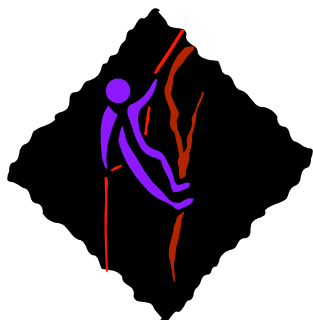


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Check It Out!

Volume 4 Issue 1

Winter 2000



Into Thin Air

By Jon Krakauer / 378 pages
Reviewed by Monica Preciado

**The Library Staff
Recommends to students
and/or staff:**

**Cindy: *A Child Called
"It"* by Dave Pelzer**

**Melissa: *Hearts in Atlan-
tis* by Stephen King**



**Jessie: *Black and Blue*
by Anna Quindlen**

**Becky: *The Hot Zone*
by Richard Preston**

**Victoria: *'Tis* by Frank
McCourt**

This issue covers

Biography

and

Autobiography.

For Fiction,

*please see our spring
issue.*

Because I like books that won't have me sleeping over them, I asked the librarian for a good book and she recommended *Into Thin Air*. By the way she told part of the story, I was completely interested in checking it out, so I took it with me that instant. This is the first book I read by Jon Krakauer, and he proves to be a great writer. I really enjoyed the 378 pages full of adventure.

The story mostly takes place on Mount Everest. Many expedition groups head off mountain climbing to Everest. The higher climbers go up the mountain, the less oxygen there is. This makes them have to use oxygen tanks with the danger of running out at any moment. The lowest temperature stated in the book is one-hundred degrees below zero. So why do these people like climbing mountains with temperatures below zero knowing that there is a great possibility of dying at any time? What is the point of suffering in the freezing cold? Is it that they take mountain climbing as a sport? The book's ending is not a surprise to the reader (the author tells the conclusion in advance), but it's still shocking and at the same time, miraculous.

Scott Fischer, a forty-year-old man, is an American leader and head guide of the Mountain Madness expedition. We learn throughout the story that he has some health problems. He suffers attacks that would cause him to break into intense sweating, and he would shake a lot. If he were to suffer one of these attacks at "Camp Four" or higher on the mountain, he would never tell anyone. He is a strong man, trying his best to do his job. He is also a

friend of the author, Jon Krakauer, who is climbing the mountain at the same time with another expedition group.

Krakauer's theme in this book is the danger of mountain climbing and of nature itself. Throughout the story, he tells about everything that happens to almost each person he knows, including all the frostbite, oxygen deprivation, and the death of many of the climbers. He teaches us about the ugly weather, especially when there's thunder and high winds, because this is when many climbers die or get badly sick.

All the characters and events, together with a plot that reads like fiction, make this a good book. Krakauer's writing style is understandable and detailed. He uses quotes for those things he remembers hearing and saying. Reading this book makes me want to search for more of Krakauer's work because he is such a good writer. I recommend *Into Thin Air* to those interested in mountain climbing, adventure, mystery, and tragedy. These four things are what make *Into Thin Air* a good historical memoir.



Overcoming Adversity

The Color of Water

By James McBride/291 pp.

Reviewed by Beatrice Oseguera

From the first page to the last, this book, *The Color of Water*, will touch your heart. McBride's difficulties and pleasures in life stem from the fact that his mother is white and Jewish while his father is African-American. Every day coming home from school, he would see his mother wait for him in the crowd with all the other mothers. He could not understand why his mother was a different color from the rest of the mothers. When he asked his mother why she was different, her response was, "I'm not different, I'm just light-skinned." When he asks about what color God is, she tells him that God is the color of water.

McBride's mother never wanted to talk about the things that happened to her when she was young. She had been abused and felt unloved. Later, marrying a Black man was difficult for her because marrying a person of another race cost her her family, all of whom rejected her.

