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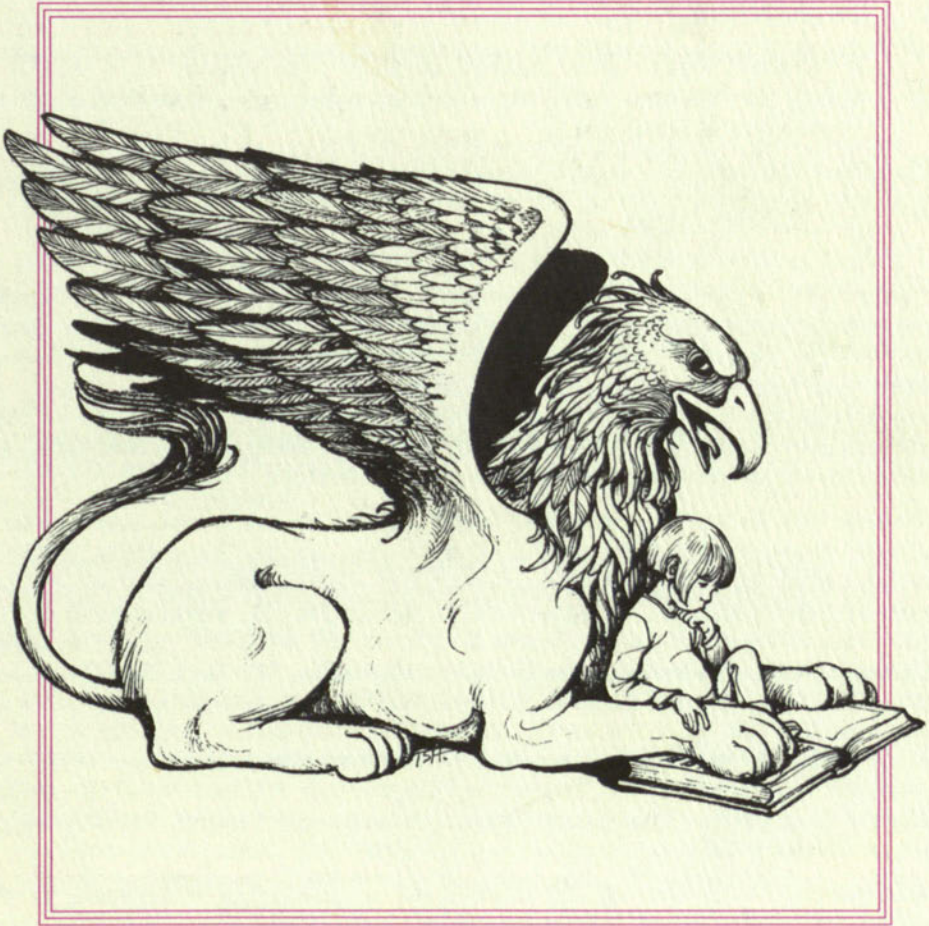


# THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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JULY/AUGUST 1991 VOLUME 44 NUMBER 11



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

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  
CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Volume 44

JULY/AUGUST, 1991

Number 11

*New Titles for Children and Young People*

Adler, C.S. *Mismatched Summer*. Putnam, 1991. ISBN 0-399-21776-2. 174p. \$14.95.

R      *Gr. 5-8.*      Neither Micale nor Meg is happy when their mothers arrange for the two girls to spend the summer together with Meg's mother in a Cape Cod cottage. Micale is notorious for her pranks and backtalk; Meg is responsible, organized, and uptight. Micale's family is well-off but emotionally cool; Meg's mother is trying to survive a scandal involving her ex-boyfriend. That the two twelve-year-olds change each other in various beneficent ways is to be expected, but that kind of predictability in this kind of book is cozy rather than boring. The girls take turns telling the story, and while their voices are distinct, so much of the book is conversations between the two that the matter of who is narrating is sometimes confusing. No matter—it's a nice summer story, with lots of appeal in its focus on friendship and squabbling, and its background of boys and the beach. RS  
D.V. Friendship values

Adoff, Arnold. *Hard to Be Six*; illus. by Cheryl Hanna. Lothrop, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-09579-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-09013-3. 34p. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95.

R      *5-7 yrs.*      This prose poem opens with the 6-year-old narrator's complaint on his sister's tenth birthday. "I run my fastest in the games, and still end: last." Throughout the subsequent pages, he strains to keep up, encouraged by his supportive family—a sister who comforts him after he crashes her new bike, a mother who shows him how fast his feet are growing, a father who serves him big burgers and takes him on the carousel, a grandmother who expresses pride in him. Both the words and the colors in the full-page paintings that face every verso of text are mellifluously warm. The compositions have a photographic quality with some stiffness in the drafting of the figures, but they also feature bold shapes that will project well in a read-aloud situation, where the internal rhyme will give a sense of wordplay and the bi-racial family image will prove a further advantage. BH  
C.U. Reading aloud  
D.V. Growing up

Archer, Jules. *Earthquake!* Lucas•Evans/Crestwood House, 1991. ISBN 0-89686-593-2. 48p. illus. and with photographs. (Nature's Disasters). \$10.95.

R Gr. 4-6. One of six books in the publisher's "Nature's Disasters" series, *Earthquake!* follows the series formula of discussing what an earthquake is, how it happens, how destructive it can be, what warning systems exist, and how people can best cope with this particular disaster. The text is adequately organized and capably written by Archer's practiced hand; it is liberally illustrated with photographs and diagrams, some of which are not clear or not clearly labeled. The other books (published at the same time) deal with hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, volcanic eruption, and avalanches. Like the book on earthquakes, the others are sprinkled with dramatic, often tragic, incidents; each volume concludes with a glossary, a brief bibliography, an index, and a list of famous earthquakes or other disasters. ZS

C.U. Geology

Barker, Dan. *Maybe Yes, Maybe No: A Guide for Young Skeptics*; illus. by Brian Strassburg. Prometheus Books, 1991. Paper ed. ISBN 0-87975-607-1. 80p. Paper ed. \$12.95.

R Gr. 4-7. Cartoon-style illustrations show Andrea and her friends to be about age ten, and it is partly through their conversation (in boxed frames) that the story is carried. The narrative is a thin support for Barker's description of how skeptics reason; it begins with a report that somebody's sister has seen a ghost, whereupon Andrea uses logical questions to establish the fact that there is no proof of this encounter. The text wanders from the story to establish methodology and criteria for rational and scientific thought, but the book should prove useful despite this, since it does confront (rare in books for children) the subject of fuzzy thinking and how to combat it. ZS

C.U. Science

Beaude, Pierre-Marie. *The Book of Creation*; tr. by Andrew Clements; illus. by Georges Lemoine. Picture Book Studio, 1991. ISBN 0-88708-141-X. [48p]. \$16.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-. Illustrated with semi-abstracted landscapes and iconographic figures, this extended gloss on the Biblical story of creation is cast as a sequence of stories told twenty-five centuries ago by a Canaanite shepherd to his son. The theology is orthodox ("God alone saw that first morning") but homely ("I myself believe that God leaned over and hugged the earth"), and its contemporary concerns arise naturally from the ancient context: "If we ever came to the point of turning our backs on the animals, then we would be losing forever a part of ourselves, a hidden place within us where we could never again feel at home." Clements' translation of the original French text is lyrically cadenced, encouraging the possibility of an unusual read-aloud for both church and home. Lemoine's watercolor paintings range from strange landscapes of the new world to a haunting portrait of the first man arising from the earth: "Now is the time for you to hear how God became the potter." The book's design is clean and open; the mysterious full-page paintings make an involving complement to the facing text. Notes by the author and illustrator are appended.

RS

C.U. Religious education

Beller, Susan Provost. *Cadets at War: The True Story of Teenage Heroism at the Battle of New Market*. Shoe Tree Press, 1991. ISBN 1-55870-196-6. 95p. illus. with photographs. \$9.95.

Ad Gr. 5-7. In a carefully detailed account that has more tedious facts than historical flow, Beller describes the battle of New Market, in which young cadets of the Virginia Military Institute took part in 1864. They were enlisted because the Union troops outnumbered the Confederate troops—and they helped win the battle for the South. This is primarily a chronological description, but it is frequently interrupted by brief biographies of individual cadets. The writing style is plodding, the book an amalgam of military fervor and romanticizing of war. Illustrated with reprints of old photographs and other contemporary material, the text gives evidence of the author's research but is not likely to have broad appeal. Index, notes, and sources are appended. ZS  
C.U. History—U.S.

Bryan, Ashley, comp. *All Night, All Day*; musical arrangements by David Manning Thomas; comp. and illus. by Ashley Bryan. Atheneum, 1991. ISBN 0-689-31662-3. 48p. \$14.95.

R 5-8 yrs. In a collection of twenty spirituals, each double-spread of two selections alternates with lavish, stained-glass-like paintings that take their motifs from the songs. The selections include both the familiar ("O When the Saints Go Marching In," "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands") and the less-known ("Somebody's Knocking at Your Door," "Great Big Stars"); the arrangements are of easy to intermediate difficulty and always soundly scored. Tempo suggestions aren't given for all the songs and some metronome markings are inconsistent, but variation and improvisation are in any case inherent in the form. It's too bad there aren't any sources or historical notes beyond a brief anecdotal afterword. RS  
C.U. Music

Burgess, Barbara Hood. *Oren Bell*. Delacorte, 1991. ISBN 0-385-30325-4. 182p. \$15.00.

