

Brave New Worlds

By Eric Norton

As a youth, I enjoyed reading both science fiction and fantasy. Since then, the genres have changed radically with the explosion of fantasy titles and the appearance and growth of the graphic-novel format. Children's publishing, in general, has grown; so where I was forced to rely on the adult section for much of my science fiction, children and young adults can now find books on their own shelves. Additionally, the media industry has a greater interaction with the world of books, and we now see franchises, such as *Star Wars*, spawning fiction, nonfiction, and graphic novels at various levels, along with movies, games, and more. The greatest change for science fiction, though, has come in the area of technology.

The technological mainstays of science fiction were once spaceships, robots, and time travel. While these all still appear, today they are hardly at the center of the genre. Adult cyberpunk and real-world advances in computing and biotechnology have led to an increase in works on cloning, nanotechnology, cyborgs, and just-over-the-horizon computing, giving us award-winning works like M. T. Anderson's *Feed* (Candlewick, 2002) and Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion* (Atheneum, 2002). Technology is also blurring genres, so that there are adventure novels with tech gadgets that don't quite yet exist and mysteries solved with fictional technology. Additionally, we are seeing more works that feature the intertwining of magic and technology. While science fiction novels lag numerically behind fantasy, SF graphic novels abound and, because of their visual nature, give all those technological images a lot of pop. Here, then, is a list of middle and high school fiction, graphic novels, and a bit of nonfiction chosen to satisfy the most avid sci-fi fans.

