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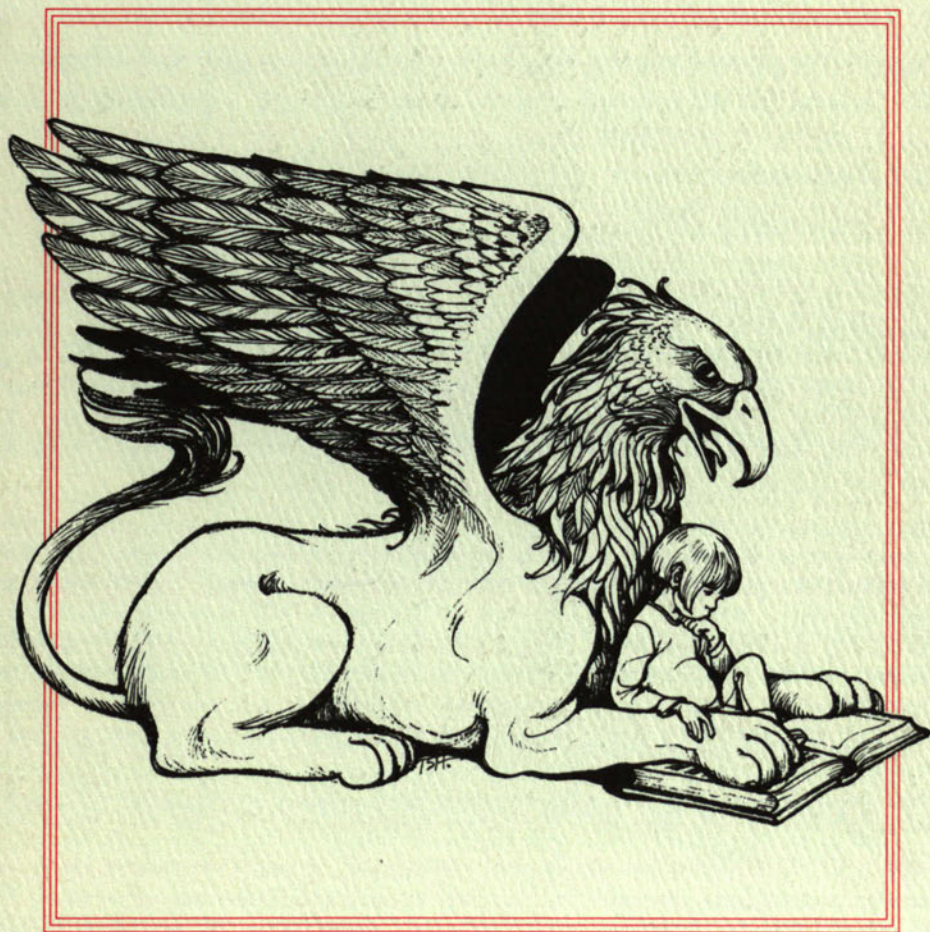
THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

MAY 1990

VOLUME 43

NUMBER 9



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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.

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The Bulletin
of the Center for Children's Books

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
GRADUATE LIBRARY SCHOOL

Volume 43

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New Titles for Children and Young People

Adler, C. S. *Ghost Brother*. Clarion, 1990. ISBN 0-395-52592-6. 150p. \$13.95.

R *Gr. 5-7.* Wally's dashing older brother, Jon-o, is dead in an accident, and Wally's life has turned upside down: his mother cries all night, his brassy Aunt Flo and her resentful daughter have come to stay for the whole summer, and Wally is desperate to emulate his brother and fill the hole in the family his death has left. Wally's primary consolation comes from the appearances of Jon-o's ghost, teasing and teaching his little brother just as he did in life; when these visits grow less frequent, Wally becomes increasingly reckless in his attempt to duplicate his brother's athletic prowess in his favorite sport of skateboarding. The plot (ghost notwithstanding) is conventional, but overt psychologizing is kept to a minimum. Characterization is effective throughout: Wally's struggle to change his own worried diligence into Jon-o's brash charm is credible, as is his gradual desanctification of Jon-o's image. Despite occasional stylistic lapses ("Being dead, where did Jon-o have to rush off to anyway?"), the writing effectively conveys both the fragility and strength of a bereaved family regaining its balance. DS
D.V. Brothers; Death, adjustment to

Auch, Mary Jane. *Kidnapping Kevin Kowalski*. Holiday House, 1990. ISBN 0-8234-0815-9. 124p. \$13.95.

R *Gr. 5-8.* "Kevin had always been the leader," but since his return from the rehab center after a bicycling accident he seems content to sit passively while Mooch and Ryan make all the decisions. Kevin's mother won't let him do anything so his two best friends "kidnap" him for a campout in the woods, hoping to convince Mrs. Kowalski that Kevin's ready for Scout camp. With a practiced blend of fast-moving storytelling, believable characters, and ethical questions that inform but do not overwhelm the story, this has guaranteed appeal for middle-grade boys. The three friends are clearly drawn, each featuring a mix of annoying as well as more laudable attributes, and Ryan and Mooch's concern for their friend is realistically tempered with exasperation at his limitations. The backyard setting is comfortably familiar, and the cover illustration of the three friends splashing through a creek on an all-terrain vehicle is a little dorky but appealing. RS
D.V. Friendship values; Handicaps, overcoming

Bechard, Margaret. *My Sister, My Science Report*. Viking, 1990. ISBN 0-670-83290-1. [96p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 4-6. Her teenage sister Jane taunts and twits Tess, who is the narrator and who seems to be a preteen. Assigned to a partner (for a school science report) who is considered by Tess and her friend Melissa to be gross, peculiar, and detestable, Tess is in anguish. Her partner's name is Phoenix Guber and he has chosen barn owls as their topic. However, the partners hide in Jane's closet and spy on her; they decide that she will be their topic. There are some humorous aspects to the story, which is adequately written but poorly conceived. All of the juvenile characters are superficially drawn, and each of them is unpleasant in behavior at some point and, most of the time, all of them are rude to each other. Not much happens that isn't trivial: Tess wins a prize, and she learns that Phoenix is really a nice companion; Jane achieves rapport with the boy on whom she has a crush. Lightweight but heavy-handed. ZS
D.V. Boy-girl relations

Bell, Clare. *Ratha and Thistle-chaser*. McElderry, 1990. ISBN 0-689-50462-4. 232p. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. 7-10. This is the third in a fantasy series about an intelligent species of panther-like creatures introduced in *Ratha's Creature* (BCCB 7/83) and further developed in *Clan Ground* (BCCB 1/85). Here Ratha's leadership survives a drought that threatens the clan, but she's shaken by a climactic confrontation with the daughter she rejected as a cub because of its "empty eyes." The outcast has survived to bitter adulthood, haunted by memories of the cruel bite with which Ratha crippled her and possessed of a powerful imagination, along with an obsession for revenge. As in the other two books, Ratha has a lesson to learn, and that lesson is made overt with her realization that narrow judgments of intelligence can limit, divide, and even doom the clan. Bell fans will not mind this rather didactic wrap-up, nor the sometimes cumbersome style ("I'm worried, herding teacher"), since it comes at the end of an involved plot sustained by details of the well-realized cat characters. BH

D.V. Fear, overcoming

Brooke, William J. *The Telling of a Tale: Five Stories*; illus. by Richard Egielski. Harper, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020689-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020688-8. 132p. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95.

R Gr. 4-6. Five cleverly styled stories update folklore with a modernized attitude about sex roles. "The Waking of the Prince" features a princess suspicious of the traditional kiss ("Do you have any form of identification with you? . . . You didn't happen to notice any guards on your way up, did you?") and a prince who loses several rounds ("I have failed at hero") to a dragon that invents golden labor-saving devices. "The Growin' of Paul Bunyan" pits Paul's timbercutting ways against Johnny Applesseed's green thumb, the latter winning by a mile when Paul's ax sprouts into a redwood ("there's nobody bigger than a man who learns to grow"). "The Fitting of the Slipper" couples a prince with a peasant girl; "The Working of John Henry" exposes the legendary giant's death as a newsman's fabrication, while the real steel driver takes over the steam hammer. "The Telling of a Tale" is a somewhat confusing tale-within-a-tale that uses "Jack and the Beanstalk" to frame a

message about the importance of passing on stories. There's a touch of self-consciousness about these, and a few embarrassing slips (how can an old peasant woman be a wet nurse?) but they're highly entertaining for all that. What's more, female liberation has been a commoner focus among fairy tale revisionists than male sensitivity has been, so this more unusual remodeling will find its way into classroom discussion after some light-hearted readaloud sessions. Each story is illustrated with a black-and-white decoration by Richard Egelski. BH
C.U. Language arts
D.V. Sex roles

Brown, Laurie Krasny. *Dinosaurs Alive and Well: A Guide to Good Health*; written and illus. by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown. Joy Street/Little, 1990. ISBN 0-316-10998-3. [32p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. K-2. This compilation of self-help hints and tips is casually organized and tries to include too much, but it may provide some pleasurable browsing and serendipitous behavior modification. Just-silly-enough cartoons of dinosaur characters illustrate facts about nutrition ("One banana gives you enough energy to sleep for an hour and a half but to bicycle for only ten minutes"), proper dress ("The best way to stay warm is to dress in layers") and exercise ("Try to remember: you don't have to be perfect at a sport to have fun"). Subsequent sections on feelings, worry, and friendship are mostly filler ("There's nothing like a good friend to make you feel happy"), and the subsequent pages on sickness and first-aid seem misplaced and are too brief to be useful. This entry in a popular series (*Dinosaurs Divorce*, etc.) will have a ready-made audience of parents, although they may be disappointed in the fuzzy focus, and children, who will once again enjoy the opportunity to watch dressed-up dinos. RS
C.U. Health

Brown, Ruth. *I Don't Like It!*; written and illus. by Ruth Brown. Dutton, 1990. ISBN 0-525-44559-5. 26p. \$13.95.