McBride grew up not understanding why he was different from the rest, and like many people, he started using drugs and even dropped out of school. James' mother would tell him, 'You're a human being, live your life as what you are, educate yourself or you'll be nothing. When he grew to adulthood, he finally got his mother to tell him the whole story of her youth. *The Color of Water* is an emotional and heartbreaking book of what family is really about.

I Never Had It Made

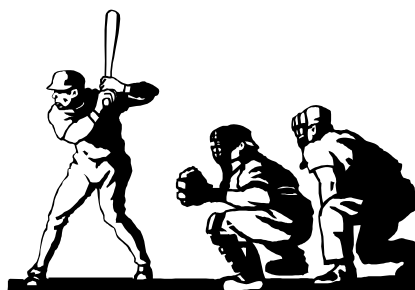
By Jackie Robinson and Alfred Duckett/304 pp.

Reviewed by Jared Goldstein

"I hate you," "Go home," and "You can't play here" are some of the nicer taunts that Jackie Robinson heard during his career with the Brooklyn Dodgers. *I Never Had It Made* is a wonderful book that shows the courage Jackie Robinson needed in order to be the first African-American person to play major league baseball. Robinson recounts his life before, during, and after his days with the Brooklyn Dodgers. He recounts his days growing up in Pasadena, playing four sports at UCLA, meeting his wife Rae, and being in the army. *I Never Had It Made*

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shows reader rything inson go through his with the Dodg-

ers. From teammates who wouldn't talk to him to other teams refusing to play against him, Robinson's life was not easy. If you're at all interested in what Robinson had to go through in order to break down the color line, then this book is for you. If I were to rate this book, I would give it a four out of five stars. *I Never Had It Made* reads smoothly and quickly and there is never a dull moment. So if you're interested in the life of Jackie Robinson, then this is the book for you.

*Pearl: The Obsessions and
Passions of Janis Joplin*

340 pages

Reviewed by Evette Perez

Pearl is a biography of Janis that shows a personal and professional Joplin. The author gives great detail and is a great source for anyone who wants to find out about her.

Janis was raised in the fading oil-refinery town of Port Arthur, Texas. At the age of seventeen, she realized she had a great voice. She sang in churches and then in beatnik houses. Her friend, Chet, helped her get into the music industry. They hitchhiked to San Francisco to see about a band named Big Brother and the Holding Company which was looking for a female singer. When Janis grabbed the microphone, the band was left speechless.

Joplin was quickly hired and began recording. Her gig at the Monterey Pop Festival along the other big names like Jimi Hendrix and the Who is the event that got Janis started.

*Courtney Love:
the Real Story*

By Poppy Z. Brite/253 pages

Reviewed by Sherry Taylor

Like Poppy admits, she was commissioned to write this book Courtney's way. Do not get me wrong—I am a major Courtney Love fan, but I do believe that this book consists of only what Courtney wants us to know. She has a right to privacy, but if she wants to commission an author to write a book, DO NOT make fools of us fans. We do know better. There is so much more than they are telling us. I'd rather know nothing than know lies or half-truths. It was interesting reading, but still a waste of time. I could have gotten just as much from watching MTV's Music News.

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Read more about Joplin's tragic life in *Pearl: The Obsessions and Passions of Janis Joplin*.



*Hendrix: Setting the
Record Straight*

By John McDermott/364 pp.

Reviewed by Ramon Ramirez

This book is about the trials and tribulations that Jimi Hendrix had to overcome in order to fulfill his dream of becoming a rock star. Hendrix spent most of his time being a back-up guitarist for all kinds of bands because no one had discovered his type of music. He didn't get his big break until he went to Britain where he thought he would have a better chance of being discovered for his new style of guitar playing. It took him awhile to pick up a record contract because no one was yet interested in his new way of playing until he met up with several producers from the states that believed his new sound could be a big hit.

I enjoyed this book very much because it proved that anyone can do whatever they want to as long as they work at it long and hard.

