

Book Blogger Reviews

ReviewStream.com

<http://www.reviewstream.com/reviews/?p=71350>

Skeleton Creek is a novel by Patrick Carman which combines the traditional art of storytelling with modern technology. In order for the reader to fully understand the story they must interact with online content at various points.

At its core the novel is a mystery, as the narrator (Ryan) describes, in diary form, all the details of events as they happen. However, several times in the story, Ryan will receive emails from his friend Sarah, telling him to go to her website and enter a password. At this point, the story becomes one of the horror genre, as she uploads videos which shed some light on the characters' paranormal experiences.

The story is very interesting in that it is written by the narrator in diary form as the events happen. After an accident which happened when Ryan and Sarah were exploring an old dredge, Ryan is unable to leave his room while he recuperates, so he is largely dependent on Sarah to unravel the mystery. Her side of the story is told through the videos on her website.

The videos on the website are of very good production quality, and can at times rival those of full scale horror movie productions in terms of the shock factor. The final video in particular is very rich in terms of atmosphere, but I won't spoil it for you.

The website's design is very good in that it builds an air of mystery around the events in the story. There is quite a bit of hidden material such as old films and adverts, photos related to the story and other easter-eggs on the website.

If the reader so wishes, more content can be found on the internet related to the novel, such as a website which claims that the novel is secretly based on real events.

The novel is written for young readers, but in my opinion it could be enjoyed by older readers also. Some of the videos can really be quite shocking, and are in my opinion not appropriate for younger children.

In Skeleton Creek, Patrick Carman has created something which breaks the confines of its given medium. It is in fact a multimedia experience, and neither the novel itself nor the online material can be as great as the sum of their parts. A treat for young and old alike, it is a truly unique concept brought to life in an intriguing, entertaining and at times scary fashion.

Rating: 9

The Library - Official Blog for Jamieson Wolf

<http://jamiesonwolf.blogspot.com/2009/06/paper-cuts-14-skeleton-creek-by-patrick.html>

I just finished reading one of the neatest books I've ever read. It's called Skeleton Creek and it's by Patrick Carman.

Ryan and Sarah have been separated after an accident at The Dredge, an old gold and silver mining plant deep in the forests of Skeleton Creek.

Sarah and Ryan try to find out the history of the town and why the town was named Skeleton Creek. They don't realize that they are at the beginning of a mystery.

And this mystery could kill them.

The deeper they delve into the mystery, the more they discover. No one and nothing is as it seems. And this is only the beginning...

The book is actually two stories. When you buy the book, it comes in a case that almost makes the book look like a DVD. There's a reason for this. There are actually two stories that you have to experience:

Ryan's journal is the written side of the story. Sarah's videos, found on the web, are the other side of the story.

It would sound like a great gimmick if the book and the videos weren't so fantastic. The story is suspenseful and leaves you wanting more and the videos have a real home made quality to them and they are genuinely scary and frightening.

It's a good thing I want to know more, as the second book (Ghost in the Machine) is coming out in October! I can't wait to find out what happens. In the meantime, I'll be watching the videos and reading the book all over again.

Oh, and something to think about: there is hidden content on the web site where you watch the videos. Even more of a mystery....Everything combines to make the book come alive!

York County Library

<http://yclibrary.wordpress.com/2009/03/31/skeleton-creek-by-patrick-carman/>

Skeleton Creek is the first book in a unique series by Patrick Carman. This is more than a story; it is an interactive reading adventure, and kids will love it. I must warn you that this it is not for the faint-hearted. I will admit to jumping and hiding behind my hands while watching Sarah's videos.

Sarah and Ryan live in a small Oregon town called Skeleton Creek. When their investigation about the town's strange name results in Ryan's accident, Sarah and Ryan are forbidden to see or talk to each other. However, that does not stop them from investigating the death of Old Joe Bush, The Crossbones, and exactly who The Alchemist is.

While Ryan keeps a written journal about his fears and what all the clues mean; Sarah videotapes her explorations of the abandoned dredge deep in the woods outside of town. She links up to Ryan's computer, and now the reader becomes a part of the investigation in an interactive experience. By following the links given in Ryan's journal and entering the passwords, we are introduced to an even more terrifying world seen through Sarah's video cam.

