



BROWSE

 **Freak Magnet (review)**

Maggie Hommel

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REVIEW

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**In lieu of** an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

*Maggie Hommel, Reviewer*

Auseon, Andrew. *Freak Magnet*. HarperTeen, 2010. [288p]. ISBN 978-0-06-113926-0 \$16.99 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 9-12.

"When the world's most beautiful woman walks into the room it's hard to keep from throwing up." So utters astronomy-loving Charlie (the freak) when he first spots Gloria Aboud (the magnet). Chapters alternate narration between the two teens and develop the pair's slowly budding relationship, while revealing the layers behind each character's facade. Six-foot-four Charlie, a hopeless social incompetent, wears a Superman suit under his clothes, but he is caring and loyal, visiting his **[End Page 418]** friend Edison faithfully in the hospital and serving as caregiver to his mother, who has Huntington's disease. Arab-American Gloria, a sensitive aspiring poet who keeps everyone at a distance, has recently been dealt the loss of her brother to the war in Afghanistan, and she struggles to connect with her sister (who's obsessed with cosplay, dressing up as anime characters) and aloof mother. While Gloria and Charlie's relationship is unlikely and by no means traditional, they find comfort and meaning in each other. The book's portrayal of Charlie in particular is refreshingly original and complex; as an unexpected hero, he models what it means to be true to who you are. While his quirky personality and embarrassing gaffes have the potential to become tiresome, the contrast with Gloria and interplay between the two help make his eccentricities endearing. The teens' reactions to their troubles (both conscious and subconscious) are touchingly realistic and balanced with humor, resulting in a skilled and moving portrait of two young people struggling to make sense of the world. Recommend this book to fans of *The Astonishing Adventures of Fanboy & Goth Girl* (BCCB 12/06) who are ready for a more sophisticated read.

Molly are all elegantly developed, adding nuance and complexity to both the plot and Molly herself as she is changed by their actions. Unfortunately, Molly is a less compelling character, and the adulatory details of her unshakable optimism, goodness, and cheerful fiddle-playing wear a bit thin. In addition, the limited perspective of Molly as narrator hampers reader understanding of the oil crisis and economic collapse, since she apparently didn't really follow those events. Nevertheless, a quest to find family, identity, and love will always find an audience, and most of the issues are compensated for with a well-deserved (and hard-won) happy ending. AS

**ATKINS, JEANNINE** *Borrowed Names: Poems about Laura Ingalls Wilder, Madam C. J. Walker, Marie Curie, and Their Daughters.* Holt, 2010 [176p]

ISBN 978-0-8050-8934-9 \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

R\* Gr. 7 up

This unusual volume of poetry follows three mother-daughter pairings in free verse, describing their relationship from their daughters' youth and into adulthood. The sequence starts with Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane, following Rose as she becomes an adult, comes to appreciate the wonder of her mother's stories, and works them into literary existence. A'Leia Walker watches her mother grow from a hard-working washerwoman to the first self-made female millionaire, as she herself first revels in luxury and extravagance and then moves beyond hollow pleasures. Irène Joliot-Curie is intimidated by her mother's austere intensity but matures to share her scientific passion, becoming the first daughter of a Nobel Prize-winner to win the prize herself. What sounds like a rather strained premise comes together with grace and power; the three mothers were not only born in the same year, they all left their daughters struggling to define their own roles in the shadow of impressive maternal figures, a challenge to which many contemporary young women can relate. Atkins' poetic style is matter-of-fact yet stealthily lyrical, with an inclination toward the proverbial ("Who is a daughter without a mother?") and a subtle use of imagery (flowers are particularly worth watching for) that add resonance. The portraits are respectful but not adulatory, and though the book doesn't force all the lives to fit one story, it across the board conveys sympathy for the daughters as well as admiration for their mothers; overall, it's proud of all six women featured, those who inherited and transformed the legacies as well as those who left them. Mother-daughter book clubs will be perfectly, splendidly suited as a venue for this title, but readers, especially girls, in any setting will relate to these daughters. Each section opens with photographs and a short background of the featured women and closes with a "Legacies" section that describes the daughter's subsequent life; the book concludes with a shared timeline for all three families and a selected bibliography. DS

**AUSEON, ANDREW** *Freak Magnet.* HarperTeen, 2010 [288p]

ISBN 978-0-06-113926-0 \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 9-12

"When the world's most beautiful woman walks into the room it's hard to keep from throwing up." So utters astronomy-loving Charlie (the freak) when he first spots Gloria Aboud (the magnet). Chapters alternate narration between the two teens and develop the pair's slowly budding relationship, while revealing the layers behind each character's facade. Six-foot-four Charlie, a hopeless social incompetent, wears a Superman suit under his clothes, but he is caring and loyal, visiting his



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A review of American Avant-garde Theatre: A history, by Arnold Aronson, the Dionysian beginning, which is currently below sea level, is huge.  
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