

RVLS Book Club Kits

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak, Grades 9 and up (20 copies)

It's just a small story really, about among other things: a girl, some words, an accordionist, some fanatical Germans, a Jewish fist-fighter, and quite a lot of thievery. . . .

Set during World War II in Germany, Markus Zusak's groundbreaking new novel is the story of Liesel Meminger, a foster girl living outside of Munich. Liesel scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement before he is marched to Dachau.

This is an unforgettable story about the ability of books to feed the soul.

City of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau, Grades 5-7 (20 copies)

This book tells the story of the great, underground city of Ember, designed as a last refuge for the human race. But when the storerooms run out of food and the lights begin to fail, it's up to two teens, Lina and Doon, to decipher the fragments of an ancient parchment and find a way out of Ember.

Cracker!: the Best Dog in Vietnam by Cynthia Kadohata, Grades 5-8 (20 copies)

Cracker is one of the United States Army's most valuable weapons: a German shepherd trained to sniff out bombs, traps, and the enemy. The fate of entire platoons rests on her keen sense of smell. She's a Big Deal, and she likes it that way. Sometimes Cracker remembers when she was younger, and her previous owner would feed her hot dogs and let her sleep in his bed. That was nice, too. When Cracker is paired with Rick, she isn't so sure about this new owner. He's going to have to prove himself to *her* before *she's* going to prove herself to him. They need to be friends before they can be a team, and they *have* to be a team if they want to get home alive.

Crazy Horse by Mari Sandoz, Adult (18 copies)

Crazy Horse, the legendary military leader of the Oglala Sioux whose personal power and social nonconformity contributed to his reputation as being "strange," fought in many famous battles, including the Little Bighorn, and held out tirelessly against the U.S. government's efforts to confine the Lakotas to reservations. Finally, in the spring of 1877 he surrendered, only to meet a violent death. More than a century later Crazy Horse continues to hold a special place in the hearts and minds of his people. Mari Sandoz offers a powerful evocation of the long-ago world and enduring spirit of "Crazy Horse." Chosen as a 2007 One Book, One Nebraska selection.

Eagle Blue by Michael, D'Orso, Adult (20 copies)

Eagle Blue follows the Fort Yukon Eagles, winners of six regional championships in a row, through the course of an entire 28-game season, from their first day of practice in late November to the Alaska State Championship Tournament in March. With insight, frankness, and compassion, Michael D'Orso climbs into the lives of these fourteen boys, their families, and their coach, shadowing them through an Arctic winter of fifty-below-zero temperatures and near-round-the-clock darkness as the Eagles criss-cross Alaska in pursuit of their—and their village's—dream.

Elijah of Buxton by Christopher Paul Curtis, Grades 3-7 (20 copies)

Eleven-year-old Elijah lives in Buxton, Canada, a settlement of runaway slaves near the American border. He's the first child in town to be born free, and he ought to be famous just for that. Unfortunately, all that most people see is a "fragile" boy who's scared of snakes and talks too much. But everything changes when a former slave steals money from Elijah's friend, who has been saving to buy his family out of captivity in the South. Now it's up to Elijah to track down the thief--and his dangerous journey just might make a hero out of him, if only he can find the courage to get back home.

Escape: The Story of the Great Houdini by Sid Fleischman, Grades 4-9 (20 copies)

How did he walk through walls, escape drowning, and shatter iron chains that were tightly wrapped around him? The rare photos in this book might help you figure it out. So might the exclusive update about the rumor that Houdini was poisoned. But just remember, a true magician never reveals his tricks. . . .

Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan, Grades 6-9 (20 copies)

Esperanza thought she'd always live with her family on their ranch in Mexico--she'd always have fancy dresses, a beautiful home, and servants. But a sudden tragedy forces Esperanza and Mama to flee to California during the Great Depression, and to settle in a camp for Mexican farm workers. Esperanza isn't ready for the hard labor, financial struggles, or lack of acceptance she now faces. When their new life is threatened, Esperanza must find a way to rise above her difficult circumstances--Mama's life, and her own, depend on it.