What happens to Sarah and Ryan in the end will leave you shivering with disbelief.

DauntlessMedia.net

<http://dauntlessmedia.net/patrick-carman/skeleton-creek/skeleton-creek-1-ryans-journal.html>

"Skeleton's Creek – Ryan's Journal" is the first book in a new series by author Patrick Carman. Carman has already experimented with New Media in his Atherton series and, once again, he returns to the format with this new book and series which is, ostensibly, a kind of ghost story – with a secret society thrown into the overall mystery. Taking into account that this book is aimed at adolescents, the results are almost entirely positive with Carman weaving a successfully creepy and suspenseful tale, while taking advantage of the internet to augment his story. To be fair, Skeleton Creek isn't nearly as immersive as primarily web-based series such as Gemini Division or After Judgment, but the fact that Carman is cognizant enough to take advantage of this new media to help tell his story is certainly a benefit.

This particular book tells the story of Ryan McCray and his best friend, Sarah, who, out of sheer boredom, have decided to uncover the mysteries of their home town, Skeleton Creek, Oregon. Their investigations ruffle the feathers of local elders, including Ryan's own father, and when they go one step too far, an accident leaves Ryan in a coma, with a shattered leg.

The book itself is written in the format of a journal, loosely modeled on the “marble notebook” of which today’s children are all too familiar. Ryan sees himself as an author – both of history and his own spooky stories – and what we read are the thoughts put down in his own notebook. As such, we get a singularly intimate perspective into Ryan’s character – his thoughts, his hopes, his dreams and, most prominently, his fears.

As a character, Ryan is something of a worrywart – forever imagining things to be worse than they actually are. As such, he often creates scary stories as a way of not only escaping his own reality, but also dealing with his own fears. What happens, then, when his own experiences begin to mirror the horrors of his stories? And, furthermore, what happens when his parents forbid him from having contact with his best friend, the only one capable of truly understanding what he is going through? The answers are the heart of the story in *Skeleton Creek*.

The story begins with Ryan recovering from a horrific accident he had while exploring the Dredge – a massive piece of equipment, left behind for over twenty years, which once carved up a large swaths of earth, looking for gold. As the story unfolds, we learn of Old Joe Bush, who was killed while working on the Dredge, and who appears to be haunting it. Though Ryan is bedridden as a result of his accident, his friend Sarah heads off to investigate the mysteries, posting her videos online for Ryan (and the rest of us) to view. Here is where the novel takes advantage of the internet to help tell its story, providing not only videos from Sarah, but also extra content which can be uncovered by astute visitors to the website, <http://sarahfincher.com>, who explore the flash site and find the right places to click uncover everything from Sarah’s favorite movies, to a Russian propaganda video.

In combining all of these elements, *Skeleton Creek* is fairly successful at not only creating a suspenseful, mysterious story, but also at evoking those emotions within the reader. There are a few missteps along the way, such as a few moments when it literally makes no sense for Ryan to be writing in his journal, but for the most part, all of the story elements blend together quite effectively. And in the end, the web content becomes critical to uncovering the full plot of the story – even if it ends on one heckuvan unfulfilling cliff hanger.

Overall Grade: B

“*Skeleton Creek*” is an entertaining book. Adults can easily read it (along with watching its accompanying videos) within a lazy afternoon. Younger readers will enjoy not only the dual format of journal and web-based video, but also the fairly straightforward language and story. And, of course, this does what an opening story must do: introduce the characters and story, and leave the audience clamoring for more.

Surprised? No, not really...

<http://mrsjsbooks.blogspot.com/2009/06/skeleton-creek-multi-media-experience.html>

So one of my summer goals is to read a lot. I just finished *Skeleton Creek* and I can easily see it being a home run with many of my students. This book by Patrick Carman is genius. Carman writes in a diary format but incorporates videos that the reader receives codes to unlock as they read. Its title alone, suggests this book is of the horror genre but Carman does a nice job of building suspense and unlike most juvenile horror books, (think *Goosebumps*) this book does not reach resolution. Have no fear, this is only book one in a series!

So follow Ryan and Sara as they unlock the mystery behind the Dredge and Old Joe Bush who seems to be haunting the place. You'll be asking yourself where these kids got so much courage!

