

## 2009-10 Book Talks Grades 6-8

*Gregor the Overlander*, by Suzanne Collins

In the laundry room of their New York apartment building, Gregor follows his baby sister through an opening in the wall that sends them hurtling down into an underground world of giant spiders, rats, cockroaches, and bats – fantastic bats that carry the Underland’s human residents on their backs. There, Gregor is caught up in a war between the rats and the other underground creatures, sending him on a quest that will solve the biggest mystery of his life.

Underland Series: #2 - *Gregor and the Prophecy of Bane*

#3 - *Gregor and the Curse of the Warmbloods*

#4 - *Gregor and the Marks of Secret*

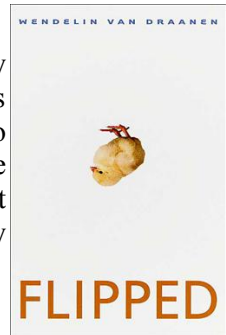
#5 - *Gregor and the Code of Claw*

*Artemis Fowl*, by Eoin Colfer

Twelve-year-old Artemis Fowl carries on his family’s long tradition of genius in illegal activities for the acquisition of wealth. In this tale of his first adventure, he endeavors to steal a treasure of gold from the fairy world of trolls, gnomes, sprites, and other creatures. But Artemis had not counted on adversaries such as Holly Short, an elf in the elite law enforcement squad, or Foaly, a centaur with great expertise in high-tech espionage. This is the first novel in a series; there are 6 ½ books in the series so far. There are also plans to produce an Artemis Fowl movie.

*Flipped*, by Wendelin Van Draanen

Two neighbors, a boy and a girl, tell this story. They tell the same story—well the story of the same days in their lives—but from opposite viewpoints. She loves him, she has loved him since the very first time she saw him, when his family was just moving into the house next door. And every day she has done things to show him how much she cares. He can’t stand her, has been unable to stand being around her since the very first time he saw her, that day when he was moving into the house next door to hers. Every day she does something else to irritate him. Why does she do these things?



*Touching Spirit Bear*, by Ben Mikaelson

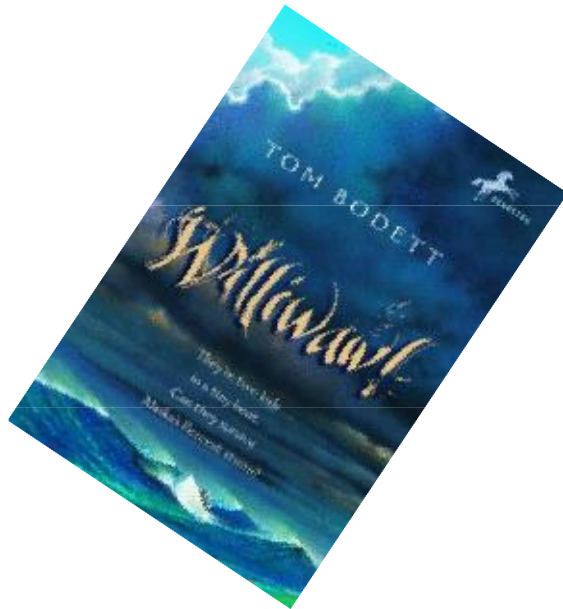
By the time Cole Matthew is 15, he has been fighting and stealing for years. After committing one more crime that almost kills a boy, his punishment can either be prison or Native American Circle Justice, and he gets to choose which. He chooses Circle Justice, and the Circle banishes him to a remote Alaskan island to live in isolation for one year. Will Cole survive his banishment? Will it change his life, or end it, or save it after all?

Kehret, Peg, *The Ghost's Grave*.

Josh didn't want to spend his summer at his elderly Aunt Ethel's house way out in the country, because he thought it would be very boring. The first night there wasn't boring, when Aunt Ethel shot a bat to death in the kitchen and nearly scared Josh to death. After that, Josh discovered the tree house, and the stray cat and her new kittens. Then Josh met Willie. He's the ghost who wanted Josh to do him a favor. A big favor. No, this summer turned out to be one of the most unboring times in Josh's life.

