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## Of Cabbages and Kings: Reviews of Books for Children

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# Of Cabbages & Kings: Reviews of Books for Children

BY LYNETTE AUTREY, KATIE RENER, LEAH VAN BELLE,  
& MAGGIE WUNDERLICH

A friend recently posted a photo on Facebook of her beautiful 9-month-old daughter, Lilith, with arms wrapped around a ball that was decorated with illustrations of Olivia—yes *the* Olivia, Ian Falconer's imaginative little pig first introduced in the book of the same name (Atheneum, 2000), and now the heroine of an entire series of books. I smiled to myself because Lilith is absolutely adorable, and also because Olivia happens to be one of my favorite picture storybook characters. Of all time. Who could resist the magical combination of imagination and moxie that is Olivia? As I scrolled down through the comments under the photo, I noticed that the discussion thread was mostly a conversation about kids and television and television merchandising. None of the posters seemed to realize that Olivia was a *book* character before she became a star of the little screen. (And here is where I must insert that I did not even know that Olivia had her own cartoon series, given that I have no small children at home begging to watch the show.) I posted in the comments that Olivia is one of my favorite *books* and this got me to thinking about what the multimedia world in which we live and how this impacts the forms children's literature takes.

Like *Olivia Counts* (Falconer, 2002), let's add up the different forms Olivia has taken on—Olivia: 1) is a book heroine; 2) stars in her own television show; 3) is a stuffed doll with accessories, which we know she loves; 4) has her own website ([www.oliviathepiglet.com](http://www.oliviathepiglet.com)); 5) is an eBook character; 6) has her own iPad app titled perfectly as *Olivia Acts Out for iPad* (Polin8 LLC, 2011); 7) has her own iPhone apps; 8) can be downloaded as an audiobook through iTunes; 9) pops out of her own jack-in-the-box toy, which really is so very living-out-loud Olivia, now isn't it?; and 10) as I know from the photo of little Lilith, Olivia her own line of fabulous plastic bouncy balls. That's a lot for one very little piglet, and even though I stopped at 10, Olivia's empire surpasses that of even Eloise from the timeless book of the same name by Kay Thompson (Simon & Schuster, 1969). And, come to think of it, doesn't Olivia remind you of Eloise ever so muchly so? (That grammar is homage to Eloise, by the way.) So many choices for how to enjoy some of Olivia's magic, but it all started with a book. And whether that book is digital or analog, on an e-reader screen or on pages of paper bound together, it is so drolly written and wittily illustrated book that it's hard to resist Olivia's charms.

We big people enjoy books for children, too. I was thinking about this when reading the reviews in this column. For each column the reviewers choose to write about different books, and write in different styles, but the commonality that runs through all of the reviews is a love for children's literature and the belief that it matters. Because while Lilith is simply playing with the bouncy ball today, she will soon be listening to Mommy read the book about Olivia that I mailed to her (addressed to *Mademoiselle* Lilith, of course, because that makes the package all the more Olivia and Eloise, now doesn't it?). And then one day Lilith will be reading Olivia books herself. The tie-ins and toys are fun, but let's face it, nothing ever compares with the book, be it analog or digital.—Leah

**Adler, D.** (2009). *A picture book of Harry Houdini*. (Ill. by M. Collins). New York: Holiday House. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8234-2302-6. (Paperback); \$6.95.

David Adler has written more than 200 fiction and non-fiction books, including the famous *Cam Jansen Series*. This picture book biography is part of the *Picture Book Biography Series* and provides readers with a look into the life of the world famous escape artist and magician, Harry Houdini. The illustrations are captivating because they are in full-page color and realistic. Readers will be drawn in by the explicit details and action-packed pages of Houdini's death-defying stunts, including his New York bridge jump into icy water while locked in chains. This book also includes important dates, a bibliography, source notes, and recommended websites. It is perfect for students in third and fourth grades who are studying biographies.—Maggie



**Bailey, L., & Colin, J.** (2012). *Toads on toast*. New York: Kids Can Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1554536627. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

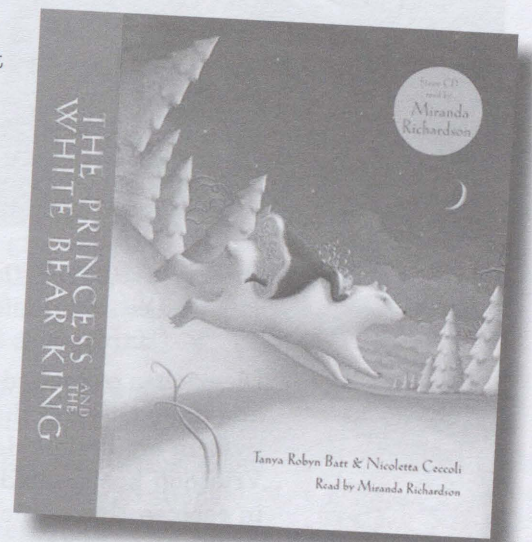
Fox needs a change. He is tired of the same routine every day and sets out to make some changes, starting with a new recipe. The local cookbook store has a wide selection of toad recipes and Fox learns that the younger toads are more tender than big fat toads. Now that he has his inspiration, he begins his journey to mix up his meals. When Fox finally catches the lively little toads he hears a voice say, "stop!" What wouldn't a mother do to save her little toads from a fox? Will a toad-free-recipe be the answer to everyone's problems?—*Katie*

**Baker-Smith, G., & Calcutt, D.** (2012). *Robin Hood*. Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books. 122 pp. ISBN: 978-1846863578. (Hardcover); \$24.99.