Ad 4-6 yrs. Less a story than an excuse for Brown's delectably textured paintings, this nevertheless has strong emotional appeal in its theme of a toy abandoned. "Everything's changed since that puppy came," sighs the doll. "My little girl plays with him all the time and leaves me inside. I don't like it!" The Teddy bear and Jack-in-the-box enjoy the relaxation, while the toy mice clean the dollhouse, but it's the puppy that finally rediscovers the doll for his mistress' bedtime snuggle. As in Brown's *The Big Sneeze* (BCCB 2/86) and other work, the colors and perspectives extend the story beyond the frame of the book, though with less compelling energy. Young viewers will respond to the rich interiors, the plump puppy, the doll-face expressions ranging from outraged to sly, and the cozy resolution. BH
D.V. Love for toy

Carlson, Nancy. *Arnie and the New Kid*; written and illus. by Nancy Carlson. Viking, 1990. ISBN 0-670-82499-2. 32p. \$11.95.

Ad 4-7 yrs. Arnie, Carlson's protagonist in *Arnie Goes to Camp* and *Arnie and the Stolen Markers* (BCCB 3/88, 9/87), now encounters in school a new kid who uses a wheelchair. Arnie mocks Philip's disabilities until, in a spot of poetic justice, an accident puts him on crutches and his laborious efforts

at everyday tasks cause him to see Philip in a new (if solecistically phrased) light: "Boy, I could use a wheelchair like you!" Arnie and Philip then of course forge a friendship that lasts even after Arnie returns to the ranks of the able-bodied. This is a moral exemplum thinly disguised as a story, but the moral is valid and may be the more effective for its demonstration by a familiar character. Vivid and casual full-color illustrations depict various new-wavy critters, whose expressive faces convey emotions that the text leaves unspoken. DS
D.V. Friendship values; Respect for differences

Carlstrom, Nancy White. *Blow Me a Kiss, Miss Lilly*; illus. by Amy Schwartz. Harper, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021013-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021012-5. 32p. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95.

Ad Gr. K-2. Miss Lilly and her cat Snug live in a little white house just across the street from Sara, the young narrator, who claims the old lady as her best friend. Sara loves working in the garden with Miss Lilly and listening to stories of the old days, which her friend recalls more clearly than contemporary details. One day, however, Miss Lilly falls ill and is taken to the hospital, where she dies after one final visit with Sara. The book is quiet and matter-of-fact, focusing on Sara's joy in knowing and remembering Miss Lilly, but the old lady herself is so relentlessly darling ("She knew everyone's birthday in our neighborhood. On your birthday morning, she would come to the door with a bouquet and card, and if you were home, she sang 'Happy birthday,' too") that the story cloy. Illustrated with trim but unfussy spring-colored pictures, this is a gentle if excessively charming introduction to mortality. DS
D.V. Death, adjustment to; Older-younger generations

Caseley, Judith. *Kisses*. Knopf, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-679-90166-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-80166-9. 186p. Library ed. \$13.99; Trade ed. \$12.95.

R Gr. 9-12. A gifted fifteen-year-old violinist who has just successfully auditioned for a local youth orchestra, Hannah Gold is preoccupied with relationships that seem problematic: her own with boys in her class; her grandmother's with her grandfather, who dies during the course of the book; her parents', when her mother's grief strains her father's patience; her best friend Dierdre's with a boyfriend who abuses her; and Dierdre's parents, who fight viciously and constantly. Sexuality is a subtle but pervasive issue. Hannah observes this among adults as well as experiencing it herself when she breaks off with a sweet but dull boy, is spurned by another who is attractive but arrogant, and finally finds the right match in gentle Bobby, who comforts her when her violin teacher forces a kiss on her. The adolescent girl's alternate fascination with bodies and revulsion from anything "gross" is well portrayed. The point of view is third person, but the story has the immediacy of a first-person narrative without the frequently attendant self-consciousness of one. Caseley's natural voice and realistic detail allow readers an intimate look at both the protagonist and her family, a coup for a first novel. BH
D.V. Boy-girl relations; Family relations

Clément, Claude. *Musician from the Darkness*; illus. by John Howe. Little, 1990. ISBN 0-316-14740-0. 26p. \$14.95.

M Gr. 1-3. Like Clément's *The Painter and the Wild Swans* and *The Voice of the Wood* (BCCB 6/89) this is a literary fable in search of an

audience. Formatted as a picture book, with illustrations that resemble fantasy calendar art, the book has a story and theme that are both ahistorical and sentimental. Back in the days of the saber-tooth tiger and woolly mammoth, "before mankind began to speak," "the man with sky-blue eyes" fashions a flute that calls the birds . . . to death, as the rougher and darker-skinned members of the tribe—insensitive brutes—use the flute's allure to stone the birds for food. "As the surviving birds called out to each other in warning, the blood from those killed slowly stained the reeds in front of the man with the blue eyes." Ostracized by the tribe when he refuses to continue to play, the outcast uses the flute to comfort himself in the lonely dark. One wonders why he doesn't build a fire: although we're told he is "alone and without any way of starting a fire," we have already been informed of the sharpened flint he used to make the flute. One also wonders what he eats. RS

Conrad, Pam. *Stonewords*. Harper, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021316-7; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021315-9. 130p. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95.

R* Gr. 5-9. Zoe's grandparents think that Zoe Louise is an imaginary friend, but the truth is far more unsettling. Zoe first meets her namesake when her grandfather refurbishes an old playhouse. "'This is mine,' said a little voice, like a voice coming down a tube." Zoe Louise lived in Zoe's house a century ago, and her ghost has returned to solve a terrible mystery. Contemporary children's book ghosts have, on the whole, become a rather friendly breed; Conrad here restores the full treatment, giving us a ghost both lonely and horrific: "Her eyes turned up to mine, her dry, transparent eyes with the barest flicker of life, her awful eyes held to her face with the thinnest cobwebs of lids. 'Come back,' she whispered and behind her dry, cracked lips were gray and terrible small teeth." The supernatural and time-travel elements of the book are viscerally convincing, and the desperate neediness of both girls is fierce and real. The disquieting ending is in the richest gothic tradition, resolving one mystery only to reveal another even more frightening. This is a very scary book. RS

Z

Cowcher, Helen. *Antarctica*; written and illus. by Helen Cowcher. Farrar, 1990. ISBN 0-374-30368-1. 34p. \$13.95.

R 5-8 yrs. The Adélie and emperor penguins are accustomed to the dangers of voracious leopard seals and egg-eating skua gulls, but the helicopters and ships are new and "more disturbing." The text of this ecological eye-opener is sometimes confusing: "The Adélie penguins have also come onto the ice. On their long journey to the rocky shore, where they will lay their eggs, they pass the emperor chicks." Onto the ice from where? "Weddell seals call to their friends under the ice." Who is under the ice? (A pitfall of anthropomorphism—"one another" would have been more clear if that is indeed what is meant.) Despite the sometimes vague text, the illustrations offer high, stylized drama. Sleek, dark curves of penguins and seals boldly stand in a context of cool blues, grays, and greens shot through with streaks of sunset and the *aurora australis*. The threats of leopard seals, skuas, and helicopters, are projected by intense graphic intrusions; the pictures of parent and baby seals have the dignity of family portraits. Avoiding the full-blown sentimentality of Glimmerveen's similarly themed *A Tale of Antarctica* (BCCB 3/90), this is both handsome and immediate. RS

Z

DeFelice, Cynthia. *Weasel*. Macmillan, 1990. ISBN 0-02-726457-2. [112p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr.5-7. Set on the Ohio frontier in 1839, this is the story of a motherless pioneer family in which the older child, Nathan, is the narrator and protagonist. When he and his sister are taken by a stranger to his cabin where their father is ill, they learn that the man called Weasel, a renegade who has killed or wounded people, white and Indian, has taken their father's rifle. After being caught by Weasel, Nathan escapes but broods bitterly because he didn't kill the man when he had a chance. Only later does he realize that if he had killed he would have been as savage as Weasel himself. The writing style is fairly smooth, the characters colorful but lacking depth; the book has an uneven pace, as though it were a short story that had been intermittently padded to make it book length. ZS

D.V. Courage; Ethical concepts

DuPrau, Jeanne. *Adoption: The Facts, Feelings, and Issues of a Double Heritage*. Messner, 1990. ISBN 0-671-69328-X. 129p. \$11.98.

Ad Gr. 7-12. Despite this book's claim to be a revised edition, it is curiously old-fashioned in many respects. Phraseologically the author is 20 years behind the times, using terms such as "natural parent" and "hard to place child" instead of "biological parent" and "special-needs child," and her information on adoptable vs. unadoptable children is similarly out of date. Overall she is much better with emotional effects and possible ramifications than with facts. DuPrau has a better sense than Landau [below] of the state-to-state variation in adoption laws, but neglects to mention several important facts: some states provide court-appointed go-betweens for adoptees searching for birth parents, for instance, and in many states adoptees retain their legal rights to their birth parents' estates and Social Security benefits. Her knowledge of registries as a means for finding birth parents and children is also incomplete, but her discussion of the possible rewards and repercussions of searching is perceptive and fair-minded. The book's sensitivity to the emotions of questioning adoptees makes it a useful counterpart to Kremenz' *How It Feels to Be Adopted* (BCCB 2/83). No notes are provided, but a "Sources of Help" list, bibliography, and index are included. DS

D.V. Adoption, adjustment to

Farrer, Frances. *Charlie and Elly Stories*; illus. by Susie Jenkin-Pearce. Gollancz/David & Charles, 1990. ISBN 0-575-03966-3. 112p. \$15.95.