AyeCaptain Reviews

<http://ayecaptain.blogspot.com/2009/06/review-skeleton-creek.html>

Summary: Strange things are happening in *Skeleton Creek* . . . and Ryan and Sarah are trying to get to the heart of it. But after an eerie accident leaves Ryan housebound and forbidden to see Sarah, their

investigation takes two tracks: Ryan records everything in his journal, while Sarah uses her videocam to search things out. . .and then email the clips for Ryan to see.

In a new, groundbreaking format, the story is broken into two parts -- Ryan's text in the book, and Sarah's videos on a special website, with links and passwords given throughout the book.*,

Review: In the complete opposite with the previous book I reviewed (Shadowed Summer), I thought Skeleton Creek was going to be... cool. Okay. Neat. But no- it was fantastic. Definitely the best book I've read in a long time. Ryan's journal was realistic, like it really was a journal (ever read those books where you were like... no way someone would write like that in a journal? Yeah, this isn't like that.) Even though the journal was personal, it felt like it was meant to be read.

Sarah's videos. The most important part. The part that made people debate whether Skeleton Creek was really a book since there were (heaven forbid) movies intertwined with it. It took me all of 5 minutes to get used to Sarah. For a minute it seemed kind of fake to me, but then I realized that I would probably sound the same way on a video. Sarah didn't try to make it over-dramatic. She made it kind of creepy, but Ryan tells us in the journal that she's just like that. So I thought Sarah had personality. She wasn't annoying, and the videos seemed so real. (I FREAKED over the last one... pathetic, I know.)

Which brings me to the ending, which left my jaw dropped for 5 minutes, while I texted my friend and paced my room, because Skeleton Creek was the best 'haunted' story I think I've ever read. Action-packed, mysterious, quirky, tense, and even with some depth, Skeleton Creek by Patrick Carman deserves the 5 stars I'm giving it.

5 Stars

Rating: PG for some frightening images ;)

Length: 144 Pages (yes, a quick read. Even more reason to dive in!)

Released: February 10, 2009

p.s. don't kill me if you don't like it because you don't like ghost stories. But I bet you will.

* Summary From Amazon

Minds Alive on the Shelves

Skeleton Creek is young adult fiction for kids who grew up online -- think Harriet the Spy meets The Blair Witch Project. Two bored teenagers manufacture a mystery in their hometown, which leads to a real mystery and some dangerous consequences. When one of them is seriously injured, the other continues the investigation, videotaping her adventures and posting them online. In order to solve the mystery, readers have to both read the book and watch the videos on the book's website. Check out the trailer...

I don't normally read YA fiction, but I was really interested in the book's format. The book itself is fairly short (185 pages) and printed in a font that looks like hand-printing. The book is Ryan's journal of events and it's supplemented with Sarah's videos of her part of the investigation. It seemed like a perfect format for teens who get bored easily and are comfortable with online content.

Ryan and Sarah live in the remote town of Skeleton Creek, and the whole adventure begins with their question: why name a town Skeleton Creek? A little digging (and some ominous warnings from the town librarian) turns up a bit of town history: it was once named Linkford, and the change had something to do with the New York Gold and Silver Company, a defunct mining concern that once had big interests in the town. Cryptic ads in these old newspapers put the kids on the lookout for the Crossbones Society, but their real interest is The Dredge. It's a huge old piece of mining equipment, abandoned way out in the woods. They decide to make a midnight trip to the Dredge to investigate. What could possibly go wrong?

Ryan is seriously injured, locked up at home with a broken leg; he and Sarah are warned not to contact each other (this isn't their first brush with trouble). So Sarah investigates on her own and posts her videos on a password-protected website for Ryan to watch. The mystery involves the librarian, the death of Old Joe Bush, a secret society with a secret meeting place, mysterious alchemical symbols and a tattoo.

Periodically throughout the book, the journal directs the reader to Sarah's website, providing a password, and the video provides more clues.

The videos have all the shaky-cam appeal of a Blair Witch-style dash through the forest. The book is aimed at kids 10 and up, so I don't think they're too scary (although I watched them at home, by myself, about 2:00 am - adds to the ambience). I have to say that this is exactly the sort of book that would have appealed to me as a kid. I was always scaring friends with ghost stories, always loved horror movies, and this would have been perfect.