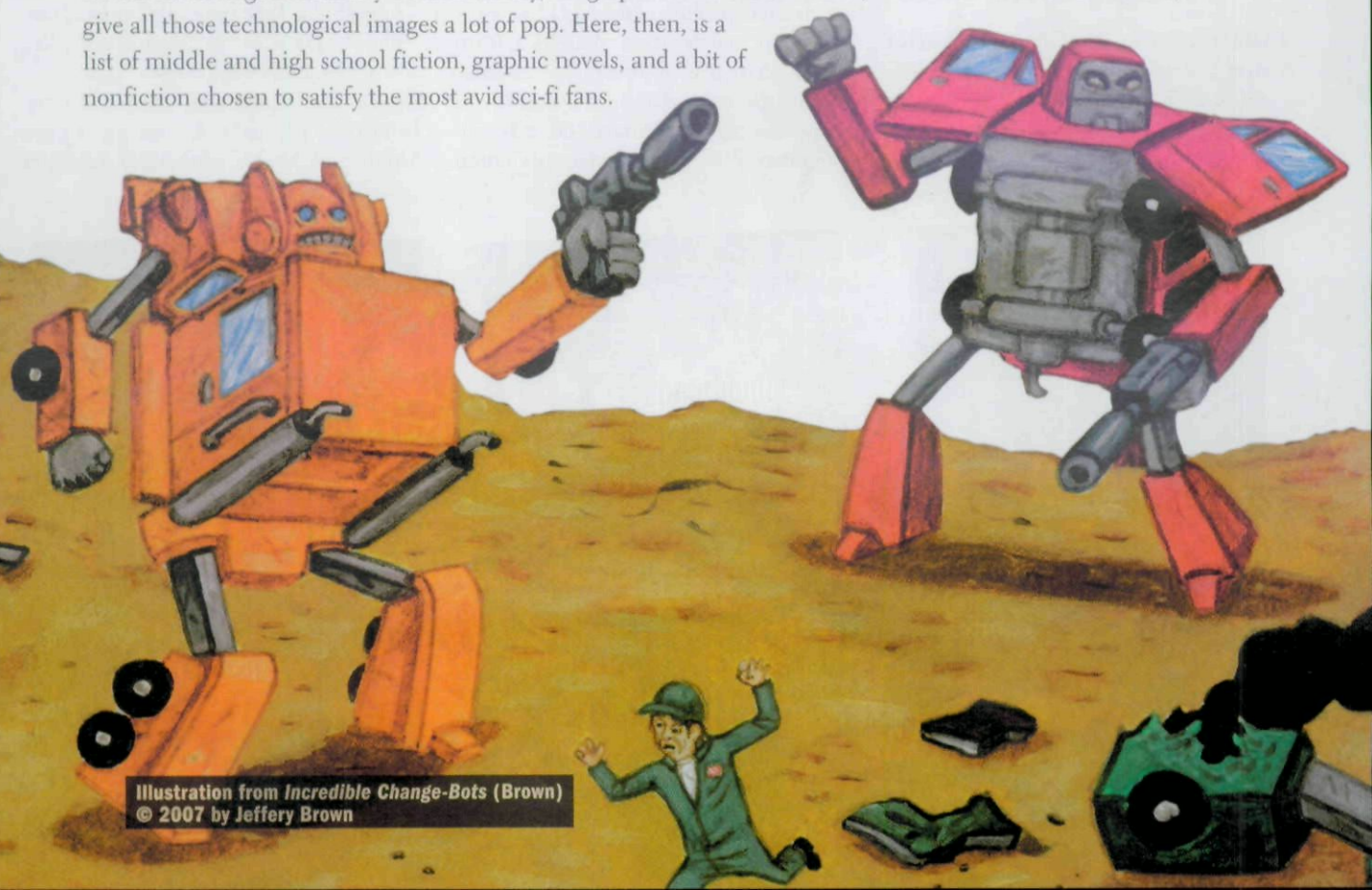


Illustration from *Incredible Change-Bots* (Brown)
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Middle School Fiction

ASCH, Frank. *Gravity Buster: Journal #2 of a Cardboard Genius*. illus. by author. Kids Can. 2007. Tr \$14.95. ISBN 978-1-55453-068-7; pap. \$5.95. ISBN 978-1-55453-069-4.

Gr 4-6—Alex, first introduced in *Star Jumper* (Kids Can, 2006), is a bona fide middle school genius. What else do you call someone who uses a handful of spare parts, a few office supplies, and some hardware to create an antigravity device? Alex's primary work, though, is a cardboard ship capable of intergalactic travel, and the only obstacle to its completion is his pesky little brother.

DALEY, Michael J. *Shanghaied to the Moon*. Putnam. 2007. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-399-24619-7.

Gr 4-8—As Stewart nears his 13th birthday, everyone around him seems to be concealing something. Then he meets a strange man at an old spaceport who offers to take him on a mission. After an extreme encounter with his insensitive holographic computer Counselor, Stewart decides to take the mysterious pilot up on his proposal and is off on an adventure to the Moon.

FARMER, Nancy. *The Ear, the Eye and the Arm*. Scholastic/Orchard. 1994. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-0-531-06829-8; pap. \$9.95. ISBN 978-0-439-53064-4

Gr 6-9—Tendai, Rita, and Kuda live in the

Harare, Zimbabwe, of 2194 in a mansion with robot servants and an automatic Doberman. Looking for excitement, they venture away from home, and things go horribly wrong. Now it is up to the extraordinary powers of three unusual detectives and the ancestral spirits of the Shona people to save the children. Audiobook version available from Recorded Books.

GAIMAN, Neil & Michael Reaves. *Interworld*. HarperCollins/Eos. 2007. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-06-123896-3; PLB \$17.89. ISBN 978-0-06-123897-0; pap. \$6.99. ISBN 978-0-06-123898-7.

Gr 4-8—Joey Harker is always taking wrong turns, but this one is a doozy. He steps out of his world into the Altiverse of Earth. There he joins an organization made up of hundreds of versions of himself. Armed with both magic and technology, these agents of Interworld keep the evil organizations of Hex and Binary from taking over the Altiverse.

HAARSMA, PJ. *The Softwire: Virus on Orbis 1*. Candlewick. 2006. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-0-7636-2709-6; pap. \$6.99. ISBN 978-0-7636-3638-8.

Gr 5-9—After an interstellar journey in which their parents perished, 12-year-old JT and his friends arrive on Orbis to learn that they have become indentured servants. JT soon discovers that he is a Softwire, a being who can communicate directly with computers. Now that the planet's Central

Computer is suddenly failing, he is both suspect and possible savior.

