

## Some Other War

Written by Linda Newbery  
Barn Owl Books £5.99  
ISBN: 1 903015 20 0

In the years between 1914 and 1917, eighteen year old twins Alice and Jack experience drastic changes within themselves and the world around them. When war breaks out both twins are working for the wealthy Morland family, and their lives are set to change forever. Alice becomes a nurse, Jack a soldier, and their two separate journeys are both refreshing and tragic. The reader is enabled to share the events of the First World War with a male and female perspective - approaching the issues in the novel from both angles is an excellent device. Linda Newbery has created complex and endearing characters, and her descriptions of life in the trenches are poignant.

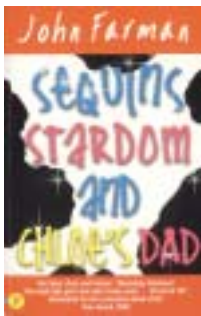
Jenny Ousbey

## Sequins, Stardom and Chloe's Dad

Written by John Farman  
Piccadilly Press £5.99  
ISBN: 1 85340 717 8

Joe fancies Chloe, so it's a bit of a problem that she is going out with his best friend, the weird and wonderful Mervin. But that's nothing compared to Joe's discovery that his own mother is having an affair with Chloe's Dad. After all that, the suspicion that Merlin is actually gay is just one more detail in a complicated life. Joe's story, told in first person, is a funny and entertaining journey into the mind of a typical teenage boy, and will engage male and female readers alike.

Yvonne Coppard



## Summerland

Written by Michael Chabon  
Collins £12.99  
ISBN: 0 00 712711 1

For the devoted fantasy fan eager to discover new landscapes, Pulitzer Prize-winner Michael Chabon offers a fresh, colourful alternative world

# Fluent

based on American mythology. Gripping, puzzling, enthralling, complex, funny - and even if you know nothing about baseball before you start the book, you will by the end.

Chris Stephenson

## A Gathering Light

Written by Jennifer Donnelly  
Bloomsbury £12.99  
ISBN: 0 7475 6304 6

A gentle sense of time and place pervades this novel by an accomplished new voice. Set in New York State at the turn of the century the story traces Mattie maturing from a simple farming girl into a young woman with a future. Whilst working in the local hotel during her school summer holiday a frightened girl presses a bundle of letters into Mattie's hands. The mystery surrounding this girl's sudden death influences the way Mattie makes decisions about her own life. There is love, poignancy, loyalty and humour, all seamlessly interwoven with the story of the strange letters themselves, to make a compelling and most satisfying read.

Jenny Blanch

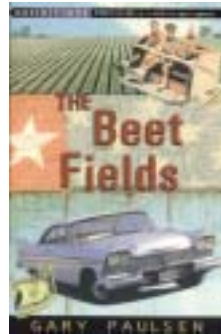
## The Beet Fields

Written by Gary Paulsen  
Red Fox £4.99  
ISBN: 0 09 943965 4

Set in 1955, this is Gary Paulsen's account of his boyhood flight from an abusive home and his finding his first job in the beet fields of North Dakota alongside itinerant Mexican immigrants. In his brief introduction Paulsen explains that, like most writers, he has been plundering his life for his fiction, but this is the truth, as near as he can remember it. He writes in the third person, calling himself the boy, about hardship, friendship, kindness, betrayal, and sexual initiation. His experiences are often hair-raising but his prose is firm, direct, unsensational and deeply satisfying, delivering a masterly piece of storytelling. The next step would

be Steinbeck, if you are thinking educationally; otherwise just enjoy and admire.

Jan Mark

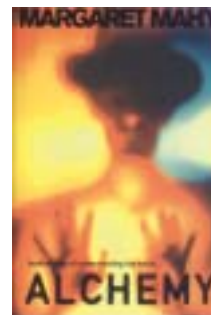


## Alchemy

Written by Margaret Mahy  
Collins £4.99  
ISBN: 0 00713 134 9

Anyone setting out to write a novel in which a good-looking young student, with an excellent school record, is black-mailed into befriending an unattractive female classmate; and then finds that he and she are part of a magical world where transformations occur in mysterious and unlikely circumstances, would be well advised to give a thought to credibility. Margaret Mahy sweeps away any doubt we may have and handles the narrative in such a way that the reader is happy to nudge aside the unlikely improbability of it all. It isn't long before we pass into that realm of story where imagination takes us to places not envisaged, and sets before us another way of knowing the world. This is a strange, sometimes disturbing tale, with a page-turning quality and a gentle compulsion to make readers want to know more.

Jack Ousbey



## Elementals - WATER

Written by Peter Dickinson  
and Robin McKinley  
David Fickling Books £10.99  
ISBN: 0 385 60458 0

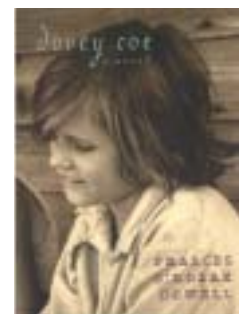
This is a beautifully presented collection of tales emerging from water, with an absorbing cover. Peter Dickinson and Robin McKinley take it in turns to spin six fables which, though new, have the rightness, the pulling power and, in some cases, the elemental force of the title. In each, humans are attracted by fabulous creatures of the deep, needing to battle with their fears, families, the weather and forces beyond their knowledge or strength. Both authors write with power and authority, giving women prominence and covering very human issues like the pain of a partner's death, alcoholism, daughter beating and unwanted suitors. A hauntingly memorable book.

