

## Middle School Book Reviews

**Title:** *Night*

**Author:** Elie Wiesel

**Genre:** Memoir

*Night* starts out in Sighet, Czechoslovakia, 1941, the beginning of World War II. Throughout the book, the author, Eliezer Wiesel is moved through several treacherous concentration camps, including Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Buna. Most of the action takes place in these camps, as Elie struggles to survive. The book covers Elie's life from 1941 to 1945, a time when, in Nazi controlled Europe, Jews like Elie, along with countless others were taken to concentration camps where they were held, forced to work, or killed. The concentration camps Elie stayed at had conditions ranging from poor to barely livable. Although one of his camps was stated to be "better off", he still had little food, old clothing and long workdays. He had to work in the snow and heat, march long distances through the cold and sleep in the mud on the floor, sometimes surrounded by the dead corpses of his companions. The author didn't "choose" the setting of his story; he was placed in it. However, I believe he chose to write about this part of his life because it shows the issues Jews went through and the cruelty man can show to man.

The main character in this book is Eliezer Wiesel. He was a Jewish boy of 15, born in Sighet, Czechoslovakia. He was thoughtful, loyal and kind throughout the book, but as he goes through one after another hardship, his character changes greatly. When at first he was deeply religious and awed by his God, he begins to doubt, and even despise Him. He stops caring about others about seeing so many die before him. One thing he doesn't lose is his love for his father. Although many times he wondered if it wouldn't be easier to leave his weak father behind, Eliezer sticks with him until the end. This loyalty is one of his best traits, while one of his worst, even if only caused by the circumstances, is his lack of concern or empathy for anyone besides himself or his father.

The message of this book was clear. Without hope, courage and empathy, men can turn on one another without thought or reason, and without education to understand other people, this can become even worse. Although the heartless soldiers stood out to me, the heartless prisoners stood out even more. For example, in one part of the book, a boy, or young man killed his own father over a piece of bread, so animal was his desire for food. I think the author wants you to learn about how harshly the Jews were treated during this time period, and the sheer viciousness of the Holocaust.

This book definitely held my interest. There were no slow parts, and although it was not an extremely difficult read, it was very thought provoking and very engrossing. I would recommend it to almost anyone. Whether they like action or history or complex characters or anything else, this book will probably have it. I think any one can enjoy, and more importantly learn from *Night*.

**Title:** *The Maze Runner*  
**Author:** James Dashner  
**Genre:** Science Fiction

The Maze Runner takes place in a very mysterious place called the “Glade” which is located in the center of a huge maze made of stone, and every night the walls close around the Glade so the stone walls can slide around to create a brand new maze. Most of the action takes place out in the maze at night when the Grievors come out. The Grievors are half machine and half animal, and will kill any person they find in the maze at night with no mercy. The author probably chose this setting because it’s very mysterious and leaves you wanting to come back and read more just so you can find out more about this strange place.

The main character of the book is a boy named Thomas. Thomas is very curious as to how he got to the Glade, why everyone was sent here in the first place, and what life was like outside of the Glade where he actually had a family. Being curious could be a good thing, but in the Glade it can also be a bad thing. Many people in the Glade don’t like to be questioned or doubted, even though in some cases Thomas’s curiosity could pay off.

The plot of the book is to have Thomas and all of the other “Gladers” find their way out of the maze using out of the ordinary ways of thought. Thomas tries to be the hero throughout many parts of the book, but sometimes he doesn’t think about what’s safe for him, and he only thinks about saving the day. The climax of the book is when all of the “Gladers” decide to make one last run for it and then everything becomes dysfunctional.

After reading the story, the author wants you to feel on edge because you find out how the outside world has changed for the worse, and the Glade might have been a good option. The author also wants you to learn that everyone has to work together so accomplish something huge. When someone tries a huge task alone they probably won’t be able to do it, but together they can do anything.

This book held my interest because no matter where you decided to stop reading, you were always left on a cliffhanger. The book is very suspenseful, especially when they had no choice but to run for their lives. I would recommend this book to anyone, whether they usually like science fiction or not because I usually don’t, and this book was still extremely well-written and had an amazing storyline.

**Title:** *The New Policeman*  
**Author:** Kate Thompson  
**Genre:** Fantasy

This book setting of The New Policeman takes place in two settings: one is in the town of Kinvara, Ireland and the other place is in Tír na n’Óg, or the land of eternal youth. Most of the book takes place in Tír na n’Óg. Tír na n’Óg looks just like the normal world. The sun stays up and shining all the time and most of the people living there are magical in some way. The book takes place in modern times.