HULME, John & Michael Wexler. *The Seems: The Glitch in Sleep*. Bloomsbury. 2007. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-59990-129-9.

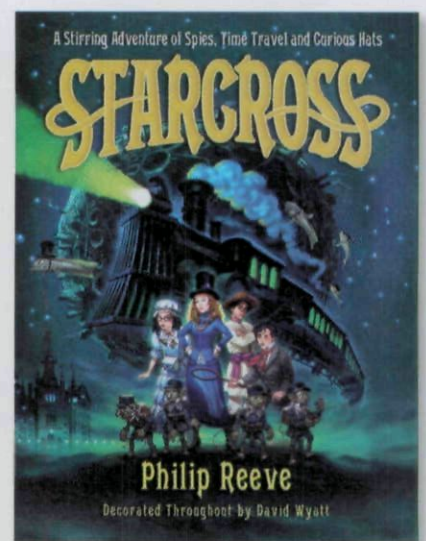
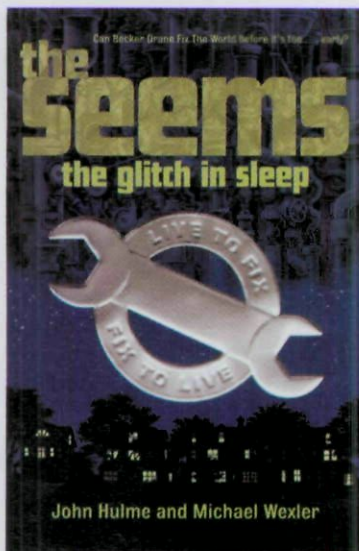
Gr 4-8—In this humorous tale, 12-year-old Becker Drane has been accepted as a Candidate at the Institute for Fixing and Repair in the Seems, a place outside of the World where things like Nature, Weather, Sleep, and Time are all manufactured. On his first mission, Becker must employ a wide variety of Tools, including his own invention, to neutralize the mischievous Glitch. Audiobook version available from Scholastic Audiobooks.

MAHY, Margaret. *Maddigan's Fantasia*. S & S/McElderry. 2007. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 978-1-4169-1812-7.

Gr 4-8—Garland's family leads a traveling circus in a postapocalyptic world. Her mother reveals that the city of Solis has commissioned the Fantasia to bring back a solar converter from Newton, the town of scientists. If they fail, so will the power in Solis, and the one true city left will be in grave peril.

REEVE, Philip. *Starcross: A Stirring Adventure of Spies, Time Travel and Curious Hats*. illus. by David Wyatt. Bloomsbury. 2007. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-59990-121-3.

Gr 4-8—This whimsically illustrated story, set in the Victorian Era, once again finds Arthur and Myrtle Mumby of *Larklight*



(Bloomsbury, 2006) in peril far from Earth. They've ridden the Asteroid Belt and Minor Planets railroad to the resort at Starcross. Their mother's curious Shaper machine turns out to be both part of the problem and the solution to troubles from spies, unscrupulous businessmen, and a thought-sucking haberdashery.

WALDEN, Mark. *H.I.V.E.: The Overlord Protocol*. S & S. 2008. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-1-4169-3573-5.

Gr 5-8—This adrenaline-pumping thriller pits Otto Malpense and his friends and teachers from the Higher Institute of Villainous Education against the mysterious Cypher and his army of preternatural ninjas. Everything is somehow connected to the Overlord Protocol, a rogue AI that was supposedly destroyed 15 years ago.

High School Fiction

BRIN, David. *Sky Horizon*. illus. by Scott Hampton. (Colony High Series). Subterranean Press. 2007. Tr \$35. ISBN 978-1-59606-109-5.

Gr 6 Up—Mark Bamford is struggling to fit into his new high school when he hears a rumor that students have an alien hidden in their basement. Mark decides that its presence must be made public in order for this first-contact situation to be handled appropriately. Now the world waits to find out what technological gifts the stranger might bring.

