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## Featured Reviews

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Looking for older reviews? We archive this page once a year.

### Archives

- [2023 reviews](#)
- [2022 reviews](#)
- [2021 reviews](#)

The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in the book reviews or recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Port Colborne Public Library.

## Book reviews by our library patrons

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## Teen book reviews

We are looking for [teen guest reviewers](#) to read and write book reviews. Each approved book review will earn you five hours of community service! Reviews will be published here and on social media accounts. [Contact us](#) for more information

if you want to participate.

## Criteria

Items being reviewed must meet the following criteria:

- Must be available through Port Colborne Public Library or a participating LINC library.
- Must be an appropriate reading level.
- Books can be fiction or non-fiction, and in book, e-book or audiobook format.

Additionally, reviews must meet the following criteria:

- Must be at least 250 words in length (or longer).
- Must contain an introduction to the book, a brief summary (without spoilers), a thoughtful review, as well as whether or not you would recommend the book.
- Be an original review; plagiarism will not be accepted.
- Contains no graphic or explicit language.

Some minor edits or corrections may be suggested. To register as a reviewer, please [email](#) or phone us at 905-834-6512. If you don't have a card yet, [join us today.](#)



## ***Backlash* by Sarah Darer Littman (Reviewed by KR)**

While this book was fiction, it certainly is a reality for many people, teenage girls specifically. This book is about a teenage girl named Lara. While Lara was in middle school, she struggled with her body image and went through depression, as well as suicidal thoughts. As Lara got older, things started getting better for her. She's now in high school, is on the cheerleading team, and has some great friends. She was pleased, but a friend request from Christian Dewitt on Facebook changed everything. Lara had been talking to Christian for two months, he told her he loved her, so why does he randomly tell her that the world is a better place without it? Lara was best friends with Bree when they were younger, so why is Bree happy when Christian posts those horrible things about her? Nobody expected Lara to listen to his words and take them very seriously.

This book discusses the serious and scary reality of Social Media and how much it affects teenage girls. Daily horrible things are said on social media, thinking it is harmless and funny, but this book showcases how much harm can happen. A study has been done and has shown that the longer teenage girls spend on social media each day, the more likely they are to commit suicide. The harms of social media need to be taken more seriously, especially by teenagers. The only issue is not cyberbullying, but also the danger of talking to strangers. This book highlights the crisis perfectly. This is not a true story for Lara, but it is true for so many other teenagers. Sarah Darer Littman brought a lot of awareness to this issue, so I recommend others to read this.

I give this book a 5-star rating because of the message it delivers. I mostly recommend this book to teenagers, but also to the parents of teenagers so they can keep their children safe.

Find "Backlash" today in our catalogue.



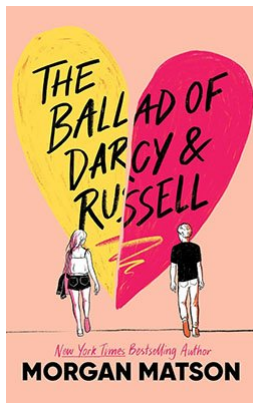
## ***The Ballad of Darcy & Russell* by Morgan Matson (Reviewed by KR)**

The Ballad of Darcy and Russell has been my favourite book. I read this so fast because I could not put it down.

This book is about the love story between Darcy and Russell. Darcy goes to a music festival one weekend with a friend, who leaves her behind. The bus Darcy takes home from the festival breaks down, and she is stranded at a bus station alone. With a dead phone and no money, Darcy has officially run out of options and has to wait the night out, but then she meets Russell. Russell was also at the bus station and had a dead phone with no charger. Darcy and Russell set out on a mission to get a charger together. During their time together, they talk all night and connect. They share things they never have with anyone else, only after a few hours of knowing each other. Darcy has never been in a relationship because she wants love at first sight, the feeling of being meant to be. She feels this meeting with Russell is meant to be, but how can you know in such a short amount of time?

This book certainly had some moments I didn't expect, but I loved the ending. I would give this book a 5-star rating because the story was written so well. I didn't expect to love this book as much as I did, but it certainly was a page-turner. The audience of this book would be young adults. I recommend this book to others because they would love it as much as I did.

