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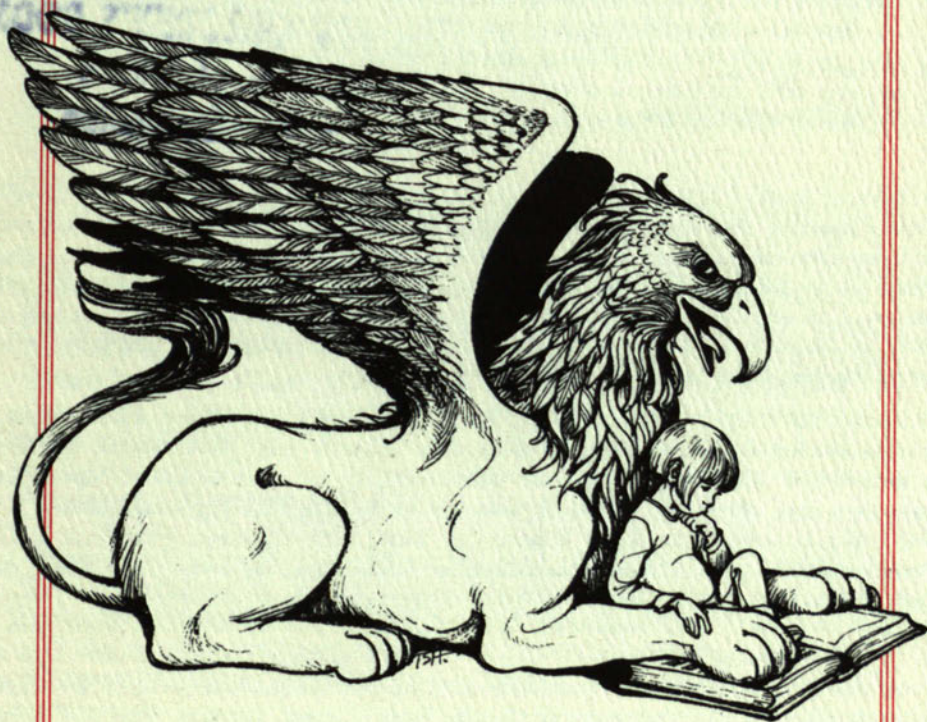
THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

MARCH 1990

VOLUME 43

NUMBER 7



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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED
WITH ANNOTATIONS

- * Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
- R Recommended.
- Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
- M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
- NR Not recommended.
- SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
- SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.
- C.U. Curricular Use.
- D.V. Developmental Values.

CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS
University of Illinois
at Urbana - Champaign
* * *

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The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
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Announcement

The 1990 Scott O'Dell Award for historical fiction has been given to Carolyn Reeder for her book *Shades of Gray*, published by Macmillan. Set in Virginia just after the Civil War, the novel tells of the struggle by Will, a twelve-year-old boy whose parents were killed by the Yankees, to understand his Uncle Jed, who had refused to fight for the South. In her review in the January, 1990 issue of *The Bulletin*, Zena Sutherland praised *Shades of Gray* as "an excellent first novel . . . that has both momentum and nuance."

The Scott O'Dell Award, a \$5000 prize, was established by author Scott O'Dell in 1981. Judged by a committee including Robert Strang, Elizabeth Taylor, Roger Sutton, and Betsy Hearne, with Zena Sutherland as Chair, the prize is awarded annually (unless no book is deemed worthy) to a distinguished work of historical fiction set in the New World, i.e., North, Central or South America, published in English for children or young adults by a U.S. publisher and written by a U.S. citizen. Previous winners, beginning in 1983, include *The Sign of the Beaver* by Elizabeth Speare, *The Fighting Ground* by Avi, *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan, *Streams to the River, River to the Sea* by Scott O'Dell, *Charley Skedaddle* by Patricia Beatty, and *The Honorable Prison* by Lyll Becerra de Jenkins.

We note with great regret that Scott O'Dell died last October 15. We believe that the Award should serve not as a memorial to the author himself, for his many distinguished books will do the best job of that. Instead, we will continue with the same plain purpose that led Mr. O'Dell to establish the Award: to encourage and reward the writing and publication of good historical fiction for young people.

Roger Sutton, Senior Editor

New Titles for Children and Young People

Ackerman, Karen. *Araminta's Paint Box*; illus. by Betsy Lewin. Atheneum, 1990. ISBN 0-689-31462-0. 32p. \$12.95.

Ad Gr. 2-4. In telling the story of an object that passed from one person (or family) to another during the westward trek in the middle of the nineteenth century, Ackerman gives an account nicely gauged to the

comprehension and interest of primary-grades independent readers. Line and wash pictures, bright and not too busy, show the spectrum of travelers or residents who acquire, in turn, the box given to young California-bound Araminta. The writing style is simple and direct, and the fact that the box eventually returns into the hands of its original owner should appeal to readers, who will probably not cavil at that coincidence or at the repetitiously convenient loss or misplacement by so many owners of the paint box. ZS

Aiken, Joan. *Return to Harken House*. Delacorte, 1990. ISBN 0-385-29975-3. [128p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 5-7. When Julia arrives for a summer in the gloomy English house where she was born, she finds that her father is in Switzerland for an undefined period and her stepmother does not want her around. Neglected and lonely, Julia becomes possessed by the spirit of a maniacal seventeenth-century resident of the house, Joshua Harkin, and begins speaking involuntarily in strange voices until her sleepwalking results in a climactic fall from a parapet during a storm. Aiken has taken advantage of Gothic conventions to develop an eerie setting and suspenseful plot on the eve of World War II. Unfortunately, just as the story assumes a full-bodied shape, she breaks it off without giving readers enough clues to figure out what happened to the troubled earlier inhabitants of the house and how their fate links with Julia's family. Why Julia doesn't simply call her mother to retrieve her also remains a mystery, as do the repeated references to King Charles I when it is actually William and Mary's reign that is encompassed by the dates over Harkin's door; and, for that matter, the spelling of Harken House after a resident named Harkin. It's too bad, too, because Aiken's style is as smooth as ever, and her characterizations as credibly practised. BH

D.V. Fear, overcoming

Alexander, Lloyd. *The Philadelphia Adventure*. Dutton, 1990. ISBN 0-525-44564-1. [160p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 6-9. Philadelphia is the setting for the fifth book about the intrepid nineteenth-century heroine Vesper Holly. Scheming to control Brazil's natural resources, arch-villain Helvitius is also intent on destroying Vesper, her guardian, Brinnie, and anyone else nearby. An amazingly resourceful young man, Toby ("The Weed") Passavant, has been added to the cast of characters as an innocent love interest for Vesper; bumbling Brinnie is characteristically jealous. Alexander has thoroughly researched the events and personalities surrounding the 1876 World's Fair. The combination of historical fact, non-stop danger and intrigue, and masterful writing style adds up to another energetic predicament for Vesper Holly. KP

Allen, Linda. *When Grandfather's Parrot Inherited Kennington Court*; illus. by Katinka Kew. Little, 1990. ISBN 0-316-03413-4. [75p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 3-5. Black-and-white line drawings that have a quasi-Jazz Age raffishness illustrate a story, first published in England, that is pleasant but predictable. It is predictable that the members of an extended family, dotty and mercenary, will connive to find a way to get the inheritance away from the

parrot; it is predictable that little Miranda, only child in the family and an animal lover, will win the inheritance through her kindness; and it is predictable that gentle Aunt Lucille (with whom the orphaned Miranda lives in proud near-poverty) will have a romance with the vet who comes to take care of the parrot. Still, many readers enjoy the comfort of formula, adequately styled and paced, and if the characters are mildly lampooned they are at least varied. ZS

D.V. Animals, kindness to

Bingham, Mindy. *Berta Benz and the Motorwagen: The Story of the First Automobile Journey*; illus. by Itoko Maeno. Advocacy Press, 1989. ISBN 0-911655-38-7. 48p. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. 3-5. Based on a true incident, this is the story of a journey by a German housewife and her two sons, who stole off one night with one of the prototype motorcars Karl Benz (as in Mercedes Benz) had invented. This was 1888, and Benz had been trying in vain to attract investors; because of a local law restricting use of the invention, Benz couldn't drive it far enough to prove its usefulness. With no experience at driving or at making repairs, Mrs. Benz set off to prove the motorwagen's roadworthiness. Fuel had to be purchased in pharmacies, in small amounts, but this first cross-country drive was successful. The story is smoothly told, but the picture-book format (oversize pages, a large amount of space given to the line and wash illustrations) and the purposiveness of the text, reflected in an appended page (addressed to parents) on positive female role models and on non-sexist attitudes, weaken the book. A story loses impact when the reader finds it concluding with a lecture, however important the lecture may be. ZS

D.V. Self-confidence

Brooks, Jerome. *Naked in Winter*. Jackson/Orchard, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08466-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05866-2. [224p]. Library ed. \$14.99; Trade ed. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R* Gr. 7-10. Set in late 1940s Chicago, this is an evocative story of adolescence and its rites of passage. A good student at a boys' public high school, Jake Ackerman takes comfort in his group of close friends, hopes to go to college, worries because he isn't aggressive enough with girls. Jake's parents quarrel, and that's upsetting; it's even more upsetting when his father announces that he's bought a house near Midway Airport (in a neighborhood that was almost rural at the time), a move that makes Jake's mother furious and Jake desolate. He commutes to his old school, but the friendships wane; he falls in love, but there are tensions and a breach; he realizes how much he loves his father when Pa becomes ill, and he learns that Ma's bitterness masks an equally strong love for Pa. While the book is redolent of the period and of Chicago and of a Jewish family's strength and tenacity, it is in the characterization of Jake that Brooks excels: Jake is the narrator, and his honesty, his joy in being loved, his apprehension about himself, and his need for independence that sometimes vies with his need for security are vivid, convincing, and moving. ZS

D.V. Father-son relations; Self-confidence

Browne, Anthony. *The Tunnel*; written and illus. by Anthony Browne. Knopf, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-394-94582-4; Trade ed. ISBN 0-394-84582-X. 26p. Library ed. \$12.99; Trade ed. \$11.95.