COLFER, Eoin. *The Supernaturalist*. Hyperion/Miramax. 2004. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-7868-5148-5; pap. \$7.99. ISBN 978-0-7868-5149-2.

Gr 7-10—In this gripping adventure, orphans are lent out for product testing, and combat lawyers arrive on the scene of accidents before emergency personnel. One orphan, Cosmo Hill, awakes to find a small blue creature sucking energy from him. That's when some unexpected help arrives and things really get weird. Audiobook version available from Listening Library.

CRAIG, Joe. *Jimmy Coates: Target*. HarperCollins. 2007. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-0-06-077266-6; PLB \$16.89. ISBN 978-0-06-077267-3.

Gr 7-10—Jimmy Coates, who first appeared in *Jimmy Coates: Assassin?* (HarperCollins, 2005), was grown by British secret agency NJ7 with biotechnology. Although designed to be an assassin, he is reluctant to kill. Here he discovers that he's not the only cyborg, and his nemesis won't hesitate to take a life. Despite this, he is forced out of hiding to rescue his friend's parents from NJ7.

MICHAELS, Rune. *Genesis Alpha*. S & S/Ginee Seo Bks. 2007. Tr \$14.99. ISBN 978-1-4169-1886-8.

Gr 8 Up—Josh Seville was born through cutting-edge medical science, and his cells allowed his older brother, Max, to live. Now, Max is accused of a horrible murder, and Josh is forced to examine his own possible

culpability. Answers lie within the science that led to his birth and Genesis Alpha, the brothers' favorite online game.

ROSE, Malcom. *Double Check*. (Traces Series). Kingfisher. 2007. pap. \$5.95. ISBN 978-0-7534-6004-7.

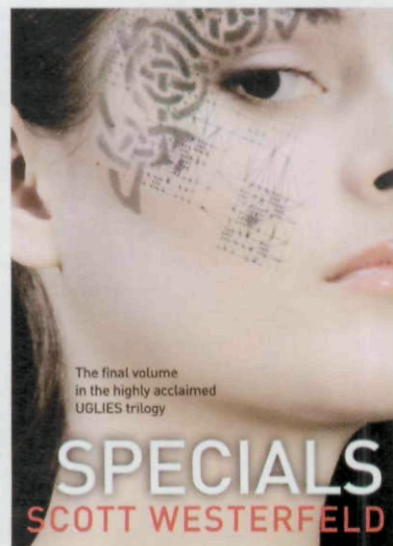
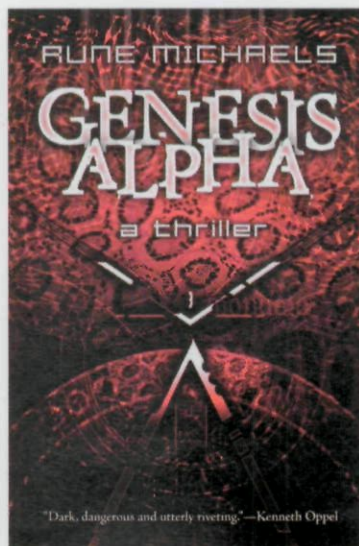
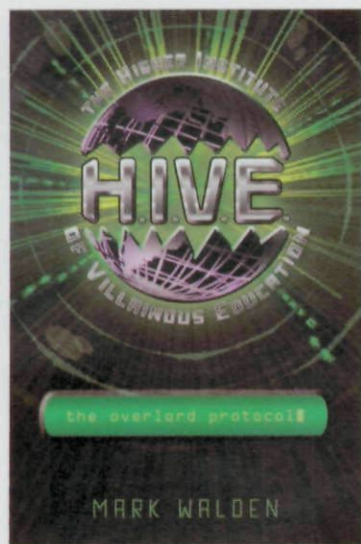
Gr 7 Up—In a futuristic England, 16-year-old Luke Harding has received a tip that a teenager sentenced to die may be innocent though the physical evidence against him is overwhelming. Luke must use his skills as a forensic inspector as well as the capabilities of his mobile computer assistant to prove the young man innocent before a lethal injection ends his life.