Everlost by Neal Shusterman, Grades 8 and up (15 copies)

Nick and Allie don't survive the car accident, but their souls don't exactly get where they're supposed to go either. Instead, they're caught halfway between life and death, in a sort of limbo known as Everlost: a shadow of the living world, filled with all the things and places that no longer exist. It's a magical, yet dangerous place where bands of lost kids run wild and anyone who stands in the same place too long sinks to the center of the Earth. When they find Mary, the self-proclaimed queen of lost souls, Nick feels like he's found a home, but Allie isn't satisfied spending eternity between worlds. Against all warnings, Allie begins learning the "Criminal Art" of haunting, and ventures into dangerous territory, where a monster called the McGill threatens all the souls of Everlost. In this imaginative novel, Neal Shusterman explores questions of life, death, and what just might lie in between.

Green Glass Sea by Ellen Klages, Grades 5-8 (20 copies)

It's 1943, and eleven-year-old Dewey Kerrigan is en route to New Mexico to live with her mathematician father. Soon she arrives at a town that, officially, doesn't exist. It is called Los Alamos, and it is abuzz with activity, as scientists and mathematicians from all over America and Europe work on the biggest secret of all--"the gadget." None of them--not J. Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Manhattan Project; not the mathematicians and scientists; and least of all, Dewey--know how much "the gadget" is about to change their lives.

Hattie Big Sky by Kirby Larson, Grades 3-8 (20 copies)

Alone in the world, teen-aged Hattie is driven to prove up on her uncle's homesteading claim. For years, sixteen-year-old Hattie's been shuttled between relatives. Tired of being Hattie Here-and-There, she courageously leaves Iowa to prove up on her late uncle's homestead claim near Vida, Montana. With a stubborn stick-to-itiveness, Hattie faces frost, drought and blizzards. Despite many hardships, Hattie forges ahead, sharing her adventures with her friends--especially Charlie, fighting in France--through letters and articles for her hometown paper. Her backbreaking quest for a home is lightened by her neighbors, the Muellers. But she feels threatened by pressure to be a "Loyal" American, forbidding friendships with folks of German descent. Despite everything, Hattie's determined to stay until a tragedy causes her to discover the true meaning of home.

Heat by Mike Lupica, Grades 5-8 (20 copies)

Michael Arroyo has a pitching arm that throws serious heat. But his firepower is nothing compared to the heat Michael faces in his day-to-day life. Newly orphaned after his father led the family's escape from Cuba, Michael's only family is his seventeen-year old brother Carlos. If Social Services hears of their situation, they will be separated in the foster-care system—or worse, sent back to Cuba. Together, the boys carry on alone, dodging bills and anyone who asks too many questions. But then someone wonders how a twelve-year-old boy could possibly throw with as much power as Michael Arroyo throws. With no way to prove his age, no birth certificate, and no parent to fight for his cause, Michael's secret world is blown wide open, and he discovers that family can come from the most unexpected sources.

Holes by Louis Sachar, Grades 4-8 (20 copies)

Stanley Yelnats is under a curse. A curse that began with his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather and has since followed generations of Yelnats. Now Stanley has been unjustly sent to a boys' detention center, Camp Green Lake, where the warden makes the boys "build character" by spending all day, every day, digging holes: five feet wide and five feet deep. It doesn't take long for Stanley to realize there's more than character improvement going on at Camp Green Lake. The boys are digging holes because the warden is looking for something. Stanley tries to dig up the truth in this inventive and darkly humorous tale of crime and punishment—and redemption.

Home Place by Wright Morris, Adult (11 copies)

This account in first-person narrative and photographs of the one-day visit of Clyde Muncy to "the home place" at Lone Tree, Nebraska, has been called "as near to a new fiction form as you could get." Both prose and pictures are homely: worn linoleum, an old man's shoes, well-used kitchen utensils, and weathered siding. Muncy's journey of discovery takes the measure of the man he has become and of what he has left behind.

Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins, Grades 7 and up (13 copies)

In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. Long ago the districts waged war on the Capitol and were defeated. As part of the surrender terms, each district agreed to send one boy and one girl to appear in an annual televised event called, "The Hunger Games," a fight to the death on live TV. Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives alone with her mother and younger sister, regards it as a death sentence when she is forced to represent her district in the Games. The terrain, rules, and level of audience participation may change but one thing is constant: kill or be killed.