Tina Massey



## Dovey Coe

Written by Frances O'Roark Dowell  
Walker Books £4.99  
ISBN: 0 7445 9029 9



A murder mystery, yet so engaging! This is a first person narrative: Dovey, outspoken and deep thinking, is twelve and lives in Indian Creek, North Carolina. This is hillbilly country: Dovey's family is tightly-knit and self-sufficient. Besides her parents, she has a big sister, Caroline, and a slightly older, profoundly deaf brother, Amos, who she sees as her special responsibility. All the boys

dote on Caroline: the most ardent and richest admirer is Parnell Caraway. He plots a long campaign to marry Caroline and Dovey fears he may succeed, until Caroline dramatically rejects him at her farewell party before leaving to train as a teacher. Parnell retires to plan his next move - and is then found murdered. Dovey is charged, brought to trial and things look bad. But a reversal of fortune frees her and the death is given a different, providential explanation. A very fine novel, loving in its description of a vanished society, satisfying in its narrative sweep.

*Dennis Hamley*

### The Rag & Bone Shop

Written by Robert Cormier  
Puffin £4.99  
ISBN: 0 141 31444 3



Twelve-year-old Jason was the last person to see the murdered seven-year-old Alicia alive; and a brutal, chilling police investigation ensues. Whilst the authorities are pushing to get a result, Trent, the interrogator famed for extracting confessions, is brought in to help. Will Jason confess regardless of the truth, or is he hiding a deeper secret. The novel expertly allows the reader to explore the psychological workings of the mind. Atmosphere and tension are sustained until the shocking conclusion. There is no room for the readers to feel comfortable during this story - they will be clinging to the edge of their seats.

*Jenny Ousbey*

### Feed

Written by M T Anderson  
Walker Books £4.99  
ISBN: 0 7445 9085 X

A novel to completely blow your mind. This futuristic young adult novel is nightmarish, fascinatingly plausible and totally unforgettable. Set in a time when teenage minds are controlled by 'feed' implants in their

brains that tell the user what to eat, drink, wear and where to go, the book tells the story of Titus and his tragic friendship with Violet. They really like each other - for a moment when their minds get to roam free of control. But Titus gets reconnected, and Violet doesn't so she begins to ask questions..... and that is when their lives go pear-shaped. Addictive reading.

*John McLay*

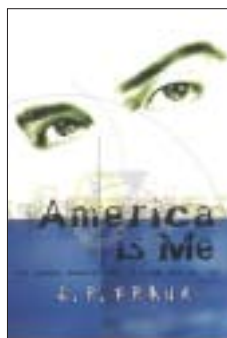


### America is Me

Written by E.R. Frank  
Simon & Schuster £7.99  
ISBN: 0 689 83677 5

Told in the first person, this is the account of a young boy's journey through abuse, abandonment and betrayal towards some kind of peace and reclamation. The movement between the present (conversations with his therapist) and flashbacks (gradually piecing together the past) keep the suspense high and the structure tight. The story is gripping without being mawkish, America's journey hopeful without descending into sentimentality. A great book for the older teenager.

*Yvonne Coppard*



## BOOKBOX

**Television is an important part of children's lives and so are books.** Being a comfortable, fluent reader is essential if you want to make the most of what computers can offer. Anyone who believed that one day any one of these three formats would replace another is being proved wrong on a daily basis so it is particularly good to see Channel 4 linking all these elements. They are making an excellent job of Book Box, one of the most useful book-related sites for children and teachers.

Put [www.channel4.com/learning/microsites/B/bookbox](http://www.channel4.com/learning/microsites/B/bookbox) into the address box and choose **Authors and Books** for a knowledgeable list of current authors and to find out about them and their books. You can not only see them but hear them, too. Being read aloud to by Philip Pullman et al is an unexpected treat. The **Writer's Toolkit** will help children with their own writing and will be useful in the classroom. **Secret Passages** gives ideas for choosing other books to read. They are under various headings: Secret Places, Talking Animals, Small People and Witches and Wizards. There is also a **Games** section with ideas for book-related activities.

The site has been thought about and assembled with care. Simon Fuller of **4Learning** says that the aim was not only to encourage reading but also to stimulate children's writing. "We want to encourage children's desire to read and write - to be inspired rather than drilled! We think writers are ideal role models for young writers and they should be seen and heard, presented as real people, with lots of tips and advice." This is not a media flash of celebrity interest in children's books. Users can take confidence from the fact that they use a tried and tested book person for their consultant and have a budget for updates. They say they have, so far, only received positive feedback from children and teachers and, having looked critically at the site and tested it with teacher training students, I believe them! Put it in your favourites.

*Pat Thomson*

For more useful sites, including help with homework, try Pat's education pages by going to:

<http://library.northampton.ac.uk>

Click on **Subject Resources**, then **Education**, then **Finding Web Resources**.