

Heos, Bridget. *Stronger than Steel: Spider Silk DNA and the Quest for Better Bulletproof Vests, Sutures, and the Parachute Rope*. Houghton, 2013. 80p. Gr. 6-10

What do spiders and goats have in common? In this Scientist in the Field installment, geneticists study how to fortify spider silk into a nearly indestructible material. Implanting arachnid DNA into goats is one way scientists hope to develop textiles stronger and more flexible than Kevlar for use in contemporary culture.

Johnson, Rebecca. *When Lunch Fights Back: Wickedly Clever Animal Defenses.* Millbrook, 2014. 48p. Gr. 3-5

Imagine reaching for a snack and it punches you in the nose: it would be startling and the snack would no longer seem appetizing, yes? Animal prey have developed ways to protect themselves from predators, with some peculiar results. Rebecca Johnson explores strange examples of animal self-defense, from a mantis shrimp that packs a punch to a horned lizard that shoots blood from its eye.

Kim, Susan. *Brain Camp.* First Second/Roaring Brook, 2010. 151p. Gr. 6-8.

Camp Fielding welcomes teens that are seen as underachievers and turns them into perfectly pleasant, obedient kids who serve as incubator hosts for an alien race. Lucas and Jenna, though they remain a disappointment to their parents, refuse to succumb to the pod-people-like possession and rely on their wits to save themselves and other campers from alien feather-induced death.

Kirkpatrick, Katherine. *Mysterious Bones: The Story of Kennewick Man.* Holiday House, 2011. 64p. Gr. 5-8

While trying to sneak into a ticketed sporting event in Kennewick, Washington, two young men came across a human skull along the Columbia River. After over three hundred bones were collected from the river bank and subjected to a radiocarbon test, scientists estimated the bones to be 9,500 years old. Claim of ownership of the archeological find was complicated by the bones possibly falling under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, but the importance of such a discovery opened conversations about human migration over the American continents.

Liu-Perkins, Christine. *At Home in Her Tomb: Lady Dai and the Ancient Chinese Treasures of Mawangdui.* Charlesbridge, 2014. 80p. Gr. 5-9.

The discovery of Lady Dai of Mawangdui's tomb and the preservation of her body led to an enormous amount of information regarding the Qin and Han periods of China, previously thought to be lost over time. Both her body and tomb served as time capsules for archeologists and scientists to piece together valuable clues in order to understand daily life in ancient China.

O'Brien, John. *Look...Look Again!* Boyds Mills, 2012. 64p. Gr. 3-6.

Comic-style sequences use illustrations to tell visual jokes and the minimal text and dialogue lends to these puns. Six "chapters" include five short stories, starring different characters (The Dairy Farmer, The Chef, The Doorman) that play with text and illustrations in each group of panels.

Omololu, C. J. *The Third Twin.* Delacorte, 2015. 336p. Gr. 7-10.

Twins Lexi and Ava relied on their shared alter ego, Alicia, when either of them needed someone to blame. As they age, the fabricated identity allows them to date boys they would avoid in real life. But when one boy ends up dead, Lexi must question Ava's innocence or consider the possibility of a third twin.

Reynolds, Aaron. *Joey Fly, Private Eye, in Creepy Crawly Crime.* Holt, 2009. 96p. Gr. 4-7. Mimicking film noirs of the 1940s and 1950s in both plot and dialogue, this graphic novel

approaches crime drama from a bug's perspective. Joey Fly, Private Eye, searches for the beautiful but dim Butterfly Delilah's jeweled pencil box with a critical compound eye, a smooth inner monologue, and a sophomoric protégé.

Theule, Larissa. *Fat & Bones and Other Stories.* Carolrhoda, 2014. 103p. Gr. 5-8.

Bones, the unlikable son of a deceased, but equally unlikable father, and Fat, an unfortunately named fairy, vie against one another, causing a chain reaction across the farm. After Bones attempts to chop down the tree that serves as Fat's home, Fat retaliates with a poisoned stew that has an unintentional victim. The interlinking short stories expand on the butterfly effect Farmer Bald's death had on the farm.

Wakefield, Vikki. *Friday Never Leaving.* Simon, 2013. 322p. Gr. 7-10.

Alone after her mother loses her battle against cancer, Friday abandons her previously isolated and transient life in favor of living with a group of street kids in an abandoned house. Arden, the group's leader, has qualities Friday associates with her mother, but she employs leadership practices that force Friday to decide between new family and her independent life on the road.

Winter, Jonah. *Here Comes the Garbage Barge.* Schwartz & Wade, 2010. 36p. 5-9 yrs.

Before recycling had picked up steam, Long Island overflowed with smelly garbage. In an attempt to expel the refuse, a barge was commissioned to carry the excess garbage from New York to North Carolina, only to end up back in New York after cities closed their harbors to the stinky tugboat and its cargo. The miniature city of Islip featured in the illustrations was created with clay figurines, cardboard, wood and bits and pieces of material repurposed from what would otherwise be trash.

Yancey, Rick. *The Monstrumologist.* Simon, 2009. 448p. Gr. 7-10.

Dr. Pellinore Warthrop specializes in monstrumology, the study of monsters. As his assistant, Will Henry has been witness to many unbelievable creatures and he records such spectacles and the adventures that accompany them in his journal. When monsters that subsist on humans begin terrorizing a small New England town, Will documents the doctor's investigation and attempt to destroy the Anthropophagi.

Yovanoff, Brenna. *The Replacement.* Razorbill, 2010. 352p. Gr. 9-12.

As a changeling allergic to iron, Mackie Doyle cannot survive in the human world. Abandoned by his own people, Mackie has been raised by humans since his own infancy and wishes only to be a regular teen. Following the mysterious death of a child, Mackie must find a way to end the kidnapping of baby humans for sacrifice.