R 5-8 yrs. "Once upon a time there lived a sister and brother who were not at all alike. . . . The sister stayed inside on her own reading and dreaming. . . . The brother played outside with his friends. . . roughing and tumbling." When their mother sends them out together after one argument too many, Jack decides to explore a tunnel and does not come back. It is Rose who must brave the underground dark and a scary forest to rescue Jack, who has been turned to stone. Rose's hug warms him back to life. Both story and graphics suggest many fairy tales, including a picture of Little Red Riding Hood on Rose's wall, the book she reads, her hooded red coat, and creatures that are shaped Rackham-like from the wood of trees. Motifs from *Beauty and the Beast* are clear when Jack dons an animal mask to frighten Rose, and of course her name and her courageous love in restoring Jack to human appearance reflect *Beauty's* role. The exemplary blending of realism and fantasy in picture book format shows how resonantly fairy tales can influence literature beyond the constant replays of illustrated new editions that are currently besieging the market. Close watchers will recognize artistic shades of Browne's *Hansel and Gretel*, *Piggybook*, and *Gorilla*, but this is an imaginative invention unto itself. BH
C.U. Storytelling
D.V. Brothers-sisters

Cameron, Ann. *Julian, Dream Doctor*; illus. by Ann Strugnell. Random House, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-679-90524-3; Paper ed. ISBN 0-679-80524-9. [64p]. (A Stepping Stone Book). Library ed. \$5.99; Paper ed. \$1.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 2-4. If Julian has not already won readers' hearts with his exploits in *Julian's Glorious Summer* (BCCB 12/87) and *Julian, Secret Agent* (BCCB 12/88), he will here when he tries to find out his father's secret dream for a birthday present. Surprised at hearing his father mumble "two snakes . . . big ones," Julian duly catches them and presents them at the family party, only to discover that snakes are his father's recurring nightmare. All ends happily when Julian's father determines to touch the reptiles and overcome his long-standing fear. Several aspects of the plot are contrived, including the children's successful questioning of Julian's father as he sleeps outside in a hammock and the convenient appearance of a large mother snake with long babies during the children's first hunt in the park. However, Cameron's style is elegantly smooth—Julian's opening description of his parents is a winner—and the characters come alive through easy dialogue and involving action. BH
C.U. Reading, beginning
D.V. Father-son relations; Fear, overcoming

Cobb, Vicki. *Why Can't You Unscramble an Egg? And Other Not Such Dumb Questions about Matter*; illus. by Ted Enik. Lodestar, 1990. ISBN 0-525-67293-1. 40p. \$12.95.

R Gr. 3-5. Like its companion *Why Doesn't the Earth Fall Up?* (BCCB 2/89), this presents basic scientific concepts in an appealingly cartooned and easy to read question-and-answer format. Most of the questions ("Why does

an ice cube float?" "How much does air weigh?" "Why isn't the Earth egg-shaped or a cube?") are accompanied by simple demonstrations, although one of them involving a yardstick and air pressure is underexplained, if particularly dramatic. Arranged in a logical sequence of increasing complexity, the questions are intriguing and essential ("Why does wood burn?") and the responses are both thorough and commonsensical. RS
C.U. Science—experiments

Cole, Babette. *Cupid*; written and illus. by Babette Cole. Putnam, 1990. ISBN 0-399-22215-4. 32p. \$13.95.

R 5-8 yrs. After comically capitalizing on fairy tales with *Prince Cinders* (BCCB 5/88), *Princess Smartypants* (BCCB 6/87), etc., Cole turns to mythology with an updated revision of the god-boy of love, whose mom, the goddess of beauty, decides to move the family down from Olympus to Earth for the Miss World Competition. Cupid's father, the god of thunder ("Bang!"), warns him to behave, but Cupid flies defiantly to the top of the grocery-store canned-goods display, eludes the babysitter, and snatches a neighbor's toy bow, pinging people into lovesickness with suction arrows. After a slapstick kidnapping, Cupid escapes and returns with his parents to the Land of the Gods, where he receives a golden replacement for his broken bow, "and he's been causing trouble ever since." Kids unfamiliar with Cupid may need a background explanation to fully appreciate the spoof, but they'll certainly never forget the manic pink-winged toddler who, with his snaggle-toothed dog, flies through these chaotic scenes keeping cultural literacists from getting too pompous. Pair with Mordicai Gerstein's *Tales of Pan* (BCCB 7/86) for a fuller pantheon. BH

Collins, Tom. *Jane Fonda: An American Original*. Watts, 1990. ISBN 0-531-10929-1. [130p]. \$13.90. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-12. Some people cannot forgive Jane Fonda her antiwar activities ("especially for being right") but at the same time, "many others who also worked to try to stop that war consider her opposition nothing less than heroic." For some, in fact, the actress is "Jane of Arc," a comment made facetiously by Fonda's former husband Roger Vadim, but apparently taken as gospel by Collins. "The Bible says a prophet is not without honor save in his own country, and Jane was certainly no exception to the rule." That a portrait of an admirable, complicated woman emerges from this adulatory biography is a credit to the tenacious Fonda, whose myriad activities and zeal speak for themselves. While the actress (whom Collins interviewed) doesn't let any cracks show, she is candid about the problems of growing up with a hard-to-please father, her mother's suicide, and her struggle with bulimia. About her political campaigns, the book is less forthright, allowing that she "made mistakes," but not telling us what they were. Still, an interesting lesson in media-literacy for those who know Fonda only as an aerobics instructor. RS

Corbeil, Jean-Claude. *The Facts on File Junior Visual Dictionary*; by Jean-Claude Corbeil and Ariane Archambault. Facts on File, 1989. ISBN 0-8160-2222-4. 160p. illus. \$18.95.

M Gr. 6-. Divided into subjects such as "Animal Kingdom," "Measuring Devices," and "Symbols," this visual dictionary is almost 150 pages of precise, computer generated drawings. Each drawing is defined by its parts—

the description of parts of bathroom scales includes “weighing platform” and “display.” The lines that connect the definitions to the illustrations of the objects are clean and easy to follow for older students, but are too thin for young users. The “Sports” section is most pragmatically useful, defining the parts of the equipment and playing fields of most major sports. The headings on many pages are misleading or inadequate—the page entitled “Continents” labels not only the land masses but also the oceans and large seas. Terminology is sometimes awkward—in the juxtaposition of a nude male and female, the man’s sexual organ is labeled “penis” and the woman’s is labeled “sex”; the male member of the bovine family on the page “Farm’s [sic] animals” is incorrectly named “ox.” On the opposite page, the definitions of the parts of a formal European-style “pleasure garden” alternate between the technical (“paling fence,” “pergola”) and the idiomatic (“clump of flowers”). Some of the inclusions are simply fatuous, such as the picture of a “memo pad,” “memo book,” and “set of coloring pencils.” This dictionary will be occasionally useful to students searching for technical details, but the labelling problems severely limit its usefulness. KP

Curry, Ann. *The Book of Brendan*. Holiday House, 1990. ISBN 0-8234-0803-5. [176p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 4-6. Drawing on some of the Celtic lore that inspired Lloyd Alexander and Susan Cooper, Curry tells the story of young Elric, a student in eighth-century Holybury Abbey, and Bridget, the daughter of a local Thegn. The two young people lead the forces of truth, including King Arthur and his queen and Merlin awakened, against the Magic of Lies wielded by an evil wizard, Myrdden, who casts spells of sickness and conjures soldiers from Druidic ground. The premise of an illuminated book whose herbs and creatures (a blessed bird, small dragon, and engaging monkey) come to life is intriguing, and the plot is well conceived. Unfortunately, the style is overexplanatory, with characters assigned predictable roles and the concluding battle scene anti-climactic in its easy outcome. While the hell-hound Azab makes a threatening villain, the Ocean of Doubt and other abstractions border on caricature. Nevertheless, readers who aren’t ready for the Prydain chronicles or *The Dark Is Rising* will enjoy this simplified sample of high fantasy. BH

D.V. Loyalty

Derwent, Lavinia. *Sula*. ISBN 0-86241-068-1, 160p; *Return to Sula*. ISBN 0-86241-073-8, 128p. Each book: illus. by Peter Rush. Canongate/David & Charles, 1990. Paper ed. \$4.95.

Ad Gr. 5-7. First published in Britain in 1969 and 1971, *Sula* and its sequel are set on a Scottish island and focus on Magnus Macduff, a reluctant scholar, a secret artist, a boy who lives with his dour grandmother and is happier outdoors than at home or in school. Derwent, a popular author in Scotland for many years, tends to romanticize almost every aspect of island life as well as the characters, but she does draw a colorful picture, and her writing style has good pace and flow. The books are weakened by a propensity for type-casting and, even more, by a repetitive use of incident—such as the efforts of a local girl to arouse Magnus’ admiration. In the first book, a new teacher on the island is used as counterpoint and observer to establish the fact that life on Sula is

“peaceful and natural,” to quote the back cover description, and that Magnus is a rebel, albeit artistically talented. In the second book, Magnus returns to Sula after a visit to the mainland because he has won a painting competition. In both books, there is a fantasy element that never blends with the realistic matrix, as an old seal has anthropomorphic thoughts: just before Magnus returns, “Old Whiskers” muses, “What had become of the boy? Magnus had been missing for days. Or was it weeks?” ZS

Ekoomiak, Normee. *Arctic Memories*; written and illus. by Normee Ekoomiak. Holt, 1990. ISBN 0-8050-1254-0. 32p. \$15.95.

R *Gr. 3-5.* As a catalogue of intriguing Inuit art work, this will serve elementary graders studying Inuit and other far-north Native American cultures, although there is little attempt at cohesion from one page to another. Each painting or wall hanging is accompanied by a paragraph in Inuktitut and English describing various aspects of traditional life: In the Iglu, Arctic Spring, Playing on a Snowbank, Ice Fishing, Okpik—The Lucky Charm, The Body Needs to Travel, Hanging Fish, The Shelter, The Curse, High-Kick Game, Blanket-Toss Game, The String Game, Ancestral Hunters, Mermaids and the Narwhal, Nativity, and The Spirit of Liberty. Two pages on the history, language, and art of the Inuit, along with an autobiographical note by the artist, conclude the book. Rich in color and shape, the art has authentic power and the text informational value. Though it is neither organized nor comprehensive, the book can serve as a primary source more vivid than outsiders’ descriptions, to which readers will have to turn, for instance, for some explanation of cultural rationale behind the tragic story of “The Curse,” about some teenagers who set themselves adrift after having their names dishonored by a criminal in the South. A valuable supplement. BH

C.U. Art appreciation; Social studies

Ellis, Sarah. *Next-Door Neighbors*. McElderry, 1990. ISBN 0-689-50495-0. [154p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. 4-7.* It’s 1957, and Peggy’s family has just moved from the country to Vancouver, where her father has been named minister in a local church. Peggy is twelve (although her behavior and thinking sometimes seem like those of a younger child) and painfully self-conscious; her brave but misbegotten attempt to make friends at school results in ostracism. “Nobody really looked at Peggy. They all just moved in and began to whisper.” She does find friendship with two unlikely neighbors: George, a younger boy whose family immigrated from Russia; and Sing, the gardener and “houseboy” of Mrs. Manning, whose good manners barely manage to disguise a cold and bigoted heart. “The thing is that Sing’s room is in the basement. Mrs. Manning has a bolt on the door going down there from the kitchen. She locks it at night.” The theme of prejudicial scapegoating is confidently woven into an essentially optimistic school-and-family story, with neither characterization nor plot succumbing to didacticism. Plenty of gentle humor, an open and inviting style, and a young heroine both exasperating and admirable recommend this to a wide audience. RS

D.V. Peer group relations; Tolerance

Esbensen, Barbara Juster. *Great Northern Diver: The Loon*; illus. by Mary Barrett Brown. Little, 1990. ISBN 0-316-24954-8. [32p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 5-8 yrs. A prime readaloud to accompany storytelling sessions featuring Native American legends or a film showing of *The Loon's Necklace*, this is a smooth natural history narrative in picture book format. Handsome paintings dramatize a text describing the loon's biannual migrations, striking plumage, eerie calls, and territorial, flight, breeding, and feeding patterns. Both author and artist walk the fine line between aesthetics and information: in spite of her lyrical style, Esbensen never tips the factual balance by becoming self-indulgently poetic, and Brown satisfies viewers with eye-catching landscapes that maintain accuracy of botanical and avian detail. The brief opening free verse and the concluding depiction of a snow-filled nest at night are examples of inspired nonfiction for the young. BH
C.U. Nature study