[Find "The Ballad of Darcy and Russell" today in our catalogue.](#)



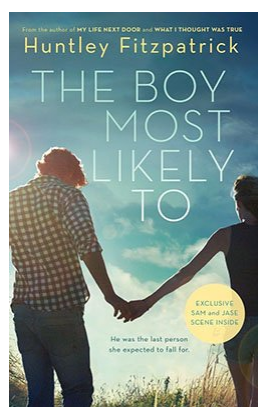
## ***The Boy Most Likely To* by Huntley Fitzpatrick (Reviewed by KR)**

The Boy Most Likely To was such an entertaining read. To describe this book, I would use words like shocking, bittersweet, and complex. The topic of this book is a Young Adult summer love. This is a spin-off of the book My Life Next Door, except this is the story of Tim Mason and Alice Garrett.

Tim struggles with his addictions; He has trouble staying away from alcohol and cigarettes. He was kicked out of school and has nothing, except a crush on Alice. Alice is in nursing school, is older than Tim, and has stated that she wants nothing to do with him. Tim has come a long way since being introduced in the first book, but he still has a long way to go. When Tim moves into their garage apartment, Alice now has to see Tim constantly. What happens when an unexpected plot twist comes across their plates? What will end up happening between Tim and Alice?

I recommend this book to anyone who wants to find out. I'm giving this book a 4-star review because I thought it was great and had an enjoyable ending, but not five stars. I might have critiqued the storyline involving Alice and her ex-boyfriend, but overall, it was a great read. I recommend this book to young adults who love reading about summer romances. Even though this book was over 400 pages, I read it in a day due to the intrigue!

Find "The Boy Most Likely To" today in our catalogue.



### ***Breakfast at the Honey Creek Cafe by Jodi Thomas (Reviewed by KR)***

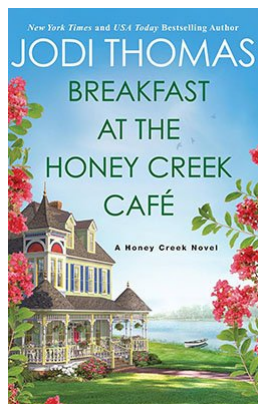
I found this book a good read. This novel is about the town of Honey Creek, and a scandal erupts.

Piper Mackenzie is the mayor of Honey Creek but is also in a fake relationship with Boone Buchanan. One night, Boone's car is discovered in the lake, and he is nowhere to be seen. Piper would do anything to ensure the scandal doesn't overcome her town, so she allows undercover detective Colby McBride, to solve this case. Her brother hired Colby, knowing Piper needed help. To ensure his cover won't be revealed, he fakes the role as one of her ex-boyfriends, and he is working on winning her back. Since Piper went through her divorce, she has not allowed another guy to get close to her. What happens when she begins to feel attracted to him, knowing she should not be?

Colby McBride is not the only new person who moved into town. Sam Cassidy has come to fill the role of the town preacher. The invitation was sent to Sam's dad, who has passed away, but Sam sees the role as a fresh start, so he takes it. After everything Sam has gone through, this is something he needs. Throughout the story, we see the relationship between Pecos and Kerrie form.

I found their journey heartwarming and looked forward to seeing where they would end up together. I enjoyed reading this book, but it was not a page-turner. I would give it a rating of 3 stars because while I thought it was good, it did not pull me in as much as other books. The audience for this book would mainly be adults, but I think it would be a good read for anybody interested in a mystery. I would recommend this book to others because it is a good story and well-written.

Find "Breakfast at the Honey Creek Cafe" today in our catalogue.



### ***Brilliant by Rachel Vail (Reviewed by KR)***

Recently, I read the book *Brilliant by Rachel Vail*, and I enjoyed it quite a bit. This book is a part of a trilogy, and it is the 3rd one.