Baker and Calcutt have composed an epic retelling of Robin Hood and his grand adventures. Not only does this book explore questions such as, "Who was Robin Hood?" it brings readers into Robin Hood's world and allows them to meet Little John, Maid Marian, and his other companions. Each section of the book expands on Robin Hood's journeys with the use of descriptive and daring text. The detailed and bold illustrations are captivating and further entice readers to continue exploring with Robin Hood. Barefoot Books has once again produced an adventurous tale that readers will love.—*Katie*

**Batt, T.R.** (2008). *The princess and the white bear king*. (Ill. by N. Ceccoli). Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books. 122 pp. ISBN: 978-1846863578. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

Batt has woven an original tale blending literary elements from several Norwegian folktales including: *The White Bear King*, *The Black Bull of Norway*, and *East of the Sun, West of the Moon*. There is a beauty and truth to this tale that children and adults will appreciate. Follow the king's youngest and bravest daughter as she goes to stay in the castle of a white bear. Throughout her stay, she learns of love and a spell that must be broken. In her journey to reach her true love, she climbs daring heights and gathers gifts along her way. When she reaches her destination, will true love overcome any obstacle? With beautiful artwork and sweet yet bold narrative, this tale will charm the hearts of boys and girls.—*Katie*

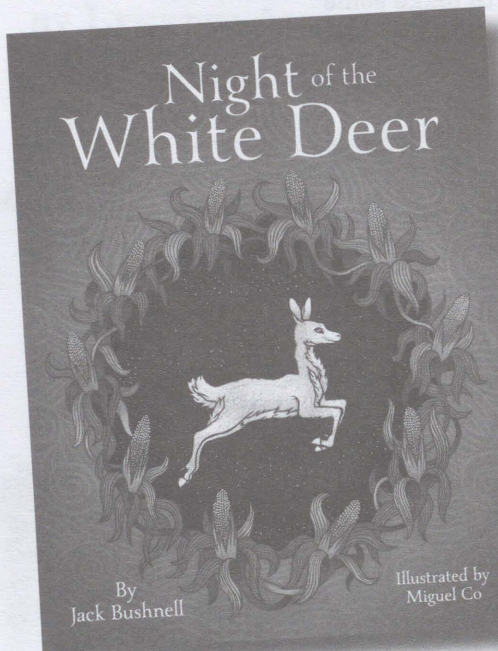


**Boelts, M.** (2012). *Happy like soccer*. (Ill. by L. Castillo). Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 0-7636-4616-5 (Hardcover); \$15.99.

Maribeth Boelts has written numerous children's books, including *Before You Were Mine*, which won the Humane Society of U.S.'s KIND Children's Picture Book Award and the ASPCA Henry Bergh Children's Book Award. This is a realistic fictional book about a Hispanic girl named Sierra who is happy to play soccer on a team, but is lonely when her aunt works on Saturdays and cannot come watch her play. Sierra and her aunt live together in the city, far away from the games. The illustrations give the reader a good sense of the distance because they show a bus passing by several apartment buildings and then crossing a bridge. In the end, Sierra solves her problem when she courageously asks her coach for help. The coach moves one of the games near Sierra's neighborhood, and her aunt is able to attend. The story and illustrations are a wonderful depiction of cultural differences, in a subtle way. The reader can see that Sierra looks different from her teammates and she lives in a different neighborhood; however, just like everyone else, she wants someone at the sidelines to cheer her on. It is a heartwarming book that may help elementary students visualize that even people from other cultures have the same problems as they do.—*Maggie*



**Bushnell, J.** (2012). *Night of the white deer*. (Ill. by M. Co). Terre Haute, IN: Tanglewood. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1933718804. (Hardcover); \$16.95.



Bushnell weaves an interesting tale centered on one town's fable of the white deer. Yet, as one little boy discovers, it may not be a fable after all. Stories say the deer had been created from a star that fell to the earth while others imagine she had risen up from tanks of spilt milk. When she comes to the young boy one night, they embark on a magical adventure. Will anyone believe him the next morning or will they think it was all a dream? Paired with Co's beautifully intriguing illustrations, this unique tale carries with it a special message about believing. – *Katie*

**Bustos, E.** (2012). *Going ape!* (Ill. by L. Rodriguez). New York: Tundra Books. 24 pp. ISBN: 978-1770492820. (Hardcover); \$9.95.

*Going Ape!* is a simple, yet informative picture book exploring primates across the world. Each page contains a short description of what makes each ape unique, along with a vivid illustration of the well-loved mammal. Bustos introduces each ape with just enough detail and simplicity to allow beginning readers to gather information independently, while also giving more mature young readers the opportunity to understand the great variety among the order of the primates. Rodriguez illustrates the book using bright colors and bold lines; reminiscent of another picture book created by this talented duo, titled *Wild Animals!*—*Lynette*

**Cleary, B.** (2013). *Do you know Dewey?: Exploring the Dewey decimal system*. (Ill. by J. Lew-Vriethoff) Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0761366768. (Hardcover); \$22.60.

Cleary has composed a flowing and informative narrative to educate students on the history and application of the Dewey Decimal System. The different sections of the Dewey Decimal System are broken down for students to understand what books are included in each. Lew-Vriethoff has created bright and bold illustrations to represent the different topics contained in each section of the system. Students will come to understand the use of the Dewey Decimal System and how it is beneficial to them when they are seeking a book. Cleary has also included two informational sections at the back of the book, "How to use the Dewey Decimal System," and "The Dewey Decimal System" which allow students to have a visual reference of the parts of the system. This book is a must have for any library.—*Katie*

**Cole, H.** (2012). *Unspoken*. New York: Scholastic Press. 40 pp. ISBN: 978-0545399975. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

*Unspoken* is a unique and powerful tale. This wordless book follows a young girl who discovers an escaped slave hiding in her family's barn. The reader sees only the escaped slave's frightened eye, yet the illustrations capture the commanding emotions circulating around this storyline. Cole has composed a tale rich in history without speaking a word. This book could have a wealth of potential in any classroom. It invites prior knowledge and creativity while still conveying a greater message about the unspoken gift of humanity.—*Katie*

**Côté, G.** (2012). *Mr. King's things*. New York: Kids Can Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 9781554537006. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Mr. King loves to get new things. However, whenever his new things get a tiny bit old, he just tosses them into the nearby pond before going off to buy something new. One day Mr. King is fishing when a monster unlike anything he has ever seen before frightens him. Upon closer examination...he discovers that the monster is made up of his old objects. Now he



must think of new ways to deal with old things in a creative and fun way. This is a great book to help kids explore the concept of reusing and recycling.—*Katie*

**Cusick, D., & O'Sullivan, J.** (2012). *Animal eggs: An amazing clutch of mysteries and marvels!* Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Books. 48 pp. ISBN: 978-0983201496. (Paperback); \$8.95.