Eyles, Heather. *Well I Never!*; illus. by Tony Ross. Overlook, 1990. ISBN 0-87951-383-7. [32p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 4-7 yrs. "As usual," Polly isn't ready for school on time, insisting that there's a witch in the bedroom (where the tee-shirt is), vampire in the bathroom (shorts), werewolf on the stairs (socks), and a ghost in the cupboard who is preventing Polly from getting her shoes. An annoyed Mom becomes a convinced Mom when she goes to get the clothes herself: "Toads and slugs' bottoms!" shrieked the witch, who looked very fetching in Polly's tee-shirt." But together, hand in hand, Mom and Polly eventually discover what imagination can wreak upon the most innocuous pile of clothing. Tony Ross' bright cartoons both confound and clarify the situation, which turns about several times with dizzying shifts of now-you-see-'em-now-you-don't perspectives and perceptions. This mother and daughter make a brave team. RS
D.V. Fear, overcoming; Mother-daughter relations

Fienberg, Anna. *Wiggy and Boa*; illus. by Ann James. Houghton, 1990. ISBN 0-395-53704-5. [112p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. Boa didn't mean to summon the pirates out of her uncle's book. Even though he sometimes acts like Captain Bligh, running her life with nautical precision, Uncle Bolderack doesn't deserve to be strung up by his former crew. But the pirates disagree, and it's up to Boa and her scrawny friend Wiggy to save him. An unlikely hero, Wiggy enlists the aid of his parents, a pair of absent-minded musicians who magically soothe the savage men into a more amiable frame of mind. The parent-child scenarios in this tall tale are reminiscent of Roald Dahl, but Fienberg is considerably gentler in her humor. Wiggy treats his negligent parents with *Matilda*-like fortitude, desperately trying to keep the house clean: "When the small brown insects in the kitchen first came to Wiggy's attention, scurrying in between the cake crumbs, and the smeared knives . . . he decided he'd have to take matters into his own hands." Fienberg has an eye for grossness that should delight young readers. The scratchy pen-and-ink drawings reflect the exaggerated humor of the story. Short-listed by the Australian Children's Book Council of the Year award, this tale is a promising first effort. Hope for a sequel. RAS

George, Jean Craighead. *One Day in the Tropical Rain Forest*; illus. by Gary Allen. Crowell, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-690-04769-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-690-04767-3. [64p]. Library ed. \$11.89; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. Following a now-familiar pattern (*One Day in the Desert* BCCB 2/84, etc.) George makes drama large and small out of the minute-by-minute events in an ecosystem. A sloth makes her weekly journey to the floor of the forest, army ants parade and pillage, trees "battle each other for sunlight." A human drama overarches: the rain forest will be plowed under for cropland unless Dr. Rivero finds a nameless butterfly so "a wealthy industrialist would buy the Tropical Rain Forest of the Macaw, name the butterfly for his daughter, and save the forest from the bulldozers and chain sawyers." While the human inhabitants of this forest play largely sentimental roles, the forest itself is center stage, with the conflicts and cooperation of its organisms providing gripping ecological theater. Pencil illustrations are cool-toned and attractive; a bibliography and index are included. RS

C.U. Science

D.V. Ecological awareness

Gibbons, Gail. *Beacons of Light: Lighthouses*; written and illus. by Gail Gibbons. Morrow, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07380-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07379-4. 32p. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95.

R Gr. 2-3. The history of lighthouses is told in a picture book format for independent readers. Although the narrative is simple, the vocabulary and some of the concepts are more difficult than is typical in picture books: "Augustin Fresnel . . . found a way to increase the light by using prisms. The prisms of the lens bent the light beam and concentrated it, making the light visible for many miles." However, each difficult concept is clarified with supplementary illustrations or text. Gibbons' depictions of people are done in her signature cartoon style, but she has added depth, taking advantage of her subject to develop an attractive technique for seascapes—dots of blue and green paint scattered over watercolor waves. Actual lighthouses were researched and are included in the illustrations. KP

Gilmore, Kate. *Enter Three Witches*. Houghton, 1990. ISBN 0-395-50213-6. [228p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 6-9. This is a deft merging of reality and fantasy, as sixteen-year-old Bren, accepting the fact that his mother and grandmother are witches, tries desperately to keep the fact from the girl with whom he's fallen in love. Erika is a dancer, playing one of the witches in *Macbeth*, and Bren is working (frantically) on the play's lighting. The third witch is black, also a member of the household, and there's an extra surprise-witch introduced in a humorous last twist. A yeasty mix of mounting a play, enjoying the New York scene, falling in love, and coping with an irrepressible family, this is good fun, with a writing style that sports an excellent ear for dialogue. ZS

Glimmerveen, Ulco. *A Tale of Antarctica*; written and illus. by Ulco Glimmerveen. Scholastic, 1990. ISBN 0-590-43360-1. [32p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

NR 5-8 yrs. Papa penguin "is glad to make a new friend" when he meets his first human (presumably a scientist), but when "the new people" move in—well, there goes the continent. The beach becomes crowded and littered, and the fish taste funny. When Papa is caught in an oil slick, Mama penguin does the loyal, penguin-like thing. "She climbs over the piles of garbage to the shelters of the people" where "everyone ignores her desperate pleas for attention until she reaches the shelter where Papa's friend lives." Papa is saved, and the book ends with a vaguely cleansing snowstorm. The laudable message is subverted by the anthropomorphism—no need to worry about these plucky penguins. Watercolor paintings of the polar landscape's beauty and desecration are delicate if didactic, but the penguins seem incongruously cartooned. RS
D.V. Ecological awareness

Goodall, John S. *The Story of the Seashore*; illus. by John S. Goodall. McElderry, 1990. ISBN 0-689-50491-8. [60p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 2-4. Using his now familiar device of alternating full and half pages, Goodall provides a table of contents for a wordless book in which watercolors portray scenes at various English seacoast towns that have become popular resorts. From the early 1800s when a royal visit was the catalyst for such popularity, the changes in such resorts as Brighton and Blackpool are pictured; the book ends, with chronological progression and geographical expansion, showing seacoast resorts abroad. Architectural and costume details provide a visual record of change, but the setting and the lack of story may limit audience appeal in the United States despite the lively action on some of the pages. ZS
C.U. History—England

Grimm, Jacob Ludwig Karl. *The Frog Prince or Iron Henry*; tr. by Naomi Lewis; illus. by Binette Schroeder. North-South/Farrar, 1989. ISBN 1-55858-015-8. 26p. \$14.95.

R 5-8 yrs. Lewis' translation remains essentially faithful to the 1812 edition of the Grimm's version, making occasional changes in the verse sections to preserve the rhyme. Overall, she strikes a good balance between the formal language of fairy tales and the colloquial expressions of everyday speech: "I don't want clothes and jewels," says the frog. "But I *would* like some love and affection." Schroeder's illustrations, with their dramatic use of perspective and shadow, provide a unique interpretation of this familiar tale. They place it in a sinister, fantastic landscape where mountains, trees, and even animals wear human faces. The princess, a girl-woman of unconventional beauty, exhibits frigid disgust at the prospect of an amphibious bed-partner. Schroeder captures the frog's-eye view as he patiently climbs the palace stairs, where at the top stands the princess, her face beyond the frog's line of sight. Here, and in the transformation scene, multiple images create a sense of movement. Painted in intense green, the pictorial sequence of frog turning into prince evokes the pain and terror of the transformation. This is surreal and sophisticated, less likely

than the Alix Berenzy variant (BCCB 10/89) to find a wide, popular audience, but this adaptation deserves consideration because it powerfully suggests the mythic and symbolic elements of the tale. RAS

Gripe, Maria. *Agnes Cecelia*; tr. from the German by Rika Lesser; illus. by Alix Berenzy. Harper, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-022282-4; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-022281-6. [288p]. Library ed. \$14.89; Trade ed. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M *Gr. 5-8.* With a spooky first sentence—"It seemed to happen only when Nora was home alone"—this ghost story promises more than it finally delivers. Fifteen-year-old Nora feels left out of family affairs, and has felt so ever since she came to live with her cousins after her parents were killed in a car accident. This is a potentially interesting conflict, but it is only expressed in long expository passages that are constantly belied by the loving attention Nora actually gets, and readers will soon become impatient with all the introspective musing. "Some days Nora couldn't stop wallowing in her own thoughts, even when they were cruel and unjust." There's a sure-allure doll-ghost motif, but while the supernatural element occasionally provides an effective chill, it is based on an overcomplicated series of resemblances between Nora's situation and that of Agnes Cecelia, who lived in the house many years ago and who has now seemingly returned. The nature of the pattern and identity of the ghost will be apparent to readers long before Nora catches on, although she is constantly beset by coincidences—"Funny this should turn up now!"—that beg questions of both the intelligence of the heroine and the integrity of the plot. Nora's encounters with the ghostly Cecelia have a stilled, expectant mood that is tellingly underplayed, as is a tense encounter between Nora and her grandmother, who must face painful secrets about her own mother that Nora has uncovered. A good story is in here, but has not yet been carefully carved out. RS
D.V. Family relations

Gross, Ruth Belov. *True Stories About Abraham Lincoln*; illus. by Jill Kastner. Lothrop, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08798-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08797-3. 48p. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95.

R *Gr. 2-4.* Twenty-two one-page chapters, each facing a full-page watercolor painting, describe episodes in Lincoln's life for young readers, many of whom will especially appreciate this accessible format. Lincoln's boyhood and political career are punctuated with specific scenes such as his playing a joke on his stepmother by walking children upside down across the ceiling to leave a trail of muddy footprints. While there's no room for some of the less obvious aspects of the statesman's life—his wife's mental aberrations are never mentioned, for example—the balance between generalization and detail is a careful one, considering the limitations of scope. The illustrations are strong in color and composition, though some of the facial expressions seem stilled, especially in poses of Lincoln grieving over the war or delivering the Gettysburg address. Nevertheless, the overall visual effect is an inviting one, well supported by the solid introductory narrative. First published in a paperback edition with different illustrations in 1973. BH
C.U. History—U.S.—Pictorial presentation

Gruenberg, Linda. *Hummer*. Houghton, 1990. ISBN 0-395-51080-5. [192p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 5-7. Twelve-year-old Hummer is the only child of midwest dairy farmers. When she's home, she spends her time either in the barn or on a horse. At school, Hummer tells whoppers about spending her weekends shopping or traveling in Europe. Unable to stop lying, Hummer is hiding the truth—her mom has gone crazy and her helpless father is living in the milkhouse. Like many first novels, this has enough plot for three books—it is a story of a family dealing with mental illness, a tale of friendship between Hummer and an old man, and a horse story. The complexity of the plot almost gets away from the author and she leaves several holes: what does Hummer say to her foster parents during the two weeks she stays with them? How does Hummer make up with her new friend Charlotte after missing their riding dates? While the writing style is sometimes awkward ("Hummer felt rather overawed"), this is an unsentimental portrayal of life on a dairy farm, with summer wonderfully evoked: "the windows were open and the kids were yelling and Hummer could smell the water in the ditches and the dust and the barns and the fields." Hummer's life improves believably when her mother gets psychiatric help, concluding an authentic book about contemporary rural life. KP

D.V. Mother-daughter relations

Hamanaka, Sheila. *The Journey*; designed by Steve Frederick; written and illus. by Sheila Hamanaka. Orchard, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08449-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05849-2. 40p. Library ed. \$18.99; Trade ed. \$18.95.

