“The Queen of Katwe” is a heartwarming true story about a girl named Phiona from Katwe, a slum neighborhood in the capital of Uganda, who finds her true calling, chess. Phiona overcomes family problems, hunger, and discrimination to rise up and become a champion.

From selling maize at her local market, to competing at international chess championships, Phiona never gives up throughout the story. This resilience is inspiring to watch and makes the characters very likeable. Phiona finds safe haven from her hard life of taking care of her brothers and her mother by spending time with the Pioneers, a chess club for poor children.

The coach of the Pioneers is a very good chess player who worked his own way out of the slums as an orphan. As a coach, he inspires and delights the children he teaches. The intelligence and get the coach has while teaching Phiona and the Pioneers is entertaining and gives the kids purpose and focus.

Even though Phiona begins to win some chess tournaments, her life is by no means perfect. She is still living in poverty with her single mom, two younger brothers, and an older sister who is never around. They get evicted from their shanty because they can’t pay rent, and Phiona thinks that she should stop playing chess.

“Don’t be too early to tip your king,” her coach tells her. He convinces her to continue with her quest of becoming a chess champion. Her determination and sacrifice for something that she loves is very eye-opening and makes her a more developed character in the eyes of the audience.

As Phiona comes back to chess, her mother is reluctant to have her continue playing, worried that she will not help out enough and she might not fit back into her normal life after being a chess champion. But as Phiona develops as a person and as a chess player, her mom begins to support her.

Phiona’s journey from the slums of Uganda is emotional, heartwarming, and humorous. “The Queen of Katwe” is a must see movie for anyone and everyone. I would recommend this movie for ages 10+, as there are some intense scenes.

History and laughs mix in presidential profiles

Your Presidential Fantasy Dream Team

by Daniel O’Brien

Your Presidential Fantasy Dream Team is a book about presidents from George Washington to Ronald Reagan. For each president, the author talks about the president’s childhood, weaknesses, strengths and adds humorous stories. For example, when Herbert Hoover was two, his parents thought Hoover was dead so they pronounced him dead, but... he wasn’t!

After each president’s chapter, the author sums up the presidency in a sentence. For example, for William Henry Harrison, the summary was: “Um... he died thirty-two days after being inaugurated after lying his way into office, so... no.” Each president is rated on whether or not he would make the presidential fantasy dream team. O’Brien uses the following rating: Brains, Brawn, Loose Cannon, Moral Compass and Roosevelt. Brains is someone who is smart, Brawn is someone who is strong/fit, Loose Cannon is whether he is just crazy, Moral Compass is to stand strong for greatness, and Roosevelt is all of the above.

I would rate this book on a scale from 0-10 a 10 because it’s funny. Other books about presidents tell facts but with barely any humor. I recommend “Your Presidential Fantasy Dream Team” for ages 9 to 95 because there might be some words that younger kids might not understand for example, “bribery” or “arrogant” and there is some rude language. You could go to school and learn a lot of important facts about presidents or you could stay home, read this book and learn things you’ll never learn in school.

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CK Reporters serve from June 13, 2016 to September 1, 2017.

Questions? E-mail dplewka@denverpost.com

By Lincoln Boyd, 12, a CK Reporter from Louisville

By Christopher Smit, 10, a CK Reporter from Boulder

Excellence as a tool against poverty

By Christopher Smit, 10, a CK Reporter from Boulder
Kids Fair provides fun for little PBS watchers

The PBS Kids Fair recently packed Bannock and 11th with a street fair in the downtown Denver area. There were plenty of super fun activities: There were PBS live shows where you get to meet PBS characters; tennis, bouncey castles; vendors everywhere, mad science and musical instrument booths; and live bands with an ASL interpreter.

That latter touch was really appreciated. Educational opportunities included a dental booth and show, a mobile library bus, a firetruck and fire fighters giving a safety speech, and a tricycle obstacle course run by the police. This festival also provided food trucks selling things like tacos, ice cream, and snow cones.

Another feature of the fair was a lost child center (always a smart move at crowded, confusing fairs). That latter touch was really appreciated. Educational opportunities included a dental booth and show, a mobile library bus, a firetruck and fire fighters giving a safety speech, and a tricycle obstacle course run by the police. This festival also provided food trucks selling things like tacos, ice cream, and snow cones.

Another feature of the fair was a lost child center (always a smart move at crowded, confusing fairs). Overall, the Rocky Mountain PBS Kids Fair was a total blast, enjoyable for everyone.

Much-hunted pangolin gets international protection

I n the shocking finale of the spell-binding series, the “Waterfire Saga,” the fate of the underwater world is at stake and the only thing the mermaids can do to save it is to listen to the enemy. “Sea Spell,” by New York Times best-selling author, Jennifer Donnelly, is the alluring story of six mermaids, Serafina, Ling, Neela, Astrid, Ava, and Becca, who are descendants of the sea’s most powerful rulers and are brought together to form a bloodbound sisterhood, and to uncover a secret conspiracy that could destroy the underwater world.

Together they must each find a hidden talisman that will be the key to conquering a thousand-year-old monster named Abbadon in the depths of the sea. Another problem arises when Serafina’s evil Uncle Vallerio takes over Serafina’s realm, kills thousands of innocent mer and starts a war that makes the realms fall apart.

In this shocking finale of the series, Serafina, Neela, Ling, and Becca must fight with their Black Fins, a group of refugees that are preparing for war against Vallerio, to regain Serafina’s throne. Meanwhile, Ava must continue searching for a lost talisman and Astrid must get close to the powerful, immortal ruler, Orfeo, the creator and master of Abbadon, to find out the secret to killing Abbadon.