I also think this is an interesting direction for books -- more online content, more extras to increase their appeal, and more ways to draw young people in and get them hooked on reading. Sarah's website, SarahFincher.com has several easter eggs (click on anything that glows - there's a music video, a list of favorite films, but I really don't get the fudgesicle thing). There's a great fansite, SkeletonCreekisreal.com with more videos, theories and discussion, which provide more ways for kids to experience the story and talk with other readers. Is this the direction that the publishing industry is heading? I don't know, but I really enjoyed this whole book experience - reading, watching and wondering.

Simply Nerdy

Strange things are happening in Skeleton Creek and Ryan and Sarah are trying to get to the heart of it. But after an eerie accident leaves Ryan housebound and forbidden to see Sarah, their investigation takes two tracks: Ryan records everything in his journal, while Sarah uses her videocam to search things out ... and then emails the clips for Ryan to see.

In a new, groundbreaking format, the story is broken into two parts -- Ryan's text in the book, and Sarah's videos on a special website, with links and passwords given throughout the book.

What I thought: This is the perfect book for the YouTube watching reader. What a great concept, combining the two medias! Before the book was even released there were tons of websites and YouTube videos available to garner interest in the book. Sites with easter eggs and conspiracy theories can be found just by googling "Skeleton Creek". It is quite amazing, really, and funny in some ways.

So, is the book worth all the hype?

If you are looking for a scary, fast-paced, thrilling and entertaining novel that will most likely keep you up at night, yes, Skeleton Creek is most definitely worth all of the hype. The unique, one-of-a-kind combination of good-old-fashioned book and new, high-tech vlogs will catch interest and please even the most avid readers.

Carman puts together all of the things the readers are looking for from a novel like this (friendship, ghosts, murder, mystery, etc) and somehow finds a way to help it flow in a way only the greatest of authors can accomplish.

Both the journal entries and vlogs clearly portray the characters, especially Ryan and Sarah. Each and every word had an underlying touch of fear enough to drive the readers insane, and Ryan's mysterious accident will leave readers speechless.

A great combination of everything a reader looks for, Skeleton Creek is the perfect scary, nighttime novel.

thanks for the book Pat!

<http://trunerd.blogspot.com/2009/02/book-review-skeleton-creek-by-patrick.html>

Books and Other Thoughts

I receive lots of emails offering me advance reading copies of this book or that (often a book that is completely unrelated to the kinds of books I review here), and I rarely agree to accept any, mainly because I have so many books on my list to read that I *know* I'm going to enjoy, and I dislike feeling

pressure to read something that I might not feel like reading at that moment. Reading is the one area of my life that I have complete control over at this point, and I like to keep it that way, thank you very much!

But when I received an email from Patrick Carman describing his latest book, *Skeleton Creek*, I was immediately intrigued because of its interesting format. It is a book that is told from the points of view of two teens who are best friends. Ryan is a writer, and the book is his journal - it appears to be hand written on lined notebook paper. Sarah, however, is a filmmaker - and her point of view is interspersed with the text in the form of videos to be viewed on a "secret" website with passwords to access them. It's a book/video hybrid, and it works particularly well because this story is an evocative, suspenseful ghost story.

The book opens with Ryan recovering from an accident. He is stuck at home in his room with a horribly broken leg, and the cause of his accident is at first only hinted at. Their parents blame the accident on Ryan and Sarah's friendship, as it is apparently not the first time they have gotten into trouble, and they have been forbidden to see - or even communicate with - each other. But Ryan and Sarah are best friends and have no intention of complying. What's more, they've stumbled across a mystery that is the most exciting thing that's ever happened to either of them in their boring little town. Ryan has trouble remembering exactly what happened on that fateful night - but when Sarah emails him with a password that allows him to access her website to view the footage she filmed that night, it all comes rushing back.

In a creepy *Blair Witch*-style video, we see what the friends see as they approach the old dredge in the woods, and we see what the camera recorded after Ryan fell, when Sarah dropped it on the floor to rush to his aid - shocking images that neither of the friends will see until later...