Ad Gr. 5-. Powerfully excerpted from Hamanaka's mural by designer Steve Frederick, this progression of images bears witness to the tragedy that befell Japanese-Americans during World War II. It begins with a picture of a Japanese farmworker grasping a peach, proceeds through scenes of prejudice, violence, and incarceration in the concentration camps, and closes with postwar claims for governmental apologies and repatriations. The text is a relentless condemnation, unfortunately weakened by undocumented controversial statements ("President Franklin D. Roosevelt, himself a believer in the racial inferiority of the Japanese . . .), overstatement ("America in 1941 was a land of lynchings") and unexplained references ("But like the banished Noh character Yoroboshi . . ."). Captions and explanations of the illustrations are sometimes unclear as to what they are pointing out; one central figure of a watchful woman is left unmentioned. Ironically, this image is perhaps more powerful for standing unlabeled, as the captioning tends to limit the emotional impact of the text. Like much overtly political art, the artist's mural (reproduced in full in the back) and the book it inspired are deliberately didactic. While the scenes depicted should not be forgotten, this largely lacks the individual vision that truly leads a reader/viewer to informed empathy, though it is a useful, sometimes striking, introduction to a terrible time. RS

D.V. Intercultural understanding

Herman, Charlotte. *The House on Walenska Street*; illus. by Susan Avishai. Dutton, 1990. ISBN 0-525-44519-6. 80p. \$11.95.

Ad Gr. 3-5. Seven episodes in the life of eight-year-old Leah, a girl in 1913 Russia, are simply told but sometimes puzzlingly underdeveloped.

Living with her mother and younger sisters in a small village, Leah has small adventures, such as going to the store, taking care of her sisters (and her mother, in one touching episode) and writing letters to her cousins in America. One chapter in which their house is ransacked by Cossacks is dramatic but uneasily set among the lighter anecdotes—perhaps it's a part of history that needs more flesh than a first chapter-book can provide. An episode in which Leah runs from the house to escape punishment and joins in a parade begs questions (a parade? is it real?) that beginning readers need answered, not elliptically left behind. A scene in which Leah causes the local shoemaker to fall on the floor is left similarly unresolved. However, Leah is an appealing girl whose dreams, fears, and mistakes will resonate for those looking for a historical "girl story" set in unusual circumstances. RS

C.U. History

D.V. Mother-daughter relations

Hest, Amy. *Fancy Aunt Jess*; illus. by Amy Schwartz. Morrow, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08097-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08096-0. 32p. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95.

R 5-8 yrs. With her stylish clothes and attractive figure, "Aunt" Jess turns heads wherever she goes. Becky admires her mother's cousin and enjoys eavesdropping on the women's conversations, especially discussions of the current man in Jess's life. Despite the encouragements of many (including an apparently jealous butcher's wife) to find a husband, Jess is not ready to settle down. For one thing, as she tells a confused-but-curious Becky, the man she marries must give her goose bumps. Becky, who looks to be about eight, may be too young to understand much of the adult banter taking place around her, but she does notice when Aunt Jess gets the goose bumps during a service at the local synagogue, and happily assists at the subsequent wedding, which follows rather abruptly. Though the romantic theme may be lost on some young listeners, Becky's friendship with Jess, complete with Friday night sleepovers, heart-to-heart talks, and special bakery cookies, will strike a chord with children who enjoy a special friendship with an adult. Schwartz's strongly patterned watercolors lovingly recreate Brooklyn in the late forties. Unfortunately, she is more successful with her characters' clothes than with their faces, which sometimes show a bland similarity of expression (or lack thereof). Well-suited for one-on-one sharing, this picture book invites discussion of how Mom and Dad met and married. RAS

D.V. Aunt-niece relations

Hirst, Robin. *My Place in Space*; by Robin and Sally Hirst; illus. by Roland Harvey and Joe Levine. Orchard, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08459-0; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05859-X. 40p. Library ed. \$13.99; Trade ed. \$13.95.

R Gr. 1-3. Weird little drawings of a small Australian town serve as foreground for dramatic paintings of the universe—all illustrating exactly where Henry Wilson and his sister Rosie live. Just like wise-guy kids who put interminable return addresses on their envelopes, Henry tells the bus driver about Gumbridge, Australia, the southern hemisphere, Earth, the solar system, the solar neighborhood, the Orion Arm, the Milky Way . . . "Most of space is just that—space," added Henry, trying to relieve the driver's puzzled look." Children will appreciate this cosmological cumulation, which satisfies a need for order,

predictability, and egocentricity. The science is sound, presented in enough detail to be interesting but with enough simplicity to be recalled and repeated aloud. Illustrations effectively combine two techniques (and artists) to convey the context of a bustling, down-to-earth earth (complete with several funny dramas that run from page to page) in a dizzying photorealistic firmament of planets, stars, and supergalaxies. It all begins to look like home. RS

C.U. Astronomy

D.V. Environmental concepts

James, Mary. *Shoebag*. Scholastic, 1990. ISBN 0-590-43029-7. [144p]. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 5-8. The publisher invites us to identify the pseudonymous "Mary James," "a popular young-adult author"; our marker is on M. E. Kerr for this book filled with *Little Little*-like repartee. Shoebag is a young cockroach who one day wakes up to find himself turning into a boy. Leaving his world of "things that live behind and under and in back of" (to the sound of a maternal plea to "promise you'll never step on your own mother") Shoebag takes up a human life with a family whose entire attention is focused on the well-being of pampered daughter Pretty Soft, a TV "spokesgirl" for toilet paper. Pretty Soft (formerly Eunice), who keeps tension at bay by gazing into a mirror and reciting the words "I see my own beauty, may it last forever," clearly needs a lesson, and Shoebag is just as clearly the one to help her learn it. The daffy premise is never convincing but always appealing, spiked with barbed observations on the family lives of both cockroaches and humans. Most of the humor is carried in the conversations, which sometimes fall into a he-said-she-said rhythm that overstates the jokes. But for all its cleverness, this has a Dale Carnegie stick-up-for-yourself theme that gives heart to the wit. RS

D.V. Self-confidence

Jenness, Aylette. *Families: A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment, and Love*; written and illus. with photographs by Aylette Jenness. Houghton, 1990. ISBN 0-395-47038-2. [48p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-8. The seventeen families photographed and interviewed here together demonstrate a splendid array, ethnic and otherwise: Jaime lives with his mom and dad and little brothers; Eve divides her time between her father's and mother's houses; Ananda lives with her parents in a religious commune; Elliott was adopted by Tom and Dmitri, two gay men. Each family is focused by the viewpoint of one of the children: "I learned sign language before I could speak, so there's no problem of communication. Just like babies learn English, I learned sign language, 'cause that's what my mother used; it was just a language used around the house." The consistently upbeat perspective of the text and portraits (clear but not particularly revealing) make this a bit of a coffee table selection—but for most children, an eye-opening one. RS

C.U. Social studies

D.V. Family relations

Johnson, Annabel. *Gamebuster*; by Annabel and Edgar Johnson. Cobblehill/Dutton, 1990. ISBN 0-525-65033-4. [192p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 7-9. Scott, a star high-school quarterback, has had a game injury that means his football days are over. When he overhears (in unlikely circumstances) discussion of a terrorist plot, he becomes involved in danger shared by a former teacher, Miss McGill, who serves as romantic interest when paired with a Navajo, Nighthawk, who helps Ms. M. and Scott and Scott's secret agent father in a desperate bid to foil the terrorists. All four of this quartet are heroic, and the bad guys are villainous indeed. This isn't badly written, and it has a great deal of action that will appeal to many readers, but it is so implausible and so often based on coincidence that the plot is almost ludicrous. ZS

D.V. Father-son relations

Kaplan, Marjorie. *The Fifteenth Peanut Butter Sandwich*; illus. by Eileen McKeating. Four Winds, 1990. ISBN 0-02-749350-4. [64p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 3-5. Kathy's parents are delighted at the prospect of working for a year in London, but all Kathy can think about is what to do with Romeo, her 10-year-old, yellow-striped tabby. She literally chews over the problem—a peanut butter sandwich for each possible solution. Kathy's letter to the queen requesting special permission to bring her cat into England despite quarantine laws elicits a kind but firm no. The family who is renting their house has three cats already (Romeo does not like other cats), and each of the neighbors proves an unlikely caretaker: one has a cat-chasing dog, another would keep Romeo as a mouser without supplementing her diet with cat food. Readers will see long before Kathy does that old Mrs. Welk, who pretends to be busy in order to mask her loneliness, is the obvious solution, and indeed the ending is predictably tidy (Click, click, click, clunk! Everything fell into place with a loud clunk inside Kathy's head"). There's not much depth of characterization here ("The mother looked like all mothers, except that she was sneezing") and the plot is single-tracked, but children will identify with Kathy's desperate state of worry and will find the reading easy. BH

D.V. Animals, love for

Kennedy, X. J. *Fresh Brats*; illus. by James Watts. McElderry, 1990. ISBN 0-689-50499-3. [48p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 3-5. This gallery of poetic mischief-makers features the ghoulish, gross, or catastrophic humor that children love most in the middle grades. It's hard to select favorite examples—students will be popping these poems at each other like spitballs: "To the bottom of his drink/ Dad beholds an earthworm sink./ For her bio project, May/ Must have used the ice-cube tray." Often the straightforward joke ends with a twist, as in the case of "jealous would-be-actor Jay," who sabotages the Yuletide play with marbles, only to end up in a cast different from the kind he envied. These irrepressibly rhymed verses make an irresistible introduction for reluctant readers as well for enthusiastic listeners. To be illustrated with black-and-white drawings by the same artist who livened up the preceding volume, *Brats* (BCCB 7/86). BH

Kessler, Ethel. *Stan the Hot Dog Man*; written and illus. by Ethel and Leonard Kessler. Harper, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-023280-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-023279-X. [64p]. (I Can Read Books). Library ed. \$10.95; Trade ed. \$10.89. Reviewed from galleys.