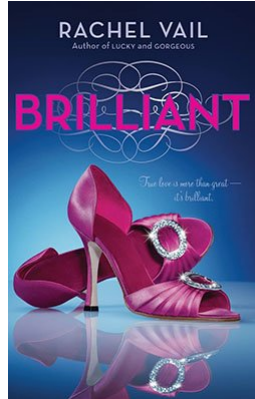
Quinn Avery is the eldest sister out of three. She is responsible, brilliant, and makes everybody proud. Quinn has always been that version of herself until her family faces a financial crisis. She has a beautiful house, nice cars, and a bright red room. Quinn has always loved her room and the colour of it, but they had to paint over it to sell the house. The thing bothering her is not that her mom repainted her room, it's that she did it without even asking or telling Quinn. This was Quinn's first straw. Even with her family's financial situation, she has remained calm and acted as if nothing's wrong, but at some point, she abandoned that version of herself. Everybody has expected her to stay her old self and help take care of it all, but she only wants them to notice how upset she is. She starts going to parties, kissing the wrong people, and acting



like an entirely different person. When will her family finally notice and pay attention to how much she is being affected?

It was well-written with a great storyline, except it was not the ending I had hoped for. Other than that, I would recommend this story, and give it a four-star rating. The target audience for this book would be young adults. I thought it was great and would read this again.

Find "Brilliant" today in our catalogue.



### ***The Bullet Garden* by Stephen Hunter (Reviewed by PS)**

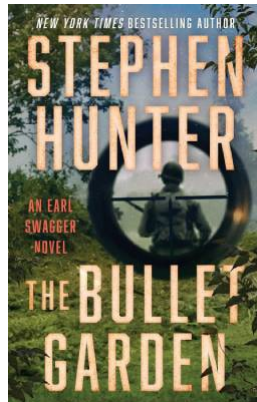
Stephen Hunter's "The Bullet Garden" is an exciting novel in his Bob Lee Swagger series. It is a fascinating story with lots of action, tension, and complex characters. I will talk about the plot, character development, writing style, and overall rating of the book in this book report.

"The Bullet Garden" focuses on legendary sniper Bob Lee Swagger, who is drawn into the high-stakes long-range shooting competition known as the Bullet Garden. Famous marksmen from all over the world join the tournament; each of them has their own secrets and reasons for going. As Swagger makes his way through the fierce competition, he gets caught up in a web of lies. In this book, Stephen Hunter's development of characters really comes through. Hunter does a fantastic job of showing Bob Lee Swagger's skill and thinking as a sniper, and he continues to be an interesting character. The supporting cast is also well developed, with every character adding to the story's suspense and unease. Hunter has an interesting and intriguing writing style. He carefully mixes an engaging plot with technical information about weapons and marksmanship to create a novel that is both exciting and educational. The book moves along at a fast pace that keeps readers guessing until the very end.

I rate "The Bullet Garden" a solid 4 out of 5 stars. It's an engaging story that

shows Stephen Hunter's skill with a gun and storytelling. I couldn't give the plot a perfect score, though, because there were a few moments where it seemed a little too predictable. Still, readers who like exciting action-packed thrillers and the Bob Lee Swagger series will find this book to be worth their time.

Find "The Bullet Garden" today in our catalogue.



***Find Him Where You Left Him Dead by Kristen Simmons (Reviewed by KR)***

I was not a big fan of this book. Find Him Where You Left Him Dead is about a group of teenagers who discovered a game in a cave, a card-matching game called Meido. This book had no instructions and seemed innocent, but it was far from that.

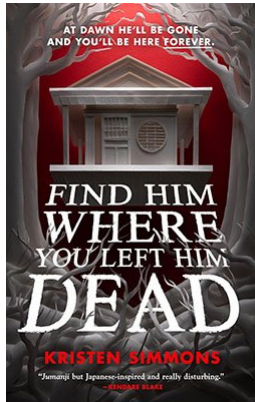
The friend group reunites four years later; Ian's ghost has brought them together to complete the game. Owen, Madeline, Dax, and Emerson. They stopped being friends once Ian got stuck in the cave. They did not bring it up after it happened or tell the police the truth. When they start the game again, they're fully brought out of reality and summoned into the Japanese underworld. In the underworld, they find somebody who tells them they have one night to complete seven challenges, or they are stuck there forever. They all need to work together to make it out alive, but not everybody will. This story mainly focuses on Japanese tales and the horrifying thoughts of the underworld.