Ad Gr. K-2. In January when the stories begin, Elly is almost five and her brother, Charlie, is almost four. Each chapter describes an everyday adventure—snow shoveling, toy shopping, running for help when their teenage friend falls through ice and again when the roofer falls off a ladder. Children will relate to Charlie's feelings when Elly goes to school and leaves him home, or to the excitement of watching their dad build a playhouse. Unfortunately, the writing style makes the tales too hard for the read-aloud audience to understand, with British dialect ("football pitch," "dodgems," "choc-ice"), badly-used American slang ("really off the wall" and "out to lunch" used as compliments), and rambling dialogue ("'Hello kids,' said Jackson, 'what's the matter, eh? We cleared the snow and we done a good job! Look! It's really good, that is . . . We're freezin' now,' he added"). Independent readers who can handle the

vocabulary probably won't be interested in the four and five year old characters. The simple plot will appeal to younger children, but the style will limit the audience. KP

D.V. Brothers-sisters

Feder, Paula Kurzband. *Did You Lose the Car Again?*; illus. by Nancy Hayashi. Dutton, 1990. ISBN 0-525-44514-5. 64p. (Speedsters). \$10.95.

R Gr. 2-3. With an appealing balance of easy-to read text and black-and-white cartoon illustrations, this recounts the lost-and-found morning of a city family preparing for a day in the country. Dad can't find his scarf; heck, Dad can't find the *car*, so sisters Karla and Phoebe search the streets up to 86th while Mom and Dad do the same down to 79th. There's a cumulative, shaggy-dog quality to the story that rewards reader concentration and retention; the humor is broadly accessible, with plenty of familial warmth—as demonstrated in Karla's friendly needling of Dad after the two girls find the car: "'And you got a ticket, too,' she sang to him." Latest in a truly audience-aware series for not-quite beginning and reluctant readers. RS

C.U. Reading, beginning; Reading, reluctant

D.V. Family relations

Fraser, Betty. *First Things First: An Illustrated Collection of Sayings Useful and Familiar for Children*; written and illus. by Betty Fraser. Harper, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021855-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021854-1. 32p. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95.

R 4-6 yrs. Because it entertains as well as informs, this picture book represents cultural literacy at its most successful, presenting (and poking fun at) traditional proverbs in familiar contexts. As a young girl leads her frazzled family to the breakfast table, she declares "First come, first served"; in the same spread, a robin visible through the window thinks "The early bird catches the worm"; a puppy lunges through the pet-door with early morning urgency ("First things first"). Just as sayings often pick up an ironic flavor in how they're said, the gallery of historically important figures (George Washington, Adam and Eve, two Puritans in Pilgrim regalia, etc.) eyeing this scene of everyday family confusion adds graphic irony. The pictures are delicate in line and color, but bold in patterned effect. They're fun to look at, while the text offers a kind of guessing game, often involving humorously contradictory advice: "what to say when you feel brave and ready to do it" faces a page illustrating "what to say when you aren't ready." The introductory phrases might occasionally seem obscure ("What to say when it isn't what you thought it would be") except that the art always clarifies the connection between them and the aphorisms. Young listeners will chime in with their own ideas to accompany time-honored maxims. Clearly aware that all work and no play make a dull book, Fraser rocks the seesaw of chaos and concept. BH

C.U. Language arts

Galbraith, Kathryn. *Laura Charlotte*; illus. by Floyd Cooper. Philomel, 1990. ISBN 0-399-21613-8. 32p. \$14.95.

M 4-7 yrs. Laura can't sleep, so Mama comes in to tell the story of Charlotte, even though Laura has "heard it a million times before." Charlotte was Mama's closest companion, a stuffed elephant she had received for her fifth

birthday from her grandmother. And now a handed-down Charlotte is Laura's "best friend." Where, then, is Charlotte when Laura can't sleep? Why is great-grandmother suddenly around to restitch an injured Charlotte? What can it possibly mean to Laura when her mother says, "but one day I was too old to play with Charlotte"? The generalized sentimentality (grandma, birthday, stuffed toy) and lack of any real story mark this as a book for nostalgic adults rather than for children, who invest their toys with far more spirit than Charlotte possesses. The illustrations, including a saccharine cover portrait of Laura and Charlotte, are likewise sentimentally lit and gaudily colored, with a grainy "time-ago" patina that fails to obscure the awkwardly drafted figures who only occasionally resemble themselves from page to page. This one's a greeting card; for a bedtime story with individualized warmth and verve try Angela Johnson's *Tell me a Story, Mama* (BCCB 2/89). RS

D.V. Love for toy

Hamley, Dennis. *Hare's Choice*; illus. by Meg Rutherford. Delacorte, 1990. ISBN 0-385-30050-6. [96p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 4-7. A dead hare is immortalized when a group of schoolchildren make up a story about her; having been brought to consciousness by literature, the hare has the choice of two heavens: the ordinary animal heaven, or the literary heaven, populated by Peter Rabbit, Fiver, Wilbur, etc. For a fiercely genuine animal fantasy see William Mayne's *Antar and the Eagles* (BCCB 3/90); Hamley's book is a theme-laden, gimmicky fable best used, perhaps, as discussion material in creative writing class. The schoolchildren's story (which comprises the bulk of the book) is a tepid ecological fable-within-the-fable; its theme of respect for animals seems contradicted by the theme of the book as a whole, which inadvertently implies that animals have no reason for living until a writer assigns them one. RS

D.V. Animals, respect for

Horgan, Dorothy. *When the Zeppelins Came*. Oxford, 1990. ISBN 0-19-271598-4. 106p. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. 5-7. Although the jacket copy refers to this as a collection of short stories, the fact that the chapters about best friends Emily and Lizzie are linked and are in chronological order makes the book seem more like a continuous, if episodic, narrative. Most of the drama is cozily domestic, but a few incidents, such as the harassment of some German neighbors, bring the war home. Emily is eight at the start of the story, set in London in 1909; the last chapter describes the jubilation of Londoners on November 11, 1918. There's just a bit too much determined provision of period details to permit the book to have great sweep or impact, but it has strength in narrative style, dialogue, characterization and a vivid impression of Edwardian London. ZS

Hughes, Shirley. *The Big Concrete Lorry: A Tale of Trotter Street*; written and illus. by Shirley Hughes. Lothrop, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08535-0; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08534-2. [32p]. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 3-6 yrs. Once again depicting the happily multiethnic milieu of Trotter Street, British author/artist Hughes will satisfy the audience that has grown fond of her amicable, ordinary, and wholly engaging characters. Five

people and a dog fill the Pattersons' house, and Dad decides on a do-it-yourself extension in the back yard. The neighbors help; indeed, the neighbors probably save the day when there is a crisis. The crisis: a lorry drops (ahead of schedule) a load of fast-setting cement at the front door and there is then a mad race to get the cement through the house from front to back and to get the foundation laid before the cement hardens. The read-aloud audience will enjoy the frenzy; they will probably notice that the extension has both the pink walls that Josie wanted and the airplane-patterned curtains that her younger brother dreamed of. If they also notice that the extension has what appears to be an instant wisteria vine in lush growth over the door, they probably won't care. It's a pleasant background for the outdoor party the Pattersons give to thank their helpful friends. ZS
D.V. Helpfulness

Hurwitz, Johanna. *Class President*; illus. by Sheila Hamanaka. Morrow, 1990. ISBN 0-688-09114-8. 85p. \$12.95.

Ad Gr. 2-5. In a series that has featured the same characters through several titles, including *Class Clown* (BCCB 4/87) and *Teacher's Pet* (BCCB 3/88), Julio Sanchez starts fifth grade with a secret yen to be president of his class. Since bossy Cricket and popular Lucas are competing for the office, Julio doesn't think he should even try, but a surprise nomination speech summarizes the leadership qualities he has shown throughout the book. This is more obvious and less spontaneous than Hurwitz' usual fare, but the reading is easy, the focus on a Puerto Rican student and teacher is refreshing, and the details of a class bake sale will entertain fans. BH
D.V. Leadership

Jacobs, William Jay. *Ellis Island: New Hope in a New Land*. Scribner's, 1990. ISBN 0-684-19171-7. 40p. illus. with photographs. \$13.95.

Ad Gr. 3-6. Formatted for a younger audience than Fisher's *Ellis Island* (BCCB 11/86), this is an introduction to American immigration through the "island of hope and fear." While only two out of every hundred immigrants were sent back, all must have been apprehensive of the series of questions and medical tests that were a prerequisite to admission. Black-and-white historical photographs plentifully enhance the spaciouly printed text, which occasionally employs more sophisticated vocabulary and concepts than the format implies, using the terms "communists" and "killing fields," for example, without definition. A closing generalization about "escape from harsh governments like those of Cuba, the USSR, and the countries of eastern Europe" may already be dated, and contemporary American prejudice against immigrants is not mentioned. The central thesis, however, that "we are all wanderers or the children of wanderers," is persuasively presented. An index is appended. RS
C.U. Social studies; History—U.S.

Kasza, Keiko. *When the Elephant Walks*; written and illus. by Keiko Kasza. Putnam, 1990. ISBN 0-399-21755-X. 32p. \$13.95.

Ad 3-5 yrs. The plot, a repetitive lead-in to a single gag, is slight and its development hardly more substantial—but the very young lap audience will probably give this book a warm reception. One, it's about animals; two, it has that mild disaster humor the young find so funny; three, it's all activity, as everybody races around, the elephant frightening the bear who frightens the

crocodile, and so on, down to the wee mouse, who frightens (of course) the elephant. The pleasant watercolor pictures show timorous beasts of all sizes on pages that have plenty of white space and just a few words on each verso page. ZS

Katz, Phyllis. *Exploring Science through Art*; illus. by Anne Canevari Green and with photographs. Watts, 1990. ISBN 0-531-10890-2. 64p. (First Books). \$10.90.