I Am a Man: Chief Standing Bear's Journey for Justice by Joe Starita, Adult (10 copies)

“What makes a man a citizen of the country in which he was born? Joe Starita vividly tells the little known story of Standing Bear, whose 1879 case in Federal Court was to the status of American Indians what the Dred Scott case was to African Americans. In Starita’s book, the story of a great man from a very small tribe becomes a microcosm for the complex nineteenth century struggle that both the American Indians and the Federal government faced in trying to define the status of native people under the law. He paints an important and compelling picture of the plight of the Ponca, a tribe impaled by misguided paternalism, while hopelessly ensnared in the bureaucratic red tape of an indecisive and out-of-touch government. It is a story that needs to be told and a book that needs to be read by anyone trying to understand the complex story of America’s relationship with its native people.”--- Bill Yenne, author of *Sitting Bull* and *Indian Wars*

Jazz by Walter Dean Myers, Grades 5-9 (20 copies)

This smash-hit picture book of jazz music poems, from award-winning father-son team Walter Dean Myers and Christopher Myers, is now available in paperback. There's a crazy syncopation /and it's tearing through the nation / and it's bringing sweet elation / to every single tune./ It's Jazz/ From bebop to New Orleans, from ragtime to boogie, and every style in between, this collection of Walter Dean Myers's energetic and engaging poems, accompanied by Christopher Myers's bright and exhilarating paintings, celebrates different styles of the American art form, jazz. "JAZZ" takes readers on a musical journey from jazz's beginnings to the present day. Includes time line and jazz glossary.

Lantern in Her Hand by Bess Streeter Aldrich, Grades 7 and up (20 copies)

After marrying Will Deal and moving to Nebraska, Abbie endures the difficulties of frontier life and raises her children to pursue the ambitions that were once her own.

The Last Newspaper Boy in America by Sue Corbett, Grades 4-7 (10 copies)

Wil David can't wait to take over his brother's paper route. For years it has been tradition in his family to hand over the route to the next boy in line on his twelfth birthday and Wil is just about to turn twelve and get his chance to put his sidearm throw into action. But when the newspaper company cancels delivery to Wil's small town, it's up to him to fight to save the route. Along the way, he unravels a carnival mystery, exposes a con artist, rescues his little town, and becomes a true hero.

Local Wonders by Ted Kooser, Adult (20 copies)

Ted Kooser describes with exquisite detail and humor the place he calls home in the rolling hills of southeastern Nebraska—an area known as the Bohemian Alps. Nothing is too big or too small for his attention. Memories of his grandmother's cooking are juxtaposed with reflections about the old-fashioned outhouse on his property. When casting his eye on social progress, Kooser reminds us that the closing of local schools, thoughtless county weed control, and irresponsible housing development destroy more than just the view. In the end, what makes life meaningful for Kooser are the ways in which his neighbors care for one another and how an afternoon walking with an old dog, or baking a pie, or decorating the house for Christmas can summon memories of his Iowa childhood. This writer is a seer in the truest sense of the word, discovering the extraordinary within the ordinary, the deep beneath the shallow, the abiding wisdom in the pithy Bohemian proverbs that are woven into his essays.

My Dog May Be a Genius by Jack Prelutsky, Grades 2-5 (20 copies)

Have you ever encountered an underwater marching band, a pig in a bathing suit, a pet orangutan, or a witch in a hardware store? Have you ever sat with a skunk in a courtroom, shopped for a dinosaur, or conversed with a Bupple, a Wosstrus, a Violinnet, or a Celloon? You will have, once you've read this exuberant collaboration from Jack Prelutsky and his "partner in crime"* James Stevenson. The "reigning czars of silliness"* have once again teamed up to bring readers an irresistible collection of poems that will have tongues twisting, imaginations soaring, and sides aching with laughter. The result is genius, indeed.