R Gr. 5-8. It's actually Oren Bell's twin sister Latonya who grabs the attention in this streetwise novel; she's smart and tough and as entrancingly overbearing as Harriet the Spy. Latonya believes the deserted house next door is cursed; she orders Oren and their younger sister Brenda to "reverse curse" by reciting an incantation, and walking past it backwards, eyes closed. Brenda, "a child genius and weird in more ways than one," gives an impressive performance, but Oren just unwillingly mumbles—and peeks. Whether it's Oren's fault or not, everything—too much—starts to go wrong: drug pushing, ghosts, fires, murder, cat cancer . . . the plot rapidly piles up and overwhelms the undeniably vivid and intriguing characters. Latonya is a bossy, fearless big sister (notwithstanding the fact that Oren's an hour older); Brenda is as weird as Oren says ("All of our pictures will be of sad, sunken, or sinking ships," she declares, taking out her crayons) and Oren is a good-natured but gullible kid with whom readers will empathize. The point-of-view is basically Oren's, but there are some awkward and confusing shifts to other perspectives. Despite the plot problems and some occasionally rough writing, this first novel has plenty of

energy and a robust black cast, through whom Burgess demonstrates an exceptionally good ear for dialogue. RS

D.V. Brothers-sisters

Cannon, Bettie. *Begin the World Again*. Scribner's, 1991. ISBN 0-684-19292-6. 181p. \$13.95.

R Gr. 7-10. Lake has spent all of her sixteen years growing up in various counterculture refuges, and while she loves the communal "family" of Barataria Farm, she wants privacy, her own clothes, and a job in town. The arrival of Sundog, a charismatic vagabond, complicates her wishes with romantic stirrings. When Sundog turns out to be a thief and a trickster and when Lake's mother flees the farm for a chance at a singing career, Lake is stymied. Although this is stronger as a portrait than as a story, the picture of Lake—and of the Baratarian community—is thorough, subtle, and involving. Unlike many YA novels about the '60's legacy, this one, set in 1979, doesn't rely on easy clichés about feckless fathers and spaced-out moms: Barataria is certainly livable, but not for everybody. Lake leaves to live with her grandmother, another complicated character, and begins to understand her mother as well as herself. While the setting and circumstances are out of the ordinary, many readers will see themselves in this quiet novel of a girl growing up. RS

D.V. Parent-child relations

Cosgrove, Brian. *Weather*. Knopf, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-679-90784-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-80784-5. 64p. illus. with photographs. Library ed. \$15.99; Trade ed. \$15.00.

Ad Gr. 6-9. Like all the books in the Eyewitness series, *Weather* is attractively and copiously illustrated with full-color photos dramatically laid-out across double-page spreads. Unfortunately, appearance takes precedence over substance here, as the eye-catching format proves confusing and poorly organized upon examination. Most of the text is captions, and it is not always clear which caption is tied to which picture. The order of topics is random (A sunny day, Frost and ice, Water in the air, The birth of a cloud), and concepts are often defined several pages after being introduced. While many of the photos of antique weather instruments and dramatic cloud formations are informative, some of the pictures, such as a reproduction of an old print depicting a man and camel, or another of a man and umbrella, seem to have been included for their aesthetic appeal rather than for their scientific value. As an assortment of interesting facts about the weather, the book makes a handsome browsing item, but it falls short as an introduction to the subject or as a reference source. RS

C.U. Weather

Donnelly, Judy. *A Wall of Names: The Story of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. Random House, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-679-90169-8; Paper ed. ISBN 0-679-80169-3. 48p. illus. with photographs. (Step Into Reading). Paper ed. \$2.95; Library ed. \$6.99.

R Gr. 3-5. Following *Who Shot the President?* (BCCB 1/89) and *Moonwalk* (6/89), Donnelly now concisely sums up a third '60s event, the Vietnam War, for beginning readers. While some of the information is (perhaps necessarily) oversimplified—stating that our reason for fighting was "fear of communism," for example—this is the best of the three books, objectively



tracing the causes and progress of the war, its aftermath at home, and its eventual Memorial, built in 1982. Along with good color and black-and-white photos of the Wall, the book includes architect Maya Lin's thoughts on her controversial design: "She thought about how it must feel to lose someone you love in a war. An idea came to her. She wanted to cut open the earth. She imagined a black wall standing between the sunny world and the great, dark world beyond that the living can never enter. A great black wall with names on it." A strong bridge between Eve Bunting's picture book *The Wall* (BCCB 6/90) and Brent Ashabranner's comprehensive book on the Memorial (reviewed in the 9/88 issue). RS

C.U. Social studies

Fenner, Carol. *Randall's Wall*. McElderry, 1991. ISBN 0-689-50518-3. 85p. \$11.95.

Ad Gr. 5-8. Randall Lord smells, and he once had lice, and the rest of the fifth grade kids won't have anything to do with him. What they don't know, and what Public Health can't seem to do anything about, is that Randall's father is abusive, his mother is afraid to leave their rundown house, and the family has no bathtub or running water. Randall's loneliness and ongoing humiliation are sparsely etched, and his rescue by a bright, brash girl, Jean, who takes him home for a bath, is both welcome and believable. However, from the hero's folkloric name to the happy ending, this story of a gifted outcast has a fabular, sometimes self-conscious, tone and approach that vitiate its realism. Randall is shown to be a gifted artist; Jean's mother, a museum director, gets him a scholarship for art lessons; Randall's kind uncle takes the family in, the father having been conveniently jailed for attempted murder. We've come to care for Randall, so we're happy for him, but most readers will be less than convinced of his good fortune. RS

D.V. Imaginative powers

Ferguson, Alane. *The Practical Joke War*. Bradbury, 1991. ISBN 0-02-734526-2. 140p. \$12.95.

Ad Gr. 3-5. Taffy, her older brother Russell, and her younger brother Eddy engage in a continuing round of practical jokes, shifting alliances and upping the ante. Save for one additional plot element, Taffy's discovery that her best friend is really interested in Russell rather than Taffy, the book is a long procession of "jokes" that are laboriously engineered by the siblings, who are eventually reconciled. "The practical joke war was over." The writing is breezy, but even readers who enjoy comedy may find it's less funny when there's little contrast to set off the humor. ZS

D.V. Brothers-sisters

Fisher, Leonard Everett. *The ABC Exhibit*; written and illus. by Leonard Everett Fisher. Macmillan, 1991. ISBN 0-02-735251-X. 32p. \$15.95.

R 3-6 yrs. With so many new high-concept alphabet books around (see *D Is for Dolphin*, reviewed last month), it's refreshing to see one primarily concerned with looking good and being clear. Fisher's twenty-six images are unrelated to each other, but each one should be familiar to most toddlers from experience, TV, or stories: Acrobat, Balloon, Cloud, Duck, Elephant, Fog, etc. The only one that reaches is (string) Quartet, which is on a

different conceptual and experiential level from the preceding Orange (the fruit) and Parrot. The acrylic paintings have the drama and heft of Fisher's well-known scratchboard and woodcut work; the overall mood is a bit somber, and many of the paintings have an edge of mystery more subtle than Van Allsburg's *The Z Was Zapped* (BCCB 10/87). Orange and peach colored Balloons escape from a dignified facade; a Juggler is caught in mid-toss rapture; bright Ribbons fall off of a metal rod into space; a dart just about to hit the Target is downright menacing. Even the simplest (Duck, Mountain, Nest) are dramatic in their intensity of light on color. This is a handsome coffee table selection in some of its effects, but it's also a strong alphabet book filled with some unforgettable pictures. RS

C.U. Art appreciation

Gilbert, Sara. *You Can Speak up in Class*; illus. by Roy Doty. Morrow, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-09867-3; Paper ed. ISBN 0-688-10304-9. 54p. Library ed. \$12.88; Paper ed. \$6.95.

R Gr. 5-8. Pairing *what if* dilemmas ("What if you think the other kids will laugh at you?") with *Try this* solutions ("Think about the worst thing that can happen if you get laughed at") Gilbert offers a sensible self-help guide for kids who are afraid to raise their hands, answer teachers' questions, or deliver an oral report. Her advice is practical ("Do this: Begin by raising your hand to ask questions, because it's harder to 'make a mistake' when you ask a question") and motivational ("Think about this: You're *not* stupid. Get that straight.") and organized in a step-by-step way that is encouraging. The book is occasionally too upbeat—"if someone is teasing you, you take away his or her nasty power if you laugh along"—but when it comes to matters of self-confidence, optimism is often the wiser course anyway. RS

D.V. Self-confidence

Goldberg, Jake. *Rachel Carson: Biologist and Author*. Chelsea House, 1991. ISBN 0-7910-1566-1. 80p. illus. with photographs. (Junior World Biographies). \$12.95.

R Gr. 4-6. A biography of the scientist/writer is shaped with clarity and balance, giving enough material about Carson as a person to make the delineation of her character effective, but not eliding the importance of her work. Goldberg's tone is impartial, and the black-and-white photographs are (for the most part) informative. Like most Carson biographies, this points out the resistance of many to the alarming facts about ecological dangers discussed in Carson's books. A glossary is provided, as is a chronology. ZS

C.U. Biology

Hall, Lynn. *Flying Changes*. Harcourt, 1991. ISBN 0-15-228790-6. 148p. \$13.95.