WESTERFELD, Scott. *Specials*. S & S/Pulse. 2006. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 978-0-689-86540-4; pap. \$9.99. ISBN 978-1-4169-4795-0.

Gr 9 Up—In this third book in the "Uglies" (S & S, 2005) series, Tally's cruel beauty and smart tattoos hide ceramic bones, monofilament muscles, and diamond teeth, all backed by software to optimize her combat skills. However, now that the terrorists of the New Smoke are growing bolder, Tally's modifications may not be enough to get her through the challenges ahead. Audiobook version available from Recorded Books.

Graphic Novels

BROWN, Jeffrey. *Incredible Change-Bots*. illus. by author. Top Shelf Productions.



2007. pap. \$15. ISBN 978-1-891830-91-4.
Gr 7 Up—This tongue-in-cheek, full-color story stars the incredible Change-Bots, beings that can change from vehicle to robot form. The two camps of Change-Bots have destroyed their world, and now they are on ours. The art and the dialogue are reminiscent of doodles from a boring sixth-hour class and should amuse both Transformer enthusiasts and fans of sarcasm.

ELDRED, Tim. *Grease Monkey*. illus. by author. Tor. 2006. Tr \$27.95. ISBN 978-0-7653-1325-6; pap. \$19.95. ISBN 978-0-7653-1326-3.

Gr 7 Up—In this black-and-white effort, Robin Plotnik and his boss, the gorilla “Mac” Gimbenky, live and work on the Fist

of Earth space station. Their job is to keep the Barbarian fighter squadron in top operational form. Mac guides Robin through the perils of military politics, mechanical upgrades, and young love with aplomb. Eldred supplies humor and a good story.

FOGLIO, Phil & Kaja Foglio. *Girl Genius: Omnibus Edition Vol. 1*. illus. by authors. Studio Foglio. 2006. pap. \$14.95. ISBN 978-1-89085-640-3.

Gr 7 Up—In this steampunk graphic novel, Agatha Clay is robbed, sees her boss blown up, builds her first “clank” (a mechanical creature), and is captured by the forces of Baron Wulfenbach, all in the first chapter. Feats of mechanical engineering, fencing, torture, rescues, and romance follow.

GALLARDO, Adam. *Gear School*. illus. by Nuria Peris & Sergio Sandoval. Dark Horse. 2007. pap. \$7.95. ISBN 978-1-59307-854-6.

Gr 4-9—This brief story stars Teresa Gottlieb, a cadet at Gear School. She and her classmates learn to pilot the Gear war machines, Earth’s defense against insectoid aliens. As if flight simulations and interpersonal relations weren’t enough, Teresa is the only one in a position to protect her friends and the school when a rogue alien teleports into the school’s airspace.

KIBUISHI, Kazu. *The Stonekeeper*. illus. by author. Bk. 1. (Amulet Series). Scholastic/Graphix. 2008. Tr \$21.99. ISBN 978-0-439-84680-6; pap. \$9.99. ISBN 978-0-439-84681-3.

Gr 4-8—Kibuishi combines all of the elements of speculative fiction in this full-color book. Strange monsters have taken Emily’s mother to the world of Alledia through a doorway in their basement. When Emily and her brother follow, a group of robots is expecting them. With the robots’ help and the power of Emily’s amulet, they attempt to rescue their mother.

KIRKMAN, Robert. *Tech Jacket: The Boy from Earth*. vol. 1. illus. by author. Image Comics. 2007. pap. \$14.99. ISBN 978-1-58240-771-5.

Gr 7 Up—This full-color, comic-book size reprint of *Tech Jacket: Lost and Found*, originally issued in manga size with black-and-white illustrations in 2003, features Zach Thompson. After a spaceship crashes near his home, he finds himself in possession of an amazing suit of hi-tech armor along with the task of helping the alien Geldarians defeat their enemies.

ROGERS, John, et al. *Blue Beetle: Road Trip*. Bk. 2. illus. by Cully Hamner, et al. DC Comics. 2007. pap. \$12.99. ISBN 978-1-4012-1361-9.