M Gr. 4-6. A series of home demonstrations and projects are massed in haphazard fashion, with little to compensate for the poor arrangement of material, awkward writing style ("How you collect requires knowledge of science facts") and inadequate instructions for the suggested activities. What's left of value are some concepts of relationships, particularly spatial relationships, and some artistic projects that may stimulate further investigation even if they do not foster creativity. Ten additional titles suggested for further reading precede the index. ZS

Konigsburg, E. L. *Samuel Todd's Great Book of Colors*; written and illus. by E. L. Konigsburg. Atheneum, 1990. ISBN 0-689-31593-7. 32p. \$13.95.

R 3-5 yrs. Konigsburg's first picture book reaffirms what most of her fans already knew: she's a good illustrator. Her text is strong in clarity and simplicity; it is useful as a new and effective book on color; and it is lightened by the kind of unexpected humor that readers have enjoyed in her writing before. Not just "a pumpkin is orange," but "A pumpkin is all orange, but all orange is not a pumpkin." "When you see a lot of gray shaped like an elephant, it is one." A concept book that amuses its young audience may very well make color concepts more memorable. ZS

Kuller, Alison Murray. *An Outward Bound School*; illus. with photographs by Tom Stewart. Troll, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-8167-1731-1; Paper ed. ISBN 0-8167-1732-X. 32p. (Let's Take a Trip). Library ed. \$9.79; Paper ed. \$2.95.

Ad Gr. 4-7. A photodocumentary in color follows a group of students at the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School in Rockland, Maine, as they swim, run, rock-climb, negotiate an aerial jungle gym, solo on foraging expeditions, and share clean-up and community service details. It's an oddly impersonal account, considering that the entire focus is on one site rather than generalizing to, or at least mentioning, some of the many other different types of Outward Bound programs throughout the country. At the same time, the activities are typical enough for campers to identify with and look forward to, so that the book could serve as a browsing/discussion item for kids making summer plans or remembering vacation activities. Although Outward Bounders must be at least fourteen years old, the format could stretch from YA reluctant readers to younger siblings. BH
C.U. Physical education
D.V. Physical skills

Laird, Christa. *Shadow of the Wall*. Greenwillow, 1990. ISBN 0-688-09336-1. 144p. \$12.95.

R Gr. 6-9. An inevitably heartbreaking book about the last days of the Warsaw Ghetto focuses on the experiences of Misha, living with his two sisters in Janusz Korczak's orphanage. The disintegration of living conditions is apparent as Misha's foraging activities become futile in sustaining his tubercular mother, who dies soon after her baby is smuggled across the wall to a gentile family. Misha watches his remaining sister marched away by the Nazis to a death camp on August 6, 1942, soon after he joins the partisan resistance, which effects his escape from the ghetto through a sewer. This is a smoothly written and gripping World War II novel, with the historical figures well integrated into a fictional cast of characters. Although there's an occasional slip in point of view from Misha to Korczak, and the doctor is presented unreservedly as a saint, Laird's realization of both personalities commands the reader's attention and carries the plot beyond purposive research to the realm of anguished experience. A postscript provides factual background on Korczak, and an acknowledgment suggests several biographies. The story itself serves as bearable context for any young person exploring the important question of how the Holocaust could have happened. BH

C.U. History—World War II, 1939-1945

D.V. Courage

Landau, Elaine. *Black Market Adoption*. Watts, 1990. ISBN 0-531-10914-3. 128p. illus. with photographs. \$12.90.

NR Gr. 9-12. This book on a topical and emotional subject opens with a dramatic description of the well-publicized death of Lisa Steinberg, which sets the error-ridden tone of the entire work: Landau seems unaware that the children in the Steinberg case were not adopted on the black market, or even adopted at all. Most of the book labors under similar misconceptions. Surrogate parenting (a legal if controversial procedure in most states) and international adoptions (most of which are no more black market than U.S. agency adoptions) are also included under the rubric of black market adoption. The book has stylistic problems, too, referring to biological mothers as "naive females" and "pregnant females" and informing us that "buying a baby usually takes on an unsavory flavor." The pictures are problematic: a photograph of Lisa Steinberg's funeral cortege bears the sensational caption "The small white coffin of adoption victim Lisa Steinberg. . ."; a caption stating "Thousands of children—even as young as two years old—have been sold and used in pornographic videos" has little relevance to the photo it supposedly describes, which depicts busy citizens passing the marquee of a movie theatre showing "Sex and the Single Gay"; the pictures in the "Infants from Overseas" chapter are mostly of happy-looking legal adoptees. And despite apparently extensive research (endnotes are provided) the book gets several basic facts wrong, stating erroneously that "All adoption records in this country are sealed by court order" and "A Mexican adoption is legal and binding in this country." There is at least an adequate discussion of the difficulty of prosecuting perpetrators of illegal adoption and the potential cost to the children. A bibliography is included, and it probably contains more useful books than this one. DS

Lasky, Kathryn. *Dinosaur Dig*; illus. with photographs by Christopher G. Knight. Morrow, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08575-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08574-1. 64p. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$13.95.

R Gr. 5-7. A full-color photodocumentary takes young readers to the Montana Badlands for a fossil hunt with paleontologist Keith Rigby. Lasky and Knight bring their own children along on this educational jaunt, and the discomforts of camping in a windstorm and hiking in 106-degree weather become as clearly apparent as the excitement of digging up *Triceratops* bones from the Cretaceous Period. There are plenty of scientific facts here, but the main emphasis is on various aspects of an exploratory expedition. With its personal, detailed approach, this is a primetime book for family sharing or kicking off field trips. BH Z

C.U. Paleontology

Leedy, Loreen. *The Furry News*; written and illus. by Loreen Leedy. Holiday House, 1990. ISBN 0-8234-0793-4. 32p. \$13.95.

R Gr. 1-3. Framing basic information about newspaper creation within a context of animals being funny, this is a light and sensible introduction to news gathering and dissemination. Publisher Big Bear assigns everyone a task (editing, reporting, production, advertising, etc.) and they're all soon hard at work. Rabbit writes an editorial ("This Really Stinks") about a new skunk deodorizer; Raccoon interviews a hippo ("So, how long have you been collecting spaghetti?"); two squirrels paste-up the ads ("Fading Stripes? Try Superstripe!"). The large full-color cartoons and silly business reinforce, rather than detract from, the engaging instruction, and an appendix and glossary give step-by-step how-tos. As Big Bear says, "Let's get started!" RS

C.U. Journalism

Lester, Julius, ad. *Further Tales of Uncle Remus: The Misadventures of Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, Brer Wolf, the Doodang and Other Creatures*; illus. by Jerry Pinkney. Dial, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-0611-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-0610-3. [160p]. Library ed. \$14.89; Trade ed. \$15.00. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-7. The cast of characters shifts in this third volume of Julius Lester's series that began with *The Tales of Uncle Remus: The Adventures of Brer Rabbit* (BCCB 6/87) and continued with *More Tales of Uncle Remus* (BCCB 10/88). Here, the other animals dominate, and they are a much grimmer lot than the irrepressible cotton-tailed trickster, who, when he does appear, lightens up the scenery with sly humor. Lester digresses more as narrator, sometimes with quick jabs ("The truth is that folks fool themselves a lot worse than they get fooled by others") and sometimes in longer peregrinations, as in his commentary on time, which fills a paragraph at the start of "Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, and the Chickens." He takes potshots at feminists ("next thing you know, we'll be hearing about the Foxperson and the Lionperson"), whites ("Deep down I think they want to look as good as our black folks do"), and critics: "Somebody come telling me once that it was a story about stealing and that Brer Rabbit wasn't nothing but a liar and a thief and a scoundrel. Them words hurt me in the heart so bad I had to eat a gallon of Haagen-Dazs coffee ice cream before I started feeling better." But mostly he stays in touch with his characters and their fast-paced doings with witty aplomb. Z

Says Brer Turtle in conning Brer Buzzard: "Two heads are better than one, especially when they on different bodies." Says Brer Bullfrog in conspiring against Brer Fox: "It takes two to make a trick. The tricker and the trickee." Lester also keeps some of the rhythmic passages from Joel Chandler Harris' original collection, as in the description of Brer Rabbit's journey to Aunt Mammy-Bammy Big-Money's swamp; there are lots of quotable lines as well as a few forced jokes ("Luciano Pavarotti Sings the Blues"). Storytellers will relish recreations of Taily-po, Brer Wolf and the Pigs, Teenchy-Tiny Duck's Magical Satchel and other variants of familiar tale types from a unique narrator. Pinkney's watercolor compositions have loosened up considerably, with more flexible lines, satisfying tonal blends, and generous textural variations. BH
C.U. Storytelling

Levin, Betty. *Brother Moose*. Greenwillow, 1990. ISBN 0-688-09266-7. [224p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 6-8. Although an appended author's note indicates that this historical novel is set late in the nineteenth century, readers will gather clues from period details rather than the provision of a date. However, clues are amply provided amply, and information about the farming out of homeless children (in the note) serves as substitute for the provision of reference sources. Two such children, capable Nell and retarded Louisa, are, through a chain of circumstances, taken in charge by Joe, a Native American, and his grandson Peter. Together they travel from Canada to Maine and face the natural dangers of the wilderness so that Nell can reach a foster mother who, she hopes, will also take Louisa in. There are moments of contrivance, and there is some uneven pacing, but the combination of the vivid descriptions of the arduous journey, the protective compassion that Nell and Joe feel for Louisa, the development of friendship between Nell and Peter, and above all the depiction of Joe (a man whose charity, common sense, and sensitivity should make readers forgive, as Nell does, the fact that he had killed a man who was responsible for his son's death) as a believably heroic figure, outweigh the minor flaws. ZS

C.U. History—U.S.