R Gr. 7-12. Seventeen-year-old Denny Browner is in a bind: her father lies seriously injured in a distant city; her first crush, to whom she has just lost her virginity, is driving off to rejoin the rodeo circuit; and she has five days to train a horse up to the standards the prospective buyer demands. To complicate matters, her estranged mother returns after ten years' absence "to take care of my husband in his hour of need," driving—or is it allowing?—Denny's grandmother out of the house. Denny's first-person narration describes her

grappling with the transitions of her difficult life, and Hall paints the picture with rich and subtle insight. The book also contains some of her finest characterization, with seeming clichés refined into complicated portraits, such as Denny's father, an aging rodeo Lothario paralyzed for life from a stupid drunken stunt; and Denny's Gramma B, the salt-of-the-earth prairie woman who used to give Tupperware parties but now vends mail-order lingerie to the neighbors. Best of all is Denny's surprisingly likable mother Rita, the apparently ditz country gal with purple toenails: she turns out to be a hard worker with good sense but is nevertheless shockingly and chillingly vindictive towards her errant husband. Set in the dusty heat of a Kansas country summer, the book's rueful wisdom and understated but heartfelt outpourings ("You talk about taking care of me, but you're saying it with one foot on the gas pedal," says Denny to her love as he leaves) give it the solid appeal of a good country and western song. DS  
D.V. Adaptability; Mother-daughter relations

Haseley, Dennis. *Shadows*; illus. by Leslie Bowman. Farrar, 1991. ISBN 0-374-36761-2. [80p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R\* Gr. 4-7. With his widowed mother looking for a job, Jamie is shipped off to rural West Virginia to stay with his kind but formal aunt and uncle. In a compact, moving portrayal, the visit becomes Jamie's search for connection with his father through encounters with his grandfather, who, throwing animal shadows on a candlelit wall, gives the boy a sense of story and of his own worth. There's a ghostly aspect to the ending, when the shadows lead Jamie to an act of heroism, but the fantasy has been so well forecast that it takes on the conviction of a supernatural legend. The narrative is selectively but vividly detailed, the dialogue natural, and the shadow motif projected on both literal and symbolic levels. Readers hooked by the dramatic action can't avoid perceiving the character dynamics, which go a long way toward disproving that easy-to-read fiction has to be episodic or simplistic. BH

C.U. Reading aloud

D.V. Grandfather-child relations; Self-evaluation

Haseley, Dennis. *The Thieves' Market*; illus. by Lisa Desimini. HarperCollins, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-022493-2; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-022492-4. 32p. Library ed. \$14.89; Trade ed. \$14.95.

M 5-8 yrs. The Thieves' Market takes place at night while all the grown-ups are asleep and the children are let free to find their hearts' desires. Susan exchanges her childish self-portrait for a painting of a dancer. "She stares and stares at that painting of a dancer. Slowly, she rises on her toes. And just as slowly, she lifts her arm." Tim "grins into a pair of cymbals, but they make his face look old," and he chooses a violin instead. The narrator, who has been carrying a mystical white stone, rides a horse. And through it all, the "king of the gypsy thieves sits behind his table that holds nothing. He doesn't frown. He doesn't smile." Like too many dream stories, this one swims in a murk of whimsy and pretension, appealing far more to an adult's sense of sentimental sophistication than to a child's desire for a good story. Desimini's paintings are all dark-hued and mysterious and evocative, but are more atmospheric than revealing. RS

Hastings, Selina. *Reynard the Fox*; illus. by Graham Percy. Tambourine, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-10156-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-09949-1. 76p. Library ed. \$16.88; Trade ed. \$16.95.

R     *Gr. 3-5.*           After briefly introducing the fox's fabled cunning, Hastings turns a practised hand to retelling William Caxton's version about the trickster's surviving an entire animal kingdom's complaints to Lion—who turns out to be the ultimate dupe. The narrative style acquires tongue-in-cheek gravity as first one messenger and then another, one trial after the next, ploy upon ploy, all reflect the political shenanigans of a medieval court. Percy's straight-faced, innocent, color-pencil drawings rely entirely on the ironic context—and a few telling details, such as the graphic motif of generously strewn chicken feathers—to convey Reynard's incurable wickedness, which includes a playful penchant for biting off the heads of unwary fowl. With intelligent adaptations of *Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady* (BCCB 11/85) and *The Canterbury Tales* (BCCB 11/88) to her credit, Hastings may soon be canonized by cultural literacists. Read this one aloud as an elaboration of Aesop, a comparison with Coyote, and a contrast to Brer Fox. BH  
C.U.   Storytelling

Hildick, E. W. *The Case of the Dragon in Distress: A McGurk Fantasy*. Macmillan, 1991. ISBN 0-02-743931-3. 153p. \$12.95.

M     *Gr. 4-6.*           Time traveling to the Middle Ages is a new twist for the McGurk Detective Agency. The four boys and two girls are sent back in time apparently to rescue some princes (including McGurk's ancestor) who are being held captive by an evil princess. Princess Melisande keeps her youth and beauty by daily eating leeches that have sucked the princes' blood. The story is a hodgepodge of comic book/fantasy/video game elements, all superimposed awkwardly on the well-worn mystery format. Fantasy fans will find the time-travel aids annoyingly illogical for the genre—Brains unwittingly changes some walkie-talkies into time machine that are in some way connected with a mysterious voice that may or may not be responsible for the time travel of a misplaced brother and sister whom the McGurk detectives meet at Melisande's castle. The castle itself is described in a one-word paragraph: "Forbidding"—a forecast of cliches as well as events. KPJ

Hill, Elizabeth Starr. *The Street Dancers*. Viking, 1991. ISBN 0-670-83435-1. 170p. \$13.95.

R     *Gr. 5-8.*           Fitzi and her parents are part-time actors/part-time street performers in New York, and Fitzi has started to hate it. Typically adolescent, she no longer can stand to have people watching her. She yearns to be normal, just another person in the crowd. Fitzi is tutored by her parents at home but more than anything, she wants to attend public school. To Fitzi, everything connected to her parents' up-and-down show business career is temporary (not to mention embarrassing), and public school represents permanence. There is a good balance of realism and glamor in the story, as Fitzi's parents brace themselves to survive a lean winter just before getting steady work in a Broadway show. The characters are believable: Fitzi's grandfather is a stage actor who's crotchety because he's been disabled by a stroke; her parents are ambitious both for themselves and for Fitzi; her new best friend seems to have a storybook family but doesn't, of course. When

Grandfather's failing health turns into crisis, Fitz exhibits the resilience she's learned from her family. The open-ended compromise she makes between going to school and performing is a good conclusion to a story about a typical girl growing up in unusual circumstances. KPJ

D.V. Parent-child relations

Hiser, Constance. *Ghosts in Fourth Grade*; illus. by Cat Bowman Smith. Holiday House, 1991. ISBN 0-8234-0865-5. 68p. \$13.95.

Ad Gr. 3-4. In a sequel to *No Bean Sprouts, Please!*, James and his friends, particularly feisty T. J., decide to finally fix Mean Mitchell, the fourth-grade bully. They send Mean Mitchell an anonymous invitation to a Halloween party—to be held at “the old Hathaway house,” site of many local and gruesome legends. They set traps for Mitchell, who, however, has overheard the plans and has a few surprises of his own. The characters will be comfortably familiar even to those who haven't read the first book, and while the plot is very predictable, it is swiftly and surely accomplished, with the haunted house setting offering plenty of special effects. Occasional pen drawings are casually scrawled and inviting, and the format is spacious without looking babyish. Good practice material for new and reluctant readers. RS

C.U. Reading, reluctant

Joseph, Lynn. *A Wave in her Pocket: Stories from Trinidad*; illus. by Brian Pinkney. Clarion, 1991. ISBN 0-395-54432-7. 52p. \$13.95.

R Gr. 4-6. The author's introductory note explains that, as a child in Trinidad, she originally heard these six short stories from her grandaunt, or tantie. True to the oral tradition, some are scary and some fragmentary. The first tale is both, with the death of a soucouyant (a woman by day, but by night “a ball of fire that flies through the air and will suck the blood clean out of you”) implied but not clearly described. Not until the afterword do we learn some important background on the legendary figures, including the fact that if you sprinkle salt on a soucouyant's skin, which she hides at night while she's flying through the air, it will burn her when she tries to put it on again in the morning. In the second story, Tantie uses the threat of the mysterious Ligahoo to keep the children away from the dangerous river at flood season. In the third, Tantie plants trees for the graveyard jumbies to play in so they won't bother her isolated house. The last three stories are best: one, a humorous trickster tale; another, a bittersweet story about Tantie's boyfriend lost at sea; and the last, a haunting tale of the forest's beast-protector, Papa Bois, whose gift of beads Tantie passes on to the narrator as a kind of storyteller's mantle. Pinkney's scratchboard illustrations, one per story, add richly to the verbal images, but the text may nevertheless be best storytold, with some background information adapted into the presentation, by a narrator comfortable with the dialect. BH

C.U. Storytelling

Kaye, Marilyn. *The Atonement of Mindy Wise*. Gulliver/Harcourt, 1991. ISBN 0-15-200402-5. 166p. \$15.95.