R 5-8 yrs. Sixty-five-year-old Stan's retired from the bakery, but he's not ready to retire, and his flashy red and blue hot dog truck is all set to go. Stan is a kindly hot dog man, selling his dogs two for one when he discovers a customer can't afford the four his family needs; and Stan's a lifesaver as well, taking in a bus driver and her charges when all are stranded in a blizzard. While the plot lacks momentum, this easy-reader has an appealing focus (food) and a real-life drama that new readers will find comfortable. It's nice, too, to have an easy-reader protagonist who is neither young nor green. RS

C.U. Reading, beginning

D.V. Older-younger generations

Klein, Norma. *Just Friends*. Knopf, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-679-90213-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-80213-\$. [192p]. Library ed. \$13.99; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 9-12. Isabel, a typical Norma Klein girl/woman of the Upper West Side, finds her senior year one of great transition for her, her three best girlfriends, and her buddy-from-childhood Stuart: she experiences sex with a boy in her class, gets ready for college, and finds that her feelings for Stuart are not as platonic as she had thought. Although the plot has some odd wrinkles, such as the quickly dismissed breast cancer of one of Isabel's friends, the characters are drawn with subtlety and breadth. Particularly well depicted are Isabel's parents, resigned to their disappointing marriage, and Isabel's best friend Lois, a quiet and thoughtful bystander to the romances of the other girls. Combined with Klein's characteristically smart dialogue and smooth exposition, it all makes for an enjoyable read. DS

D.V. Boy-girl relations

Kliment, Bud. *Billie Holiday*. Chelsea House, 1990. ISBN 1-55546-592-7. 111p. illus. with photographs. (Black Americans of Achievement). \$17.95.

R Gr. 7-. Like all the others in the "Black Americans of Achievement" series, this is introduced with an essay by Coretta Scott King called "On Achievement"—an inspiring introduction that stands in slightly ironic contrast to the painfully honest and direct biography that follows. Kliment's portrait shows the fatal effect racism had on Holiday's life and career, but he is equally candid about her hellbent self-destruction. Most of all, he gives a comprehensive picture of the jazz world of the thirties and forties. Holiday's first record was with Benny Goodman; she later toured with Count Basie (having once to darken her skin when a manager was afraid audiences would think she was white) and Artie Shaw. Her heroin habit, troubles with men, and arrests are discussed forthrightly, often pointed with incisive quotes from the singer herself: "The case was called 'the United States versus Billie Holiday.' And that's just the way it felt." While her life probably serves more as object-lesson than role model material, Holiday's singing (and songs: "God Bless the Child," "Strange Fruit") is a powerful legacy, and well-introduced by this book. Discography, chronology, bibliography and index are all included. RS

Landau, Elaine. *Child Abuse: An American Epidemic*; Revised edition. Julian Messner, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-671-68874-X; Paper ed. ISBN 0-671-68875-8. 128p. Library ed. \$11.98; Paper ed. \$5.95.

R *Gr. 7-10.* When the first edition of this book was reviewed (BCCB 5/85), it gave balanced coverage, cited actual cases, described physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, focused on the role and motivation of adult caretakers who were perpetrators, and provided information about preventive measures and about sources of help. This revised edition does all those things, and the revision has been thorough: substantial rewriting, information and examples brought up to date (as is evident from the chapter bibliographies) and provision of a bibliography, index, and list of sources from which help may be obtained. ZS

C.U. Social studies

Landis, J. D. *Looks Aren't Everything*. Bantam, 1990. ISBN 0-553-05847-9. [192p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. 7-12.* Rosie's best friend, Jeanie, is in love with a potato—or at least, a waiter dressed up as one: "Call me Spud." Jeanie doesn't care that she has never seen Spud without his Potato Man uniform. After all, looks aren't everything, right? Wrong, says Rosie, who harbors a secret crush on Jeanie's brother, Handsome Harry Higgins: "I like handsome boys. That's what I like. . . Handsome boys. I mean, what else is there when you get right down to it." To get Harry's attention, Rosie worms her way into the family business, La Maison de Trash, but without apparent success. Despite her romantic failures, Rosie freely dispenses advice to both Jeanie ("The basic thing to know about guys is that they're more nervous about girls than girls are about them") and to her mother, whom she accompanies on her first post-divorce date: "With me along, you have a hundred years of experience in a sixteen-year-old body." Woven throughout this funny story are satiric comments on consumer society, some of which may hit home. Especially on target is Rosie's description of teen-age kissing: ". . . their lips are like caterpillars that have attached themselves to *your* face. They squirm, they wiggle, and all of a sudden they seem to die . . ." A welcome vacation from Sweet Valley High. RAS

Lang, Susan S. *Extremist Groups in America*. Watts, 1990. ISBN 0-531-10901-1. [144p]. \$12.90. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad *Gr. 9-12.* Grabbing the reader's attention with her opening description of four brutal racially-motivated murders, Lang quickly convinces us that violent extremism is alive and well in America. The history and causes of racism and anti-Semitism are briefly discussed, but the book tends to be more descriptive than analytical. Lang focuses primarily on right-wing extremists (Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, religious extremists, and skinheads) but also discusses the activities of such left-wing groups as the Black Liberation Army. While she clearly disagrees with the views expressed by the extremists, Lang assumes her readers already share her contempt, and thus fails to debunk the myths of Aryan superiority and "racial purity." She does a good job of showing how hard it is, given the First Amendment, to combat racist propaganda and the willingness of many racists to die for their beliefs. Particularly disturbing is the new alliance between old-guard Nazis and young skin-heads. "I am a violent person . . . I love the white race, and if you love something, you're the most vicious person

on earth," boasts one young skinhead. Relying primarily on secondary sources, Lang's use of quotations skillfully reflects the warped logic of her subjects. Though suffering from occasional lapses in style ("another type of bigot has been brewing in the United States"), Lang's account provides adequate coverage of a pressing subject. RAS

C.U. Social studies

Lawlor, Laurie. *Second-Grade Dog*; illus. by Gioia Fiammenghi. Whitman, 1990. ISBN 0-8075-7280-2. 40p. \$12.95.

R 5-8 yrs. One of those happy hits with built-in child appeal, this is homely fantasy about a lonely dog that decides to attend school for the company it might provide. Treated royally by his middle-aged owners, Bones nevertheless tires of tearing up toilet paper, so he disguises himself in shirt, shorts, sneakers, and backpack and joins the morning student crowd. Bones is as successful in the classroom as he is on the playground until a finicky fire marshal observes that he's a dog and sends him home—accompanied by a troop of rebellious classmates who promise to visit him after school next day. Exuberant pencil and paint illustrations cartoon the action with compositional flair, extending the spoof on grown-ups in general and officials in particular with colorful aplomb. BH

Lerner, Carol. *Dumb Cane and Daffodils: Poisonous Plants in the House and Garden*; written and illus. by Carol Lerner. Morrow, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08796-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08791-4. 32p. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$13.95.

R Gr. 4-6. Like her companion volume *Moonseed and Mistletoe: A Book of Poisonous Plants* (BCCB 3/88), this overview of common shrubs, climbers, vegetables, and decorative plants with poisonous properties is handsomely illustrated. Lerner's detailed botanical drawings and paintings are the real highlight of the book, though descriptions of the plants and explanations of their effects on humans, especially children and house pets, are capably written. Young readers will be surprised to find some of our most attractive garden flowers—narcissus and lily-of-the-valley among them—included as troublemakers, along with common house plants such as philodendron: "Their leaves—and sometimes other plant parts as well—contain sharp crystals. If the plant is chewed or eaten, these crystals cut into the mouth and throat like hundreds of burning spears. The tongue, mouth, and throat swell, sometimes so badly that it becomes impossible to breathe." This will leave kids with a healthy respect for knowing what flora to look at and leave alone. BH

C.U. Botany

Lester, Helen. *The Revenge of the Magic Chicken*; illus. by Lynn Munsinger. Houghton, 1990. ISBN 0-395-50929-7. [32p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad 5-7 yrs. While this doesn't have quite as foolproof a plot as *The Wizard, the Fairy, and the Magic Chicken*, it has the same appeal of three absurd creatures acting on magic-empowered impulse. In the course of their perpetual arguments over who is the greatest in the world, the Fairy turns the Wizard into a cow, the Wizard turns the Fairy into a blueberry muffin, and the

Magic Chicken gets transformed into a ballerina for laughing at them both. Disgruntled, the Ballerina Chicken uses his pickle power to scare them with Gnarly Gnitbats, Awesome Alligators, and an Enormous Elephant, but he garbles the spell and breaks a tree over their heads with the weight of his creations. Sprightly watercolors and a playfully childlike tone redeem the lame ending, where the three magicians are reconciled with a hug and restored to their former shapes. BH

Lewin, Ted. *Tiger Trek*; written and illus. by Ted Lewin. Macmillan, 1990. ISBN 0-02-757381-8. 34p. \$14.95.

R 5-8 yrs. In a misty early-morning scene, several trekkers mounted on elephants set out through an Indian jungle, observing wild dogs, monkeys, deer, and a tiger hunting to feed her cubs. Lewin's dignified watercolors blend the big cat into undergrowth and even into the shadowy "ruins of an ancient palace where a maharajah once lived." Beside a lake, as a peacock screams dramatically across a double spread, the tiger kills a chital fawn—"in a few days she must hunt again. She may not be so lucky the next time, but today she and her family will eat." Lewin wisely relies on the inherent natural drama of the scenes, underplaying each with camera-like objectivity while focusing the compositions with subtle painterly perspective. This is an expedition on which few children could expect to go; they'll relish the experience of a picture book safari. BH
C.U. Nature study

Lowry, Lois. *Your Move, J. P.* Houghton, 1990. ISBN 0-395-53639-1. [108p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 5-8. "James Priestley Tate, age twelve, had an overwhelming urge for the first time in his life, to use deodorant" in this third book about J. P. and his sister Caroline. J. P.'s sudden fascination with personal hygiene is sparked by his crush on Angela Galsworthy, newly arrived at his private school from London, England. Suddenly, J. P. finds chess (his former passion) a bore, starts walking into walls, tripping over his own feet, and confiding in a total stranger. It *must* be love! Anxious to sustain Angela's interest, J. P. tells her that he is suffering from triple framosis, a rare but fatal disease. Angela believes him and J. P. is stuck with his lie. Lowry's brand of comic realism combines a keen sense of the absurd with a sympathetic understanding of early adolescent angst. This fast-paced plot contains only one implausible element: J. P.'s conversation with a stranger in the park who acts as his conscience and sounding board. J. P.'s ardency makes him seem a cousin to Byars' Bingo Brown. Like Byars, Lowry articulates her hapless hero's thoughts in words more witty than he could imagine (or appreciate); at the same time she keeps the narrative and dialogue spontaneous, natural, and humorous. RAS

D.V. Boy-girl relations

Mayne, William. *Antar and the Eagles*. Delacorte, 1990. ISBN 0-385-29977-X. [176p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R* Gr. 5-8. Strong, suspenseful storytelling married to a confident use of folkloric motifs makes this one of Mayne's most accessible fantasies. Climbing for the second time ("he remembered, too, that he was

going to be very frightened”) to the steeple of the church, six-year-old Antar is taken by an eagle to help rescue a very special baby: the embryonic Great Eagle, asleep in a golden egg, captive to a King. His eagle taskmasters harsh but just, Antar learns to live in their mountain eyrie, to communicate in squawks and bows and pecks, and, finally, to fly. The scenes of Antar’s abduction and forced march to the eagle home are tense and exciting; his evolving respect for his captors is credibly developed. And while the eagle clan has a fierce nobility, they aren’t above pranks, tricks or general disagreeableness. A formidable kitten adds a comic accent. Fantasy fans won’t be put off by the tender age of the protagonist, “the child who shall lead them” being a respectable convention in the genre. Less introverted than much of Mayne’s fiction, this has a compelling narrative drive with natural, cliff-hanging chapter endings that recommend it for classroom reading aloud. Choose your own adventure. RS
C.U. Reading aloud

McFarland, Cynthia. *Cows in the Parlor: A Visit to a Dairy Farm*; written and illus. with photographs by Cynthia McFarland. Atheneum, 1990. ISBN 0-689-31584-8. 32p. \$13.95.