Gr 7 Up—The superhero in this story is the high-tech element. An alien scarab has bonded to Jaime Reyes’s spine, allowing him to produce high-tech armor, shields, weaponry, and wings at will. In this second volume of Jaime’s adventures, the El Paso teenage hero (from DC Comics’ 2006 *Blue Beetle: Shellshocked*) tries to discover more about his powers and the source of the scarab.

ON THE WEB

Resources for Librarians and Teachers

The Inter-Galactic Playground. farah-sf.blogspot.com. Farah Mendlesohn and Kathryn Cramer. (Accessed 3/15/08)

Blogophiles can access this blog dedicated to science fiction for thoughts on recent and not-so-recent works. The creators have contributed to a variety of publications on science fiction.

Science Fiction Youth Program. www2.ku.edu/~sfcenter/young-SF.htm. Center for the Study of Science Fiction. University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS. (Accessed 3/15/08)

This site has a wealth of links to help teachers and librarians spread the love of SF, including awards for science fiction for young people, lesson plans, and major magazines.

Student Resources

Information Technology and Communications Services Interactive Media. imedia.ksc.nasa.gov/index1.html. NASA/Kennedy Space Center. (Accessed 3/15/08)

Gr 5 Up—On this site, readers can plan a mission, launch and land the shuttle, and even drive the Mars Rover. They can also take virtual tours of NASA facilities that are off-limits to the public in the real world.

NASA for Students. www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/index.html. NASA. Washington, D.C. (Accessed 3/15/08)

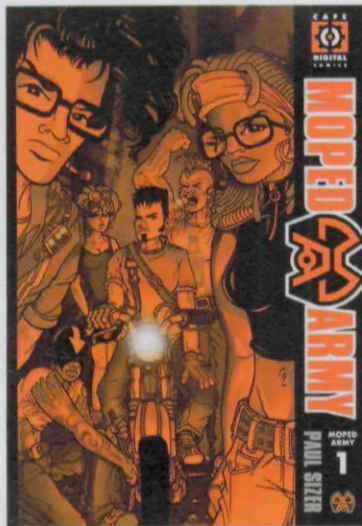
K Up—This page organizes many of NASA’s online materials for students with breakdowns by elementary, middle, and high school, and includes contests, articles, videos, and podcasts. There is also a direct link to the NASA Kids game site.

Nanotech KIDS. www.nanonet.go.jp/english/kids. Nanotechnology Researchers Network Center of Japan. (Accessed 3/15/08)

Gr 3-6—Text, diagrams, and videos (some in Japanese with English subtitles) explain the basics of nanotechnology while experiments give students a sense of some of the principles involved.

Illustration from Nanotech KIDS Web site.





SIZER, Paul. *Moped Army*. vol. 1. illus. by author. Fiery Studios. 2006. pap. \$12.95. ISBN 978-0-9768565-4-2.

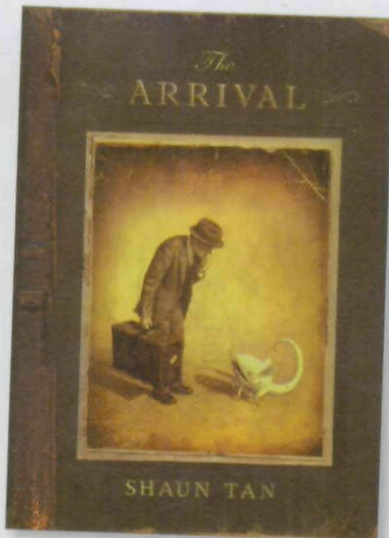
Gr 10 Up—In 2277 A.D., Simone seems to have the perfect life, but her boyfriend is emotionally and verbally abusive. When she ventures from her comfortable city environment, she meets a group of moped riders unlike anyone she knows. While their technical know-how is tremendous, their spirit is what truly amazes her. Simone must choose between the two worlds in this edgy, urban tale.

TAN, Shaun. *The Arrival*. illus. by author. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Bks. 2007. Tr \$19.99. ISBN 978-0-439-89529-3.