D.V. Courage; Kindness

Macaulay, David. *Black and White*; written and illus. by David Macaulay. Houghton, 1990. ISBN 0-395-52151-3. [32p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 3-5. There is something new under the sun, and David Macaulay is just the person to reveal it. In a book with a strong game element that invites sustained reader involvement, the title page bears a warning that begins "This book appears to contain a number of stories that do not necessarily occur at the same time. Then again . . ." What the ingenious author/artist has done is to quarter the pages, with each location assigned a separate story, each illustrated in a different style and palette. One quarter follows a child's train trip, another shows people waiting at a small station, a third is about a family in which the parents are either busy or silly, and the fourth is about some rambling Holstein cows. Gradually, humorously, the stories overlap—a sophisticated concept, and clever execution. ZS

Mango, Karin N. *Just for the Summer*. Zolotow/Harper, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024039-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024038-5. 204p. Library ed. \$13.89; Trade ed. \$13.95.

Ad Gr. 7-9. Living with friends at a New Hampshire summer resort, Jenny (the narrator) is working as a lifeguard and working at becoming friends with the dour boy-next-door. Rollo is a silent loner, a serious musician, and a handsome-but-hostile challenge to Jenny. Yes, this *is* a summer romance, but it's not formulaic; Jenny knows, by the time they say goodbye, that she and Rollo (who has, of course, thawed to the point of enthusiastic reciprocation of Jenny's affection) won't meet again. She also knows, because of her own caring, how much she must have wounded Alex, the boy-back-home, whose deafness had for years been a barrier to their communication, who had made his hopeless love clear, and whose sterling qualities she only now (in absentia) has begun to appreciate. The characterization is effective, and the narration is smooth. What weakens the book are its pace, as Jenny slowly woos and wins Rollo, and the fact that Jenny's change of heart about Alex is not as convincing as perhaps it might have been had he been a participant in the ongoing story. ZS

D.V. Boy-girl relations

Manson, Christopher. *Two Travelers*; written and illus. by Christopher Manson. Holt, 1990. ISBN 0-8050-1214-1. [32p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 5-7 yrs. The two unlikely travelers celebrated here are a Jewish envoy from Charlemagne to the caliph of Baghdad and an elephant sent back as a gift in token of peace. Isaac and Abulabaz are not sure of each other at first, but after crossing an ocean, a desert, and a mountain range, they have become such fast friends that Abulabaz pines in Isaac's absence until Charlemagne makes him the imperial elephant keeper. "The story . . . is mostly true," says an author's note, but the picture-book version does leave a lot of questions dangling. What, for instance, does Abulabaz eat on the trip? Elephants consume 150 to 500 pounds of hay or foliage a day, but there's not a wisp or leaf in sight. The adults here express themselves like children and the elephant thinks like a human, but for all that, the robust color-pencil illustrations are jolly good fun. Their energetic composition combined with a humorous text and unusual historical setting tips the balance toward broad appeal. BH

C.U. History—Medieval

D.V. Pets, love for

Martini, Teri. *The Secret Is Out: True Spy Stories*; illus. by Leslie Morrill. Little, 1990. ISBN 0-316-54864-2. [144p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-7. Retellings of eleven famous spy stories are characterized by suspenseful, unsensational narration and thoughtful considerations of spying's moral complications: "Because we know more about the reasons behind Paul Revere's famous ride than we do about Delilah's situation, it is a little easier to judge him a hero rather than a villain." The stories are arranged in chronological order, including spies of the Revolution and Civil War, spies of WWI (including Mata Hari and T. E. Lawrence; and WWII, including "Major Martin," a decoy corpse designed to fool the Germans into believing the Allies were intending an invasion of Greece rather than Sicily.

The postwar spies covered include Kim Philby, Rudolf Abel, and Gary Powers. Each account is inherently intriguing, but the collection would also provide some co-curricular shadows for the history class (and it is unfortunate that the book lacks an index). A bibliography is included, but it is not always clear which source was used for a particular subject. RS

C.U. History

Masters, Susan Rowan. *The Secret Life of Hubie Hartzel*; illus. by Gretchen Will Mayo. Lippincott, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-397-32400-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-397-32399-9. 137p. Library ed. \$11.89; Trade ed. \$11.95.

Ad Gr. 4-6. Nothing is going right for Hubie Hartzel. He's being picked on by a bully, his beloved cat is getting old, and he may have to repeat fifth grade. Hubie's refuges are food (cookies, mostly) and fantasy ("Lana takes his hands into hers. 'Oh, Hubert, you are so talented. But it's your thoughtfulness I most admire about you'"). "Lana" is Ms. Slomonsky, an art teacher who, though not returning Hubie's tender passion, shows Hubie that he has artistic talent and boosts his confidence. The pace is frenzied and the tone laboriously high-pitched, but this is easy reading about a likable, ordinary boy. Most school-and-family stories feature girls as protagonists; while neither as controlled nor as funny as Blume's books about Fudge, *Hubie Hartzel* addresses similar appeals. RS

McAllister, Angela. *When the Ark Was Full*; illus. by Michaela Bloomfield. Dutton, 1990. ISBN 0-525-44616-8. [32p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

NR 5-8 yrs. Authorities as diverse as Joseph Campbell, the local minister, and any competent children's librarian are agreed on at least one thing: Myths, legends, and folktales survive because at their most organic level they make sense. Noah's Ark is a story that makes a great deal of sense; here's a story that by default shows just how sturdy that old Ark really is. Walt and his sister Wisteria, whales, lived in the days (you remember) when whales lived on land. It wasn't much of a life: "All day long, whales lay around pretending to be hills and swallowing unpleasant people to make themselves useful." But come the Flood, there's no room in the Ark, so the two learn to swim. And they love it. Bloomfield's whales look like bemouthed boulders, large blocks of purple swimming in a garishly crayoned sea. The problem here is not the lighthearted treatment of a Biblical theme (Kathryn Hewitt's *Two by Two* is just one funny variant among many); the problem is the absence of any theme at all, resulting in a story that is coy, witless, and empty. RS

McCully, Emily Arnold. *Grandmas at the Lake*; written and illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Harper, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024127-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024126-8. [64p]. (I Can Read Books). Library ed. \$10.89; Trade ed. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 1-3. In a sequel to *The Grandma Mix-Up*, Pip's two grandmothers and his friend Ski are his companions at a lakeside cabin, rented by Grandma Nan, who has invited Grandma Sal and the boys. The hostess is rigid and highly organized, while plump Grandma Sal is easy-going. Pip and Ski get tired of being told what to do by the Grandmas, especially when the directives contradict each other. They are even more weary of never being allowed to do anything by themselves. While the women are napping, the boys go off in a

Z

rowboat. At first alarmed, the grandmothers concede that the boys are doing a good job and come for a ride, promising to let Pip and Ski play by themselves. The paintings are bright, casual, and funny in cartoon style; the story is nicely gauged for the beginning-to-read audience, with appropriate length and vocabulary. While not outstanding in conception or development, it should please readers who sympathize with the boys' desire for independence and enjoy, vicariously, the pleasure of having achievement recognized. ZS

C.U. Reading, beginning

D.V. Self-reliance

McKissack, Patricia. *Taking a Stand against Racism*; by Patricia and Fredrick McKissack. Watts, 1990. ISBN 0-531-10924-0. 157p. illus. with photographs. (Taking a Stand). \$13.40.

R Gr. 7-12. While the cover pictures four hands colored to represent the major racial groups, this book is primarily concerned with discrimination in regard to black Americans. This is still a large topic for any single book, and many of the topics covered, *Brown v. Board of Education*, for example, are given sketchy treatment. On the whole, however, the McKissacks have provided a cogent and provocative discussion of racism and civil rights from sociological, historical, legal, and personal perspectives. Students will particularly appreciate the portraits of young activists such as Portland Birchfield, who wrote a play about racism in her high school, and George Sakaguchi, who recalls his internment at age seventeen in a U.S. concentration camp for Japanese Americans. Advice on getting involved in civil rights issues, including information on national organizations, is helpful, and could have been expanded. A bit too textbookish in style, organization, and coverage to encourage independent reading, this will still be a useful primer for social studies classes. Illustrated with photographs (many of them dramatic), the book is unevenly documented but includes a bibliography, index, and directory of organizations. RS

C.U. Social studies

D.V. Interracial understanding

McMillan, Bruce. *One Sun: A Book of Terse Verse*; written and illus. with photographs by Bruce McMillan. Holiday House, 1990. ISBN 0-8234-0810-8. 32p. \$14.95.

R* 4-7 yrs. Warning: this book may be contagious and should be considered, at the very least, catching. Well, catchy, anyway. Each of fourteen rhyming phrases faces a full-page color photo of an engaging boy playing at the beach. The front cover starts the game (One Sun) and the back cover (Blue View) extends it. Between them comes a parade: *Sand Hand, Lone Stone, Snail Trail, Six Sticks, Small Ball, Wet Pet, Tan Man, Neat Seat, Stuck Truck, Whale Pail, Scoop Group, Round Mound, Pink Drink, and White Kite*, all so naturally pictured that there's not a trace of cuteness in any of the scenes of play among children who are Asian, black, and white. They all look suitably wet and sandy to offset the glamorous unlitte red glitter of the ocean front. One page not only leads you speeding to another, but anyone listening will keep going after the book is over. Fun won! BH

C.U. Language arts

D.V. Imaginative powers

Naidoo, Beverley. *Chain of Fire*; illus. by Eric Velasquez. Lippincott, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-397-32427-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-397-32426-X. 242p. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95.