Children and adults of all ages will be amazed by the stunning strength and cleverness of nature in this book about animal eggs. Dawn Cusick and Joanne O'Sullivan are coauthors of this incredible and fascinating look at nature's beginnings. The book is formally titled, *Animal Eggs: An Amazing Clutch of Mysteries and Marvels!* The photographs and written information are educational and dynamic—surely starting a stir of excitement and wonder in all readers. Be amazed as you see octopus eggs up close. Grow curious as you wonder who lays emerald-green eggs with pointed ends. Get a little grossed-out while looking at a male jawfish hold hundreds of jawfish eggs in his mouth. The authors have (separately) written several other nature-loving books with the intent to get children interested in studying and appreciating nature. This book is sure to “hatch” an interest in animals of all kinds!—*Lynette*

**Davis, J.** (2012). *Ladybug girl and bingo.* (Ill. by D. Soman). New York: Dial Books for YoungReaders. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8037-3582-8. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

The creators of the *New York Times* bestselling Ladybug Girl series bring us yet another charming adventure. Lulu, as Ladybug Girl, explores nature with her dog, Bingo, during a family camping trip. As the two pals are making imaginative discoveries, Bingo escapes into the woods. Ladybug Girl finds him, gets lost for a moment, and then safely takes him back to the campsite. This is a perfect book for kindergarten through second-grade classrooms because it is imaginative and demonstrates how a child can act responsibly. The ink and watercolor illustrations are amazing and depict the special relationship between a little girl and her dog. This is sure to be a favorite in classrooms across America.—*Maggie*

**de Beer, H.** (2011). *Little polar bear and the submarine.* (Ill. by H. DeBeer). New York/London: NorthSouth. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-7358-4030-0. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

This picture book is an excellent addition to de Beer's popular *Little Polar Bear* series, about a friendly polar bear named Lars and his adventures in the North Pole. The illustrations are in watercolor and almost every page is filled with a bright snow-covered landscape. In this story, Lars meets a dachshund named Freddy, who is there with a crew on a research submarine. Freddy takes Lars aboard the submarine and introduces him to two lost polar bear cubs. Lars acts like a big brother as he attempts to help the cubs find their way home. This endearing story of friendship is sure to appeal to children of all ages.—*Maggie*

**Despeyroux, D.** (2012). *The big book of vampires.* (Ill. by F. Falcon). New York: Tundra Books. 112 pp. ISBN: 978-1770493711. (Hardcover); \$19.99.

Any vampire enthusiasts in your classroom? This unique book is composed of wonderfully creepy vampire folklore. Despeyroux has compiled vampire stories from around the world and has further brought them to life with an attractive narrative and the perfect blend of creepy and creative illustrations. This is the perfect addition for your Halloween library as it easily allows for a teacher to pick and choose stories for a group read; it would also be conducive for individual children to explore.—*Katie*

**Dodd, E.** (2012). *Foxy.* (Ill. by E. Dodd). New York: Harper. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-06-201419. (Hardcover); \$14.99.

Emma Dodd is the winner of numerous distinguished awards for children's books. In this book, she illustrates and writes an all too familiar story. It's the night before the first day of school, and Emily has the jitters. Unlike in other stories, however, Emily enlists the help of her magical friend, Foxy. Foxy's magical tail can't seem to get anything right, but his antics



keep Emily distracted and entertained. The bright illustrations are full-paged and colorful. Young children will surely love these vibrant characters and illustrations. In the end, the message is clear. Emily doesn't need magic because she'll make friends just fine. This book is perfect for younger children who are entering Kindergarten.—*Maggie*

**Doyal, M.** (2005). *The barefoot book of fairy tales*. (Ill. by N. Ceccoli). Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books. 160 pp. ISBN: 978-1841487984. (Hardcover); \$23.99.

I adore fairy tales and find they hold wonderful concepts for creativity and lessons. When I stumbled upon this storybook, I knew I found another Barefoot Books gem. With brilliant artwork and a variety of cultural stories, including a few amusingly uncommon tales, this is a beautiful collection. Readers will revisit some of their childhood favorites as well as some new tales. Endnotes for each tale tell where the story originated and a little about that country. This book features an educational perspective to the telling of fairy tales, many of which teach a moral lesson as well. The writing is enchanting, and the pictures will delight readers of many ages.—*Katie*

**Eszterhas, S.** (2012). *Brown bear*. London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1847803085. (Hardcover); \$15.99.

**Eszterhas, S.** (2012). *Cheetah*. London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1847803016. (Hardcover); \$15.99.

**Eszterhas, S.** (2012). *Gorilla*. London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1847802996. (Hardcover); \$15.99.

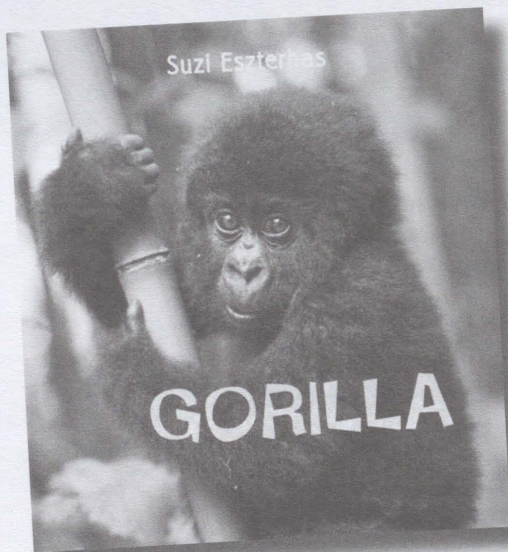
**Eszterhas, S.** (2012). *Lion*. London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1847803153. (Hardcover); \$15.99.

