**Booktalk/Annotations**

**Close to Famous** by Joan Bauer (240 pages)

Twelve year old Foster McFee and her mother flee Memphis, an Elvis impersonator and an abusive relationship but mistakenly leave behind her most prized possession – the pillowcase holding all memories of her dad who was killed in Iraq. Settling in the town of Culpepper, West Virginia, which is facing its own hard times, mom and daughter make quick friends aided by Foster’s baking talents. Macon, with his plans to become a young documentary filmmaker, befriends Foster as she aims to become a famous television chef like Sonny Kroll. She manages to tackle life’s challenges through her amazing baked goods. But Foster now has to face her biggest challenge. She can’t read! Her baking turns out to be a lifesaver and her key to success while inspiring others – one cupcake at a time!

 (realistic fiction, early chapter book, girl and guy main characters, reluctant readers, social/family issues, bullying, humorous)

*~ Booktalk from the Louisiana Young Readers’ Choice Committee*

***Close to Famous* by Joan Bauer**

Who likes to eat cupcakes? Yeah, that’s what I thought. Ok, now here’s another question. Who likes to *bake* cupcakes? Well, that is what 12-year-old Foster McFee loves to do. In fact, her dream is to one day have her very own cooking show on the Food Network, just like her favorite chef, Sonny Kroll. That’s a big dream, but maybe it will happen. Foster does make delicious cupcakes. Everybody says so. But right now, she and her mom are down on their luck. They have left Memphis, Tennessee in order to escape her mom’s creepy, Elvis-impersonator ex-boyfriend. And now they have ended up in Culpepper, a tiny town in West Virginia, where they don’t know anyone. At first, Foster has a hard time figuring out how to fit in, but soon enough she finds a way to use her baking skills. She even makes some friends. But when someone figures out what Foster *can’t* do, she’s ready to leave Culpepper for good. But with the help of the town’s strangest and most famous resident, Foster gets the help she needs and decides to stay. And it’s a good thing, too, because Foster’s cupcakes just might save the day.

*~ Booktalk by Elizabeth Daigle*