R Gr. 5-8. “Fox Haven, Connecticut, turned me into a sinner.” As the book opens, fourteen-year-old Mindy is penitently sitting through a Yom Kippur service, recalling her sins of the past year. They're all there: lying, disobedience, gossiping, cheating—even unchastity, sort of. The occasion for

all these sins began when Mindy's family moved, and she became determined to get in with the in crowd, "The Club." Mindy's attempts to flatter and curry favor with this particular group of girls are believable, often embarrassing, and ultimately for naught: despite the right clothes, despite the wild party she throws in her parents' absence, despite letting teen-queen Dani cheat from her quiz paper, Mindy is not elected to The Club. With such a set-up, it would be impossible for this book not to be didactic, but because the author devotes more attention to the sins than to their repentance, the moralizing does not overwhelm the plot. Except for Mindy's oddball friend Peggy, who couldn't care less about The Club, the characters are school-story stock and so is the suburban setting, making the book a comfortable, familiar read. Kids will see their own mistakes in Mindy's sins and will appreciate the chance to relish them from a distance. RS

Kennedy, X. J. *The Kite that Braved Old Orchard Beach: Year-Round Poems for Young People*; illus. by Marian Young. McElderry, 1991. ISBN 0-689-50507-8. 85p. \$12.95.

R Gr. 4-6. As usual, X. J. Kennedy gives us a rich and varied collection, with his best verses carrying plenty of punch, sometimes literally: "my Pekingese beat up his mutt/ And now he keeps his big mouth shut." Humor is the hallmark, with one narrator painting a "unicow" ("her horn had slightly slipped") and another teaching her teacher that girls *can* play the cymbals—with a smash ("his eardrums traffic-jammed"). The poet has also played some welcome softer notes, including two poignant portraits of old people, "Mrs. Morizawa's Morning" and "Hot Milk," as well as a sad but unsentimental farewell to past pleasures in "Taking Down the Space-Trolley." "March Thaw" has some great read-aloud sounds, as do many other of the sixty poems, categorized as Joys; Growing & Dreaming; Family; Friends; Not So Ordinary Things; Birds, Beasts & Fish; and Times of Year. A jaunty black-and-white drawing sets the tone for each section. BH  
C.U. Reading aloud

Kline, Suzy. *Orp Goes to the Hoop*. Putnam, 1991. ISBN 0-399-21834-3. [112p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. When his mom asks him to set the table, Orp makes a quick decision to run over to the basketball team try-outs. Although he's never played before, he's inherited talent from his parents, and he goes on to become the youngest star of the team in his Middle School. Orp's lively enthusiasm for "round ball" is catching, but it is the details that make this not just another basketball story. For example, Orp's favorite place to sit, think, and talk on the phone is the bathroom, the only warm place in the house. When Orp is trying to dodge the attentions of a girl his best friend likes, he ends up taking his sister to the school dance. And on the court, when he tells an older team member, "You shoot like my mother," it's a few minutes before Ike knows that's a compliment. Details about basketball are not neglected, however; Orp firmly establishes his place on the team with a saving play in a dramatic game. While it's hard to believe that every adult Orp knows once played on a basketball team, it's easy to believe the rest of the story, including the innocence of his

long-distance romance. Something for older Matt Christopher fans who have noticed girls. KPJ

D.V. Boy-girl relations

Larrick, Nancy, comp. *To the Moon and Back: A Collection of Poems*; illus. by Catharine O'Neill. Delacorte, 1991. ISBN 0-385-30159-6. 84p. \$14.95.

R Gr. 2-5. With a keen eye for read-aloud quality, Larrick has gleaned appealing poems from some of the best children's poets and added a few unexpected entries as well. The former include Norma Farber's "Spider" ("I weave my stillnesses of thread") and the latter, Joseph Bruchac's "Feathers" about grosbeaks: "Everything that lives/ wants to fly,/ . . . Those were/ dinosaurs once,/ he said,/ but they/ made a bargain./ They gave up/ that power/ in return for/ the Sky." The anthology's tone ranges from the light nonsense of X. J. Kennedy's "Instant Storm" to the sad narrative rhythms in "The Ballad of Red Fox" by Melvin Walker la Follette. The sixty-six poems are shaped into seven sections, each imaginatively titled by words from a poem and introduced by an airy watercolor illustration in black and white. BH

C.U. Reading aloud

Lawson, Don. *America Held Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and the Iran-Contra Affair*. Watts, 1991. ISBN 0-531-11009-5. 128p. illus. with photographs. (Twentieth Century American History). \$12.90.

R Gr. 8-10. Meticulously researched and organized, Lawson's account of events in the Middle East, especially Iran, is a quietly damning indictment of (at best) presidential ineptitude, and of reckless, often illegal, machinations on the part of some government officials. Since the book covers developments only until June 1990, it does not include information about the recently-alleged Republican efforts to defer the release of hostages until after Reagan's election. Too dramatic to be dry, this is a serious—often depressing—narrative. Appended are chapter notes, a chronology, a bibliography, a list of American hostages in Lebanon, and a quite detailed index. ZS

C.U. History—U.S.

Lewis, Barbara A. *The Kids' Guide to Social Action*; illus. by Steve Michaels and with photographs. Free Spirit Publishing, 1991. Paper ed. ISBN 0-915793-29-6. 185p. (A Do Something! Book). Paper ed. \$14.95.

R\* Gr. 4-10. Providing many examples from the activities of her indefatigable sixth-grade class, veteran teacher Barbara Lewis shows and tells young readers how they can effect change at the local, state, and federal levels. Her own class began with the problem of a nasty hazardous waste site near their Salt Lake City school; after talking to the mayor, media, and EPA, the students wrote a resolution for a statewide Superfund which the legislature turned into law. The book includes sections on letter and speech writing; petitions; fundraising; campaigning and voter registration; picketing; lobbying; and (most impressively) "Amending the U.S. Constitution," an effort undertaken by a group called Kids Against Pollution. A lengthy directory of addresses and phone numbers for government offices and national social change groups is included, as is a section of forms for press releases, surveys, etc. that can be photocopied. Clearly but informally written, the book is packed with well-organized, practical

information and includes plenty of inspiring quotes and anecdotes ("Kids in Action") along the way. Backed with an index and bibliography, this is an exemplary reference and curricular resource that works as enlightening browsing material as well. RS

C.U. Community life; Government

D.V. Civic competence and responsibility

Lewis, Richard. *All of You Was Singing*; illus. by Ed Young. Atheneum, 1991. ISBN 0-689-31596-1. 32p. \$13.95.

R 5-8 yrs. This lyrical rendition of an Aztec myth will send shivers up the spine of anyone familiar with the Biblical Creation. "When things were beginning, there was water everywhere," begins a text printed in white against a black square set into rhythmic colored designs. The book is an effective collaboration between poet and artist, with Young's pastel and torn-paper illustrations giving innovative form to a melodious set of verbal images. Ultimately the story accounts for music coming to earth: "In the east, the singer in white sang the songs of the newborn. In the west, the singer in red played the songs of love and war. In the north, the singer in blue sang the songs of wandering clouds. In the south, the singer in yellow sang the songs of gold." Good company for John Bierhorst's collection of songs and chants from traditional North American Indian lore (*In the Trail of the Wind*, BCCB 1/72), this could be used for middle-grades' comparison of creation myths as well as for reading aloud to a picture book audience. BH

C.U. Reading aloud

Marrin, Albert. *The Spanish-American War*. Atheneum, 1991. ISBN 0-689-31663-1. 182p. \$14.95.

R Gr. 6-. As he has demonstrated in previous books, Marrin has the ability to infuse the facts of history with the drama of fiction. The result is an eminently readable account of the Spanish-American War, and it incorporates perceptive character sketches of major figures such as Theodore Roosevelt, William Randolph Hearst, and George Dewey. The text gives a broad background of events and those who influenced them, so that Marrin's description of the onset and progression of the war are given meaningful context. Chapter notes, a bibliography, and a full index are provided. Bully for you, Albert Marrin. ZS

C.U. History—U.S.

McMullan, Kate. *The Great Eggspectations of Lila Fenwick*; illus. by Diane deGroat. Farrar, 1991. ISBN 0-375-32774-2. [144p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 4-7. A sequel to *Great Advice from Lila Fenwick* (BCCB 7/88) has Lila and her friends involved in a school library project designed to teach them the hard work of parenthood: each student must protect and care for a hard-boiled egg as if it were a human baby. This is not a new plot device, witness Louise Moeri's *First the Egg* (BCCB 1/83), among others. However, the project is entertaining as well as edifying and provides the novel with a focus and a variety (class elections, boys) of school-and-friends fun. A subplot about a boy who has lost some fingers due to playing with firecrackers is didactic, irrelevant, and poorly integrated into the story. There's a touch of preachiness to



the egg-babies theme, but it is ameliorated by plenty of humor (Lila's Coddled Egg sitting service) and some pathos (the fatal fall of an egg-baby to the floor). deGroat's boy-girl cover and interior pen sketches strike just the right preteen tone. RS

Mellecker, Judith. *Randolph's Dream*; illus. by Robert Andrew Parker. Knopf, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-679-91115-4; Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-81115-X. 40p. Library ed. \$15.99; Trade ed. \$14.95.

