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Professional Materials

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REVIEWS

Professional Materials

High Interest-Easy Reading. Editor, William G. McBride. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana IL 61801. ISBN: 0-8141-2097-0. Paperbound. 130 pp. US\$7.95.

Reviewed by Mary Jo Smith
Western Michigan University

Organized alphabetically by subject headings, this easy-to-use guide is designed for use by junior and senior high school students in selecting high interest-easy reading materials. Titles are grouped under twenty-four categories of interest, including Adventure, Death, Family Life, Mystery, Poetry, Science Fiction, Social Problems, and Supernatural.

Annotations of over four hundred titles of contemporary fiction and nonfiction published between 1987 and 1989 by a variety of notable authors are included in the booklist. Each annotation contains publication information, a brief synopsis of content, and a notation signaling mature content when necessary. Reading levels are not identified but are suggested by mentioning characters' ages.

The volume includes a directory of publishers, and author, title and subject indexes. Although developed primarily for student use, this practical guide would be a valuable tool for classroom teachers and librarians interested in choosing books that appeal to less sophisticated readers and encouraging students in grades 7-12 to make reading a habit.

Books for Children

Julius, the Baby of the World. by Kevin Henkes. Greenwillow Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. 32 pp. ISBN: 0-688-08943-7. US\$12.95.

Reviewed by Sherry R. Myers
Western Michigan University

Lilly was entranced by the idea of having a new baby in the family – until he arrived. She is disgusted by Julius' looks, his smell, and his inability to do anything of merit. Nothing seems to be able to convince Lilly that the baby is worth keeping until Cousin Garland voices the same uncomplimentary thoughts. Lilly has a sudden and profound change of heart. *Julius, the Baby of the World* is a delightful romp through a big sister's adjustment to the arrival of a new baby. I brought it home intending to give it as a big sister gift for friends of ours who just had a second child. However, my six year old – and my fifteen year old – wouldn't let me give it away. They were positively morose at the thought that Lilly might live somewhere else. And I couldn't fault them in the least. In fact, later in the evening, I found myself reading part of the book aloud to one of my friends, who enjoyed it as well. Some books marked "4 up" mean 4 to maybe 6 or 7; this one truly means "4 up." The illustrations are simple but charming, particularly those on the cover and on the last page, and the language used in the story is perfect: "You will live to regret that bump under your dress," Lilly tells a pregnant passerby. It's the kind of book with which the reader has as much fun as the listener. I have enjoyed reading my children other books by Henkes, but this one tops the list. Lilly is a charmer; she has more personality developed in 32 pages than many characters do in full-length novels.

The adult friend with whom I shared this delight reported, "It's exactly right, that's just the way it is." Siblings can call each other dumb, smelly nothings, but don't let them hear anyone else trying it. I hope to see more of Lilly and Julius as they grow together. After all, they're part of our family now, too!

Quick! Turn the Page! Written and illustrated by James Stevenson. 1990. Greenwillow Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09308-6. Hardcover. 32 pp. US\$12.95

Reviewed by Michelle Dearmin
Western Michigan University

Quick! Turn the Page! by James Stevenson provides children with a wonderful opportunity to interact with a book. This is how it works: First the book presents the child with a situation such as "The birds are sleeping." Then the book either gives the child a command, or asks for the child's help. "Turn the page quietly..." When the child turns the page, the result is shown. In this case, the birds are flying around – "Too loud!" With its colorful pictures, imaginative situations, and varying print, *Quick! Turn the Page!* is the ideal book for the active reader. It is also an interesting book to read to a child. Reading aloud encourages children to interact with the book, giving them the feeling that they are affecting the outcome. This book is an excellent choice for teaching children to predict outcomes. What *will* happen when you turn the page?



The Stowaway. Written by James Stevenson. 1990. Greenwillow Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-08619-5. Hardcover. 32 pp. US\$12.95.

Cartoons are good reading for children, we're sometimes told, but most cartoons are just for looking — the pictures tell the story, often a violent one, and the print is tiny even for grownup eyes. Here the cartoon bubbles are bright with child language, in child style writing, and the story is exciting and appropriately active. Children will enjoy following the adventures of Hubie the Mouse as he travels to France in style, all loneliness banished when he is befriended by a stowaway mouse named Claude. Grownups invited to read aloud will have fun with the sophisticated jokes, such as a luxury liner named the Hedonia. (JMJ)

Noly Poly Rabbit Tail and Me. Written and illustrated by Maggie Smith. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09570-4. 32 pp. US\$13.95.

Hair flying, eyes bright, the narrator of this pleasingly sentimental story smiles broadly at us from the cover illustration, her stuffed rabbit clutched firmly as she runs through a flowery field. Noly Poly Rabbit Tail is a rabbit, a doll, and a best friend in times of joy and sorrow. Her absence is a time of trial; her return, by US mail, a relief and a delight. A dedication, "For Lamby, wherever you are," suggests that the author describes the experience of having a cherished stuffed friend from personal experience. (JMJ)



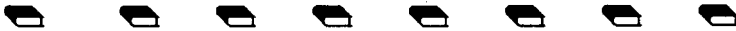
Natural Wonders: Stories Science Photos Tell. Written by Vicki Cobb. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09317-5. Hardcover. 32 pp. US\$14.95.

Every one of the brilliant illustrations in this handsome and varied collection — photographs, paired photographs, groups of photographs — illustrates a scientific concept. Accompanying explanations of complex topics are precise, clear, and readable. A photograph produced over a period of year, showing the sun at the same time of day, reveals a figure-eight pattern, an *analemma*, caused by the tilt of the earth's axis. A series of six photos show an experiment designed to investigate the pattern of pesticide distribution from a crop-dusting airplane — an experiment which resulted in a redesign of the plane's wingtip to produce more accurate targeting of the spray. Perhaps the most beautiful of the illustrations is the set of photographs showing a single drop of rain falling into a pond:

...The first photo shows the drop a fraction of a second before it lands. Note that the drop is perfectly spherical, not tear-shaped as it is often imagined to be. In nature, when there are no distorting forces, such as wind resistance, a liquid takes the

shape of a sphere. In the second photo, just after impact, .025 seconds later, the drop causes a coronet of water to rise around the point of impact....

Added features are a useful index and a brief, clear glossary. The book would be a splendid addition to school or home libraries, and an excellent gift for young people interested in science and photography. (JMJ)



A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution. Written by Betsy and Giulio Maestro. Mulberry Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09589-5. 48 pp. US\$5.95.

Clearly and simply, this book presents the background and history of the Constitutional Convention, which met for four months in 1787 to prepare what now, after a little more than 200 years, is "the oldest written set of rules for running a country still in use in the world." Full page color drawings provide an interesting glimpse of our country in its earliest days. The conflict between large and small states over representation — shall the number of national legislators from each state be proportional to the state's population or shall each state have the same number of representatives? — is clearly presented, but it is regrettable that the authors have only stated that the delegates reached a compromise on this issue; young readers could readily understand how representation in the Senate and the House of Representatives differs and how this difference produces fair representation among states. This is, however, a minor flaw in an excellent book. (JMJ)

Materials reviewed are not endorsed by *Reading Horizons* or Western Michigan University. The content of the reviews reflects the opinion of the reviewers whose names or initials appear with the reviews. To submit an item for potential review, send to Kathryn A. Welsch, Reviews Editor, *Reading Horizons*, Reading Center and Clinic, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008.