Ad Gr. 5-9. Like *Journey to Jo'burg* (BCCB 5/86) this sequel effectively presents an anti-apartheid manifesto at the expense of fictional crafting. When the authorities decide that Naledi's village is to be destroyed and its inhabitants relocated to the "homeland" of Bophuthatswana, Naledi, inspired by fellow student Taolo, joins in a secret resistance movement. The courage of the students is admirable, and, like the inevitable violence that follows their peaceful demonstrations, entirely realistic. The characters, however, are barely developed, with polarized typecasting (good/bad, victim/oppressor) substituted for individualized credibility. Both the characters and the authorial voice too often speak in slogans clear and true in themselves, but not as dramatically involving as would be action less trammled by exposition. American young people will nevertheless be compelled by this story of student heroism, which has a brave and urgent core revealed despite its author's didactic gloss. RS
C.U. Social studies
D.V. Devotion to a cause

Parker, Nancy Winslow. *Frogs, Toads, Lizards, and Salamanders*; by Nancy Winslow Parker and Joan Richards Wright; illus. by Nancy Winslow Parker. Greenwillow, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08681-0; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08680-2. 48p. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$13.95.

R 5-8 yrs. On the book's rectos, each of four representatives from four title reptiles gets a paragraph of description under a large, carefully captioned color-pencil drawing. Versos depict children relating to the various species under a silly verse in large print ("Onto Patty's pie a la mode/ hopped a large American Toad"). The verses and information appeal to different age levels, but the difference is not insurmountable. A picture glossary gives clear illustrations of how frogs and toads develop from eggs to tadpoles to adults (including a timetable), of frog or toad and lizard anatomical cross-sections, and of the scalation of lizards. A regular glossary, range maps, scientific classification chart, and bibliography of books useful to children are also appended. The blend of humorous pictures and factual accuracy will make this most useful as a book shared aloud with young listeners interested in science. They can enjoy the view while hearing the hard-core data. BH
C.U. Zoology

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. *How Smart Are Animals?* Harcourt, 1990. ISBN 0-15-236770-5. [208p.] illus. with photographs. \$16.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-12. Patent's discussion of kinds, degrees, and definitions of intelligence in animals is scrupulously paralleled by an analysis of the scientific methodologies used by animal researchers. She describes both laboratory experiments and ethological observation of insects, birds, and mammals, persistently reminding readers that all species are adapted to their own circumstances. "Since the lives of animals are so different from ours, we can't apply human standards to them. We must develop different ideas of what animal intelligence might be." The experiments described are intriguing, and include both familiar projects, such as Patterson's work with Koko the gorilla, and some

lesser-known ones, such as Pepperberg's teaching shapes and colors to Alex the parrot. "When he doesn't want to continue a series of experiments he says 'No,' and gets a rest from working." Some of the recounting is overly-detailed (and could use clarifying illustrations), but Patent always provides a careful commentary on what each experiment proves and what remains speculation. A lot depends, she suggests, on what we mean by intelligence, illuminating not only the ways animals think, but the way humans think about animals and about themselves. Notes, glossary, bibliography and index are all included. RS
D.V. Animals, respect for

Pershall, Mary K. *You Take the High Road*. Dial, 1990. ISBN 0-8037-0700-2. 245p. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. 7-10. Sam is thirteen when her mother unexpectedly becomes pregnant, and she wonders if the real reason Mom decides to have the baby is to be able to stay at home and write full-time. While Sam, her mother, and her father have varying degrees of ambivalence toward the impending event, all love baby Nicholas and are equally devastated by his accidental death a year and a half later. Sam's present-tense narration of the grief, anger, and disruption that follow Nicholas' death is raw and real but static, lacking the narrative structure and drive that would engender the reader's empathy. Sam's eventual recovery is occasioned by a convenient device well-worn in YA fiction: an all-wise English teacher who gives up his lunch hour to act as amateur psychiatrist. Best are the bitter scenes of argument between Sam and her mother, and between the parents themselves. Mom's desolation and feelings of responsibility for the death are in fact more affecting than Sam's experience, perhaps because the third-person portrait affords some poignant distance. The observed is often more revealing than the confessed—a maxim YA narrators would do well to remember. RS

D.V. Death, adjustment to; Mother-daughter relations

Putnam, Alice. *Westering*. Lodestar, 1990. ISBN 0-525-67299-0. 90p. \$12.95.

Ad Gr. 4-6. Journeying to an Oregon homestead in 1850, eleven-year-old Jason knows that Pa won't welcome the stray dog who has followed him back to the wagon train when they stopped to rest in a town. While this is adequate in its period details and has enough vitality in its plot to appeal to readers, it is formulaic in its basic structure. Few readers, however, will be totally surprised when the disappearance of Jason's little sister and the dog's role in finding her results in Ma saying "We owe a lot to that dog, Henry," and her hitherto-adamant husband answering, "I reckon we do." ZS

Richemont, Enid. *The Time Tree*. Little, 1990. ISBN 0-316-74452-2. [96p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-7. After days of feeling watched as they sit in the branches of their favorite tree, Joanna and Rachel, two London schoolgirls, encounter a silent and oddly dressed girl. Anne lives in the time when the great tree was only a sapling, and her deafness has kept her from intelligible speech and caused her Elizabethan contemporaries to think her a freak and a half-wit. Over several visits, the modern girls befriend stubborn, smart Anne and teach her to write, accepting her in a way her own contemporaries never have. The

narration is understated, impressionistic in style as well as in its fascination with light and shadow that enhances the atmosphere but never interferes with the story. The tone falters occasionally (particularly in the few scenes set in Anne's time) but otherwise deftly encourages the willing suspension of disbelief, and the mood is so effective that the absence of explanation for Anne's time-traveling ability seems unimportant. Not only does Richemont paint an alluring picture of the camaraderie of three girls among the summer leaves, she skillfully counterpoints it with an undertone (reminiscent of *Tuck Everlasting*) of gentle and regretful wisdom about the evanescence of all friendship in the face of time.
DS

D.V. Friendship values

Rogers, Paul. *What Will the Weather Be Like Today?*; illus. by Kazuko Greenwillow, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08951-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08950-X. 32p. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$13.95.

Ad 3-5 yrs. A rhyming text of speculation about the day's weather provides a frame for panoramas made of paper collage. The crisply detailed, multi-colored illustrations include scenes of outdoor activities, such as skiing and woodchopping, and pastoral portraits of wild animals in their natural habitats. As the text introduces different kinds of weather, Kazuko takes the opportunity to create a unique sky on each page. The text is sometimes too cute ("... you can hear all the birds and the animals say/ 'What will the weather be like today?'" and sometimes clever ("The white cockatoo likes it steamy and hot/ The mole doesn't know if it's raining or not"). The brightly colored illustrations are attractive, the one exception being a combination carnival/rainbow scene, in which the many colors and patterns are garish and jarring. KP

Ross, Tony. *The Treasure of Cozy Cove*; written and illus. by Tony Ross. Farrar, 1990. ISBN 0-374-37744-8. 26p. \$12.95.

R 5-8 yrs. Saved from drowning by "Cap'n Claws," two wide-eyed kittens soon find themselves in an exciting new world of pirates, treasure, and perilous adventure. Danger threatens from all sides, including Tiddles 'Awkins ("the baddest badcat in the Drain"), "the big fish," and what looks like someone who just wants to play: "Dog ho!" The writing bobs along with just enough ahoy-me-heartiness, and the crayoned cartoons have both humor and shadows, splashed with energy and sufficient sophistication to keep both ends of the picture book set afloat and amused. RS

Sattler, Helen Roney. *Giraffes, the Sentinels of the Savannas*; illus. by Christopher Santoro. Lothrop, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08285-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08284-X. 80p. Library ed. \$14.88; Trade ed. \$14.95.

R Gr. 4-6. In a text that is logically arranged and clearly written, Sattler presents a range of information that has both breadth and depth. She describes species (including some that are now extinct), their habits and habitats, and the behavior that has led to giraffes being called the "gentle giants" of the animal world. Although there is an occasional need for definition ("ruminant" is used several times before it is obliquely explained), the text is almost always comprehensible and is as admirable for its accuracy as for its narrative quality. Sattler includes a discussion of the dwindling numbers of giraffes (decimated by a

Z

loss of available territory and, to a lesser extent, by hunters who are desperately seeking food). Profusely illustrated with nicely detailed drawings, the book closes with a glossary of giraffes (like the text and its illustrations, this includes extinct species) and a chart and classification system as well as a bibliography and a relative index. ZS

C.U. Science

Scarboro, Elizabeth. *The Secret Language of the SB*. Viking, 1990. ISBN 0-670-83087-9. [120p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-7. Adam enjoys being an only child. Thus, he doesn't take kindly to the news that Susan, a Taiwanese orphan and temporary charge of his social worker mother, is coming to live with them for an unspecified period of time. For one thing, he questions his mother's motives: "This was probably just an excuse so she could take care of a girl. Maybe she wanted a daughter all along." Much to his relief, Adam finds that Susan is no smirking parent pleaser, but a terrific soccer player, a talented artist, and best of all, a kindred spirit who knows how to keep a secret. Before they get to the secret sharing stage, Scarboro takes her characters through a series of low-key, trust-building encounters. She convincingly portrays the growing chemistry between them, which, though not as intense, is similar to that of Jess and Leslie in Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia*. Susan's secret, a paralyzing fear of reading out loud in class, and Adam's reaction to it, are handled with sympathetic understatement: "Her eyes looked blacker than they usually looked, and the corners of her mouth were turned down. Adam wished there were some way to make her stop looking like that every time she thought about reading." Adam never tells Susan about his secret code but the two develop their own language of communication, adeptly escaping parental notice. While the frequent references to television programs may date the book, the use of TV as a point of communication between the two main characters is a fresh image in this promising first effort. Z

RAS

D.V. Friendship values

Shalant, Phyllis. *The Transformation of Faith Futterman*. Dutton, 1990. ISBN 0-525-44570-6. 138p. \$13.95.