More Music

Mariah Carey Revisited By Chris Nickson/172 pages Reviewed by Shaliza Moore

With my love for her music, and Carey's love for her fans, I found that Chris Nickson's unauthorized biography of Mariah Carey gave me all I need to know. This tell-all book touches issues such as rags to riches, and the troubles Carey was faced with growing up biracial. Being Black Venezuelan and Irish only left her on the receiving end of prejudice. The 172 pages in this book will only keep you wanting more.

Mariah grew up all her life knowing what she wanted to be. Having a mother who was not only supportive, but also a member of the New York City Opera, encouraged her to follow her dreams. Singing was something that came naturally to Carey. Once she realized that she possessed this ability, she used it constantly.

When Mariah was four, she was already considered a born singer. Realizing this, her mother enrolled her in voice lessons. All this seemed fine and dandy, but they did struggle. Fame did not come easily for Carey. The family, sadly, continued to be the target of rampant racial intolerance, causing ongoing problems for Patricia and Alfred Roy Carey which led to

their separation and divorce when Mariah was a small

child. This left Mariah and Patricia to struggle. As the story continues with more detail, I realized that this book represents the triumph, admiration, and large amount of faith Mariah had to show to pursue her musical goal. This only makes the reader wonder how one mother can instill so much confidence in a child when all that child sees is negative. Yet Carey is able to see past the negative and turn it into a positive. That's what makes this book so interesting.

The theme of this biography is basically to believe in yourself and never give up. Shining throughout this book is Mariah's strong belief that following your dreams leads to nothing but success. You have to know that no matter where you go, you are going to be faced with negativity. And it's up to you to turn it into a positive.

I've come to notice that in Chris Nickson's book *Mariah Carey Revisited*, his writing style expresses a lot of detail and interest. He keeps the readers wanting more and at the same time, he's giving it to them. He stays right on topic, not switching from event to event. This is good because it keeps the reader from getting confused.

This book is highly recommended for all of you number one Mariah Carey fans—and even those of you who don't quite know her. It gives you more than what any television show would offer. This book gives you front row seats to her private yet highly recognized life. Mariah Carey is number one in my eyes, and after reading this book, there's no doubt in my mind that she will be number one in yours, too.

**"Imparting knowledge is only lighting other men's candles at our lamp, without depriving ourselves of any flame."
Henry Adams**

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil By John Berendt/386 pages Reviewed by Preciosa Calderon

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil is a wonderful book that makes you think twice about how crazy people can act at times. This book takes place in Savannah, Georgia where almost everyone knows the business of everyone else. This town is full of rich people but also strange people. You will find just about everything hard to believe, but this is a true story.

There's a reporter that comes to Savannah from New York looking for a good story that could help him get a name for himself. A prominent citizen in town has been accused of murdering a young man that he employed in his antique goods business. The reporter—the author of this book—plans to interview the accused. By the time he arrives in town, everyone already

knows who he is. Through the window of his apartment, he gets to know more and more about who is who and what things they do. The reporter is put in awkward situations and while he gets through them, he meets all kinds of people.

Many people in Savannah are rich. That means that everyone has a big, wonderful house, and they throw a lot of parties. In these parties, women get together and start talking about how their husbands killed themselves, like suicide is something that normally happens in every family. There is also an old lady that believes she can contact the dead at a cemetery. She says those thirty minutes before midnight are when the good spirits are out and thirty

minutes after midnight are when the bad spirits are out. She helps the man accused of murder to contact the dead. But that's not where the strangeness stops; there's much more.