The book alternates between Ryan's journal and Sarah's videos, and the suspense increases with each segment through the final gripping chapter. Many questions are raised throughout the narrative - there are puzzles and clues, codes and symbols. I found myself turning back and rereading sections of the book as new information came clear - and re-watching the videos revealed details I missed the first time around. I love the fact that things are not spelled out - there are intriguing topics that are touched upon, and I imagine that many readers will feel compelled to discover more about Morse code, mining, alchemy and elements, among other things.

The mystery is compelling, and the footage of the old dredge is incredibly spooky. I did wonder a bit at the friends' determination to find out what was going on, however. It seemed rather extreme, given the extent of Ryan's injuries, to be simply the product of boredom, of living in a town where nothing interesting ever happens. Why are the friends - particularly Sarah - so obsessed with the dredge? The passwords for the videos that Sarah gives Ryan may provide some insight - *Lucy Westenra*, *Amontillado*, and *Peter Quint* are among them. Again, I can see readers who are unfamiliar with those names looking for clues there, and perhaps discovering some further spine-tingling reading material. Still, I'd have pegged Sarah for someone who would use more film references than literary ones (but perhaps she was referring to the movies - there was a reference to *Poltergeist* at one point).

I loved the format of this book, and I think the subject matter is a perfect fit - what better way to really make a ghost story even more compelling than to add a soundtrack and "real" images? The two formats are integral to the work - the text would make no sense without the videos, and vice versa. The alternating viewpoints heightened the tension, making it difficult to put the book down. The novel will certainly appeal to reluctant readers, but also I love the way the format lends itself to making the book a shared experience. A group of friends could read this to each other on a dark and stormy night, then watch the videos together, speculating and sharing thoughts and trying to solve the mystery. My ten-year-old daughter practically tore the book from my hands when I explained how it worked. She loves books and she loves movies, so this was just perfect for her! She couldn't wait to get home from school so she could keep reading - and watching. She did wait for me to watch the final part with her (and she declined to watch it right before bed, which I felt was a wise decision).

Stephen R. Covey

Every now and then you come across a book that is so unique, so different, so incredible that you just want to share it with everyone you know. This is one of those books. I read it three times in a week, and still want to go back over it again, in case I missed anything. What makes this book so incredible is that it is actually more than a book; it is a new entertainment experience. It is a book, it is a movie and it is fantastic. The story is told in two parts.

It is the story of Ryan and Sarah, who live in Skeleton Creek Oregon. They become fascinated with the town's name, and the fact that it only changed to that recently. While investigating the mystery of the name, they find out about a ghost story of a man named Joe Bush who died in a mining dredge outside of town. While investigating the dredge, something strange happens and Ryan falls and breaks his leg. That is where our story begins. Ryan is in the hospital recovering and he starts to tell the story in his journal so he can make sense of it, and in case something happens to him. But the story is told by both Ryan and Sarah. Currently their parents will not allow them to see each other because they believe that it will encourage their investigative efforts.

Yet the two are staying in contact over the web. Ryan is writing the story in his journal, which is our book, and Sarah is creating videos and posting them on her website www.sarahfincher.com. Combined they tell the story. It is a great new media/literary adventure. Even the packaging and presentation is new. The book comes in a sleeve like a cover on a new DVD that says: "Read the book ... Watch the videos." Once you slide the book out, it looks like a hard cover journal, and it looks like it was hand-written. The journal has illustrations and, what appears to be items taped inside it.

This story is incredibly well done. It is a ghost story for the net generation. You have to read the book and watch the videos and follow groups and websites online to find out more details and background to the story. It is well-written and the videos are amazing. I did read the book the first time to see if it could stand alone without the web component and it does, but the videos take the book to a whole new level of reading entertainment. Some of the websites that you can check out are:

www.enterskeletoncreek.com

www.skeletoncreekisreal.com

www.haunteddredges.com

www.sarahfincher.com

The only bad thing I can say about it is that it ends with a cliff-hanger and the conclusion, *Ghost in the Machine* - Skeleton Creek Book 2, is not due out until September 2009. This book has made my top ten all-time fiction list. It is a ghost story extraordinaire. So as the cover says, read the book and watch the videos - you will be drawn in and amazed by the story!

100 Scoop Notes

January 6, 2009 in [*Recommended*](#), [Reviews](#) (Warning: This book is not a graphic novel, but I'm about to use that genre to help describe this book. You'll see how it connects in a minute.)

