

Library News: Are you looking for last minute gift ideas for the holidays? Books are always a good way to encourage reading and to show your child that you value reading yourself. There is a lengthy list of good books linked to the library web site's home page (<http://www.mdusd.k12.ca.us/sequoiamiddle/library>). I was not impressed with many of the books that I read this past year, but there are a few that stand out in my mind.

White Sands, Red Menace is the sequel to Green Glass Sea by Ellen Klages. These two titles are historical fiction and take place first during, and then after, WWII. The focus is on two girls whose parents were involved with the creation of the atomic bomb. Besides interesting characters, this book offers readers a peak into how scientists were involved with the war effort.

Al Capone Shines My Shoes follows Gennifer Choldenko's very popular Al Capone Does My Shirts. Set on Alcatraz when families of prison employees lived on the island, the story involves the antics and relationships between the children of the families.

For those who love mysteries, but want something more modern than Nancy Drew I recommend the Enola Holmes Mysteries by Nancy Springer. Enola is the sister to the famed Sherlock. She loves investigating as much as her brother, but has to do her work more secretly as Sherlock doesn't think that sleuthing is an activity becoming a proper young lady.

Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins won awards last year when it came out. Not for the faint of heart, this is an outstandingly written science fiction story that is set in an alternative society. Once a year the heads of the country have children representing different regions fight to the death against each other. The battles are manipulated by the wealthy and powerful, but for the children involved the desire to stay alive is very real. This story now has a sequel called Catching Fire.

If your child enjoyed Gail Carson Levine's Ella Enchanted or is in love with Shanon Hale's fairy tale like stories (Goose Girl, Princess Academy) then give them Castle Corona to read by Sharon Creech. Creech has established herself as an author of young adult novels, but this is her first attempt at fantasy. Adventure, magic, royalty and children saving the day abound.

Another fantasy that is just plain fun and may appeal to boys as well as, if not more than, to girls is Troll Bridge: A Rock 'N Roll Fairy Tale by Jane Yolen. Three brothers get washed down under the bridge where the trolls live. They attempt to save themselves as well as the princesses that were grabbed earlier. The trolls are appropriately dumb and the boys are clever enough to make you sometimes laugh out loud.

Samurai Shortstop by Alan Gratz is a little bit sports and a little bit Japanese history. When Japan decides to do away with the title of Samurai a lot of young men are at a loss as to what the future holds for them. Trying to adjust, one young man finds that many of the ethics that are held important to samurai's will help him succeed at baseball.