*Williwaw*, by Tom Bodett

Imagine what it would be like to live in a cabin in Alaska, so far from town that a baby bear would come right up to your porch to find something to eat, so far from your neighbors that you would have to travel by boat to visit them. If you lived there, you would know what the word "williwaw" meant. Ivan and his sister, September, certainly know what a williwaw is – a fall windstorm like the one that drowned their mother and sank the family boat in the middle of the bay one night. Where Ivan and September live in



Alaska, they need to know if a williwaw is coming, especially now that their father is gone on a week-long fishing trip, and they need to know if the weather is too dangerous to take a boat into town. Their mail is delivered by boat, to their cabin far outside of town, a cabin with no indoor plumbing, no telephone or television reception or Internet, no electric lights, in fact, no electricity at all unless they charge the generators with the stationary bike their dad rigged for them. If they charge the batteries, they can listen to radio broadcasts, and they can talk to their dad by radio also when he calls to check on them. That is, they can use the radio if Ivan hasn't burned it up by trying to rig his favorite pocket video game to the batteries, leaving them totally isolated from contact with the outside world. They will only stay isolated until they can get the radio repaired, which they can do if they take it by boat into town, which they shouldn't do if there is a big storm coming, a giant, dangerous storm, a williwaw as

bad as the one that sank their boat and killed their mom a few years before.

*Dragon Rider*, by Cornelia Funke

The author of *The Thief Lord*, *Inkheart*, and *Inkspell* has written this adventure story that begins with a rat, a brownie, and a human boy named Ben who has no home and no family, and an enormous dragon named Firedrake. With no place to go and nobody to care where he goes, Ben might as well accompany Firedrake and his friends on their search for the mythical place where dragons can live in peace forever. So how does a human boy travel with these magical creatures? Riding on the dragon's back, of course, as it flies off in search of the perfect place to live.

*Jackie's Wild Seattle*, by Will Hobbs

Shannon and her little brother, Cody, have a summer full of adventure when they visit their Uncle Neal in Seattle. The adventures will be especially hard for Cody, who is a fearful person, always imagining disasters about to happen. Uncle Neal deals with real-life disasters, driving a wildlife ambulance, rescuing wild animals that have been injured or stranded. Think about how you could safely get a coyote out of the elevator of a big-city office building, or how you would rescue a hawk tangled up in a net on a golf course. Shannon and Cody help with some of the rescues and with the care of the animals at the wildlife rescue center. That's where they meet Tyler, another volunteer with some upsetting secrets in his life. But, they find out that their uncle is also keeping some secrets from them, true events in his life that are scarier than anything little Cody is imagining.

*One-Handed Catch*, by Mary Jane Auch

On July 4, 1946, Norman's life changed forever. He was working in his family's grocery store, putting beef through the meat grinder. Norm's dad had said to give him a hand back there, and that was exactly what he did when he got his hand caught in the grinder. Instead of going out to watch the fireworks, Norman spent that night in the hospital. When he went home, he had to learn how to do things with only one hand. Think of all the things that you do with both hands – tie your shoes, eat your lunch, button your shirt, play baseball, one of the most important things in Norman's life. If you suddenly had just one hand instead of two, could you learn to do everything you do now with two hands?

*Schooled*, by Gordon Korman

All his life, Capricorn (Cap) Anderson has lived with his hippie grandmother, whose name is Rain, on a commune where they grow their own food and live a very quiet, isolated life completely away from modern civilization. Actually, all the former residents of the commune left a few years ago, so it's just been Cap and Rain living there alone. So when Rain is injured in a fall, there is nobody else to take care of Capricorn, and he goes to live with a foster family. For the first time in his life, Cap attends a public middle school. Cap, with his extremely long hair, looks different from all the other students, and he doesn't really know how to behave in this totally unfamiliar world. When a student plays a prank on Cap, and tells him that he has to memorize the names of all the other students in the school, Cap doesn't know that it's a joke, and he actually starts studying the yearbook and memorizing their names. Imagine what you would think if you had just arrived in this school, and you had never in your life been inside a school building, talked with other kids, watched television, or even spent money in a store. Capricorn knows a lot about Zen Buddhism, but nothing in his life has prepared him for the politics of a public school. This is the funniest book of the 11 books I am telling you about today.

*A Drowned Maiden's Hair*, by Laura Amy Schlitz

When Maud was 11 years old, the elderly Hawthorne sisters adopted her from the orphanage where she had been living. They took her to live in their elegant house where she had her own bedroom, and where she learned to enjoy modern conveniences, such as hot running water and a flush toilet, wonderful luxuries that most homes didn't have back in those Victorian times. Maud was very happy to get to live with this new family, although they were a little strange, and they insisted that Maud work at their family business, something about communicating with people who had died. "Ghosts?" asked Maud. "No," the Hawthorne sisters explained, not ghosts, but rather "good spirits who come back from the dead." Were they actually contacting the spirits of dead people, or was it all just trickery to cheat people out of their money? Maud wanted to know the truth, but she also wanted to continue living with her new family. She definitely didn't want to go back to the orphanage, and she wasn't afraid of the ghosts, or rather the spirits.