When I was in middle school I read plenty of comics. I wasn't really reading many traditional books at that time. There was an era where not only was reading comic books "not reading" but it was considered an [outright damaging thing](#) for children. While some still hold that belief, times have changed enough to where comics and graphic novels have gained fairly wide acceptance as legitimate reading materials.

Even though I was steeped in comics for a while, my tastes eventually expanded. I still like graphic novels, but I also read "real" books all the time. My point being? Comics didn't hurt my interest in reading - they helped.

Then along comes a book like Skeleton Creek. Part book, part online movie. It incorporates text and video in a way that has not been done before. It brings up all the old comic book arguments. What is reading? What is a book? Add to those the question of whether the internet is helping or hurting the reading

interest/ability of our youth, and you've got some thinking to do. *Skeleton Creek* will be the topic of some debate, folks. None of it would be worth much if the book wasn't so much fun to read.

The story moves from the get-go. We find out that the book is really Ryan's journal. Ryan is a compulsive, passionate writer who would be lost without the ability to put pen to paper. In handwriting-style font, Ryan describes a recent accident that has left him bed ridden, separated from his friend Sarah, and wrapped up in a mystery that he is in no position to solve. Skeleton Creek, a tiny mountain town that was once bustling with gold rush activity, has been host to some strange goings-on. The abandoned dredge in the nearby woods may be haunted. Ryan and Sarah's first nighttime visit to the dilapidated old machine nearly killed Ryan. Sarah, a curious amateur filmmaker, wants to get to the bottom of things. The two are forbidden (by their parents) to talk, but communicate anyway through email and videos that Sarah sends (and the reader watches). As the mystery becomes more complex, involving family members, Ryan and Sarah become increasingly brazen in their investigation. It all culminates in a genuinely scary middle of the night trip to the Dredge that ends with our protagonists in peril.

It's the kind of cliffhanger ending that will leave some readers frustrated. Scratch that - outright displeased. But it's for the right reasons. There is a sequel that will be released in September '09 (*Ghost in the Machine*), so that will ease some readers, anxious to know how it will end. Initially, before I knew about the sequel, I thought it was up to the reader to piece together the ending through online clues - man am I glad they didn't go that route. However, there is a large amount of online content for readers to delve into before the sequel hits shelves for those who are so inclined. All of the sites associated with the book treat the story like it really happened, increasing the scare factor.

The smooth combination of text and video is impressive. Every couple chapters, Sarah sends Ryan a message with a password. You head to the website, type in the password, and the video begins immediately. Some videos show Sarah talking, but most are from the field, revealing new characters or information about the dredge. Fans of scary will love these, while easily spooked children's lit bloggers may choose to watch them with all the lights on, and the stereo playing. And the TV on.

There are moments that distract from the storyline. One occurs when Ryan is writing down his escape from the house as it happens. I know the author wanted to express the tension of the moment, but make sure your disbelief is set to "suspended" for this scene. Also, the character who plays Sarah occasionally lapses into some "just spit it out!"-type moments. Thankfully, these flaws are fairly minor, and do not have much of an impact on the work as a whole.

There will be those who question the legitimacy of the format, but here's the bottom line:

It's an entertaining read, an engaging mystery, and it should perk up the ears of even the most reluctant of readers. You will be doing yourself a favor by adding it to your collection.

A Year of Reading

We received an advanced copy of [Patrick Carman's](#) upcoming book, [SKELETON CREEK](#). This is a middle grade novel--a ghost story and mystery. I am thinking 5thish through 8thish grades. (I am never sure when it comes to ghost stories.)

SKELETON CREEK is a format that is totally different from anything I've ever seen. As Patrick Carman says, "It is a book and a movie at the same time." Here is how it works. The main character in the story, Ryan, has had an accident and is stuck at home in bed recovering. The accident occurred when he and his friend, Sarah, were exploring the spooky dredge in their city, trying to uncover a secret. It helps Ryan to write about his experiences and thinking, so the book is actually Ryan's journal.

Because of the danger that Patrick and Sarah seem to get into, they are now forbidden to see each other anymore. But with technology, they communicate via email. Then Sarah begins to send Ryan videos of her own findings.

Here's the way it works. You read about 20-30 pages of Ryan's journal, emails, etc. Then, as Ryan checks his email and notices another video from Sarah, you go to your computer to watch the video.