There's a man that glues string onto flies and carries them around with him. He also has this chemical that he carries around, and everyone seems to believe that one day he'll pour it into the waters of

Never use the word gossip in a perjorative sense. It's the stuff of biography and has to be woven in.
 Joan Peyser

All But My Life

By Gerda Weissmann Klein/261 pp.
 Reviewed by Raquel Ballesteros-King

This book is incredible! It is the breath-taking retelling of the horrific experience that one young girl lived through. It all began in Bielitz, Poland on September 3, 1939, when the Nazis invaded and began to round up all Jewish people. Gerda was taken to a labor camp for three years. She was

harshly treated and fiercely abused for those three years. Now, fifty years later, she is looking back at her life—the life she feels that she doesn't deserve—and thanking God she doesn't have a headstone in Czechoslovakia.

Savannah and try to kill everyone in town. Also, we hear about a man that walks around with an invisible dog and gets paid for it. Then last, but not least, there's a Black drag queen that befriends the author and is always getting herself in trouble.

If you're looking for a book that will make you laugh and wonder about people, this book is the perfect book for you. You will have to prepare yourself for just about anything that goes on. Try to see from the point of view of the main character, 'the reporter,' and think of the things you would do if you were he.

Need a good biography?
 Ms Waddle recommends

She Said Yes

Read the inspiring story of Cassie Bernall, who was killed at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado last spring.

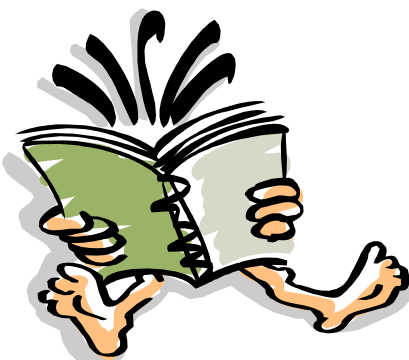


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as by great spaces and the stars."*



**New Books In Our
Library for
Teachers**

*Managing Classroom
Behavior* by James M.
Kauffman, et. al.

*Classroom Management
for Secondary Teachers*
by Edmund T. Emmer, et. al.

*Discipline Survival Kit for
the Secondary Teacher*
by Julia G. Thompson

***She Got Game*
By Cynthia Cooper/256 pp.
Reviewed by Mary Turner**

The main thing Cynthia Cooper is trying to tell the reader is that no matter what the circumstances look like, you can be successful. All you have to do is believe in yourself and have faith in God. You can be in a situation that is really bad, and if you keep your head and give your life to Christ, you can easily overcome that situation. This book is an autobiography and the character (who is also the writer) grew up very poor, but she was determined to succeed no matter what. She is now very important, a great WNBA basketball player.

Cynthia Cooper went overseas to play basketball after she finished her career at USC. She was an underdog, and she was never really seen. When she went overseas, she made a name for herself. She was one of the best players. So when they started the WNBA, she was determined to keep playing at the same level. She worked and worked, and she did just that. She has established quite a name for herself, and she is far from the underdog.

When Cynthia Cooper and her WNBA team, the Houston Comets, won their third championship, Cynthia said on camera that she gives God all the glory, and that it was all God's doing that made the way for them. I want to one day be like her and follow in her way.

***A Child Called "It"*
By Dave Pelzer/184 pp.
Reviewed by Crystal Valenzuela**

A Child Called "It," an autobiography by Dave Pelzer, is a must read book. based on the author's childhood from the time he was four to twelve years old. It will make you cry, laugh, and be mad, bringing out all of your emotions.

Dave Pelzer started getting physically abused by his mother around the age of four. At first it was just beatings, but it later grew into public humiliation and starvation. Dave's mother started drinking and singled Dave out from his brothers when she wanted to punish someone. She did anything from locking him in the bathroom with a bucketful of ammonia and Clorox to stabbing him and then not taking him to the hospital.

This book is about the will of a little child to keep himself alive by any means. Pelzer learned how to beat his mother at her "games." He even went as far as eating out of trash cans to keep himself alive.

This book does have a bad side. It leaves you with many questions and compels you to read the sequels *The Lost Boy* and *A Man Named Dave*. These books may make you realize your life is not so bad, or make you want to do something about child abuse. It is a must read!