The main character is a 14 year old boy, J.J. Liddy. J.J. also has a sister, Marian, who is younger than him. J.J. is a well-rounded character. He has different attitudes for different moments that make him a truly believable character.

This book is about J.J. Liddy trying to find his mom a gift for her birthday. His mom only wants the gift of time. Everyone in Kinvara is also experiencing the feeling of the loss of time.

One of J.J.'s friends tells him that his grandfather murdered the town's priest. J.J. sets out to try and get his mom more time in the day and to figure out if his grandfather killed the priest. Both the story and the gift lead him to Tír na n'Óg.

The message of this book is to always try to succeed. This is shown in the book when J.J. tries to get his mom more time in the day. We all know that it is impossible to get more time into the day, but J.J. actually tries. I think the author wants the reader to try to accomplish more than they think they can. The author delivers the message in a very subtle yet effective way.

This book was very good at captivating my interest and imagination. It captivated my imagination because something unexpected always kept on popping up in the story. I would recommend this book to anyone who like fantasy mixed with folklore and mystery.

**Title:** *All I Want is Everything*  
**Author:** Cicely von Ziegesar  
**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

My favorite book of this year was All I Want is Everything: a *Gossip Girl* novel by Cecily Von Ziegesar. This "girly" novel was extremely funny, dramatic and full of fabulous clothes and different lifestyles.

The characters: Blair, Serena, Vanessa, Dan, Jenny, Nate and many more, live their life to the fullest in a big city. Living the fabulous life has its complications; for example, the drama, the boyfriend stealing, the divorces, and school can get a little overwhelming. This book is full of secrets and revenge. Ziegesar, in my opinion, is a great writer and really makes the characters seem real, especially the "gossip girl".

This book captures the reality of life but also incorporates what every girl wishes she had: the perfect boyfriend, an expensive car, loads of make up and designer clothes, and money. I recommend this book for every young teen girl who loves juicy secrets, romance, and lots of revenge. In conclusion, this is why I recommend, All I Want is Everything.

**Title:** *The Lightning Thief*  
**Author:** Rick Riordan  
**Genre:** Fantasy

Before I tell you what book I am writing about, I want you to imagine this, pretend that you are there. You walk through the grand doors of the National History Museum following your old and creepy teacher, Ms. Dobbs. You walk into a big storage room. You are now completely alone with her. Suddenly Ms Dobbs says to you, "I have to kill you now." Right before your eyes, who you thought was a teacher, turns into a huge black demon bird with wings about twenty feet long, talons the size of your forearm, and as sharp as anything you could have ever imagined, and feathers the size of half of your body.

This is what happens to Percy Jackson in The Lightning Thief, a fantasy novel. A brave heroic boy only twelve years old and in sixth grade, finds out that he is a half-blood. You know all the myths you've heard about Zeus and Poseidon and all those other Gods? Imagine how Percy Jackson feels when he finds out he is one!

Rick Riordan, the genius who is the author of this book, The Lightning Thief, tells the story of Percy and his adventures to discover Zeus's lightning bolt. You will laugh, cry, and want to read this book over and over again!

**Title:** *I, Alex Cross*  
**Author:** James Patterson  
**Genre:** Action Adventure/Mystery

James Patterson's, I, Alex Cross is an amazing action mystery story about the death of a beloved Cross family member. Alex Cross is a famous police detective who receives a call on his birthday telling him about a woman by the name of Caroline. After Alex finds out that this is Caroline cross a beloved, beautiful family member it all goes downhill from there.

James Patterson's I, Alex Cross is an amazing page-turner that will make you crave for more. This story is a great mix of action, adventure, and intrigue. I would recommend this book to young adults and teens. This book is amazing and something everyone can enjoy. Will Alex find Caroline's Murder? You will have to read the book to find out!!!

**Title:** *Paper Towns*  
**Author:** John Green  
**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

John Green's amazing way of writing has not let us down yet. With his mesmerizing book, Paper Towns, he has captured the interests of teens around the country. Paper Towns has a setting that corresponds to our time and gives teens more reasons to drop their computers and pick up Paper Towns.

Quentin, also known as Q, fell in love with his best friend, Margo from the day she moved to his neighborhood. Since they were little children they've have managed to get themselves into a great deal of mischief. For Example, one spring afternoon they found an old dead man in the park they always visited. Q is a charming, loveable boy who would do anything for Margo, and Margo, she's something special. She's beautiful and outgoing. She doesn't care what she does and if someone does anything bad to her she will get revenge no matter what. Margo and Q are now in high school and it's almost their graduation day. A week before, Margo disappears, no one worries at first because she is known to disappear and reappear at times-- except when Quentin gets worried and tries everything to find her.

