

“Librarian’s Shelf” by Rachelle McPhillips

Outstanding books for young adults

The Alex Awards are given to books written for adults that appeal to younger readers as well.

In “The Boy Who Couldn’t Sleep and Never Had To,” by DC Pierson, two geeky teenage boys become friends when they learn they share a love of drawing. They draw together, create characters and storylines. Then one tells the other his secret: he can’t sleep. Ever.

In “Girl in Translation,” by Jean Kwok, Kimberly and her mother move to New York when she’s eleven years old. The reader grows follows Kimberly’s journey to adulthood and her quest to pull her family out of poverty and despair. The bittersweet ending may inspire a few tears.

Aimee Bender adds a cupful of magical realism to this list with her novel, “The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake.” Our young protagonist can “taste” the emotions in food other people prepare. At the beginning of the story, her mother says she’s fine when asked, and appears cheerful enough, but her lemon cake tastes “empty.”

In “The House of Tomorrow,” by Peter Bognanni, meeting Jacob catapults the previously isolated Sebastian into a world he’s never experienced. New food, music, and girls are introduced to him. When his grandmother calls him back to their tiny world, can he return?

Five-year old Jack also lives in isolation with his captive mother in Emma Donoghue’s novel, “Room.” Jack doesn’t know anything of the world outside the tiny room where his mother is raising him. We see his world – and his transition into the bigger world outside – from Jack’s point of view.

The Alex Awards are not limited to fiction. “Breaking Night” is Liz Murray’s inspiring story. Her parents were drug addicts and she was teased at school and lived in a group home. Her mother’s death inspired her to leave life on the streets and return to school. Her determination earned her a spot at Harvard.

In “The Lock Artist,” by Steve Hamilton, Mike hasn’t spoken since that terrible thing happened to him. But what was that event that dubbed him, “Miracle Boy”? Read along as he writes his story from prison and see if you aren’t moved to root for Mike to find the right path – or to try picking some locks yourself.

Can we have a book list of any kind without vampires these days? Absolutely not. But everyone says “The Radleys” by Matt Haig isn’t today’s usual fang-filled fare. This is a humorous, domestic drama about “abstaining” vampires who are forced to confront their true nature. I’m incredibly curious. Do you think they sparkle?

We can’t leave out zombies, can we? In “The Reapers Are the Angels,” by Alden Bell, a fifteen-year-old girl is unable to remember the world without zombies. One reviewer on www.goodreads.com says that this is not a paranormal young adult novel. She calls it “post-apocalyptic fiction at its best.” I can’t wait for it to be returned.

Find these titles and past Alex Award winners now on display at CPL in the adult fiction area. To place a hold on these titles, call 402-564-7116 option 2.