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Children's Books

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Children's Books

A Flamingo Who Can Rap

Fiona Raps It Up. Written by Frank Remkiewicz. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. 1995. ISBN: 0-688-13146-8. 32 pp. US\$15.00.

This story features a relaxed pink flamingo who gets herself in trouble by flying with her eyes closed. She crashed into a banana boat and accidentally lays an egg in a pile of bananas. Rappin' Cap'n Otter helps Fiona, the flamingo, by dressing her egg to look like a mean sea captain to help keep it safe. He also teaches Fiona how to sing rap songs as she travels to find her flock of birds. This is an amusing enjoyable story with rhyming words children will appreciate. (SAS)

A Special Gift

Badger's Bring Something Party. Written by Hiawyn Oram. Illustrated by Susan Varley. Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-14082-3. 1995. US\$15.00.

All of Badger's friends wanted to come to his Bring Something Party except Mole, who feels grumpy and believed he didn't have anything to bring, so he told Badger he couldn't come to the party. Badger suggests he can come without bringing anything at all. So that's what Mole does. He feels worse and worse at the party until his friends make him

realize what a great thing he did bring to the party — HIMSELF. This story can increase children's self-esteem, and they will also take pleasure in the impressive illustrations. (SAS)

Versatile Joanna Cole

Yours Till Banana Splits, The Gator Girls, and My New Kitten. Written by Joanna Cole. William Morrow and Company, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019.

Author Joanna Cole is sufficiently prolific that it takes a crew of colleagues to keep up with her. In *Yours Till Banana Splits*, the newest in her series of collections with Stephanie Calmenson, spiced by Alan Tiegreen's witty sketches (following earlier books on riddles, tongue twisters and card games), she gives us 201 autograph rhymes with suggestions for pink pages, blue pages, bottom-of-the-page, secret messages, puzzles, insults, friendly words, upside down rhymes, and golden oldies (always renewably new to a new generation): *Yours till butter flies, ginger snaps, and ice screams.* Cole and Calmenson have also teamed to produce the junior book, *The Gator Girls*, with eight chapters on the adventures of Allie and Amy, best friend alligators who have to make every minute count before Allie leaves for a summer vacation at Camp Wogga-Bog — adventures which fairly cry out for a sequel. In *My New Kitten*, Margaret Miller's gorgeous photographs illustrate Cole's account of a kitten's life from pre-birth till he's big and strong enough to come home with the child who has been eagerly waiting to love him. Fulfilling all our expectations, the book is a treasure from dedication page featuring an inset kitten photograph, to the joyous conclusion, showing narrator, a crew of teddy bears, and wide-eyes kitten, cuddling together. (JM)

Spring Gardens

Counting Wildflowers. Written and illustrated by Bruce McMillan. William Morrow and Company, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-14027-0. Paper 32 pp. US\$4.95.

Seeds sprout; spring is here. In beautiful large print story and bright pictures Miela Ford and Sally Noll tell the story of a sunflower, from a tiny seed in a child's hand, to the overflowing hatful of seeds for treats and for planting — a metaphor of nature's richness.

Bruce McMillan's lovely, thoughtfully-designed counting book uses wildflower photographs to show One through Too Many to Count. For the numbers 1-10, ten dots, shown in a row below each picture, are colored with the wildflower's color to match the number of flowers shown in the picture with the remaining dots in green — always the background color in the flower pictures. Thus for the number three, below the picture of three True Forget-Me-Not blossoms, three dots are blue and seven are green. A similar pattern, with two rows of dots, is followed for the numbers 11-20. At the end of the book the author provides a list of the flowers with their scientific names and natural location.

Children can't build a house, but they can plant a garden. In his gentle but dazzlingly rich book, following the pattern of "this is the house that Jack built," Henry Cole traces Jack's garden from planting to flowering. Each two-page illustration is accompanied by smaller, labeled drawings — of garden tools, insects, birds and flowers. The final page gives directions, "To Start Your Own Garden." (JMJ)

A Bronco Riding Armadillo

Armadillo Rodeo. Written and illustrated by Jan Brett. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. ISBN: 0-399-22803-9. 32 pp. 1995. US\$15.95.

Julie A. Foss, Mount Morris, IL

Bo is the adventuresome armadillo in Jan Brett's book *Armadillo Rodeo*. He is one of Ma Armadillo's four sons. Being an armadillo means Bo cannot see very well. He mistakes Harmony Jean's new "pointy-toed, high heeled, hand-tooled, chili-pepper red" cowboy boots for an armadillo he wants to befriend. While trying to catch up with his new friend, Bo rides a bronc, eats a red hot chili-pepper, and tries to two-step. When Bo finally catches up with his new friend, he is disappointed to find it is a cowboy boot and not an armadillo.

Jan Brett's illustrations in *Armadillo Rodeo* are fantastic. She once again uses meaningful borders to add to her illustrations. When Bo and Harmony Jean wearing Bo's "friend" are in the main illustration, Ma Armadillo and her sons are shown in the borders searching for Bo. When Ma Armadillo is in the main illustration, Bo and Harmony Jean are in the border heading to their next adventure.

This is delightful book to read to children in grades 1, 2, and 3. Children will find this book funny. They will also enjoy picking out the animals Ma Armadillo talks to in her search for Bo. *Armadillo Rodeo* has become a favorite of books by Jan Brett.