R Gr. 5-8. Led by Randi Martin ("thin, short, and gray-eyed, with blond hair that she wore in an impossibly smooth ponytail"), Suzanne, Rachel, and Charlie are self-styled "Insiders." The impossibly eager Faith Futterman ("Once she even reminded Mrs. Hayes that she had forgotten to assign homework") is, to recall Randi's phrase, a "Nearly Nerd." Assigned a flute duet for the spring concert, Suzanne and Faith become friends, sort of, until a transformed Faith breezily threatens Suzanne's place in Randi's clique. Suzanne's narration of sixth-grade social vicissitudes has a sharp slant that sets this book above the chatty conventions of the usual school story. The characters are smoothly engaging and naturally revealed, as when Charlie tells Suzanne her reasons for so desperately wanting to be an Insider: "At home we spoke Vietnamese. At school everyone spoke English. Half the time, I didn't understand the names the kids called me." This is the best kind of popular realism, informing good storytelling with a friendly understanding of the everyday events and emotions that kids find important. RS

D.V. Friendship values

Shaw, Murray, ad. *Match Wits with Sherlock Holmes: The Adventure of Black Peter; The "Gloria Scott"*; illus. by George Overlie. Carolrhoda, 1990. ISBN 0-87614-385-0. 40p. (Match Wits with Sherlock Holmes). \$9.95.

M Gr. 4-6. Adapting two Sherlock Holmes stories in each of four volumes of the "Match Wits with Sherlock Holmes" series, Shaw does an adequate job of compressing the original plot so that the narration is cohesive. However, brevity is not the soul of wit or style, for neither the style of Doyle nor the cumulation of telling details are possible in a dozen or so pages. The appended "Clues that led to the solution of . . ." each story are meant to give the reader insight into Holmes' methods, but they are often mere repetitions of what has already been stated in the adaptation. ZS

C.U. Reading, reluctant

Shura, Mary Francis. *Polly Panic*. Putnam, 1990. ISBN 0-399-22214-6. [128p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 4-7. Polly's sixth grade year is not starting as she planned: instead of being the oldest grade in the lower school (where, according to her best friend Staci, "It's up to us to set an example for those little kids") her class is forced by overcrowding to be instead the youngest in junior high. A newly-cool Staci has returned from her vacation in California scornful of old friendships, leaving Polly panicked and alone until a new boy, Andrew McCoy, befriends her and she gradually gains confidence. Flashbacks to earlier traumas or background events are distracting and chronologically confusing, and the bases of Polly's friendships with Andrew, an elderly neighbor, and even Staci are as unclear as her eventual showdown with Staci is implausible. Polly herself, however, is a believable and endearing character, a prototypical "good kid," and her pre-teen awkwardness and shyness are authentically depicted; the tale of her gradual blossoming makes for pleasurable reading. DS

D.V. Friendship values

Simon, Seymour. *New Questions and Answers about the Dinosaurs*; illus. by Jennifer Dewey. Morrow, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08196-7; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08195-9. 48p. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$13.95.

R Gr. 4-6. While the questions that Simon poses are not grouped under topics or arranged in a discernible pattern, it is clear, looking over the text, that he has moved from general considerations like classification and descriptions of kinds of dinosaurs to the introduction of individual species or distinctive traits. He also deftly incorporates newly discovered facts about dinosaur habits or newly established corrections of erroneous details that were previously accepted as fact—such as the canard that all dinosaurs were without intelligence. The writing is clear and direct; the crayon drawings have accurate details and soft texture. The index includes phonetic pronunciation. ZS

C.U. Science

Sonnenmark, Laura A. *Something's Rotten in the State of Maryland*. Scholastic, 1990. ISBN 0-590-42876-4. [192p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-10. When her class assignment, a modern rewriting of *Hamlet*, is chosen for the school play, Marie Valpacchio finds herself thrust into

an unwelcome spotlight. Few people, including her jock boyfriend Brian, realize that underneath a protective layer of mediocrity, Marie conceals a lively intellect. Only surly Simon, the play's director, who is secretly in love with Marie, suspects she is much brighter than she lets on. Determined to keep Simon from rewriting her play ("I knew I'd scratch his eyes out before I'd let him touch one word"), Marie soon finds herself falling in love with him. Yes, the plot is as predictable as it sounds, except that it takes Marie several months to realize that her jock boyfriend is an insensitive clod. Even then, she agonizes over killing their relationship because she hates scenes. This first novel suffers from several clichés—cheerleaders named Ashley, artsy-types named Sabrina—and from psychologizing: "I'm just thinking you may be outgrowing Brian. You know you're changing, expanding your horizons, but your relationship is stagnating." However, the abundant dialogue and self-deprecating humor succeed in holding the reader's interest, while the theme, "to thine own self be true," is commendable if unoriginal. RAS

D.V. Boy-girl relations

Stangl, Jean. *Crystals and Crystal Gardens You Can Grow*. Watts, 1990. ISBN 0-531-10889-9. 64p. illus. with photographs. (First Books). \$10.90.

R Gr. 3-5. With full-color photographs, black-and-white diagrams, clear explanatory background on crystal formations, and easy directions for experiments, this will meet a real need in every classroom and public library collection. Although the words *magic* and *mystery* are used, they're carefully qualified by scientific facts: crystal gardens don't even grow; "minerals can change, but only living things—plants and animals—actually grow . . . what you saw was a process of dissolving, absorbing, evaporating, and crystallizing." Periodic questions stimulate observant readers to try for answers on their own. A list of children's books for further reading and an index increase the usefulness of a book to be sure and have on hand for school or home science projects. BH C.U. Geology

Stanley, Diane. *Fortune*; written and illus. by Diane Stanley. Morrow, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07211-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07210-0. 32p. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95.

Ad Gr. K-3. With no source note to the contrary, this seems to be an original story in the "folk-like" tradition. A young Persian man goes off to seek his fortune, which he finds in the form of a docile, dancing tiger offered to him by a mysterious woman. Omar makes his fortune by exhibiting Fortune (as he names the tiger), and disdaining his girl-next-door first love ("I'm sure you can see that it can never work out between us") seeks the hand of a princess. The solution, in which all are restored to their various high and humble places, involves both an interior tale and a "Beauty and the Beast" switch on the part of the tiger, conclusions which seem contrived rather than inevitable. The illustrations are an ornate tribute to the traditions of Persian miniatures, with elaborate borders and patterns framing iconographically stylized figures. While the rich colors and intricate designs have an innate eye appeal, the hyperstylization may keep some young lookers-on at an emotional distance. RS

Stevenson, Laura. *Happily After All*. Houghton, 1990. ISBN 0-395-50216-0. 252p. \$13.95.

R Gr. 5-7. A first novel with vividly realized characters and settings, this recounts ten-year-old Rebecca Davidson's traumatic move from California, where she lived with her wealthy father before his death, to her mother's rough farm in Vermont. Becca's adjustment involves learning about Mr. Davidson's bitter machinations as the lawyer in his own child's custody case, through which he prevented Becca's mother from any contact with the child. Eventually Becca perceives her beloved father's adoration as having been a form of imprisonment, but the process is a credibly slow one, and along the way readers will make the acquaintance of a likable cast, including a neighboring orphan raised by grandparents and a school newcomer whose disappearance from his foster home provides a suspenseful subplot. Stevenson occasionally feels compelled to tell what she more effectively shows ("Why couldn't things be nice and simple and always the same, the way they'd been in California when there was only Dad and his princess?"), and the ending is unnecessarily sweetened by a surprise decision on the part of Becca's mother's lawyer, of whom they are both fond, to move east. On balance, however, the story is engrossing, and the protagonist's key acquisition of a pony and puppy will offer an extra dimension to animal lovers. BH

D.V. Death, adjustment to; Divorce, adjustment to; Mother-daughter relations

Walter, Mildred Pitts. *Two and Too Much*; illus. by Pat Cummings. Bradbury, 1990. ISBN 0-02-792290-1. 32p. \$12.95.

R 4-7 yrs. Seven-year-old Brandon rapidly regrets his generous offer to look after two-year-old Gina so that their mother can prepare for a party. Gina, whose favorite word is "no," gets into Mama's makeup ("I pretty?"), knocks down Brandon's toy garage, and pours milk into the jelly. All this appealing mayhem is brightly captured in Cummings' day-glowing, firmly lined illustrations that give graphic weight to the fuzz exploding from the vacuum cleaner, pink powder liberally scattered, and other assorted solids and liquids that fly through the air. Both pictures and text capture family devotion as well as disaster. Although this isn't a new story, it's an ever-appealing one, and kids will find this black family a pleasure to know. RS

D.V. Brothers-sisters

Woolf, Felicity. *Picture This: A First Introduction to Paintings*. Doubleday, 1990. Library ed. ISBN 0-385-41136-7; Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-41135-9. 40p. illus. with photographs. Library ed. \$15.99; Trade ed. \$14.95.