O Pioneers! by Willa Cather, Grades 7 and up (15 copies)

This powerful early Cather novel, a landmark of American fiction, tells the story of the young Alexandra Bergson, whose dying father leaves her in charge of the family and of the Nebraska lands they have struggled to farm. In Alexandra's lifelong fight to survive and succeed, Cather relates an important chapter in the history of the American frontier.

One False Move by Alex Kava, Adult (12 copies)

Melanie Starks and her seventeen-year-old son have been running one con job or another for as long as she can remember. But she's getting sick of that life - and worried that Charlie is enjoying it too much. So when her brother, Jared, gets out of his life sentence on a technicality and shows up with a plan for a big score, Melanie decides her last job will be helping Jared rob a local bank. And then everything goes terribly wrong.

Red Cell by John Kalkowski, Grades 7 and up (12 copies)

Will Conlan is an unconventional thinker. After winning a baseball game with an innovative toss of a rosin bag, he catches the interest of a chief operative of the Homeland Security's Analytic Red Cell. Employing the creative problem solving of philosophers, futurists, and Hollywood movie writers, this intelligence unit is seeking any original ideas about anticipating terrorist plots. As a recent surge of terrorist activity undermines these fresh insights, the operative banks on the notion that Will's youthful imagination, unclouded by the premise of "it can't be done," may provide the key insight they need and seeks to secretly exploit Will's unhindered "out of the box" thinking. Unaware of the magnitude of danger surrounding him, Will uncovers something he wasn't supposed to discover—a connection between a television advertisement and a master terrorist plot. Narrowly surviving, he alone foils a bombing at Wrigley Field. Uncertain about the knowledge he now holds, he has to figure out the terrorists' next target. Will just doesn't realize...it's him.

Re-Gifters (Graphic Novel) by Mike Carey, Grades 7 and up (16 copies)

Meet Jen Dik Seong -- or "Dixie" as she's known to her friends. Korean American, dirt poor, and living on the ragged edge of LA's Koreatown, Dixie's only outlet is the ancient martial art of hapkido. In fact, she's on the verge of winning a championship -- until she falls for fellow hapkido fan/California surfer boy Adam and gets thrown spectacularly off her game. As she struggles to win the tournament -- not to mention Adam's affections - - Dixie learns that in love and in gift-giving, what goes around comes around.

Rescue Josh McGuire by Ben Mikaelson, Grades 6-8 (15 copies)

A Daring Rescue...or a Deadly Risk? Ever since Josh's older brother died, his father has been drinking too much and taking his anger out on Josh. But when he orphans a bear cub on a hunting trip, it's more than Josh can stand. Josh insists on bringing the defenseless cub home-only to find out he must surrender it to game officials. Knowing the cub will be given to researchers, Josh makes a defiant choice. Taking only his brother's motorcycle, the cub, and his dog, Josh runs away to the mountains, vowing to stay until the hunting laws are changed. But the mountains hold unexpected menace, and Josh's bid for Justice soon becomes a battle to survive.

Restoring the Burnt Child by William Kloefkorn, Adult (10 copies)

Negotiating the no man's land between ages nine and thirteen, this memoir of a small-town boy's life in 1940s Kansas continues the story William Kloefkorn began in his much-loved volume *This Death by Drowning*. With characteristic humor and in prose as lyrical as his best poetry, Kloefkorn describes the unsentimental education he received at the hands of the denizens of Urie's Barber Shop and the Rexall Drugstore and at the knees of the true characters who made up his family. From the "firefly" stunt that nearly burns down his home to the distant firestorms of World War II, fire holds an endless range of subtle and surprising lessons for the boy, whose impressions Kloefkorn conveys with the immediacy, naiveté, and poignancy of youth—and reconsiders with the wisdom and distance of age.

Rules by Cynthia Lord, Grades 4-7 (20 copies)

Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life. Which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She's spent years trying to teach David the rules from "a peach is not a funny-looking apple" to "keep your pants on in public"---in order to head off David's embarrassing behaviors. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising, new sort-of friend, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal?