Ad 4-7 yrs. “Where does milk come from?” is often the first of a toddler’s ever-more complicated questions about causation, and this photoessay concisely provides the answer: milk comes from cows. While not as fully informative as Gail Gibbons’ *The Milk Makers* (BCCB 5/85), this clearly shows the basic workings of a dairy farm, including haymaking, silaging, feeding, and automatic milking. The color photos are sometimes dark (particularly unfortunate in a picture of hay drying in the sun) and transitions are abrupt, but the commonsensical tone informing both text and pictures is forthrightly informative. RS

D.V. Everyday life concepts

McKenna, Colleen O’Shaughnessy. *Eenie, Meanie, Murphy, NO!* Scholastic, 1990. ISBN 0-590-42899-3. [128p]. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. This fourth entry in a likable series (BCCB 10/88, 2/89, 10/89) takes Collette to camp, where she encounters First Love (including an entirely innocent but subtextually suggestive scene where he teaches her how to fish) and a mean fellow camper, Peally, who will stop at nothing to get Tommy back. Peally’s tricks (decorating Collette’s cabin with her underwear, etc.) are deliciously nasty; readers will writhe at her reading of Collette’s (stolen) diary out loud at dinner. While Collette does wreak satisfying revenge, Peally remains refreshingly unreformed at the end of the summer and the book. Straight-ahead funny fare for those who don’t understand why everybody else thinks *Anastasia Krupnik* so amusing. RS

Meddaugh, Susan. *Tree of Birds*; written and illus. by Susan Meddaugh. Houghton, 1990. ISBN 0-395-53147-0. [32p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. K-2. Harry is too fond of the injured bird he rescues to let it go, even after it’s healed and longing to rejoin the flock of Green Tufted Tropicals that waits patiently in a tree outside Harry’s window—even after the whole tree full of GTTs turns blue with cold. This wildly anthropomorphic

picture-book fantasy features cartoon illustrations of scenes such as Harry's rushing out, in a cat costume, to try and frighten the birds away ("The birds were not fooled"). The story leaves something to be desired in the credibility department, but a surprise ending makes up for the overextended plot. ZS
D.V. Animals, kindness to

Miller, Margaret. *Who Uses This?*; written and illus. with photographs by Margaret Miller. Greenwillow, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08279-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08278-5. [40p]. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 2-5 yrs. Crisp color photographs, simply composed and clearly focused, form the basis for a guessing game about "tools of the trades," which are grouped together on the last page of the book. Opposite the first boldface question "Who uses this?" is pictured a hammer; turn the page to find the answer, "Carpenter," set between a craftsman working on a house and a young girl hammering on a building project. The choice of objects is imaginative—including a juggling club, football, rolling pin, watering can, leash, baton, scissors, and paintbrush—and the candid shots equally so, with the dogwalker fielding a dozen canines down a city sidewalk and, on the page opposite "Barber," a child cutting her teddy bear's hair. Perhaps the children are a bit squeaky clean (except for one, who has just stepped in paint), but a conscientious ethnic balance and a book design skillfully calculated for group showing as well as one-on-one sharing make this a preschool coup. BH
D.V. Occupational orientation

Peyton, K. M. *Darkling*. Delacorte, 1990. ISBN 0-385-30086-7. [256p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-10. When fifteen-year-old Jenny discovers that her irrepressible Granpa Murphy has spent his gambling winnings ("I came up on the three o'clock yesterday at thirty-three to one") on a Thoroughbred colt for her, she is thrilled. Her family is already emotionally and financially tattered, with her father a vegetable and her mother embittered and secretive, but Jenny keeps *Darkling* in spite of all objections. When the colt is two, Jenny goes to work for a neighboring trainer in exchange for *Darkling*'s keep and training fees, hoping that he will be a successful racehorse. At the stable she grows closer to her long-time crush Goddard Strawson, who is an aspiring jockey and the son of her family's landlord. Jenny is believable and appealing as she grapples with her loyalties to her family and her uncertainty in her emotional and physical relationship with Goddard; Peyton's portrait of her heroine is characteristically sure. Granpa, however, is a stereotype of the lovably eccentric old Irishman, and the domestic melodrama gets out of hand with a subplot about a dark secret from the past involving adulteries between Goddard's and Jenny's parents. Although the book lacks the cohesion and impact of *Flambards in Summer* (BCCB 11/74) or *The Beethoven Medal* (BCCB 9/72), equiphiles will enjoy the classic rags-to-riches plot. DS
D.V. Boy-girl relations

Polacco, Patricia. *Thunder Cake*; written and illus. by Patricia Polacco. Philomel, 1990. ISBN 0-399-22231-6. [32p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 5-8 yrs. In a picture book that will appeal mightily to any child who has quaked at the sounds of a thunderstorm, Polacco illustrates a first-person narrative about a little girl's experience on her grandmother's farm in Michigan. A Russian immigrant, Baboushka placates her granddaughter's fears by baking a "Thunder Cake" that requires the two of them to gather ingredients to the count of the approaching booms: ". . . you got eggs from mean old Nellie Peck Hen, you got milk from old Kick Cow, you went through Tangleweed Woods to the dry shed, you climbed the trellis in the barnyard. . . only a very brave person could have done all them things." The art features an array of earth tones in sweeping compositions that use organic shapes and patterns inventively. The figures occasionally strike a coy pose, but Polacco relies less on her signature use of pencilled faces against luminous color, and the result is a better blend. A recipe for Grandma's Thunder Cake is appended for young listeners who want to crawl out from under the bed and try it. BH

D.V. Fear, overcoming; Grandparent-child relations

Poynter, Margaret. *A Time Too Swift*. Atheneum, 1990. ISBN 0-689-31146-X. [192p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 6-9. This first novel is, according to the jacket copy, "largely autobiographical" and based on the author's experiences as an adolescent in the early 1940s. Living in San Diego, Marjorie (the narrator, fifteen) meets a nice young serviceman who is shipped off after the Pearl Harbor bombing. Her brother enlists in the Marines, her friend's father is killed, a Japanese-American family who are her friends are sent to an internment camp. Marjorie's father is a bigot and a bully, but she loves him anyway; her hitherto-meek mother defies Dad and takes a wartime job. Eventually Marjorie forgets her serviceman and realizes she loves her brother's best friend, who is 4F; she and her parents are overjoyed when her brother is shipped home, hurt but not crippled. As often happens in a first novel, the author has put in too much in an effort to record the many facets she remembers of the wartime experience. This dilutes the story's impact, but it has a cohesive structure and is adequate if not impressive stylistically. ZS

D.V. Sex roles

Prelutsky, Jack. *Beneath a Blue Umbrella*; illus. by Garth Williams. Greenwillow, 1990. ISBN 0-688-06429-9. 64p. \$14.95.

R 4-8 yrs. As he did in *Ride a Purple Pelican* (BCCB 1/87), Prelutsky makes the smallest byways a poetic occasion in this rhyming romp around the American countryside. Percival Peake rides a white bear from Point Barrow to Eek, John Poole's mule gives out between cool Sedalia and hot Joplin, and Amanda finds a flounder near New London on the sound. Several of the fifty states put in a jovial appearance, along with some of their humble occupants, from kids to crows. Prelutsky has an unerring sense of popular appeal; these verses bounce as rhythmically as children do on a bed or jumping rope. They also feature plenty of reassurance and humor, staples for chanting. Garth Williams' homey pen drawing and luminous colors enliven each full-page

illustration with a dramatic simplicity set off by spacious book design. Kids are bound to set their own home towns into creative-writing motion. BH
C.U. Language arts—poetry

Pulver, Robin. *Mrs. Toggle's Zipper*; illus. by R. W. Alley. Four Winds, 1990. ISBN 0-02-775451-0. 32p. \$12.95.

Ad 3-5 yrs. Line and wash drawings illustrate a one-gag story that should appeal to the age that appreciates disaster humor; adult readers-aloud may appreciate the fact that the disaster is a mild one. Otherwise, this is a moderately amusing book in which several other staff members try to help a teacher with a jammed zipper after her concerned students have tried and failed. Each attempt at pulling Mrs. Toggle's coat off results in everyone tumbling to the floor; the only sensible person is the school custodian, who comes to the rescue with needle-nose pliers. While the treatment doesn't quite live up to the promising premise, young listeners will enjoy seeing the teacher stuck in a childlike predicament and the other authority figures displaying a variety of exaggeratedly childish reactions. ZS

Raymond, Patrick. *Daniel and Esther*. McElderry, 1990. ISBN 0-689-50504-3. [160p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R* Gr. 9-. At the experimental British boarding school of Dartington in the years preceding World War II, two teenagers fall in love, only to be swept apart by forces more powerful than their own internal adolescent drama. Esther is a beautiful Viennese refugee whose cool reserve finally gives way before Daniel's intense, creatively chaotic nature. Daniel tells the story in 1939, three years after it began, and his narrative fully realizes a complex world in which he finds his calling as a composer only to hear that the man who inspired him has been killed fighting Fascists in Spain. So, too, Daniel loses Esther just as the two of them have established a close bond—she is sent to rejoin her parents in Europe, and he is summoned by his American father. To focus on Daniel's immediate emotional deprivation, Raymond has set the narration before the Holocaust, leaving the implications of Esther's fate and of Daniel's eventual reactions to the reader's imagination. These characters and their peers come alive through vivid scenes that hold one with a strength of detail and of mood that recalls the bitter-sweet reflection dominating *A Separate Peace*. BH

C.U. History—World War II, 1939-1945

D.V. Boy-girl relations

Reid, Margarette S. *The Button Box*; illus. by Sarah Chamberlain. Dutton, 1990. ISBN 0-525-44590-0. 24p. \$12.95.

R 4-6 yrs. In a first-person narrative with which many children will identify—enviously—a boy describes playing with his grandmother's button box. Sorting through this round treasure chest, he imagines the buttons as belonging to elegant costumes, rough and ready clothes, uniforms, and assorted other garments that are depicted, paper-doll-fashion, in the full-color illustrations. He makes patterns according to size and color, plays guessing games with Grandma, makes a button hum along a twisted string, and learns what buttons are made of: seashells, sand (via glass), wood, horns, etc. "When it's time to put the buttons back, I pretend I'm very rich, counting all my gold.