R Gr. 4-7. In a quick survey of painting from 1400 to 1952, Woolf offers straightforward explanatory accompaniments to a selective group of acceptable reproductions. These include an illuminated manuscript, an altarpiece, a Renaissance fresco by Michelangelo and one of Titian's classical mythology compositions, several portraits and self-portraits from the 17th and 18th centuries (Rubens, Rembrandt, Hobbema, Vermeer, Boucher, Chardin), a seascape and landscape by Turner, contrasting versions of Ophelia by Millais and Redon, Picasso's *Weeping Woman*, examples of the Impressionists (Morisot, Renoir, Degas, van Gogh) and Surrealists (Ernst, Dali), and abstract action artist Pollock. Woolf urges young viewers to look closely, compare, and ask questions. A glossary explains boldface terms in the text, a gallery list cites

locations of the original paintings, and an index facilitates research for school reports. An introduction explains away the skewed gender representation: “the women who worked as artists usually painted subjects such as flowers or made handwork, such as embroidery, and these types of paintings and crafts have been judged unimportant by historians.” It would have been refreshing for Woolf to break the mold, but this serves its stated function as a traditional overview. BH C.U. Art appreciation

Worley, Daryle. *Billy and the Christmas Present*; ISBN 0-924067-01-2. *Billy and the Chocolate Chip Cookies*; ISBN 0-924067-02-0. Each book: illus. by John Daab and Ron Wennekes. Tyke, 1990. [32p]. \$9.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M 3-6 yrs. Second and third in a series designed to address Plato’s seven cardinal virtues, *Christmas* (Hope) and *Chocolate Chip* (Love) share the literary virtue of simplicity but lack those of dramatic tension and effective resolution. In *Christmas*, Billy’s parents have promised him a toy boat; come the morn, though, there’s no boat under the tree. The last page shows that, too large to go under the tree, it’s in the kitchen. In the other book, Billy’s been waiting and waiting for the chocolate chip cookies to come out of the oven ever since his mother promised him two; come the cookies, he gives one of his two to her. *Billy and the Attic Adventure* (BCCB 7/89) was a suspenseful and subtle demonstration of Faith; these two are placid, oblique, and attenuated. Hazy pencil drawings are simple and attractive, but they don’t have enough story to illustrate. RS

Yepsen, Roger. *Smarten Up!*; written and illus. by Roger Yepsen. Little, 1990. ISBN 0-316-96864-1. [128p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-10. Filled with anecdotes, tips, experiments, and various odd bits, this is an engagingly chatty survey of the powers of the human brain. Much of the information is useful—how to remember facts for tests, how to sleep well, what to eat for alertness—and much more of it is fun: how thunderstorms clear the head, what colors encourage certain moods, why “more lefties wear sweaters to their birthday parties.” Experiments for determining brain hemisphere dominance, charting your “internal clock,” and increasing creativity are just strange enough to be inviting, as are the instructions for biofeedback and meditation. Some questions go begging: why isn’t green mentioned in the section on mood and color? Why isn’t marijuana discussed in the chapter on drugs? Too, some of the facts seem highly speculative (and not always documented), as in the chart demonstrating that people born in January tend to be either smarter or more schizophrenic than most. In all, though, this has a let’s-take-a-look spirit that’s infectious. And if not? “If you decide to toss this book into the wastebasket, your right hemisphere will judge its path through the air and guide you in making a successful launch.” RS C.U. Physiology

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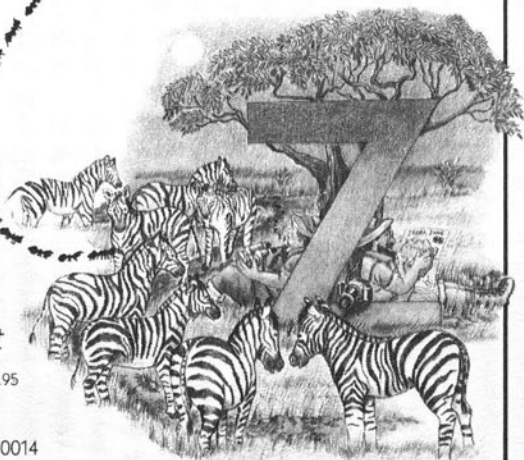
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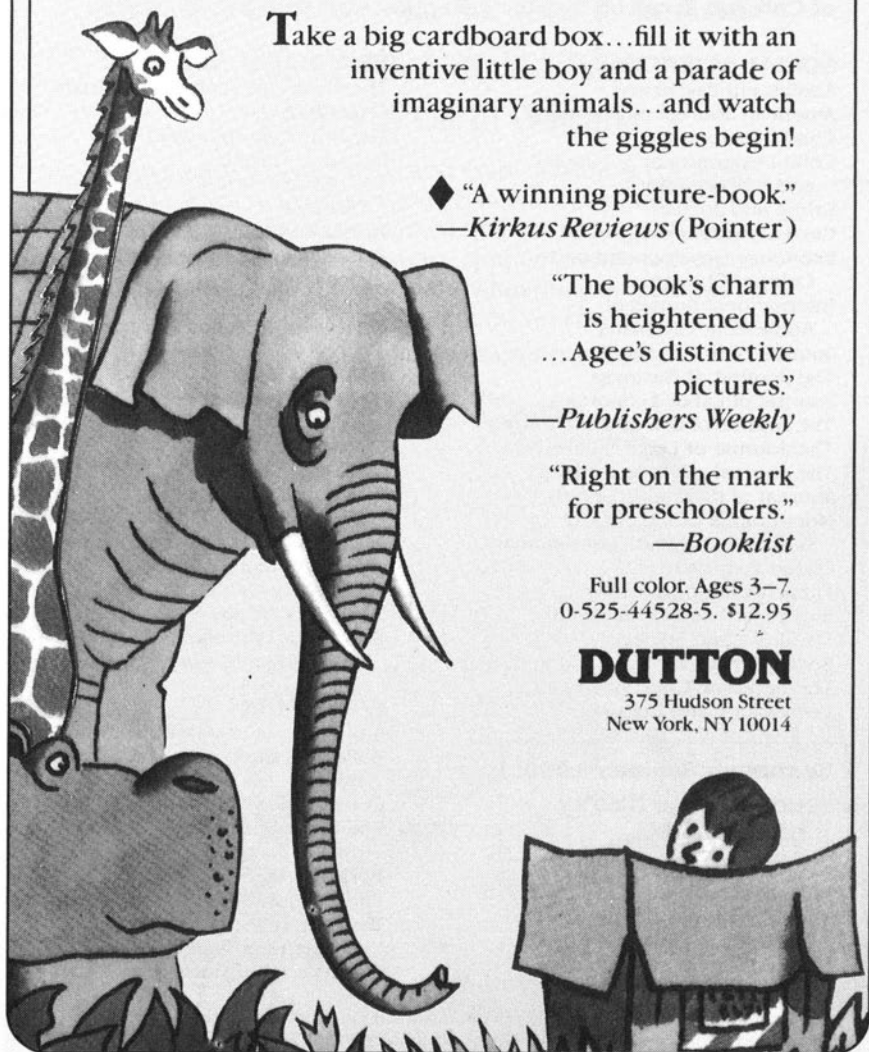
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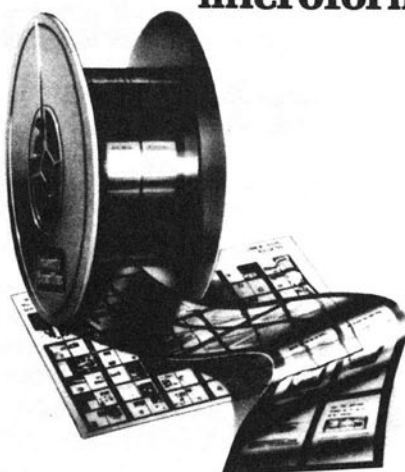
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Freedman, Barbara. *Draw Me A Story, Volume I*. Feathered Nest Productions, 1989. 56p. \$8.95.

Hammond, Susie. "Children's Small Press Publishing." *Publisher's Weekly*, February 23, 1990.

Hauser, Jill Frankel. *Learning and Loving to Read*. Learning Excellence Press, 1990. 112p. \$12.95

Hobbs, Anne Stevenson, comp. *Beatrix Potter's Art: Paintings and Drawings*; selected and introduced by Anne Stevenson Hobbs. Warne, 1990. 192p. \$24.95.

Langerman, Deborah. "Books & Boys: Gender Preferences and Book Selection," *School Library Journal*, March, 1990.

Polette, Nancy. *Whole Language in Action*. Book Lures, 1990. 128p. \$12.95.

Purves, Alan C., Theresa Rogers, and Anna O. Soter. *How Porcupines Make Love II: Teaching a Response-Centered Curriculum*. Longman, 1990. 256p.

Reetz, Marianne, comp. *International Periodicals: the IYL Guide to Professional Periodicals in Children's Literature*. 2nd edition. International Youth Library, 1990. 68p. Paper ed. DM 5 + postage to be paid by international reply coupons. Order from IYL, Schloss Blutenburg, D-8000 München 60, West Germany.

Wilson, Mary E. *Representing Children's Book Characters*. Scarecrow Press, 1989. 182p. \$25.00.

Winkel, Lois, ed. *The Elementary School Library Collection: A Guide to Books and Other Media*. 17th ed. Brodart, 1990. 1149p. \$99.95.

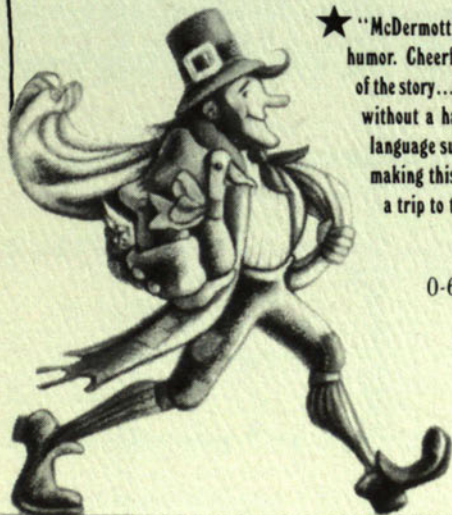
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