

ily farm. Her story of integrating back into high school life after being home schooled for two years is the classic new-kid story line. She joins track, meets a boy, has misunderstanding with the boy, and then falls for the boy. The secondary historical story line features Josey, Tara's ancestor in 1859. Gold has been discovered on her farm by a handsome charmer named Mr. Curry. When her father disagrees with Mr. Curry, he is murdered and the gold disappears. The two stories merge as Tara uses Mr. Curry's mysterious necklace to find the missing gold.

Larson's black-and-white artwork focuses primarily on the character's faces and expressions. The artwork defines the different time periods very well, using black backgrounds for the past. Josey's story line is stronger than Tara's. There is plenty of intrigue and family dynamics detailed in the dialogue and artwork to keep the reader entranced. Tara's plot is more insular, with only Tara being of much interest. Still there is enough momentum from the interconnected aspect to keep readers turning the pages. Libraries looking for quality one-volume graphic novels should consider this one a solid option.

—Kristin Fletcher-Spear.

3Q • 4P • S

Lerangis, Peter. **WTF**. Simon Pulse/S & S, 2009. 272p. \$8.99 Trade pb. 978-1-4169-1360-3.

Jimmy, Cam, and Byron are on their way to a party in a "borrowed" car when a deer appears from nowhere and changes their lives forever. Cam is left for dead because Jimmy fears being caught for driving without a license and Byron is worried about the drugs in his pocket, which must make it to a contact at the party, no matter what. The cops want to talk to Jimmy and to the drug supplier, Waits, but Waits is on the run from his mob connection and inadvertently involves Reina, Cam's girlfriend.

Everything comes to a head at an all-night club owned by Reina's cousin.

Written in ever-widening circles and loops, this novel's structure nearly becomes a character in its own right, lending an unpredictability and urgency to the events. The

and when a chapter moves back to another character in a different place, clues help the reader to switch gears. The story takes place predominantly on one night (with only a few necessary flashbacks), making the read compulsive and surreal. Male and female characters from a variety of backgrounds will give the book broad appeal, perhaps especially to reluctant readers. Sex, drugs, and strong language are prevalent—as might be supposed by the title—along the lines of a

Chris Crutcher book, giving an air of realism to a horrifying night.—Melissa Moore.

4Q • 4P • M • J • S

Lieb, Josh. **I Am a Genius of Unspeakable Evil and I Want to Be Your Class President**. RazorBill/Penguin USA, 2009. 304p. \$15.99. 978-1-59514-540-5. Photos.

Disguised as the biggest loser in the eighth grade at his school in Omaha, Nebraska, Oliver Watson is really a cunning billionaire who secretly controls everything within his reach, from the teachers in his school to his father's job as the director of a public television station. Oliver has a team working for him at all times, including the false figurehead of his corporation, Lionel Sheldrake, a former insurance executive recruited from skid row, and a highly trained dog, Lollipop, disguised as the family pet. When Oliver realizes that his father, usually ambivalent about Oliver's activities, is excited by the prospect of Oliver's becoming class president, he focuses the efforts of his corporation on winning the office.

The story is told by Oliver and is embellished with his sarcastic footnotes. It varies to include transcripts of conversations and photos used as if they were evidence, all of which will engage readers accustomed to multimedia formats. Oliver dominates the world because he is clever, and he gains his father's admiration for this skill. The author portrays school life realistically and creates a Walter Mitty for teenagers, especially those who do not fit in. They will become huge fans of this book.—Jenny Ingram.

4Q • 4P • M • J

Lupica, Mike. **Million-Dollar Throw**. Philomel/Penguin USA, 2009. 256p. \$17.99. 978-0-399-24626-5.

Eighth-grader Nate "Brady" Brodie is one of professional quarterback Tom Brady's biggest fans. Nate also plays quarterback, and when he wins the chance to throw one pass for a million dollars during halftime at a New England Patriots game, his entire life changes. Suddenly Nate feels a tremendous amount of pressure, and his own play on the football field is adversely affected. In addition, Nate's family is in financial trouble and his parents must take on second jobs. He also faces the prospect of his best friend Abby going blind. Nate must learn to deal with the circumstances that surround him without being weighed down by the pressure to succeed. Instead of burdening himself with the throw and asking, "Why me?," Nate decides to change the question to "Why not?"

Bestselling author Lupica stays within his sports fiction niche and provides another solid addition to the genre. The game descriptions are typical Lupica, but the plots that develop away from the field are what

make this book special. The possibility of the Brodie family losing their home provides a very current backdrop to the story. Lupica keeps the tension high as the million-dollar throw approaches and surprises the reader with a heartwarming decision at the end of the story. Through Nate, Lupica explores the themes of believing in yourself and handling pressure, issues faced by many teens. Teens who love sports fiction or Lupica's other books will find this book a rapid, enjoyable read.—Dave Goodale.

5Q • 3P • J • S

Mankell, Henning. **When the Snow Fell**. Delacorte, 2009. 256p. \$15.99. 978-0-385-73497-4.

Joel Gustafson, a fourteen-year-old growing up in a small town in northern Sweden during the 1950s, makes a set of New Year's resolutions to celebrate the first snowfall. He resolves to live to be one hundred, to see the sea, and, within the next year, to see a woman naked. Joel expects to have to overcome a few obstacles to complete his resolutions. It's the obstacles he did not expect that force him to reevaluate his relationships with people around him, his view of the world, and his hopes for the future.

Extremely well written, Mankell's prose occasionally verges on poetry. His descriptions are vivid enough for the reader to almost feel the cold in the Swedish air, and his characters act and read like real people rather than constructs to move the plot forward. Especially deft is the portrayal of Joel's father's relapse into alcoholism after a failed love affair. Mankell shows both Joel's and his father's realization of each other's responsibility in what has been a cycle of recoveries and relapses. Ultimately this book is a vivid and carefully crafted portrait of a young teen. Although there is a plot involving Joel's efforts to complete his resolutions and a harrowing rescue during a blizzard, Joel's internal struggles and realizations are the meat of the novel. The novel might not appeal to reluctant readers, but many will find parts of themselves in Joel.—Steven Kral.

5Q • 4P • S

Marsden, John. **Hamlet: A Novel**. Candlewick, 2009. 240p. \$16.99. 978-0-7636-4451-2.

The world does not lack retellings of Shakespeare's greatest tales, but to successfully reprise the story of Hamlet in a way both accessible and opaque, familiar yet transformed, seems an unimaginable feat. Yet Marsden does so almost entirely successfully. The story speaks to the familiar anxieties of young people: alienation from their parents, the uncertainty of which friendships can be trusted, the struggle to identify one's purpose and place in the world. Although the cadences and some occasional lines are drawn from the original work, the contemporary feeling