Suzi Eszterhas is a California-based wildlife photographer who spends 9 months of the year photographing a multitude of wildlife. During the recent years, she has focused on documenting animal family dynamics and has become well known for her extraordinary work with newborn animals. Eszterhas has used her amazing photographs and knowledge of animal family life to compose the Eye on the Wild series. Each book centers on an animal from birth to adulthood with striking snapshots to accompany the animal's life growth. The reader is immersed in the animal's world watching them explore, hunt, and interact with other members of their species. Each book features a simple narrative for young readers to

follow and learn from. The Eye on the Wild series is a wonderful introduction to animals in the wild for young readers. Upcoming 2013 books in the Eye on the Wild series include: *Sea Otters* and *Orangutans*.—*Katie*

**Fernandes, E., & Smith-Milway, K.** (2012). *Mimi's village: And how basic health care transformed it*. New York: Kids Can Press. 144 pp. ISBN: 978-1554537228. (Hardcover); \$18.95.

This is the newest addition to the CitizenKid™ collection of motivating stories from around the world. This tale focuses on Mimi Malaho and her family's goal to help bring basic health care to their community. Mimi shows readers, and her neighbors, that making small changes makes a big difference in keeping yourself healthy. In this encouraging story, the Malahos' and their neighbors transform their Kenyan village into a prospering community. Other titles in this series include: *One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference* and *The Good Garden: How One Family Went from Hunger to Having Enough*.—*Katie*





**Froud, B., & Froud, Wendy.** (2012). *Trolls*. New York: Abrams Books. 144 pp. ISBN: 978-1419704383. (Hardcover); \$35.00.

Brian and Wendy Froud, co-authors and renowned artists of *Faeries*, have composed a comprehensive and bewitching collection of troll knowledge into their newest book, *Trolls*. Step into the mystical world of trolls where the Froud's spin together both original works and classic tales with remarkable illustrations. The authors allow readers to journey through a multitude of topics including troll culture, myths, archaeology, and life. This book possesses such a great deal of imagination and depth that fantasy lovers could lose themselves in for hours. Brian and Wendy Froud have produced a truly unique and fascinating tale.—*Katie*

**Gervas, B., & Pittau, F.** (2012). *Birds of a feather*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. 18 pp. ISBN: 978-1452110660. (Hardcover); \$24.99.

Pittau and Gervais have once again teamed up to create a wonderfully engaging and educational book for young readers. *Birds of a Feather* is an interactive and unique pop-up book that allows readers to explore the vibrant world of birds. From eggs and shadows to puzzle pieces and flip tabs, this hands-on book will beckon children to turn the page and keep discovering. The authors have included a wealth of information within this interactive book. To see book-in-book in action go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-oeLGVpp8A>.—*Katie*

**Harris, T.** (2012). *The royal treasure measure*. (Ill. by I. Stevanovic). Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0761368069. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Have you ever wondered what people used to measure things with before a foot? Harris has created an endearing and comical tale to provide possible answers to this question. In King Balbazar's kingdom, measuring is a mess and nothing seems to come out right. People measure dimensions with everything from candlesticks and sausages to spoons. Frustrated with this measuring mess, King Balbazar holds a contest to see who will come up with the winning way to standardize measuring. When the princesses hand in marriage is on the line, who will rise to the occasion and create the winning measuring system?—*Katie*



**Hearst, M.** (2012). *Unusual creatures: A mostly accurate account of some of earth's strangest animals*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. 112 pp. ISBN: 978-1452104676. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Never have so many unusual creatures been found in one book! Michael Hearst has compiled fascinating information about some of the most interesting and sometimes unbelievable animals ever found in this book, which contains information and illustrations of 50 relatively unknown animals from around the world. The readers of this book will discover the axolotl's ability to regrow body parts, the Texas horned lizard's gross defense mechanism, and how the glass frog got its name. Readers will also be amused by the author's occasional poetic outbursts as he rhymes about (among others) the very lazy blobfish. Although the book contains no actual photographs of these rarely seen creatures, the drawings are beautifully and realistically done by illustrator, Jelder Noordeman. The author does include a website to find real photographs and videos of animals described in the book. Readers of all ages will find Hearst's writing style clever and informative, and everyone will learn something new.—*Lynette*



**Heidbreder, R., & Smith, L.** (2012). *Noisy poems for a busy day*. New York: Kids Can Press. 40 pp. ISBN: 978-1554537068. (Hardcover); \$18.95.

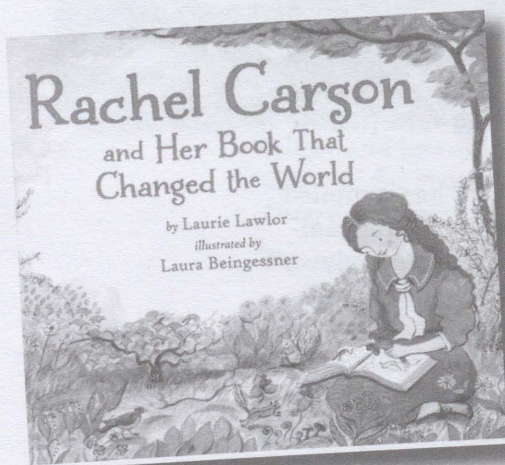
Heidbreder and Smith have written a collection of poems for every time of the day. From getting “Out of Bed” to “A Dream-filled Head,” each poem’s simple and charming language will attract readers. The unique and delightful pictures further add to the charming nature of this collection of poetry. This would be a wonderful book to introduce young learners to writing and reading poetry.—*Katie*

**Heller, L.** (2012). *Sign language ABC*. (Ill. by ElizOng/Stockphoto.com). New York: Sterling Children’s Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-4027-6392-2. (Hardcover); \$14.95.

Lora Heller has been featured in the *New York Times* for her work on several instructional books that teach infants to sign. This alphabet book is an early introduction to American Sign Language because it provides a combination of finger spelling and letters. Finger spelling is a process where fingers are used to spell words, letter by letter. The finger spelling for each letter is enclosed in a circle, depicting hands of various skin tones. Each letter of the alphabet has a page of full color images with whimsical illustrations of children, giraffes, tigers and other characters. In the classroom, this book can serve as a springboard for discussion about communicating in a way other than oral language. It is a simple, yet delightful book that is sure to engage younger readers from preschool to second grade.—*Maggie*

**Katz, J.** (2012). *Lenore finds a friend*. (Ill. by J. Katz). New York: Henry Holt and Company. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8050-9220-2. (Hardcover); \$15.99.