Ad 5-8 yrs. From the author and artist of *The Fox and the Kingfisher* (BCCB 12/90), this is another story of a child who finds magical refuge from a painful situation. Because of the Blitz, Randolph has been sent from London to the English countryside to stay with relatives. He helps with the garden, ponders his collections of dead moths and odd stamps, saves string for the war effort. At night, in his dreams, he flies, at first just around the countryside but then to North Africa where his father is stationed, and where, Randolph discovers, his father has now been lost in the desert. Randolph saves him and takes home an orange, which is still in his pocket when he awakens in the morning. The fantasy element here is more logically structured than it was in *The Fox and the Kingfisher*; yet the story takes too long to get going, with too much text devoted to scenic but static detail—the atmosphere is in any case well served by Parker's cool line-and-watercolor paintings. Facial drawing is elegant but rather immobile; the figures are casually lined and expressively postured; the living rooms and landscapes are effectively staged. This is a handsome but rather adult-toned production, and while it lacks the emotional pull that a more simply told story might have, young listeners will be convinced of Randolph's brave dream come true. RS

D.V. Father-son relations

Nixon, Joan Lowery. *High Trail to Danger*. Bantam, 1991. ISBN 0-553-07314-1. 168p. \$15.00.

M Gr. 7-9. Sarah, at seventeen, is the older of two sisters whose mother has just died; although nervous about just how wild the west is (it's 1879), she sets out from Chicago to find the father who had left them ten years before and who is in Leadville, Colorado. On the train to Denver, Sarah captivates Jeremy, also bound for Leadville; on the stagecoach from Denver to Leadville, she captivates Clint, the driver. Bits of information and fragmentary clues about Father emerge, indicating that he is in hiding and had shot a man in self-defense. Sarah finds him, but all is not well, and signs point to a sequel, since Sarah is still uncommitted romantically and since the story ends with a strong hint that Sarah will stay in Leadville to clear Father's name. Various incidents of a melodramatic nature occur, quite a few of which seem to provide nothing that moves or deepens the plot. ZS

o huigin, sean. *the ghost horse of the mouties*; illus. by Barry Moser. Godine, 1991. ISBN 0-87923-721-X. 72p. \$14.95.

R Gr. 4-7. The time is 1874, and an early expedition of the Canadian Mounties is camping on the northern prairie. This free-verse poem urges the reader to imagine an episode in which a horse is lost in a stampede that costs the owner's life during a wild storm. The focus is on sensuous details of wind, rain, thunder, and lightning as an animal might experience them. Moser

projects the imagery with striking visual suggestion; a passage in which the horse loses consciousness—"and your mind goes/ blank"—faces a gray-green sheet of paper with no illustration. This is a book that emphasizes the graphic in both words and design. Readers who ordinarily don't enjoy poetry will be enticed and moved by a rhythmic narrative with mythical dimension, spaciously extended in art and format. BH

C.U. Reading aloud

D.V. Loyalty

Orgel, Doris. *Nobodies and Somebodies*. Viking, 1991. ISBN 0-670-82754-1. [128p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-7. Liz is In. So is Beth, and so is Vero. Janet was In briefly, but now she's Out and so is the new girl, Laura. The "Supes," as Janet sarcastically refers to them, have the school's most exclusive club, whose dramas and downfalls are chronicled in turn by Janet, Vero, and Laura. The revolving narration is a little confusing: first, because the three girls sound too much alike; and second, because the ins-and-outs of secret clubs are just like that, thriving on their own perplexities. Despite some structural awkwardness, the writing is clipped and telling, as when Janet recalls the time she and the others all planned to wear blue to school on the same day. "The three of them wore green from head to toe . . . I decided I would hate that color till the day I died." Orgel is also aware of the ironies of inclusion: "We discussed who we'd have. Whoever wanted to join. As long as they were in fifth grade, and as long as we all liked them." A thoughtful entry in a popular genre. RS

D.V. Friendship values

Paladino, Catherine. *Pomona: The Birth of a Penguin*. Watts, 1991. Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-15212-X; Library ed. ISBN 0-531-10988-7. 34p. illus. and with photographs. (New England Aquarium Books). Library ed. \$12.90; Trade ed. \$12.95.

R Gr. 2-4. A lucid continuous text and effective color photographs capture the hatching and development of a blackfooted—aka jackass—penguin. The pictures take kids closer to the action than they could ever get otherwise—in fact, this particular egg was taken away from the parents, and viewers actually watch as a sequence of shots shows a pair of tweezers widen a pip hole to help the chick along. Constant feedings of herring pudding and fillets pay off in a healthy juvenile that grows up ("Molting makes her grumpy"), takes her place in the New England Aquarium pool, and learns how to "fly" through the water. Maps, a species identification chart, an environmental note, and a glossary expand the informational base of the book. BH

C.U. Science

Paul, Ann Whitford. *Eight Hands Round: A Patchwork Alphabet*; illus. by Jeanette Winter. HarperCollins, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024704-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024689-8. 32p. Library ed. \$14.89; Trade ed. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. 2-4. This is an alphabet book only in terms of organizing the subject of patchwork quilt patterns, since children learning their ABCs would generally be too young for the historical information included in the paragraph-

long description of each design. In most cases, the folk-art stylization is self-explanatory; the Grandmother's Fan pattern looks like what it's named after, as does the Honeycomb, Mapleleaf, Necktie, etc. In several cases, however—Old Tippecanoe, for instance—the description doesn't help figure out a puzzling design, and it's hard to distinguish conjecture from fact. The Flying Geese pattern, for instance, appears to refer to a flight formation, but the accompanying description talks about plucking (live) geese: "Maybe the person who made up this pattern was thanking her goose for giving its soft downy feathers for pillows and its pointed quills for writing pens." Many of the descriptions conclude with suggestions that seem farfetched: "Maybe he [a traveler] thought up this pattern [variable star] because he was so happy to sleep under a roof instead of the stars." The illustrations, however, are attractively drawn and colored, with examples of each quilt's total effect as well as closeups of a square, and with cozy scenes of early American life. Teachers could find plenty of use for this book as a springboard for students' discussion of quilting and other artistry shaped by women's work traditions. BH  
C.U. History—U.S.—Pictorial presentation

Peters, Lisa Westberg. *Water's Way*; illus. by Ted Rand. Arcade, 1991. ISBN 1-55970-062-9. 32p. \$14.95.

R 4-7 yrs. Ted Rand's background as a landscape painter always tells in his picture books, and never better than in his clean pictures of the moods of sky and weather. In this simple introduction to water and precipitation, Rand shows us clouds and rain and snow, and, inside a house, a boy who sees some of the same phenomena right around him as well as outside: steam from the heating soup making fog on the cold window; and later, steam from his bath making fog on the bathroom window, fog that turns to frost—snow is on the way! Westberg's brief text gracefully parallels, on facing pages, the actions of weather inside and out; Rand superimposes a smaller picture of the boy inside the house upon a double-spread of the landscape outside. *You* might not appreciate puddles on the windowsill, but both kids and teachers alike will learn from this unusual look through—and at—the glass. RS  
C.U. Weather

Plummer, Louise. *My Name Is Susan Smith. The 5 Is Silent*. Delacorte, 1991. ISBN 0-385-30043-3. 217p. \$15.00.

R Gr. 9-12. The 5 in Susan's name is symptomatic of her rebellion: she's eighteen, a promising young artist, continually shocking her provincial Utah family and desperate to try big-city life. She goes to stay with a relative in Boston, hoping to make a professional start and also secretly hoping to encounter Willy, her former uncle by marriage, who understood her artistic dreams and who also yearned for wider horizons. She gets what she hoped but not what she bargained for: a small part of a small gallery show (behind a frame shop), and a reacquaintance with Uncle Willy that changes her childhood adoration of him into something more adult and complicated until his final betrayal of her. The subplots and secondary characters are particularly strong here, a standout being Grace, the credibly irritating and touching old woman in Susan's apartment building who foreshadows, Susan feels, her own future of "an aged eccentricity that reached way beyond what was chic." Susan's self-deceiving

and complex involvement with Willy is well-captured in all its subtle shades, and her first-person narration is witty without being superficial in this wryly intelligent novel of maturation. DS

D.V. Uncle-niece relations

Pomeroy, Wardell. *Boys and Sex*; Third ed. Delacorte, 1991. Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-30250-9; Paper ed. ISBN 0-440-20811-4. 205p. Trade ed. \$15.95; Paper ed. \$3.95.

R Gr. 6-. A psychologist who was co-author of the Kinsey Reports, Pomeroy first wrote *Boys and Sex* in 1968 and *Girls and Sex* in 1969. His views are stated clearly and frankly: "Don't do anything that will harm other people, especially a sex partner." He doesn't make moral judgments, feeling that his role is to give information and describe consequences. Throughout the book, which has chapters on such subjects as masturbation, homosexuality, venereal disease, and understanding the viewpoints of girls, there is good basic information about the human body and about sexual attitudes. Throughout, Pomeroy reminds readers of the role of parents and of the fact that each person may have to make difficult decisions when there is conflict between sexual needs and religious dicta. A bibliography and a full relative index are appended. ZS

C.U. Health; Sex education

D.V. Consideration for others

Pomeroy, Wardell. *Girls and Sex*; Third ed. Delacorte, 1991. Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-30251-7; Paper ed. ISBN 0-440-20812-2. 207p. Trade ed. \$15.95; Paper ed. \$3.95.

R Gr. 6-. In his introduction, Pomeroy comments on the changes in social attitudes toward sexuality, which—despite the observed growth of conservatism since the 1981 revision of the original text—are still affected by social movements (women's rights, gay rights), the media and entertainment worlds, and a freer use of frank language than obtained at the time this book (and its companion volume, reviewed above) was initially published. The author distinguishes between sexual behavior and attitudes toward sexual behavior, including sex education and open discussion of the subject. The text provides good basic information about anatomy, reproductive systems, and the consequences of sexual relationships, and he provides, as in *Boys and Sex*, separate chapters on homosexuality and masturbation. However, this is not a masked clone of the book for boys, since it deals with subjects such as rape and consistently reflects the special interests or problems experienced by most girls. The book is objective and authoritative, and its author makes no moral pronouncements but consistently advises ethical behavior and consideration for others. A lengthy relative index and a bibliography are provided. ZS

C.U. Health; Sex education

D.V. Consideration for others

Ross, Rhea Beth. *Hillbilly Choir*. Houghton, 1991. ISBN 0-395-53356-2. 166p. \$13.95.