Will Q ever find his love? And will she ever love him back? You will have to read this amazing book to find out. *Paper Town* is an amazing love story that will leave you craving to turn the page; you will never know what would be coming from Q or Margo. I recommend this amazing book to any girls or boys who like Realistic Fiction and love.

**Title:** *Twenty Boy Summer*  
**Author:** Sarah Ockler  
**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

Twenty Boy Summer is by far the best realistic fiction novel I have ever read. Sarah Ockler, the writer of this book, wrote these events as if everything happened to her when she was younger. I will never forget this book as long as I live.

This realistic fiction novel follows a teenager named Anna Riley through a summer of fun, lies, and relationships. She is accompanied by her best friend in the whole world, Francesca, known as Frankie. One ordinary day, Anna, Frankie, and Josh are getting ice cream. Everything changes when the three best friends are in a fatal accident. Now Anna and Josh's

love will never be told to anybody. It is a secret that will always be in Anna's heart. Anna's world has flipped upside-down.

The plot of this novel makes a spectacular realistic story. There is a plethora of drama and romance. I recommend this book for all teenagers. I believe that Sarah Ockler is an amazing writer.

**Title:** *Soldier X*

**Author:** Don L. Wulffson

**Genre:** Historical Fiction/Action

My all time favorite book of the year was Soldier X. This historical fiction/action novel is a real page turner. This story is about a teenager named Erik that was forced to join the German army during World War II.

Erik didn't even have experience shooting a gun; he was learning new commands and enduring training in order to defend himself and country. He was also forced learn and speak German. Erik was not only German, he was also Russian which eventually affected his life later on in the book. Erik is the type of man that doesn't enjoy hurting others or destroying others' belongings; he's timid and has complex character traits throughout the entire text.

This book is mesmerizing because the author has a clear plot. He wants the reader to recognize the point that in life there's not always going to be great parts. Even the most terrible situations can have a positive ending or a great resolution. This makes for an excellent story to read because not only is it engaging it teaches a piece of history and how the Jews and Germans were treated and how World War II affected many lives. Many soldiers died to defend their country from harm while Hitler planned to kill innocent people for ridiculous reasons.

In conclusion, I recommend that you decide to read this because it's compelling, educational, and has various moods and character traits.

**Title:** *Ball Don't Lie*

**Author:** Matt De La Pena

**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

The book *Ball Don't Lie* by Matt de la Pena is an emotional story about urban street basketball and a young man named Sticky, who plays it exceptionally well.

Sticky has had a very hard childhood mostly spent in a series of foster homes where people did not care for him, hurt him, or ignored him. The book takes us back and forth between past and present, explaining Sticky's defense mechanisms, his silence and toughness, and his repetitive behaviors.

Sticky finds a family in the other street basketball players in a run down inner city gym, where he finds his skills, his heart and his desire to move beyond the hardships of his childhood. His relationship with his girlfriend also helps Sticky to care and to learn to respond to another person's caring for him.

All the characters in the book are very believable, and the exciting plot and excellent writing kept me very interested, and I was cheering Sticky on to make the right decisions all the way to the end. By the way, this book is available in the school library!

**Title:** *The Alchemyst*  
**Author:** Michael Scott  
**Genre:** Fantasy/Action Adventure

The Alchemyst by Michael Scott is an action adventure/fantasy book. The book focuses on a man named Nicholas Flamel. Nicholas Flamel was born in Paris on September 28, 1330. Nicholas Flamel is a pharmacist who discovered the secret to eternal life. 700 years later, the news is out that Flamel is still alive!

Sophie and Josh Newman are the only ones with the power to save the world and discover the true secrets of Nicholas Flamel.

This book is one of the best adventure books I have ever read. I really love the way Sophie and Josh get pulled into the adventure and discover that they are actually smarter than they really think!

**Title:** *The Westing Game*  
**Author:** Ellen Raskin  
**Genre:** Mystery

Do you like mysteries? Are you always the one who is trying to figure out “who dunnit”? Well if you can answer yes, then this means that *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin is the book for you!

It is the unfortunate demise of billionaire Sam Westing that forces sixteen people to come together and experience the game of their lives. This unlikely group is forced to follow clues to figure out who among them is the MURDERER of Sam Westing. While following them along this crazy adventure, the reader gets a chance to understand the lives of each one of these characters and why they were selected to play this very unorthodox game. This novel is truly character driven and the author does a fantastic job of revealing the inner thoughts and feelings of each character as they play this very dangerous game.

The book grabbed my interest from the very start. However, it takes time for the story to develop, so it requires the reader to have patience with the story. All in all, *The Westing Game* is a story that truly is unlike any other you have ever read. Once you start this novel, you definitely will not be able to put it down.