Bestselling author Jon Katz brings us yet another true story that takes place on Bedlam Farm, where he lives. The book features vibrant and detailed photographs of the animals on Bedlam Farm. It is a tender story about an unlikely friendship between a dog named Lenore and a grumpy ram named Brutus. At first, Lenore can’t seem to make friends on the farm. Despite her sweet disposition, the other dog, Rose, is too busy herding sheep. Lenore is sad, but then she befriends Brutus, who doesn’t budge when Rose tries to herd him away. Students will love the photographs because they captivate the animals’ facial expressions, which bring the story to life. This sweet story of friendship is great for preschool to second-grade students who love stories about animals.—*Maggie*



**Lawlor, L.** (2012). *Rachel Carson and her book that changed the world*. (Ill. by L. Beingsner). New York: Holiday House. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0823423705. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

Rachel Carson was a revolutionary environmentalist. She valued the world around her and wrote, “Once you are aware of the wonder and beauty of earth, you will want to learn about it.” Lawlor’s book presents an overview of Carson’s life and her accomplishments. Rachel Carson went to places where few women yet ventured, such as diving into the deep seas near Nova Scotia. Her efforts to preserve the environment lead to her creation of the book *Silent Spring*. However, not everyone shared her opinions relating to protecting the natural elements of earth. It was her braveness and the support of her publishers and friends that superseded the dismissive remarks of those who tried to shut her down.—*Katie*

**Lougue, M.** (2012). *Sleep like a tiger*. (Ill. by P. Zagarenski). New York: Houghton Mifflin. 40 pp. ISBN: 978-0547641027. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Once there was a little girl who did not wish to fall asleep and claimed she was not tired. With a little coaxing from her parents, she finds herself tucked under her covers asking her



mother and father, "Does everyone in the world go to sleep?" Her parent's words paint a colorful picture of all the creatures sleeping around the world. This is a truly charming tale sleepy children of many ages will be able to enjoy. Zagarenski's unique and soft drawings help bring Lougue's creative tale to life.—*Katie*

**Long, E.** (2012). *The Wing Wing brothers: Math spectacular!* New York: Holiday House. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0823423200. (Hardcover); \$15.95.

Wilber, Wendell, Willy, Walter, and Woody truly know how to put on a great educational show! The ducks demonstrate the concepts of basic math skills including addition, subtraction, and greater than/less than/equal to. The humorous illustrations add to the playfulness of this book. At the end of this funny tale, Long includes a page for teachers and parents that explains how the book meets the Common Core State Standards K.CC.6-7 and K.OA.1-5. With an engaging layout, Long's story is a great addition to any young reader's library.—*Katie*

**Long, S.** (2010). *Thumbelina*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. 58 pp. ISBN: 978-0811855228. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

Sylvia Long has presented a bright and detailed retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's classic tale, *Thumbelina*. This tale follows a thumb-size girl and her journeys that unfold throughout the pages. Thumbelina's extraordinary adventures are reminders to all of us that no matter our size, we can accomplish great things. Long's stunning jewel-toned paintings help to illuminate the storyline and entrance readers. This book is truly a beautifully done adaptation of the tale and would serve as a wonderful addition to any big-dreamers' bookshelf.—*Katie*

**Ludwig, T.** (2011). *Better than you*. (Ill. by A. Gustavson). New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1-58246-380-3. (Hardcover); \$15.99.

Trudy Ludwig is a nationally acclaimed author who is best known for her work about bullying and other childhood social issues. In this realistic fiction, Tyler is an African American boy who starts to feel like a loser because his friend Jake does everything better than he. Or so it seems. The illustrations help tell the story because they show Tyler's expressions when he gets tired of hearing all the bragging. At every chance, Jake brags about how much better he can play basketball, how much better he can do a math problem, how much better he can do everything! When Tyler's self-esteem plummets, his uncle visits him and they play guitar together. The illustrations provide a warm visual of the closeness between them. His uncle helps Jake deal with his negative feelings when Tyler brags. The illustrations are incredibly realistic throughout the story and are sure to engage young readers. The author includes a list of suggestions to help children deal with braggarts. This is an excellent book to teach children of all ages a life lesson about the impact their boastfulness may have on others and what to do if they are in the receiving end of it.—*Maggie*

**Lupton, D., & Morden, D.** (2010). *The adventures of Odysseus*. (Ill. by C. Balit). Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books. 96 pp. ISBN: 978-1846864469. (Hardcover); \$24.99.

Odysseus's adventures come to life in this adventurous and beautifully illustrated epic. The authors have created this thrilling tale by condensing the adventures of Odysseus into a fun and engaging narrative without making the story feel lacking from the original. Join Odysseus as he fights his way back home after the Trojan War and endures tests and tribulations through his adventures. *The Adventures of Odysseus* would serve as a wonderful classroom or independent read. Students will be captivated by Odysseus's adventures and enthralled by the brilliant illustrations. This tale includes two full-length CDs of the story read by the authors.—*Katie*



**Marzollo, J.** (2012). *Help me learn addition*. (Ill. by C. Phillips). New York: Holiday House. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8234-2398-9. (Hardcover); \$15.95.

Best known for her award-winning *I SPY series*, Jean Marzollo has created more 100 books. This one is part of her *Help Me Learn series*. It starts off with counting and then leads to adding, including tally marks and number stories. What makes this book unique is that the illustrations are photographs of toys and the text is written in rhyme. The photographs include fuzzy animals, spaceship babies and adorable monsters, which attract even the youngest of readers. It would be an excellent book in elementary classrooms because it provides a fun and interactive way to support lessons about addition. It also relates to common core standards in mathematics for preschool through first grade.—*Maggie*

**Miriam, L., & White, K.** (2012). *Ruby's sleepover*. Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1846865930. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Imaginations can grow wild in the dark. Ruby and Mai camp out in their tents and prepare to spend a night gazing at the moon and showing each other the treasures they've brought. When they hear a "rumble and grumble" down the street...will it truly be a sign that a giant is near? Will a shadow in the grass really mean a dragon just flew over? Once again, Barefoot Books has published a creative tale with beautiful illustrations meant to capture the eyes of its young audience.—*Katie*

**National Children's Book and Literary Alliance.** (2010). *Our White House: Looking in, looking out*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 256 pp. ISBN: 978-0763646097. \$14.99.