When we got the initial information about the book, I was not sold on it. [BUT, because I have committed to "stretching my thinking" about these things](#) AND because I know Carman's work, I decided to give it a try. The package came, I previewed the book and read the accompanying letter and was really not sold. I am a reader who likes to be lost in a book. The idea of having to stop every 20-30 pages, go to the computer, and watch a video did not appeal to me at all.

Well, my opinion changed rather quickly. I loved it right off. Funny thing was, I found myself counting the pages until I could see the next video.

The story is very well done and this format could only work with certain stories. I have seen other attempts at this book/tech connection for novels but this is really the best I've seen it done. They are so interconnected that one doesn't work without the other. The text and video work together perfectly to tell the story.

I was trying to think through the things that make it a different kind of read for me. First of all, it took me a long time to "like" Sarah as a character. Because you meet her through video and not text, you actually see and hear her--unlike envisioning her on your own if you were reading. But, I came to like her soon enough so all was well. The combination of knowing some characters through writing and others through video took me a little while to get used to but it worked.

The other difference is that the videos make the story a little bit scarier than it would be if the info was in the text if that makes sense. In other children's ghost stories, you aren't actually seeing the scary stuff. You are seeing it in your head. But actually watching a video MAY make it scarier for kids. Now, I am not a scary book/movie person. So I am a bit sensitive to this. For some readers, more scariness might be welcome. For me, I have to read things like this during the day! And the lights had to be on when I was watching the video clips!

Killer cliffhanger at the end of this book and I am a little angry at Patrick Carman for this. (I forgave him quickly when I remembered how much I love the book.) Seems we'll need to wait 6 months for the 2nd (and final) book. So, be ready to be slightly annoyed at wondering for a fairly long time.

One of the things that Patrick Carman says about the book is that he is hoping that the 20 page read followed by video clip will appeal to reluctant readers. I have to agree with this. Having worked with many, many reluctant and struggling middle grade readers, stamina is often an issue. They like a book but interest dies out. With this book, it is very hard to lose interest because you are reading until the next clip. It could be a huge support for these kids. Even though it will certainly appeal to others.

So, I am so glad that I made a commitment to stretch my thinking a bit about 21st Century Literacy's. Otherwise, I am pretty sure I would have missed this book. The concept did not appeal to me. If authors can continue to play with formats like this one--formats that match the storyline and add to the storytelling, then I am all for it. It opens up so many possibilities for publishers and for student writers.

Unmainstream Mom Reads

Skeleton Creek is an innovative new style of literature. It's both a book and a movie. Every few chapters, the reader gets a password to enter at a website, and can see Sarah's videos to Ryan. It makes the reading experience interactive and exciting.

I see so many kids nowadays that do not read books. They play video games and use the internet. This is a great way to make reading fun for kids who would otherwise not be interested. The book is written journal-style, and even uses lined pages and handwriting. There are copies of emails, pictures, and diagrams. It's very cool to see, especially since the mystery unfolds right before your eyes, in print and in video.

I had a great time reading and watching and am very much looking forward to the next book, as *Skeleton Creek* ends in a very tense cliffhanger. Patrick Carman is changing the face of literature forever, helping it to adapt to today's kids, and I have no doubt that it will be a huge success.

Phoenix Book Company

I hate cliff-hangers!! Grrr!! But I am getting ahead of myself... in [Skeleton Creek](#), Patrick Carman's latest book, we meet best friends Ryan and Sarah right after a terrible accident that has left Ryan house-bound and forbidden from having any contact with Sarah. They came too close to discovering something scary and sinister that's happened (or maybe happening) in their small Oregon town, Skeleton Creek. Separated and alone, Ryan works through his fear & trauma by journaling about what happened that led to the accident and he communicates secretly with Sarah via emails and online videos. They know whatever caused the accident is still out there and they plunge back into the mystery, putting their lives on the line to uncover the truth.