I like to feel the buttons then, the bumpy and the smooth. I like the way they sound—clickety tappety—falling through my fingers, one by one, into the box.” Rich, indeed, and an inventively varied page design incorporates art featuring the same neat, satisfyingly rounded shapes as the subject. A one-page history of buttons concludes the story, which will send children straight to the nearest caretaker with a request for their own button box. Simple toys are best, and when they’re done as well as this, simple books as well. BH
D.V. Imaginative powers

Rylant, Cynthia. *Soda Jerk*; illus. by Peter Catalanotto. Jackson/Orchard, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08464-7; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05864-6. 48p. Library ed. \$14.99; Trade ed. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. 7-10. Twenty-eight free-verse poems, all narrated by a young soda jerk in a Virginia drugstore, depict small-town life without prettification. The best poems are those that don’t rely on the soda jerk framework, such as “When my Granddaddy died,” “I have got these,” “Doug Oaksberry tried to kill himself.” Restrained, effective pieces about loneliness, mourning, and isolation, these rely on understatement and observation. “My granddaddy’s glass eye/ would confuse you/ because you weren’t sure/ which side of his nose/ to look to/ since/ it wasn’t real clear/ which eye worked and which didn’t.” In many of the poems, however, the reader is merely an audience for the unbelievably knowing perceptions of the speaker, who sees and understands everything from his soda-counter vantage point (“Tips are okay/ But the secrets are better”). The style tends to be rambling and unfocused; the pieces often seem more like artistically arranged prose than poetry. Six double-page-spread paintings are included, isolated from the poems and likely to be ignored in this format; they are effective tableaux, curiously voiceless and faceless in a manner reminiscent of a cozier Edward Hopper. DS

Sachs, Marilyn. *At the Sound of the Beep*. Dutton, 1990. ISBN 0-525-44571-4. [128p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 4-6. Twins Mathew and Matilda are in sixth grade and are good companions despite having different interests and abilities; when their parents announce that they are separating and that each will keep one twin, the children decide to run away. They go to San Francisco because they have one relative who will, they feel, understand their plight—but Uncle Ben is out of town and the twins take refuge in Golden Gate Park. There’s certainly plenty of action, as the two meet some of the many homeless and become involved in a murder mystery. Sachs is a competent writer, and her compassion for her characters, especially for the indigent park-dwellers, permeates the story. Unfortunately, this sentiment also obtrudes on the story, partly because of its own weight and partly because there are brief, interpolated pages in the form of newspaper headlines or quotations from newspapers. The twins help solve the mystery and catch the murderer, and they thankfully return to their home, where their parents seem to have had a reconciliation. ZS

Sauer, Jim. *Hank*. Delacorte, 1990. ISBN 0-385-30034-4. [260p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M **Gr. 7-10.** Sixteen-year-old Richard narrates the story of his junior year, focusing on his growing friendship with girl-next-door Allie Boggs (in preference to a glossy and heartless senior), his ten-year-old brother Hank's attachment to Allie's troubled younger sister Emma, and finally Hank's unexpected illness and death. Although the writing is competent, the limited viewpoint of the narration grows tiresome, particularly as the novel is long, slow-moving and rambling. Richard shows little of the emotional growth that the rest of the characters constantly attempt to teach him. Characterization is both amorphous and simplistic, and Hank's prescience and moral courage (he catches fatal meningitis from a vagrant he befriends) mark him immediately as Too Good For This World, leaving us relieved rather than sorry at his exit. DS
D.V. Boy-girl relations; Brothers

Schami, Rafik. *A Hand Full of Stars*; tr. from the German by Rika Lesser. Dutton, 1990. ISBN 0-525-44535-8. [224p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R **Gr. 7-.** In a four-year diary detailing daily life in Damascus, Syria, during the political upheavals following World War II, the narrator describes his school, friends, sweetheart, family (especially beloved Uncle Salim), and the steps that lead him to become an underground journalist. The pressures of poverty, constant danger of arrest, and reality of torture in prison emerge from observations of the fate that befalls several of the narrator's intellectual mentors, his father, and a harmless old bum who wanders through the neighborhood. This is a journal of maturation, sometimes slow-moving but vivid in its cumulative effect; within a setting halfway around the world, U.S. readers will find themselves face to face with familiar characters and reactions as the narrator finds the courage to pursue love and career in spite of an oppressive situation. BH

D.V. International understanding

Seuss, Dr. *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*; written and illus. by Dr. Seuss. Random House, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-679-90527-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-80527-3. [48p]. Library ed. \$13.99; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad **Gr. K-2.** This has the bright extravaganza of structures and creatures that Seuss fans expect, and the same felicity of rhyme but less word-play. It may be less successful than most Seuss books because it doesn't tell a story, instead having a didactic message and repeated idea. The idea is that if you (the reader) will forge ahead, accept life's blows, not just sit around waiting for something to happen, etc. etc., you will be a success. "And when things start to happen/ don't worry. Don't stew/ Just go right along *You'll* start happening too," or "With banner flip-flapping/ once more you'll ride high/ Ready for anything under the sky/ Ready because you're that kind of a guy!" Message and audience don't seem to fit each other. ZS

Shuker, Nancy. *Elizabeth Arden: Cosmetics Entrepreneur*. Silver Burdett, 1990. ISBN 0-382-09587-1. 112p. illus. with photographs. (American Dream Books) \$11.98.

R **Gr. 7-9.** Under the rubric of the series ("The American Dream: Business Leaders of the 20th Century") Elizabeth Arden, née Florence Nightingale Graham, is clearly entitled to be included. Combining commercial

genius and indefatigable ambition, she worked with concentrated application at building and enlarging her cosmetics empire, as successful in its merchandizing of products as in its proliferation of services, or salons. At the same time, Shuker does not hesitate to show her subject's less appealing personal characteristics—a selfishness and autocratic willfulness that drove away friends, family, and employees. A special point of interest is Arden's behavior contrasted with the first self-made millionairess in the United States, a beautician named Madame Walker, who was descended from slaves and who poured her profits back into the black community. Despite a sometimes pedestrian style and occasionally irrelevant black-and-white photos, this gives many such glimpses of fashion's historical context and of women's progress in the work force. Bibliography and index are appended. ZS
D.V. Industry

Te Ata. *Baby Rattlesnake*; ad. by Lynn Moroney; illus. by Veg Reisberg. Children's Book Press, 1990. ISBN 0-89239-049-2. 32p. \$12.95.

R 4-6 yrs. Two colorful picture books (see imprint information for Xiong's *Nine-in-One, Grr! Grr!* below) each present a simple, repetitive folktale that will appeal to young listeners. "Nine-in-one, Grr! Grr!" is the chant the first tiger sings after learning from a wise man how many cubs she will have each year. Afraid the world will soon get overpopulated by tigers, a bird tricks Tiger into remembering the song backward ("One-in-nine, Grr! Grr!"), thereby changing the prophecy. The vivid watercolor and silkscreen illustrations are designed after the style of Hmong embroidered story cloths. *Baby Rattlesnake* also follows the format of each page of text faced by an illustration, but in this case the brightly-colored pictures are made with cut paper and gouache paints that color the tale with a postmodern flair. Set in the American Southwest, the story tells of a baby rattlesnake who gets his rattle too soon. He learns his lesson when he tries to scare the chief's daughter. Both stories would work equally well for reading aloud or storytelling. KP

Trenary, Jill. *Jill Trenary: The Day I Skated for the Gold*; by Jill Trenary with Dale Mitch; illus. with photographs by Dino Ricci. Simon, 1989. ISBN 0-671-68315-2. 60p. (Time of My Life Books). \$14.95.

R Gr. 4-7. Faces come and go mighty quickly in the field of amateur athletics, and the "autobiographies" by these starring participants are often just as ephemeral. While a little too perky, Jill Trenary's story is direct, focused and as informative about the world of figure-skating as it is about the skater herself, who came in fourth at the 1988 Olympic Games. In the series' context of "the time of my life," Jill recalls the last day of the Calgary competition when she, Debi Thomas, Katarina Witt and several others performed the deciding freestyle segments of their routines. She provides plenty of technical detail, shows generosity to her peers, and is candid about her own performance: "They were not really mistakes, but I had wanted them to be triple jumps instead of doubles. I might have done better but it was a good performance, one I could be proud of." Plenty of colorful action shots add glamour and excitement. RS

Udpike, David. *A Spring Story*; illus. by Robert Andrew Parker. Pippin, 1989. ISBN 0-945912-06-4. 40p. \$13.95.

R 5-8 yrs. An atmospheric tale recounts the adventures of two boys meeting up with old Mr. Birch, who lives at the edge of the marsh and tells them about “running tiddlies up and down the creek”—riding icebergs on the tide. On a warm March day, the two boys try their hand at it, resulting in a wild trip that almost takes them to sea. This is a much more cohesive and credible story than *An Autumn Tale* (BCCB 2/88). The writing is at once well-focused and spacious, creating a rare sense of free time for roaming around with dogs and pushing the limits of the land. Parker’s blue-based paintings emanate the same tone with clean compositions, easy color blends, and horizontal brush sweeps. Without nostalgia, the book rings of strong remembrance that will stir recognition in today’s—and tomorrow’s—children. BH
D.V. Friendship values

Wallace, Bill. *Danger in Quicksand Swamp*. Holiday House, 1989. ISBN 0-8234-0786-1. 181p. \$14.95.

M Gr. 5-8. Best friends Jake and Ben (the narrator) would like to spend summer vacation earning money for a fishing boat. When Jake finds an abandoned boat near their homes in rural southeast Oklahoma, they can’t believe their luck. But compared to the amazing events that follow, the discovery of the boat is nothing. The two boys find a treasure map hidden in the boat, a murderer stalks them, and they are stranded on an island surrounded by alligators and quicksand. Jake and Ben face melodramatic death several times; just before he is rescued from suffocating in quicksand, Jake says to Ben, “Tell my daddy I love him.” The scene in which the boys trap an alligator in a pit and bludgeon it to death with shovels (and cook it for dinner) is graphically described. The style is Hardy Boys exclamatory, with cliff-hanging chapter endings (“Swim, Ben! Swim!!!”) that may annoy even the most reluctant readers. Still, for those who have loved and outgrown Eth Clifford’s thrillers (*Help! I’m a Prisoner in the Library* BCCB 4/80, etc.), Bill Wallace could be a simple step. KP

Willey, Margaret. *Saving Lenny*. Bantam, 1990. ISBN 0-553-05850-9. [160p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R* Gr. 7-10. Kay had convinced her best friend Jesse to ask Lenny for a date—she couldn’t have known then how fast the new couple would shut her out. In alternating, distinctively voiced chapters, the two girls recall what happened to their friendship while Jesse and Lenny have “the undisputed romance of the century.” Willey deftly combines empathy for her adolescent characters and readers with a seasoned perspective on their dramas. While readers may, like Kay, soon become impatient with Jesse’s infatuation, they will understand it, and perhaps be a little jealous, “the kind of jealousy that makes you wonder what it would be like to be so crazy about someone. When it hasn’t happened to you.” As was true in Willey’s last book, *If Not for You* (BCCB 9/88), the sad spiral of the romance is inevitable and believable: it isn’t until they run away together to an isolated beach cottage that Jesse understands that Lenny isn’t a dark romantic figure; he’s clinically depressed, a condition that the author renders with considerable acuity and a welcome lack of problem-novel melodrama. With a prose style that is at once quiet and forthright, Willey demonstrates an unassuming respect for her readers and their passions. RS

Xiong, Bli. *Nine-in-One, Grr! Grr!: A Folktale from the Hmong People of Laos*; ad. by Cathy Spagnoli; illus. by Nancy Hom. Children's Book Press, 1990. ISBN 0-89239-048-4. 32p. \$12.95.