The National Children's Book and Literary Alliance has composed an engaging and informative look into the White House. *Our White House* is an amazing collection of writings from more than 100 award-winning children's book authors and illustrators. This tale goes beyond the traditional bounds of a historical chronicle and offers readers a unique and appealing look into the White House containing information about the home, U.S. presidents, and their families. It also includes a multitude of different writing formats including essays, fictional stories, poetry, fictional letters to the president, texts of actual speeches, memoirs, transcripts of TV interviews, and clever games to further captivate readers. This book contains a wealth of information and makes learning about the White House entertaining for readers.—*Katie*

**Nelson, R.** (2012). *Let's make a bar graph: Kinds of pets*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner. 23 pp. ISBN: 978-1575059471. (Hardcover); \$6.95.

**Nelson, R.** (2012). *Let's make a circle graph: How Mr. Hall's class gets to school*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner. 23 pp. ISBN: 978-1580136754. (Hardcover); \$6.95.

Nelson breaks down the concepts of developing a bar graph and a circle graph to young learners in a fun and practical way. The each book begins with a question and follows the thought process students use to put their thinking skills to work. Nelson utilizes actual classroom photos that allow young learners the opportunity to follow the visual procedures of putting graphs together. Nelson also includes a specific "How to Make a Graph" section in the back of each book. Throughout the text, boldface words appear and correspond to a glossary at the end of the book. Nelson has demonstrated these procedures in a practical and fun manner for students to understand. Lerner Publishing Company also provides a website link (located within the individual books) to complementary educational resources for these books. Other books in this series include: *Let's Make a Picture Graph* and *Let's Make a Tally Chart*.—*Katie*



**Nelson, R.** (2012). *What does a hammer do?* Minneapolis, MN: Lerner. 23 pp. ISBN: 978-1580139472. (Hardcover); \$6.95.

**Nelson, R.** (2012). *What does a level do?* Minneapolis, MN: Lerner. 23 pp. ISBN: 978-1580139489. (Hardcover); \$6.95.

In this series, Nelson explores answers to questions about what tools do and how we can use them. These books are wonderful for inquisitive, young, hands-on minds. Photographs of the tools in action help provide a visual connection apart from the textual words. A "safety first" section accompanies these titles and outlines the proper procedures for using the tools responsibly. Nelson has composed an engaging series that imaginative and resourceful minds will be sure to enjoy. Lerner Publishing Company also provides a website link (located within the individual books) to supplemental educational resources for these books. Other books in this series include: *What Does a Saw Do?* *What Does a Screwdriver Do?* *What Does a Wrench Do?* And *What Do pliers Do?*—Katie

**Reynolds, P.** (2012). *The dot.* Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 256 pp. ISBN: 978-0763619619. (Hardcover); \$14.00.

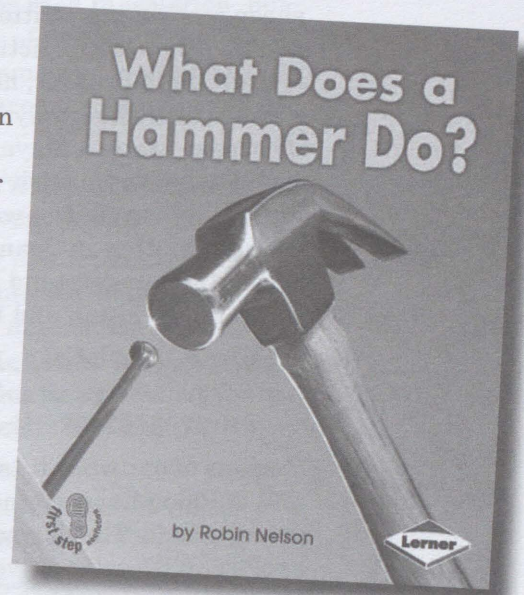
**Reynolds, P.** (2012). *Ish.* Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 256 pp. ISBN: 978-0763623449. (Hardcover); \$14.00.

**Reynolds, P.** (2012). *Sky color.* Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 256 pp. ISBN: 978-0763623456. (Hardcover); \$14.00.

Peter Reynolds has composed an imaginative and colorful collection of books in the *Creatrilogy* collection. These books come together to demonstrate the power and beauty of original thinking. *Sky Color* follows young Marisol as she shares her art and beliefs with the world. When her class is given the opportunity to paint a mural in the library, Marisol volunteers to paint the ocean and the sky. However, she can't find her blue paint. Marisol must learn to see beyond traditional ideas and see all the colors in our beautiful world. In *Ish*, young Ramon must learn to appreciate his own unique artist's eye. While others cannot always see the beauty in his work, Ramon must learn to appreciate his *artistic-ish* abilities. *The Dot* focuses on Vashti, who believes she cannot draw. Her teacher tells her, "Just make a mark and see where it takes you." With her teacher's urging, Vashti makes a dot on her paper. Where will this dot lead her? Reynolds's books inspire creativity and are sure to delight young readers.—Katie

**Quattlebaum, M.** (2012). *Jo MacDonald had a garden.* (Ill. by L. Bryant). Nevada City, CA: Dawn Publications. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1-58469-164-8. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

The catchy and familiar tune of this book will get the reader singing from page one. It's a twist of *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*, but Mary Quattlebaum takes it to a whole new level and makes it educational. Quattlebaum has published various other children's books, including *Jo MacDonald Saw a Pond*. This book takes the reader through all the steps of planting a garden and so much more. The soothing illustrations are on double-page spreads, which will capture children's attention. The back of the book provides information about the garden community, including plants and wild creatures. Curiously, several creatures sneak into the garden throughout the story, and the reader is encouraged to find and answer questions about them. It would be a great book for preschoolers to second graders because it's a rendition of an old favorite song and fits in nicely with learning about plants.—Maggie





**Shaw, N.** (2012). *Elena's story*. (Ill. by K. Rodanas). Ann Arbor, MI: Sleeping Bear Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1-58536-528-9 (Hardcover); \$16.95.