Ad Gr. 5-7. Set in rural Arkansas during the early 1930s, this is a diffuse story narrated by a fifteen-year-old returning from New York City with her mother, who embarked on an unsuccessful acting career to escape her small-town background. While family members are well characterized, the large cast of

boarders, neighbors, townfolk, and teenage friends gets somewhat confused in the shuffle. Laurie's budding career as a "hillbilly" musician is a much more immediate plot than the somewhat distracting development of a shoe factory by a newcomer who burns it to the ground when his funds fail. Abundant details enliven the situation but could have been pruned for better focus. Nevertheless, this second historical novel by the author of *The Bet's On, Lizzie Bingman!* (BCCB 6/88) does bring the time and place to life in a low-key, accessible way. BH

D.V. Occupational orientation

Sachs, Marilyn. *Circles*. Dutton, 1991. ISBN 0-525-44683-4. 132p. \$14.95.

R Gr. 5-8. Mark feels a bit lost after moving in with his father, who loves Mark but never quite hears him when he talks about astronomy or mentions not liking football. Beebe (for Beatrice) is outraged at what's happening to this year's school Shakespeare production: "'It could be the coach,' Ms. Drumm said the next day. 'The coach instead of a prince. The coach could throw Romeo off the team for fighting with Tybalt.'" Mark and Beebe have little in common; in fact, they don't know each other, but readers will quickly be itching to do a little matchmaking between this likable pair. Mark's father and Beebe's mother even date for a while, but for one reason and another, the kids never meet. Both Beebe and Mark are fully fleshed characters with stories of their own, and there are enough moments where their lives, if not selves, impinge in ways that are touching, witty, and suspenseful. Although we're not about to give anything away, the last line of the novel is a wish-fulfilling delight. RS

D.V. Boy-girl relations

Sage, James. *The Little Band*; illus. by Keiko Narahashi. McElderry, 1991. ISBN 0-689-50516-7. 26p. \$13.95.

R 3-5 yrs. Six magical children materialize from an idyllic landscape and play their instruments as they march through a town. The citizens who ask about them never get answers to their questions, but everyone's deeply affected by their music—the tiny parade leaves people dancing and fish leaping behind them. "And nothing was ever the same again." The airy, somewhat mystical text borrows substance from Narahashi's watercolor paintings, especially a double-spread lake painting and the following seascape. The children in the band, each one a different race or color, wear petals, a leaf, and butterfly wings in the mode of Cicely Barker's flower fairies of the 1920s, although the figures are somewhat primitive and the perspectives surrealistically flattened. There's no story depth here; the total effect is light and saved from being too sweet by earthy hues and touches of visual humor. BH

Schories, Pat. *Mouse Around*; written and illus. by Pat Schories. Farrar, 1991. ISBN 0-374-35080-9. 32p. \$11.95.

M 3-5 yrs. Framed squares of various sizes show the adventures of a small mouse, in a wordless picture book that is usually clear enough to interpret but that is, alas, repetitive in structure. Even the youngest audience may find the ending contrived; the mouse (which had fallen out of a nest and straight into a plumber's pocket) is carried by one unsuspecting person after another, all around the town (with coincidence piled on coincidence) until it falls

down a kitchen drain into its very own nest. The line and wash pictures are pleasant albeit undistinguished; some children may find the juxtaposition of pictures in different scales confusing. ZS

Schwartz, Amy. *Camper of the Week*; written and illus. by Amy Schwartz. Orchard, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08542-2; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05942-1. [32p]. Library ed. \$14.99; Trade ed. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. K-2. A light, pleasant camp story begins with Rosie being given Camp Wicky-Wack's weekly award, for Rosie does everything she's supposed to do, from brushing her hair one hundred times (even when nobody's watching) to obeying all camp rules. Like most camp stories, this has a bully—Bernice. Should Rosie help her three buddies put minnows in Bernice's bed? She does make it possible for the trio to get away before Bernice sees them, so Rosie's moral dilemma is: should she share her friends' punishment because she has played a minor role? This isn't exactly high drama, but the read-aloud audience doesn't need high drama, and they are likely to respond to the problem, the solution, the textual simplicity, and the brightness of the spacious line-and-wash pictures. ZS

D.V. Ethical concepts

Scieszka, Jon. *Knights of the Kitchen Table*; ISBN 0-670-83622-2. *The Not-So-Jolly Roger*; ISBN 0-670-83754-7. Each book: illus. by Lane Smith. Viking, 1991. 55p. (The Time Warp Trio). \$10.95.

M Gr. 3-5. The "Time Warp Trio" consists of three friends, one of whom has received a wish-granting magic book as a birthday present from an uncle. The book sends them back in time to Camelot (*Knights*) and a desert island (*Roger*). The device is tired, the puns are weak, and the tone is too knowing. The jokes are dumb, mostly based upon the boys' anachronistic attitudes and slang: "Your mother was a sardine can," says Fred to the armored Black Knight. There are lots of sound effects, lots of explosions, and lots of disgusting emissions ("Ten brave knights fell like bowling pins, victims of gas warfare"); while it all adds up to standard fourth-grade chucklebait, the three boys are indistinguishable and the plots predictable. Smith's pen sketches have more personality than the text, but their new-wave weirdness only underlines the staleness of the stories. Scieszka's picture-book texts have proven him capable of tight, funny prose (see *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, reviewed in the 9/89 issue); books for newly independent readers deserve no less. RS

C.U. Reading, reluctant

Scott, Elaine. *Safe in the Spotlight: The Dawn Animal Agency and the Sanctuary for Animals*; illus. with photographs by Margaret Miller. Morrow, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08178-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08177-0. 80p. Library ed. \$14.88; Trade ed. \$14.95.

R Gr. 3-6. This enticingly formatted photodocumentary covers the farm started by Leonard and Bunny Brook to save outcast animals. The focus on abandoned or mistreated creatures insures reader interest from the start, and both the informal text and the competent, sometimes inspired, black-and-white photos sustain attention. In fact, the idealistic aspects of the farm have captured many donors as well as volunteer helpers. In addition to private funding, the camels, big cats, elephants, and domestic animals that are in demand for show

business and advertising support those that don't "work." The text is careful to point out that the Brook family or one of their representatives is always present to insure conscientious treatment of the creatures at filmings, theatricals, or other performances. The amount of work involved is as carefully noted as the passion of those committed to this dream of protecting vulnerable creatures. The book's unique subject clearly focuses a broad concept, the necessity of human respect and responsibility for animal life. BH  
D.V. Animals, kindness to

Shuker, Nancy. *Maya Angelou*. Silver Burdett, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-382-09908-7; Trade ed. ISBN 0-382-24036-7. 128p. illus. with photographs. (Genius!). Library ed. \$17.98; Trade ed. \$14.95.

R *Gr. 6-10*. In a biography that manages to be at once daring and understated, Shuker takes on the territory that Angelou has covered so mellifluously in her own autobiographies and translates it into crisp, intelligent terms for young readers who can't yet manage the poet's four-volume life story. Most students will aspire to try that series after finishing this concise overview, which blends Angelou's dramatic personal odyssey with historical background on racism in America and which interweaves summary with quotes from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Angelou's other work. There's an honest balance in portraying the subject's hardships along with her impulsive behavior, which has sometimes freed her creativity and sometimes led to restrictions on it, especially in her relationships. A chronology, selected list of Angelou's writings, glossary, bibliography, and index enrich the research value of the book, which will serve an important function in older elementary and junior high school black and women's studies units. Although the cover has the unappealing appearance of a laminated photocopy, the abundant illustrations, both news and publicity photographs, are relevant. BH

C.U. History—U.S.; Women's studies

D.V. Creativity; Self-expression

Shyer, Marlene Fanta. *Ruby, the Red-Hot Witch at Bloomingdale's*. Viking, 1991. ISBN 0-670-83473-4. 151p. \$13.95.

R *Gr. 4-6*. Petra is thirteen, her brother Thomas is five, their parents have separated, and Petra (who tells the story) becomes convinced that witch Ruby can effect a rapprochement because her magic has already worked in many small ways. Shyer's writing style is light and often humorous, and she makes her witch engaging by creating a hard-working fantasy figure who uses all sorts of merchandising terms and tricks: an electronic wish-fulfiller has "a very high success rate," for example, and a pocket problem-solver works on two double-A batteries. None of the magic is any sillier than the basic premise of a department store's employing a full-time witch, so readers should enjoy the deliberate implausibility as much as they enjoy the happy ending. ZS

D.V. Brothers-sisters

Simon, Seymour. *Earthquakes*. Morrow, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-09634-4; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-09633-6. [32p.] illus. with photographs. Library ed. \$14.88; Trade ed. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R\* *Gr. 3-5*. Although some of the success of Simon's series (to which this is a distinguished addition) is certainly due to the spacious format,

striking photographs, and clear diagrams, it is the authoritative and clear writing style that make his books effective. The Archer book reviewed above, for example, gives much of the same information but is not quite as well-organized nor as smoothly written. Each page of Simon's succinct continuous text faces a full-page illustration, and the placement is always judicious, so that the two reinforce each other. As in Archer's book, Simon includes safety tips for those who experience an earthquake. ZS  
C.U. Science

Smalls-Hector, Irene. *Irene and the Big, Fine Nickel*; illus. by Tyrone Geter. Little, 1991. ISBN 0-316-79871-1. 32p. \$14.95.