R 4-6 yrs. See Te Ata, *Baby Rattlesnake* for review.

Yee, Paul. *Tales from the Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World*; illus. by Simon Ng. Macmillan, 1990. ISBN 0-02-793621-X. 64p. \$14.95.

R* Gr. 5-. Eight original stories—brilliantly illustrated with eerily textured, mask-like portraits—make a haunting companion to use with the tales in Laurence Yep's *The Rainbow People* (BCCB 4/89), which were drawn from a WPA oral narrative project. Yee never indulges in stylistic pretensions as he releases these dramatic blends of realism and legend from what seems long silence. The manager of a fish cannery turns trickster to foil a greedy boss, a young man arranges burial for a group of Chinese railroad workers after meeting his father's ghost in a deserted tunnel ("Take chopsticks; they shall be our bones"), a young woman's gift of ginger root saves her betrothed's life and, eventually, their love. A few of the tales focus on the personal price of clashes between old traditions and new influences. From romance to sly humor to conflicts of the living and dead, these carry mythical overtones that lend the characters unforgettable dimension—humans achieving supernatural power in defying their fate of physical and cultural oppression. The combination of Yee's piercing portrayals and Ng's monumental images against background effects of cracked canvas must—as the author hopes in his afterword—"carve a place in the North American imagination for the many generations of Chinese who have settled here as Canadians and Americans, and help them stake their claim to be known as pioneers, too." BH

C.U. Social studies

D.V. Pride in background and heritage

CORRECTION: Ruth Belov Gross' *What's on My Plate?* (Macmillan) was incorrectly identified as a paperback edition in the February *Bulletin*. Marj Gurasich's *Letters to Oma* (T.C.U.) is only available in a paper edition.

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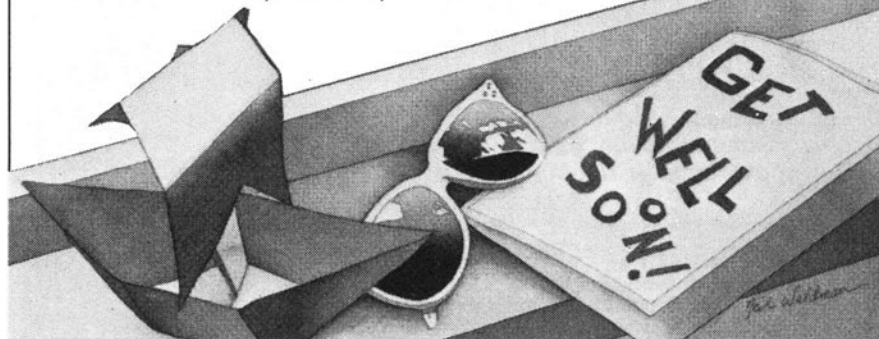
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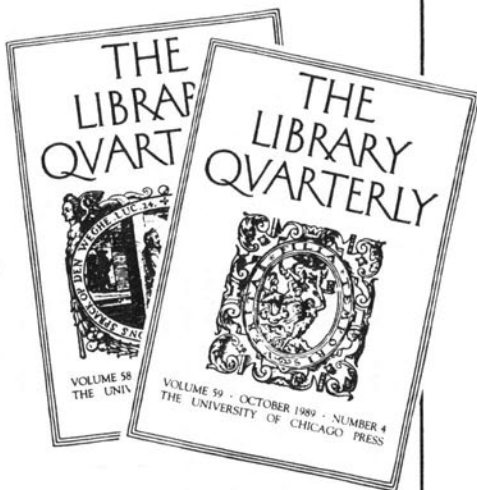
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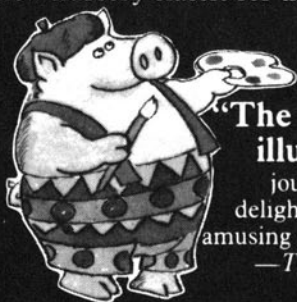


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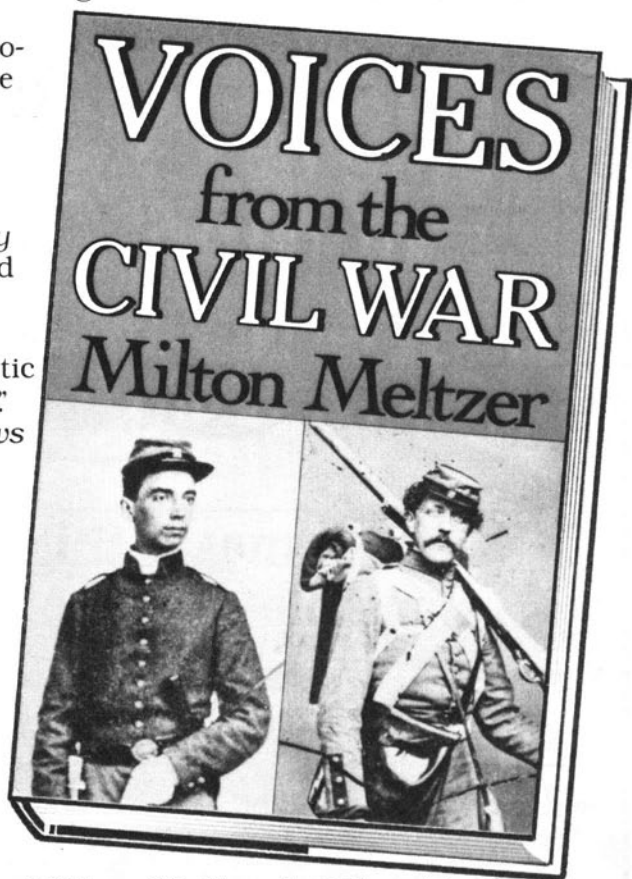
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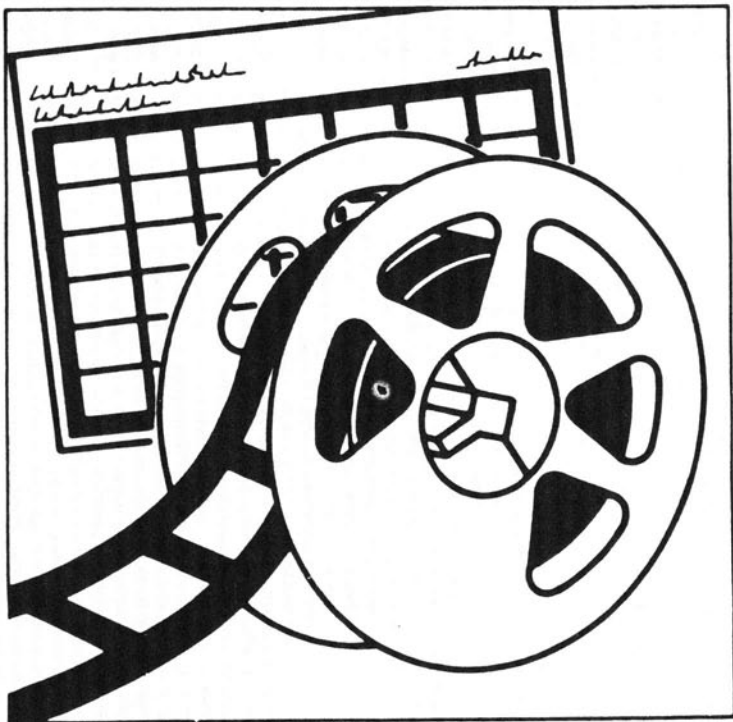
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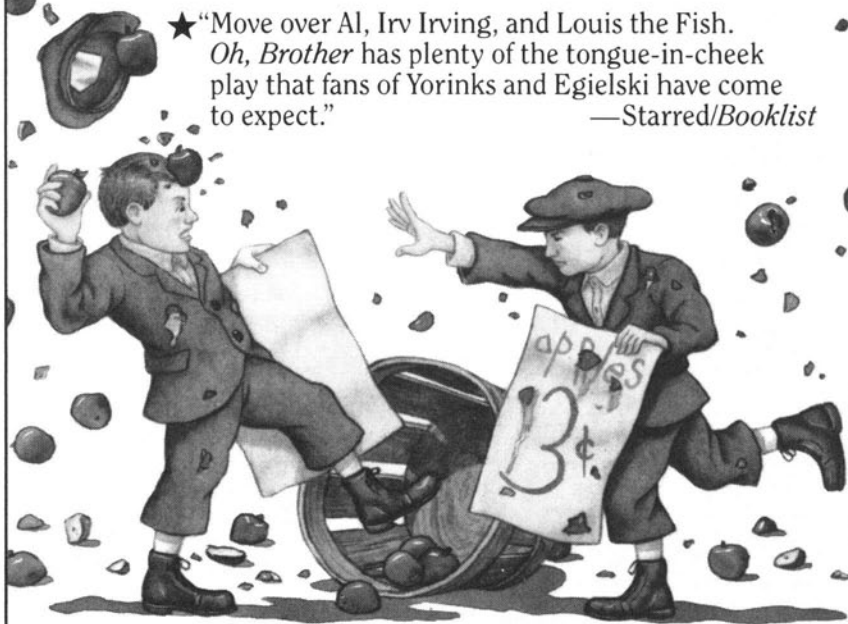
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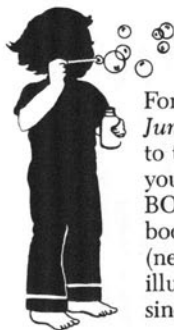
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"Encouraging Young Writers," "Building a Family Library," "Family Storytelling," "Summertime Reading." (Parent Guides). *Reading Is Fundamental*, 1989. Each brochure 50¢; Bulk rate of \$15.00 per 100 (single titles only). Order from RIF, 600 Maryland Ave. S.W., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20024.

Frankson, Marie Stewart. "Chicano Literature for Young Adults: An Annotated Bibliography," *English Journal*, January, 1990.

Giblin, James Cross. *Writing Books for Young People*. The Writer, Inc., 1990. 132p. \$12.00.

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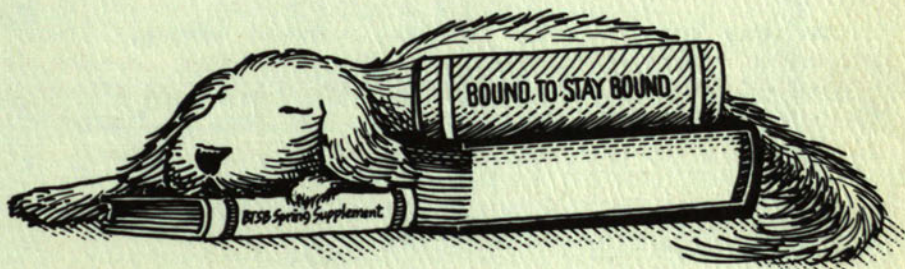
Potter, Beatrix. *Beatrix Potter's Letters*; selected and introduced by Judy Taylor. Warne, 1989. 478p. \$29.95.

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