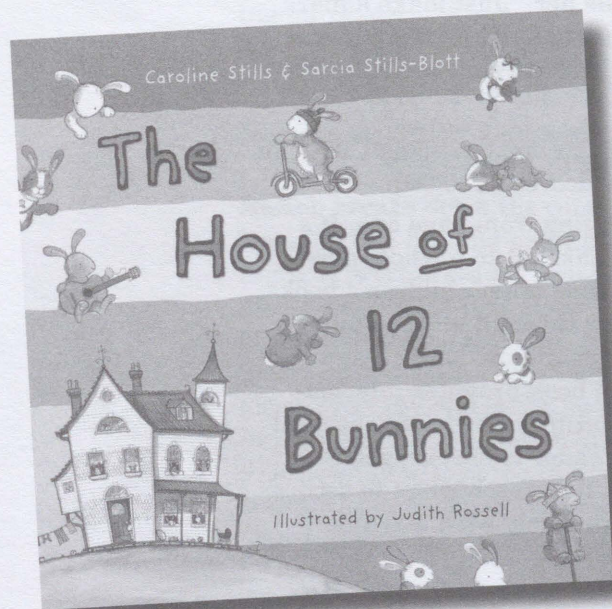
Nancy Shaw, the award-winning author of *Raccoon Tune*, *Sheep in a Jeep* and five other sheep stories, has written the latest installment in the *Tales of the World* multicultural series. It is realistic fiction and takes place in Guatemala, where a young girl named Elena is a struggling reader; however, she is so busy with chores and helping care for her younger siblings that she rarely has time to read. To further compound the problem, Elena's family speaks Mam, a Mayan language, and not Spanish, the national language. The story is sprinkled with Spanish words and colorful illustrations that help define them. As the story unfolds, Elena finds a way to combine her responsibilities and her studies by reading to her younger brother in Spanish. This is a perfect book to help students learn about a different culture and understand what life is like for children who speak a second language. It is beautifully written and illustrated and is sure to be a class favorite.—*Maggie*

**Smith, J., & Waddell, D.** (2012). *How to be a detective: Search for clues, analyze the evidence, and solve the case!* Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 24 pp. ISBN: 978-0763661427. (Hardcover); \$19.99.

Curious about what it takes to be a detective? Then this interactive book is for you! Smith and Waddell have engineered this captivating and informative book perfect for curious young minds. This is a wonderful independent or group read for students to learn and explore. With interactive tabs and crime scene clues, this hands-on book will educate readers on the basics of being a detective. The special features of this book include an inkpad for taking fingerprints, a make-your-own periscope kit, and a foldout poster featuring a case yet to be solved.—*Katie*

**Simon, S.** (2012). *Seymour Simon's extreme Earth*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. 60 pp. ISBN: 978-1452107851. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

Simon's exciting book contains a multitude of questions and answers for inquisitive young minds. This text allows the reader to explore the most extreme places from the comfort of their classroom. Curious about the hottest place on earth? What about the most remote location on earth? Simon's educational research is narrated in an engaging manner and is combined with photographs and images to keep readers turning the page to discover more. Students will love to dive into new depths of knowledge through this text.—*Katie*



**Stills, C., & Stills-Blott, S.** (2012). *The house of 12 bunnies*. (Ill. by J. Rossell). New York: Holiday House. 24 pp. ISBN: 978-0823424221. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

Join Sophia on her search to find her missing...something! Its almost bedtime yet Sophia cannot rest until she finds it. As Sophia searches, her 11 brothers and sisters bounce throughout the pages and through the house. This tale not only has a sweet storyline, but also incorporates counting in a fun manner for beginning readers. The soft and colorful illustrations allow readers to count along with the narrative.—*Katie*

**Urrutia, C.** (2012). *Who will save my planet?* New York: Tundra Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1770492813. (Hardcover); \$10.95.

So many stirring, beautiful, breathtaking, and troubling pictures contained in this one thought-provoking wordless picture book! Maria Cristina Urrutia presents photographs



of nature at its most spectacular and then counters with images of nature at the hands of humankind at its most irresponsible. *Who Will Save My Planet* will have young students marveling at beautiful waterfalls, forests, and sea lions while questioning the deforestation, pollution, and real leopard-skin rug. The book is not meant to be read in isolation, but rather used as a springboard for discussion on the beauty and power of nature versus the destruction and devastation humans can reign over it. Urrutia needs no words to convey her message; the “readers” of her picture book will express amazement, wonder, and dismay as they explore every powerful image.—*Lynette*

**Walsh, M.** (2012). *Living with Mom and living with Dad*. (Ill. by M. Walsh). Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7636-5869-4. (Hardcover); \$15.99.

Readers will not be able to resist this fun lift-the-flap book. Not only is it interactive, but the double-page spreads are filled with full page bright colors. Melanie Walsh has published many children’s books and, interestingly, some were translated into nine different languages. In this touching story, the acrylic illustrations depict a young girl who travels back and forth between her divorced parents’ homes. Despite the topic, there’s a positive vibe to the story and the little girl appears happy. This is a perfect book to start a dialogue with children of all ages about dealing with divorce.—*Maggie*

**Whiteside, A.** (2011). *Valentino finds a home*. (Ill. by C. Hnatov). Cambridge, MA: Star Bright Books. 24 pp. ISBN: 978-1595722843. (Hardcover); \$15.99.

Valentino the guinea pig attempts to escape Bolivia before he is turned into a meal. He longs for a safe and happy home with a loving family. Smuggling himself out of Bolivia in a traveler’s suitcase, Valentino embarks on the journey of his life. When he reveals himself to his unknowing transporter, she gasps and mistakes him for a rat. Valentino then finds himself at a pet store alone and unhappy in his box. When a man comes in looking for a gift for his daughter, will this be Valentino’s chance to find his *happily ever after*?—*Katie*

**Willems, M.** (2011). *I broke my trunk!* (Ill. by M. Willems). New York: Hyperion Books for Children. 58 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4231-3309-4. (Hardcover); \$8.99.