Carman cleverly and seamlessly combines Ryan's handwritten journal (the novel) with online videos and webcasts from Sarah (links and passwords appear throughout the book) to capture the reader and take us along with Ryan & Sarah as they dig for clues, discover who they can (and can't) trust, and stay one-step ahead of the danger (most of the time). I really enjoyed the pace, the tone, and the mystery of the plot in this novel. About the cliff-hangers - I know I like a book when the cliff-hangers drive me crazy! I had 2: half way through the book, my laptop battery died and I didn't have a power cord at home, so I couldn't finish reading it until the next day and I wondered and fretted about what would happen in the next video; and the second came at the end of the book (I won't give away anything) and it's driving me crazy! So, I hope Patrick Carman has *Skeleton Creek #2* almost done and can resolve the mystery soon! I'll definitely be anticipating the sequel to this highly enjoyable story.

Mari Reads

This is the perfect book for the YouTube watching, reluctant reader. What a great concept, mixing the two medias. Before the book has even been released there are websites and YouTube videos available to garner interest in the book. Sites with easter eggs and conspiracy theories can be found just by googling "Skeleton Creek". It is quite amazing.

So, is the book worth all the hype?

Well, that depends on what you are expecting. If you are expecting a fast-paced, entertaining and interactive read to get your kids interested in reading. This is it.

The book is written as a journal by 15 year old Ryan who loves to write and read ghost stories. His best friend, Sarah, loves her video camera and a good mystery to investigate. Since the two have been separated from each other because of an accident during an investigation late at night on an abandoned Dredge, they are forced to communicate with each other in secret through email and video clips while they continue to investigate.

I really think kids are going to love this mixed media ghost story and they will definitely get hooked with the cliff hanger. It is rather fun going to [sarahfincher.com](#) and entering the passwords as they come up in the book. Also, parents, lots of really great literature is mentioned throughout. It just might get some kids interested in checking them out next time they are in the library.

Book and Cranny

I just had the pleasure of reading a very unusual book. Skeleton Creek by Patrick Carman is a novel targeted towards readers 10 and up, which follows best friends Ryan McCray and Sarah Fincher on their journey to discover the odd happenings of the deserted "Dredge" in their town. What makes this book unique is the fact that it's told in journal format, written by Ryan, and also allows the adamant reader a chance to go online and view videos sent to him by his friend Sarah. Since Ryan's accident in the Dredge, the friends are told by their parents to keep away from each other. Through email and video correspondence, which the reader gets to experience as well, they try to piece together the mystery behind the abandoned dredge.

I had quite a bit of fun reading this book. I flew through it very quickly because I was so eager to get to the next video. There's something captivating about being able to watch this scary story/mystery unfold before your eyes and feeling like you're learning and seeing things as the characters are.

If Mr. Carman's hope was to find a new way for young readers to enjoy reading, I think he's found it. While I'm fond of the old "use your imagination" type of reading, I agree that this style of book will find a fan base. With technology advancing so quickly, more young readers are choosing the computer over a book, and this is a nice medium. My younger self would easily have fallen in love with this book, and would be anticipating a sequel (which I sure hope Mr. Carman is going to do).

I would suggest anyone that is looking for a change of pace, to pick this book up and give it a go. You'll have a blast reading/watching it. This I promise you.

What Vanessa Reads

This book is the first of its kind. Targeted to reluctant readers, it asks that you read twenty pages of Ryan's thoughts and adventures and your "reward" is to watch a video made by Sarah that relates to it. It's a ghost story. I bet you're wondering if it's good enough to make your knees shake? I truthfully was scared throughout the book. I think the videos had a great impact in my whole perception of the book because I could view what Ryan was talking about in his journal. The videos just make it that much more like you're really there, witnessing whatever this ghost is.

While I was reading it I had the sense that it was kind of like National Treasure meets lonelygirl15. It was short, quick, and effective.

But I did have some problems with it. What if you're not by a computer when you're reading? This happened to me more than once. So I tried watching the video through my iPhone, but it didn't work. Another thing is that I wished the supporting characters had been more developed. I felt as though I didn't truly know them as much as I knew Ryan and Sarah and hope that in the next book there will be more explanation about them.

The ending was a total cliffhanger. But I do think it's one more step to getting reluctant readers to pick up the second book in the series. And perhaps the piece that makes it that much more interactive is that this book is being speculated to be real over at skeletoncreekisreal.com.

I recommend this book to boys 9-13 who don't really enjoy reading. But if you're like me— a total ghost stories and suspense fan— you'll really get a kick out of this.