Ad 5-7 yrs. This day in the life of a seven-year-old seems purposively nostalgic in its re-creation of the 1950s Harlem setting: "The gutters of the street were so clean that you never saw anything in them, but this time there was definitely *something* there." The something is a nickel, and it's the closest the story comes to plot, as Irene and her friends share a raisin biscuit warm from the West Indian bakery. The ambiance, as Irene wakes up, fights with a neighbor, plays in the park, and shares the treat, is strong, and the warm, thick-textured paintings heighten a mood of high spirits: "Irene was feeling seven and in heaven on this summer day in Harlem." In spite of its occasionally self-conscious tone, the book may inspire some sharing of family stories and of pride in a black community heritage. BH  
D.V. Pride in background and heritage

Smith, Allison. *Come Away Home*. Scribner's, 1991. ISBN 0-684-19283-7. 105p. \$11.95.

Ad Gr. 3-5. Angus is a young sea monster who, because of a storm, finds himself trapped in a Scottish loch. He makes a circle of new friends: James the terrier, Sarah the cat, two otters, a bird, and a girl named Fiona who bring Angus the scones she has baked. The fantasy is less adeptly handled than the realistic aspects of the book, with the plot contrived to an extent that prevents the fantastic element from having any conviction. Angus, yearning at first to get back to the sea, realizes at last that where friends are is where he wants to be; although his chance to leave has come, he decides to stay in the loch. ZS

Squire, Ann. *Understanding Man's Best Friend: Why Dogs Look and Act the Way They Do*. Macmillan, 1991. ISBN 0-02-786590-8. [128p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. Despite its easy tone, this contains considerable information organized to demonstrate the point that dogs have inbred wolf characteristics. The history of both species, their common behavior patterns, and the variations evolved by breeding dogs for working, herding, hunting, sport, fighting, and companionship amount to an overview that will help young readers better understand the dogs they own or better select the ones they want. However, unlike many introductions, this argues a case instead of dumping together a lot of facts. Squire doesn't flinch from warning of genetic problems that have accompanied breeding dogs too selectively; her text is honest as well as



engaging. A list of dog breeds and their original uses serves as a useful appendix. BH

C.U. Nature study

Steel, Danielle. *Martha and Hilary and the Stranger*; ISBN 0-385-30212-6. *Max and Grandma and Grampa Winky*; ISBN 0-385-30165-0. Each book: illus. by Jacqueline Rogers. Delacorte, 1991. 32p. \$9.95.

NR Gr. K-2. It's probably impossible, and possibly irrelevant, to review such a brand-name-driven product, but we'll try. Again—see BCCB 1/91. Sausalito resident Martha has a perfect life: "Martha loves her Mommy and Daddy very much and she is very lucky because she has an extra person to love her: John, her stepfather, who is a very kind, loving person." Seven-year-old Max of New York City, has a similarly very pleasant situation, with a father who is a fireman and a mother who is a nurse, and "when Grandma and Grampa Winky come to New York to visit, it's very, very special and Max gets very excited." But into every life, even those that are very, very special, a little rain must fall. Something "very scary" happens to Martha's friend Hilary when a strange lady attempts to strong-arm her into a station wagon. Max is sad and lonely after "a very sad phone call from Grampa Winky. He called to say that Grandma Winky had died. She was very old and her heart was very sick." Both books have happy endings: Hilary escapes from the scary lady ("and all the children had learned they had to be very, very careful") and Max's Mom assures him that Grandma Winky is in Heaven, waiting for the rest of the family, whiling away the time by "making a beautiful garden." The flat and insipid tone of the stories, pictures, and writing style is not enhanced by the distinctly mercenary jingling of both premise and packaging. RS

C.U. Safety education

D.V. Death, adjustment to

Stevenson, James. *That's Exactly the Way It Wasn't*; written and illus. by James Stevenson. Greenwillow, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-09869-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-09868-1. [32p]. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. K-2. Mary Ann and Louie keep arguing, so their parents send them off for a walk to see Grandpa . . . who, of course, has a story, narrated in contentious tandem by his little brother Wainey, about the time *they* couldn't agree, and were told to go for a walk until they agreed on something. "Hot, isn't it, Wainey?" "Nump." "Must be getting late, Wainey." "Early." "Steep hill, Wainey!" "Flat." They can't even agree that it's a landslide that overtakes them, or an armadillo that saves them, or even that they're falling off a cliff: "THUD!" "Nump . . . not any more!" While all of Grandpa's stories are stretched, this one seems unduly ridden with events that are silly rather than funny, such as when the boys fall from an iguana's mouth into a giant cherry pie, which subsequently explodes. Most kids won't mind one bit, however, and will simply appreciate all the lovely sound effects. The illustrations are again briskly cartooned pen-and-watercolor; the narration a combination of Grandpa's recollections, Wainey's interjections, and ballooned dialogue; the final agreement on all parties to indulge in ice cream (with cherries, of course) serves as a tasty and contented

close. Stevenson has done this book many times before, but it's likely that fans will enjoy it all the same. RS

D.V. Brothers

Stwertka, Eve. *Rachel Carson*. Watts, 1991. ISBN 0-531-20020-5. 64p. illus. with photographs. (First Books). \$11.90.

Ad Gr. 3-6. Sub-headings are used in a visually distractive way within the chapters of a simply-written biography of Carson. The print is, for lack of adequate leading, less clear here than in the Goldberg book reviewed above. Some of the photographs are in color, others are black-and-white shots that have been given an over-all tint. Like Goldberg's biography, Stwertka's gives information about Carson's life and her struggle, as a woman, for acceptance in the scientific community. Perhaps because the emphasis on her work is stressed, this gives a less effective picture of Carson as a person. It is written with less stylistic restraint and includes a brief bibliography, an index, and a glossary after the concluding chapter, which forecasts "The Earth, Tomorrow." ZS

C.U. Biology

Turner, Glennette Tilley. *Lewis Howard Latimer*. Silver Burdett, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-382-09524-3; Paper ed. ISBN 0-382-24162-2. 128p. Library ed. \$13.98; Paper ed. \$7.95.

R Gr. 5-9. A success story even when blacks were rarely accorded success, Lewis Latimer's life seems almost like inspirational reading: the son of slaves, he worked his way from poverty to an esteemed position as electrical inventor and colleague of Thomas Edison. Turner painstakingly records his achievements and his outspoken support of the African-American cause. Her research is well supported with an extensive bibliography of books, newspapers and journals, unpublished primary sources, and interviews. The account is factually packed, and if the man remains elusive within the impressive parameters of his work, it's not because the author has neglected his family life, but rather because the almost superhuman nature of his achievements creates a distant formality—there seems no flaw in the person. Indeed, Latimer's spiritual commitment and poetic talent make him a role model of well-rounded intelligence and a welcome alternative to the frequently spotlighted scientist and political conservative Booker T. Washington. Illustrated with historical photographs, documents, and drawings, this will be indispensable during Black History month but should also serve as a longer-term reminder of the minority leaders left uncited in history geared to young people. BH

C.U. History—U.S.

D.V. Industry

Westwood, Chris. *He Came from the Shadows*. HarperCollins, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021659-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021658-1. 215p. Library ed. \$14.89; Trade ed. \$14.95.

R Gr. 7-9. In his first novel for young adults, Westwood uses the setting of an English town where the recently-closed mines have caused an economic depression. The mysterious stranger calls himself Mr. Stands, and it is clear from the start that he has magical powers. He turns an old Vauxhall into a Mercedes, he changes a toy dog into a live one, and he makes predictions

("She'll be out of intensive care before you know it") about someone he doesn't know. He has come in response to a silent call, and he can grant any wish. The author plants hints that all is not well, so that when Stands' evil purpose is revealed, readers will feel prescient rather than puzzled. A nicely constructed fantasy ends with a believable victory of good over evil, and satisfaction for the young people who have resisted Stands. But in an epilogue, Stands leaves town by train, invisible to other passengers. He is ready for a new call. ZS

Wisler, G. Clifton. *Red Cap*. Lodestar, 1991. ISBN 0-525-67337-7. 160p. \$14.95.

R Gr. 6-8. Today, Andersonville is a National Historic Site. In the last years of the Civil War, it was a nightmare of suffering and death for those who lived as well as those who died by the thousands behind the stockade walls. The first-person narration is intimate and vivid and stark, based on the experiences of a drummer boy of thirteen; "Red Cap" was the nickname of a real person, Ransom Powell, who had run off from his Maryland home in 1862 and joined the 10th Virginia Regiment of the Union Army. Wisler's story is based on careful research, as is evident from material in the epilogue and in the author's notes. The writing is convincing as an adolescent's account, and it eschews hyperbole, so that the grimness of war and prison emerges as naturally as do the courage and tenacity of Union and Confederate troops. ZS

C.U. History—U.S.—Civil War

D.V. Courage; Devotion to a cause

Wolff, Virginia Euwer. *The Mozart Season*. Holt, 1991. ISBN 0-8050-1571-X. 249p. \$15.95.