In the midst of the fighting, Sera must hide a secret love, Astrid must gain confidence, and Ava must realize there was a reason for her being blind. This novel is not your average mermaid book and it is the perfect mix of fantasy, action, romance, and mystery, a fantastic addition to this series.

However, sometimes the wording and plot was confusing even after re-reading read multiple times, especially if you had not read the earlier books, since the main storyline is only explained in a short summary. Despite its flaws, the book has breathtaking descriptions of the underwater world and the mermaids which allow you to be able to feel like you’re swimming alongside them. Another unique point of this book is that all the characters are completely different and even if you can’t relate to a certain character, you can definitely relate to others. Every chapter keeps you wanting more and there are no boring moments.

There is some romance, not too much, but it is one of the main plot points in the book. This is supposedly the finale of the Waterfire series, but the end has a slight cliff-hanger, so a new spin-off could arise. The 357 page book is probably suitable for ages 12 and up because of occasional language, romance, war and gory moments, and confusing reading. The next time you’re looking for a book, I would highly recommend “Sea Spell,” but you should probably read the other books first.

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Polls are a valuable tool in election season, but, like all tools, they're only as good as the person using them. When you see a "poll" in the news, the very first thing you need to ask yourself is, "Is this a real poll, or just the kind where people call or text to say who they think will win the next football game, and, if it's just in Denver, they will probably pick the Broncos because that's who will call in?"

In a real poll, the pollsters try to find a large enough number of people who include old and young people, poor people and people of different races and ethnic groups. They want the group to come as close as possible to looking like the entire population. They also need to ask fair questions. A "push poll" is one where the questions try to get people to give a particular answer. "Do you agree that this candidate is a liar?" is not a fair question, though "Which candidate is more honest?" might be. (See the difference?)

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Polls are a valuable tool in election season, but, like all tools, they're only as good as the person using them. Watch the polls as we come closer to November, but watch the pollsters, too.
Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a newswoman in 1840, when she met Lucretia Mott. Mott was an unusual woman for those days. She not only had a high school education, but was a minister in the Society of Friends, a religious group also known as the “Quakers.” In a time when women rarely spoke at public meetings, Lucretia Mott was known for her speeches at gatherings of people who opposed slavery. Now she and her husband, James, were traveling to London for the World Anti-Slavery Convention, which was also where Elizabeth and Henry Stanton planned to spend their honeymoon.

However, when the Americans arrived in England, they discovered that the convention planners would not allow women to be members of the convention. Henry Stanton was part of the American delegation, but Elizabeth had only expected to attend and listen. Lucretia Mott, however, was one of several women chosen for the group, and they were surprised and offended to be excluded.

But despite the arguments of the American men and women, the convention voted against letting women participate. James Mott later wrote that one of the first acts of a convention to promote liberty and freedom was a vote “that the chains should not be broken, with which oppressive custom has so long bound the mind of woman.”

The controversy may have spoiled the convention for those who had traveled so far only to be shut out, but it created a friendship that would change American history; for it gave Mott and Stanton that much more to talk about as they got to know each other.

Like Mott, Stanton was more educated than most women. She had graduated from Johnstown Academy and, since women were allowed at so few colleges, had furthered her education at Emma Willard’s school, the Troy Female Seminary.

Still, she had met few people like Lucretia Mott, and, as she heard the older woman calmly but accurately make point after point in conversations with the other people at the convention, she was delighted to realize that she was meeting a woman who was all the things she had only dreamed a woman could be:

“I often longed to meet some woman who had sufficient confidence in herself to frame and hold an opinion in the face of opposition, a woman who understood the deep significance of life to whom I could talk freely,” she remembered years later. “My longings were answered at last.”

Stanton had read books about human rights, including the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, but she had never had the chance to discuss them with someone like Mott.

“I had never heard a woman talk what I had scarcely dared to think,” she said, and the two women agreed that there should be a convention about the rights and the needs of women.

Eight years later, when the Motts came to Auburn, NY, to visit Lucretia’s sister, Martha Wright, the three women got together at the home of Jane Hunt, anabolitionist friend in Waterloo. Along with Mary Ann McClintock, another Quaker abolitionist deeply involved in the Underground Railroad.

They decided it was time to hold the convention that Mott and Stanton had discussed in London, not just “sometime” but now.

They went to the newspaper office, and, on July 14, 1848, a notice appeared in the Seneca County Courant announcing that there would be a convention “to discuss the social, civil, and religious conditions and rights of woman” in Seneca Falls on the nineteenth and twentieth.

Then they sat down to write a document for the convention to discuss and debate. McClintock and Mott were both ministers, but Quaker ministers did not deliver written sermons, and, although Wright was a teacher, none of them had ever done the sort of writing that now faced them.

After some tries, however, they had an idea, and used the Declaration of Independence as a model for what they called “The Declaration of Rights and Sentiments.” Stanton altered the famous words to say “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal and changed King George to all men” as they listed the ways in which women were treated unfairly by the law.

In the nearly 70 years since that first document had been written, women had begun to gain some rights, and, just three months before the Seneca Falls Convention, New York had become the first state to pass a law giving married women the right to own their own property and other rights that their husbands had previously held. But there was still much to accomplish, and, though there had only been one announcement in the newspaper four days earlier, 300 people showed up the first day of the convention.

Through two days of discussions, the group unanimously approved each of the resolutions in the Declaration, except for one: “Resolved, That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise.”

There, the group split, with Mott among those who felt the right to vote was too great a demand and would turn people against them. But Stanton was joined by another voice, that of the abolitionist hero, escaped slave and newspaper editor, Frederick Douglass, who said that being able to vote was the mark of a citizen, and the mark of equality.

The resolution passed, and, now a conversation that had taken place only in private, among women, became a conversation that would take place in public, among all Americans.

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