The Schwa Was Here by Neal Shusterman, Grades 6-9 (15 copies)

They say his clothes blend into the background, no matter where he stands. They say a lot of things about the Schwa, but one thing's for sure: no one ever noticed him. Except me. My name is Antsy Bonano and I was the one who realized the Schwa was "functionally invisible" and used him to make some big bucks. But I was also the one who caused him more grief than a friend should. So if you all just shut up and listen, I'll tell you everything there is to know about the Schwa, from how he got his name, to what really happened with his mom. I'll spill everything. Unless, of course, "the Schwa Effect" wipes him out of my brain before I'm done.

Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie by David Lubar, Grades 7 and up (20 copies)

This sparkling novel covers a year in the life of high school freshmen Scott Hudson, who is sideswiped by the unexpected news that his mother is about to have another baby. In a hilarious and touching journal addressed to the unborn intruder, Scott bares his soul as he copes with the trials and tribulations of a life that is changing faster than he wants it to. Filled with Lubar's trademark wit, enlivened by unexpected twists and turns of plot, *Sleeping Freshman* is widely considered as one of the best YA novels of 2005.

Stranded by Ben Mikaelson, Grades 5-8 (20 copies)

Koby's whole life changed after the accident four years ago. Between the smothering concern of her separated parents and the awkward glances from the kids at school, Koby only feels at home when she is on the ocean in her dinghy. That all changes when she rescues two dying pilot whales. Day after day, she visits the whales as they begin their long road to recovery. She finds a new friend in Dr. Tracy Michaels, a veterinarian, and gains the admiration of her classmates. But most importantly, Koby starts to recognize her own strength and courage.

Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelson, Grades 7 and up (17 copies)

Within Cole Matthews lie anger, rage and hate. Cole has been stealing and fighting for years. This time he caught Alex Driscoll in the parking lot and smashed his head against the sidewalk. Now, Alex may have permanent brain damage and Cole is in the biggest trouble of his life. Cole is offered Circle Justice: a system based on Native American traditions that attempts to provide healing for the criminal offender, the victim and the community. With prison as his only alternative, Cole plays along. He says he wants to repent, but in his heart Cole blames his alcoholic mom, his abusive dad, wimpy Alex -- everyone but himself -- for his situation. Cole receives a one year banishment to a remote Alaskan island. There, he is mauled by a mysterious white bear of Native American legend. Hideously injured, Cole waits for his death. His thoughts shift from anger to humility. To survive, he must stop blaming others and take responsibility for his life. Rescuers arrive to save Cole's but it is the attack of the Spirit Bear that may save his soul.

Unwind by Neal Shusterman, Grades 7 and up (14 copies)

In America after the Second Civil War, the Pro-Choice and Pro-Life armies came to an agreement: The Bill of Life states that human life may not be touched from the moment of conception until a child reaches the age of thirteen. Between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, however, a parent may choose to retroactively get rid of a child through a process called "unwinding." Unwinding ensures that the child's life doesn't "technically" end by transplanting all the organs in the child's body to various recipients. Now a common and accepted practice in society, troublesome or unwanted teens are able to easily be unwound.

The Usual Mistakes by Erin Flanagan, Adult (15 copies)

These characters may be the usual suspects, making the usual mistakes, but their stories are not the usual fare. Populated by pretenders, ex-cons, and wannabes who bend the rules, break the law, and risk everything to salvage their own hearts, the twelve stories in *The Usual Mistakes* conduct readers into a world where betrayal is just a beginning. Deception, infidelity, even death—where a person goes from there is the mainspring of Erin Flanagan's fiction, and in the turns her characters take, we find rare insights: that we are often wedded to one another because of, not in spite of, our flaws and that this paradoxical connection may be cause for hope.

White Star: A Dog on the Titanic by Marty Crisp, Grades 4-8 (11 copies)

The year is 1912, and twelve-year-old Sam Harris is traveling from England to America on the grand ship the Titanic. Sam is lonely at first, but is soon delighted to discover that there are dogs aboard! When Sam volunteers to help out in the kennel, he meets Star, a spunky Irish setter that belongs to the ship's captain. Sam and Star become fast friends, and when disaster strikes, the boy and dog must rely on each other more than ever before. The harrowing, breathless conclusion -- and fascinating historical information -- makes this boy-and-dog tale truly unforgettable.