Gr 5 Up—Tan's wordless story defies easy genre classification as it combines odd devices from science fiction with strange creatures that could as easily be monsters as aliens. Our hero arrives in a new country where everything is unfamiliar, from the technology through basics like food, animals, and housing. The baroque, sepia-toned illustrations will enthrall readers as they vicariously partake of the immigrant experience.

TENNAPEL, Doug. *Iron West*. illus. by author. Image Comics. 2006. pap. \$14.99. ISBN 978-1-58240-630-5.

Gr 7 Up—The gold rush may have died down, but there is still plenty of action for a cardsharp like Preston Struck in old California. Struck hops a train just ahead of some bounty hunters only to find the train being overrun by mechanical gunslingers. Struck



and his sidekick, Sasquatch, must partner with a strange shaman and the sheriff to save the town.

WARREN, Adam. *Livewires: Clockwork Thugs, Yo!* vol. 1. Marvel. 2005. pap. \$7.99. ISBN 978-0-7851-1519-9.

Gr 7 Up—Stem Cell and teammates Cornfed, Social Butterfly, Gothic Lolita, and Hollowpoint Ninja are mecha constructs from Project Livewire. Their mission is to seek out and destroy rogue weapons. The full-color manga-style art and nonstop action will appeal to many readers.

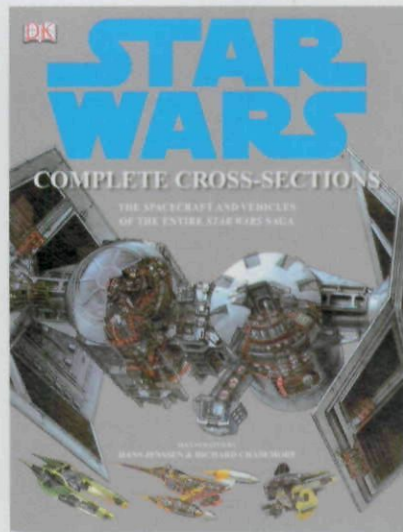
Nonfiction

BENFORD, Gregory & Elisabeth Malarre. *Beyond Human: Living with Robots and Cyborgs*. Forge. 2007. Tr \$24.95. ISBN 978-0-7653-1082-8.

Adult/High School—Sci-fi authors Benford and Malarre take a look at the current realities and future possibilities of those ever-popular science fiction figures: robots and cyborgs. The authors assess the likely course that development will take as well as when, if ever, we can expect to see various concepts realized. They even discuss social aspects of our coming future with robots.

HOROWITZ, Anthony. *Alex Rider: The Gadgets*. illus. by John Lawson. Philomel. 2006. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-0-399-24486-5.

Gr 4-8—This technical manual features all of the gadgets from the first five "Alex Rider" novels (Philomel). Each one is introduced



with a description of its use in the story. The main entries are spreads of blueprints with appropriate cutaways and descriptions of mechanisms for each one.

REYNOLDS, David West, et al. *Star Wars Complete Cross-Sections: The Spacecraft and Vehicles of the Entire Star Wars Saga*. DK. 2007. Tr \$35. ISBN 978-0-7566-2704-1.

Gr 4 Up—The material from previous "Cross-Section" books is combined with new text to produce a work full of vehicle technology from the Star Wars universe. Military, governmental, and civilian vehicles are each presented in two- to four-page layouts with cross-sections cut away to reveal elements like crew spaces or hyperdrive generators. Vehicle-use notes and a data file complete each spread.

RUSSELL, Gary. *Doctor Who: The Encyclopedia: A Definitive Guide to Time and Space*. BBC Books. 2007. Tr \$24.99. ISBN 978-1-84607-291-8.

Adult/High School—This encyclopedia covers everything from the new seasons of the BBC's *Doctor Who*, including heroes, aliens, technology, and even minutiae. Entries vary in length with major subjects, such as the Doctor and TARDIS, given a full page. Some of the color photos throughout relate to adjacent articles while others serve as decoration. A must for fans of the Doctor.

Eric Norton is the Head of Adult Services at the McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids, WI.

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