I didn't enjoy reading this that much. It does have many plot twists and creepy moments, but it just didn't consume or interest me as much as I hoped it would. While it is a scary book, I didn't find that it scared me that much. Others would like this book, but only if you are interested in Japanese tales. If you are reading this book for a good scare, I do not think you will find it. I recommend this to people who like Japanese horror stories and tales. I



would personally give this book a rating of 2 stars.

[Find "Find Him Where You Left Him Dead" today in our catalogue.](#)



### ***Firekeeper's Daughter by Angeline Boulley (Reviewed by KR)***

Firekeeper's Daughter is an Indigenous novel that touches on topics such as drug abuse, a clash between cultures, and all aspects surrounding Indigenous society.

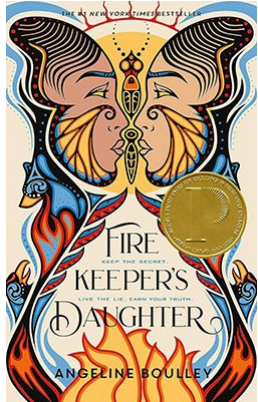
The main character in this novel, Daunis Fontaine, is an Ojibwe woman who has experienced some hardships and difficult situations throughout her life. Her father passed away when she was younger, and throughout the novel, she experiences some other tragic losses. In her community, there is a dangerous drug going around, killing too many people. When Daunis meets some people undercover, they ask her to become involved in the investigation as well. Daunis is hesitant to take part in this, but she reluctantly agrees so she can help her community put a stop to this.

This investigation has quite an impact on her, and it is noticeable as you keep reading the book. I enjoyed reading this novel because of the unique storyline.

If you want to educate yourself more on Indigenous tradition and celebration, this novel is for you. I found it to be written well and stayed interested the entire time. There are quite a few plot twists, and the novel will keep you on your toes. The one thing I was not a fan of was the ending of Firekeeper's Daughter. I did not like how it ended because it felt rushed and was not what I hoped for.

Firekeeper's Daughter does contain mature content, such as sexual assault and drug abuse, that can be upsetting to people. I would recommend it for ages 16 and above. Overall, I would recommend it to other readers because I found it a 3.5 out of 5-star novel.

Find "Firekeeper's Daughter" today in our catalogue.



### ***I'll Give You the Sun* by Jandy Nelson (Reviewed by SW)**

"I'll Give You the Sun" is a novel written by Jandy Nelson and published in 2014. The novel depicts the story of Noah and his twin sister Jude, two inseparable siblings who tackle all of their challenges together, but unique in each their own way. Noah is an extremely talented artist, spending most of his time painting and sketching wonderful displays of art. Noah also finds himself falling in love with a boy, and dealing with the challenges given by the world on that principle. Whilst his sister Jude is much more gutsy, seeking thrills on the waves, while having difficulty having her art noticed by their mother.

I'll Give You The Sun is a complex novel about the complexities of maintaining and having relationships with family and lovers, and about the mistakes one can make and come to regret them later. Both Noah and Jude are shown as the protagonist in each of their segments, with the book periodically switching between their perspectives between chapters.

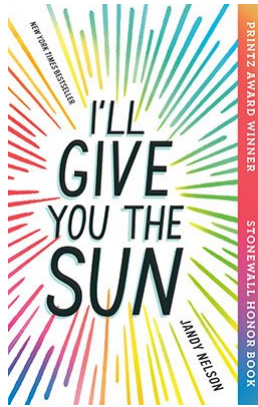
Both characters are shown as "the bad guy" at some point in the story or another, conflicting with each other at regular intervals and tensions rising between them. Eventually snapping and driving them both apart after a devastating tragedy in each of their lives.

Despite this, they both have to work through their problems to return to what their lives once were. As the story progresses and unravels, the connection between Noah and Jude becomes more and more apparent to the reader as well as how they affect each others lives, and what happens when they split apart from each other in unhealthy ways.