Willems received the Theodor Seuss Geisel Honor for his latest addition to the *Elephant and Piggie* book series. Gerald (the elephant) and Piggie are beloved characters in the series, because of their wittiness and dry humor. In this story, Gerald starts out explaining to Piggie how he broke his trunk; the problem is that the explanation keeps getting sillier and sillier *and sillier*. Of course, that is exactly what preschool to second graders will love about this book. The illustrations are plain and not very colorful, but Gerald’s and Piggie’s hilarious facial expressions will surely capture children’s attention. Lastly, the simple text and plot are perfect for new readers.—*Maggie*

**Wood, A.** (2012). *What time is it? It’s Duffy time!* (Ill. by D. Wood). New York: The Blue Sky Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-545-22089-7. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Audrey Wood and Don Wood are the husband-and-wife team who have written and illustrated several bestselling and award-winning children’s books, such as *The Big Hungry Bear*, *Silly Sally* and the Caldecott Honor Book *King Bidgood’s in the Bathtub*. This picture book delights the reader with the antics of an adorable pug named Duffy. Through Duffy’s eyes, the reader experiences his daily activities, which occur around his nap times. Cleverly, illustrations of clocks are included on almost every page, which help the reader discover how often the sweet little pug is napping. The lovely illustrations depict the affection and love between Duffy and his family, who he calls “mistress,” “master,” and “best friend.” The illustrations are quite detailed with indoor and outdoor scenes and Duffy’s precious facial expressions. These realistic illustrations will capture children’s attention. In fact, dog lovers of all ages will surely appreciate this book.—*Maggie*



**Woo, A.** (2012). *Maggie's chopsticks*. (Ill. by I. Malenfant). New York: Kids Can Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1554536191. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

Poor Maggie struggles to master her chopsticks—it seems nearly everyone around the dinner table has something to say about the “right” way to hold them! But when Father reminds her not to worry about everyone else, Maggie finally gets a grip on an important lesson. Paired with Isabelle Malenfant’s charming illustrations, Woo’s meaningful lesson is a great reminder to kids that being unique is great.—*Katie*

## Spotlight on Bilingual Fairytales

By **Katie Renner**

“Once upon a time...” is an ageless phrase known to children of various origins. Chronicle Books has created a series of books geared to retell classic fairytales in both English and Spanish. Their collection of titles include timeless favorites such as *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*, *Cinderella*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Rapunzel*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *The Hare and the Tortoise*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Musicians of Bremen*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *Puss in Boots*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Three Little Pigs*, *Thumbelina*, and *The Ugly Duckling*. Each of these retellings is unique with bright and engaging illustrations to capture the reader’s eye. The language is flowing and conveys these classics in a wonderful voice. Each book presents its tale in a reader-friendly layout with each picture filling the page and the text, in both English and Spanish, on the opposite page. These fairy tales provide young readers with a fun opportunity to learn and recognize words in both languages. Children and adults will love the new touch Chronicle Books added to these classic stories.

**Bofill, F.** (2006). *Rapunzel*. (Ill. by Joma). San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0811850605. (Hardcover); \$14.99.

This adaptation of *Rapunzel* offers some unique twists to the classic tale. Charming illustrations collaborate with the love-story background of Rapunzel and her prince. Though they meet under unusual circumstances, they know they are meant for one another and form a plan to run away to live happily ever after. When the witch finds out, will that be the end of their dreams?

**Carrasco, X.** (2006). *Rumpelstiltskin*. (Ill. by F. Infante). San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0811859721. (Hardcover); \$14.99.

The trouble begins when a miller boasts to the king that his daughter can spin straw into gold. Before they know it the king has placed the miller’s daughter in a room filled with straw and tells her she must spin it all into gold by the morning. When she begins to cry her tears are answered by a strange little man named Rumpelstiltskin. He agrees to help her accomplish this great task, though it will cost her. Can she continue paying the little man? Or will her promises of payment result in heartbreak?

**Vallverdu, J.** (2006). *Aladdin and the magic lamp*. (Ill. by P. Montserrat). San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0811850629. \$6.99.

Follow mischievous Aladdin as he wanders through the streets of his city day and night. When he meets a magician who poses him with a challenge to retrieve his magic lamp, Aladdin cannot turn it down. His journey brings him to a deep cave in which Aladdin meets a genie who will grant his every wish. Will wishes be enough to secure the heart of the king’s daughter?



Lynette M. Autrey is a fourth-grade teacher for Howell Public Schools. She holds a master's degree in reading and has experience leading a reading clinic and writing tutoring through an after-school program with elementary school children in Detroit. In this issue of MRJ you will also find Lynette's piece *Do You Know What Your Elementary Reading Program is Lacking?* in which she and her coauthors provide insights and tools for evaluating reading programs.

Katie Rener is an undergraduate student at Madonna University in the College of Education. As an English major, she is pursuing her teaching certificate in secondary education and is passionate about supporting students' creativity as readers and writers. Katie served as the editorial assistant for the Michigan Reading Journal. In this issue see her Note from Katie, in which she reflects on what she gained in her experience as editorial assistant for MRJ.

Leah van Belle serves as the editor of MRJ and is an associate professor of education at Madonna University in Livonia, MI. Dr. van Belle teaches all of her university courses as field-based classes in Detroit schools. Her work as an urban education consultant and instructional coach allows her to collaborate with amazing teachers in working to close the academic opportunity and achievement gap. She earned her doctorate in education from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Find her online at [www.RethinkingTeaching.org](http://www.RethinkingTeaching.org).

Maggie Wunderlich is a paraprofessional who helps teach English as a second language to a diverse group of students in Plymouth Canton. She has written a middle grade novel titled *Visibly Every After*. As an undergrad student at Madonna University, she is pursuing a teaching certificate in elementary education with a language arts major and an emphasis on supporting English language learners. She is happiest when she can combine her passion for teaching children and for writing.

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