I personally believe this book to be a phenomenal work of art and I recommend it to anyone interested in picking it up to read. I absolutely love the way the world is portrayed through Noah's eyes, as well as the sheer

vastness of the difference between the way each of them speak. This book is a wonderful work of art and is definitely worth reading.

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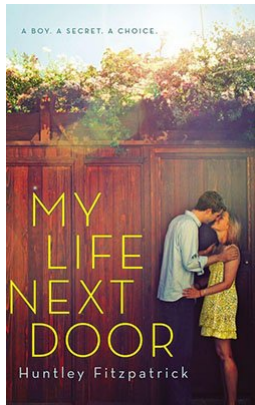
### ***My Life Next Door* by Huntley Fitzpatrick (Reviewed by KR)**

If I were to describe this book in 3 words to summarize it, I would say intriguing, shocking, and dramatic. This Young Adult summer romance will have you going through a rollercoaster of emotions the whole read.

This book is about two teenagers experiencing summer love, but something is keeping them from it, their families. Samantha Reed has a big, always clean, perfect-looking house. Samantha has always attended private school. Her next-door neighbour, Jace Garrett, has a more carefree and messy house, along with his eight siblings. They all attend a public school and don't care as much about their appearance. Samantha has always loved to watch; She would always watch what the Garrett's were up to, and the fun they were having. She never dared to go over there or talk to them, she knew the opinions her mom had on the Garrett's. Samantha's mother has always hated seeing their messy house next to hers, which she would often comment on. The real question is, how did Jace and Samantha manage to fall in love, even with their differences?

I would recommend reading this book to find out more about it. When I first started reading, I was immediately intrigued by it. I found this storyline heartwarming, though this book has some unexpected twists, I thought it ended perfectly. I would give this book 5 out of 5 stars because I can not think of anything that could be changed. Furthermore, I would say that the audience of this book is mainly aimed towards young adults, but it is perfect for a summer read. This book is one I would love to read again.

Find "My Life Next Door" today in our catalogue.



### ***One Night Gone* by Tara Laskowski (Reviewed by KR)**

I describe this book as a thriller, a murder mystery, and unsettling.

In this novel, Allison Simpson is house-sitting in Opal Beach for a few months. She had a rough divorce and lost her job, so this opportunity was refreshing for her. Opal Beach is a wealthy town with very nice houses, and it's pretty quiet during the off-season, but things get quite busy during the summer. Allison doesn't feel anything wrong about the town until she discovers the disappearance of Maureen Haddaway 30 years ago.

Maureen was an 18-year-old girl who had arrived in Opal Beach, hoping for a fresh start away from her issues. She worked in a travelling carnival and eventually made two wonderful friends, things were looking up for her. One night, Maureen randomly disappeared with no trace. The police and everybody brushed it off, thinking she probably just fled to a new place, but her best friend Tammy didn't believe that. Once Allison comes into town, Tammy is immediately reminded of Maureen. Once Tammy shares the story of Maureen, Allison is immediately interested. Eventually, they unravel the mystery of Maureen and end up with some shocking information.

This book kept me on the edge of my seat the whole read due to the mystery. I would recommend this book to anyone who loves reading a good mystery and would give this book a 5-star rating. The target audience for this book would be young adults and adults, but I believe anybody who likes a good thriller would enjoy it. I enjoyed this book and loved the way that it ended up.

Find "One Night Gone" today in our catalogue.



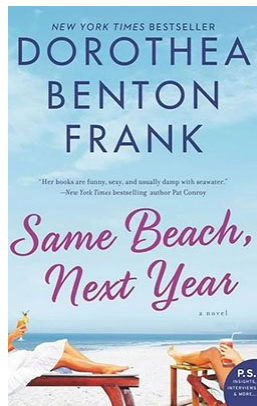
### ***Same Beach, Next Year* by Dorothea Benton Frank (Reviewed by KR)**

Same Beach, Next Year is the perfect book to read during the summer months, especially on the beach. This book is about the friendship between 2 couples that begins one summer. This friendship lasts many years and undergoes many challenges.

Adam and Eliza are one couple who have a beautiful home, two boys, and a great life. Carl and Eve have no kids, but they live a good life. Adam and Eliza decided to rent a place in The Isle of Palms for the summer. While there, Adam runs into an old friend and decides to catch up with them. The only issue with this is that they were madly in love during their teenage years. Eliza and Carl become overwhelmed with jealousy due to the rekindling of Eve and Adam's flame, but they also have some attraction to each other. Through the book, we see heartbreak, tragedy, and obstacles that seem impossible to overcome. I didn't think the issues in this book could be solved, but thankfully, it had a wonderful ending.

I enjoyed reading the various emotional stages in this book, but I was glad to see a positive end. Over the 20 years of friendship, there has been tremendous growth between everybody, and we see the true meaning of friendship. I would give this book 4 out of 5 stars because it was intriguing and well-written. I completely recommend this book, but the target audience for it would be young adults or adults. Overall, I enjoyed reading this book, and I believe others would as well.

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### ***Some Places More Than Others* by Renee Watson (Reviewed by KR)**

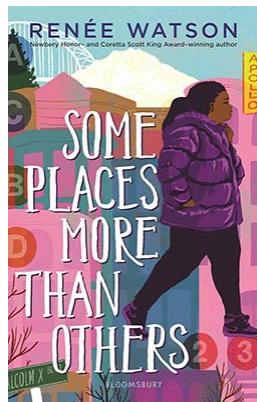
This book was different from the ones I have read before. I would describe this book as very authentic. It was a quick read, but it did not intrigue me as much as other books have.

This book introduces the character Amara. Amara is an 11-year-old girl, she lives in Oregon with her mom and her dad; They live a good and comfortable life. Her mom is a dress designer, and her dad is the vice president at Nike. Her dad's side of the family lives in New York, but Amara has never had the chance to meet them. Her dad is visiting New York for a business trip, and Amara wants to go more than anything, but her parents are hesitant to let her go. She wants to go to New York for the experience and to understand more about her family and their history. Eventually, Amara wears down her parents, and she gets to visit New York. On her trip, she learns more about her family history, she learns more about black history, and she has a great bonding experience with her family.

This book was heartfelt and genuine. I enjoyed reading this because it gives another perspective on forgiveness and the importance of it. I was pleased with the book's ending, and the storyline of it. I loved watching Amara discover more about herself and who she is. I would give this book a 3/10 because while it was great, I would not call it my favourite. I recommend this book to young adults and everyone who loves to read a heartfelt story.

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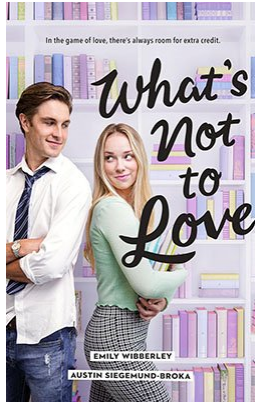
### ***What's Not To Love* by Emily Wibberley and Austin Siegemund-Broka (Reviewed by KR)**

This book has now become my favourite one I have borrowed from the library. Once I read the description, I knew it would intrigue me.

This Young Adult fiction is about two teenagers at the same high school; everything is a competition between them. Alison Sanger and Ethan Molloy have had a rivalry since high school began. From having every class with each other to being on all the same teams, they are constantly together. The one problem is that they cannot stand each other. They've both applied to Harvard, both competing to get in. Their last and final competition is who will win valedictorian. Alison thinks she can avoid Ethan until graduation, but what happens when they're both in charge of planning a party together? They will be seeing each other more often now. The real question is, how much longer will they be able to keep up their rivalry? Are feelings going to get in the way of their hatred towards each other?

I strongly recommend this read. I would describe this book as a page-turner since I could not put it down. What makes this story more heartwarming, is the basing on a true story. While we see some plot twists throughout the book, it's hard to know how it will end. I was more than happy with how this book was written, especially how great the ending was. This story was wonderful, and I would recommend this book to young adults and anyone who loves reading the "academic rivals" storylines!

Find "What's Not to Love" today in our catalogue.



## Book reviews for kids

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1. Write down your name, age, the title of the book, the reason why you liked it, and how many stars you would give this book out of five. You can include a drawing or photograph!
2. Then email or submit your book reviews to us.

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