R Gr. 5-8. Allegra hadn't anticipated facing a summer filled with Mozart's Fourth Concerto in D, but she has just discovered that she has made the finals of an important statewide violin competition to be held on Labor Day. So, the summer becomes Mozart and music festivals and practice and—too much—conversation around the dinner table or on the picnic blanket about various highminded topics: life, lessons, and the Holocaust. While Allegra provides a solid center to the story, some of the surrounding characters speak more for the book's various themes than they do for themselves. There's a passionate, mad soprano who keens for her dead child, and a dancing homeless man, Mr. Trouble, who seeks his lost Waltz Tree: both seem to exist primarily as metaphorical inspiration for Allegra. On the other hand, Allegra's fellow competitors are freshly conceived and spontaneously developed. The story wanders down too many byways, but the prose is often light and fresh, and the qualities of hard practice and delight in music are well-conveyed. The suspense leading up to the competition is carefully developed, and if Allegra's hearing a song dedicated to her on the radio seems a bit out of the blue, it's still a nice ending. RS

D.V. Conduct of life

Yep, Laurence. *Dragon Cauldron*. HarperCollins, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-026754-2; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-026753-4. Library ed. \$16.89; Trade ed. \$16.95. 312p.

R Gr. 6-9. In a sequel to *Dragon of the Lost Sea* (BCCB 11/82) and *Dragon Steel* (BCCB 5/85) Yep continues the story of the dragon princess

Shimmer and her companions: the witch Civet, the human children Thorn and Indigo, and the clever wizard and narrator Monkey. This has all the classic elements of high fantasy: the quest, the struggle between forces of good and evil, magic and shape-changing, and a menu of disasters that might overwhelm a less cohesive narrative. In the end it is the boy Thorn who sacrifices his life to save the magic cauldron that will bring back the sea that had been the home of Shimmer's clan. So the cauldron is repaired, only to be wrested from Shimmer. "As long as we're alive," Monkey promises in closing, "we'll find a way." Perhaps the way will be a fourth book? ZS

Yolen, Jane. *Wizard's Hall*. Harcourt, 1991. ISBN 0-15-298132-2. 134p. \$13.95.

Ad Gr. 4-7. Henry "never wanted to be a wizard," but that seems to be his destiny, so off he goes to Wizard's Hall to receive instruction and a new name: Thornmallow, "prickly on the outside, squishy within." As student number one-hundred-and-thirteen, Thornmallow discovers that something special is going to be demanded of him; and, sure enough, it is he—"small and thin and often smudgy of nose"—who defeats the Beast and its Master. Although Yolen is a good storyteller and any tale of a child-hero conquering monsters has appeal, the writing here is often Disney-cute and the theme ("Try") didactically overpointed. The exact nature of the Beast is obscure and underdeveloped, but the story is suspensefully spun out to a satisfying, if predictable, ending. RS  
D.V. Perseverance

CORRECTION: Sheila Cole's *The Dragon in the Cliff*, reviewed in the May issue, takes place in Lyme—not Lye—, England, during 18—not 19—11. We regret the errors.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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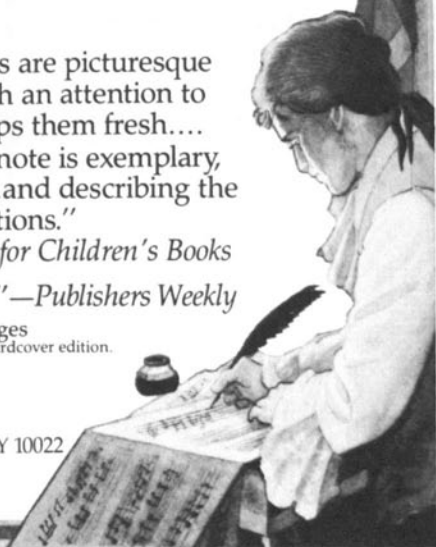
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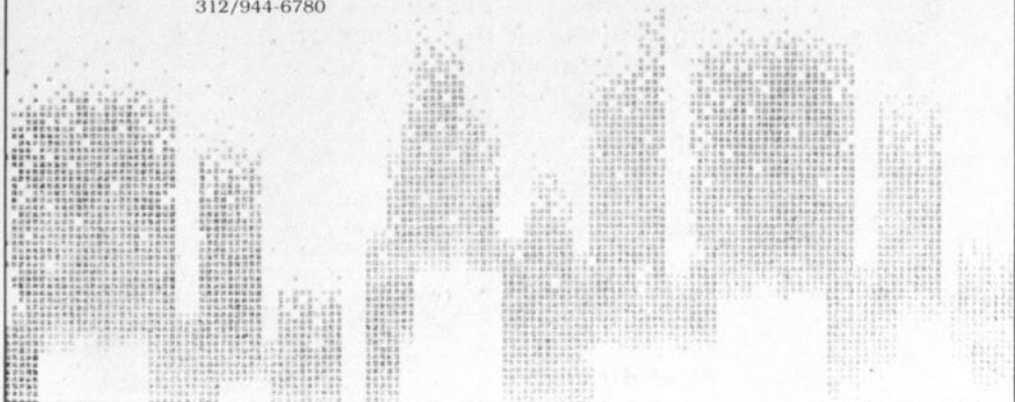
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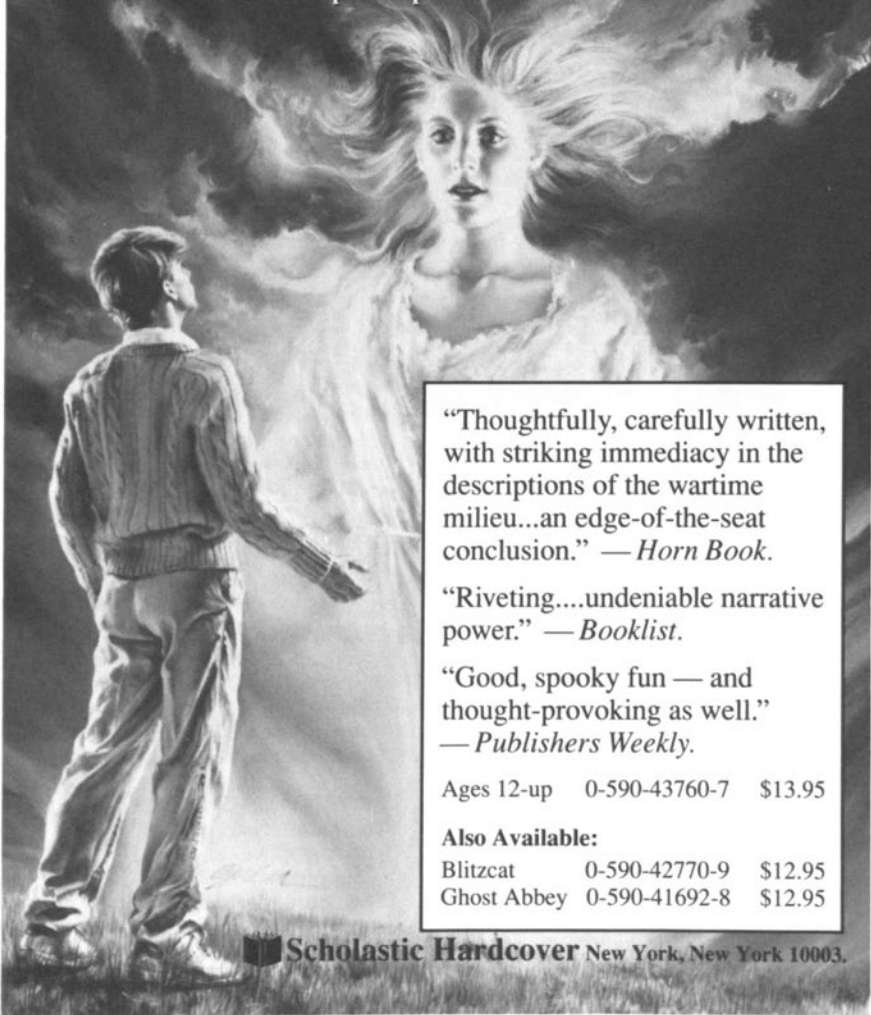
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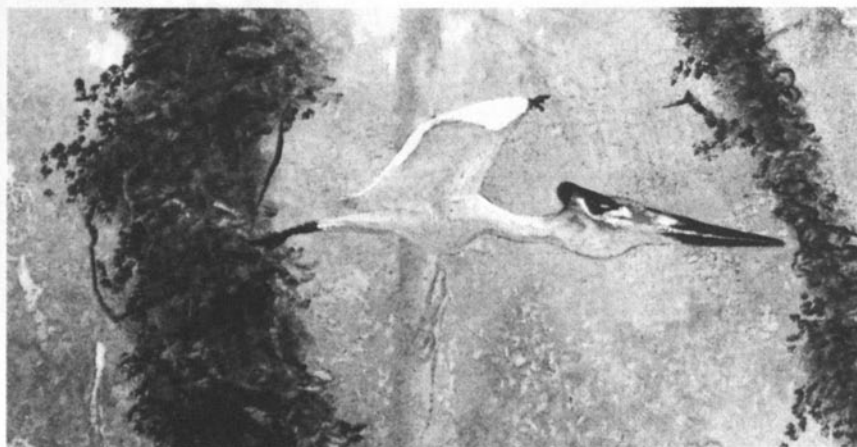
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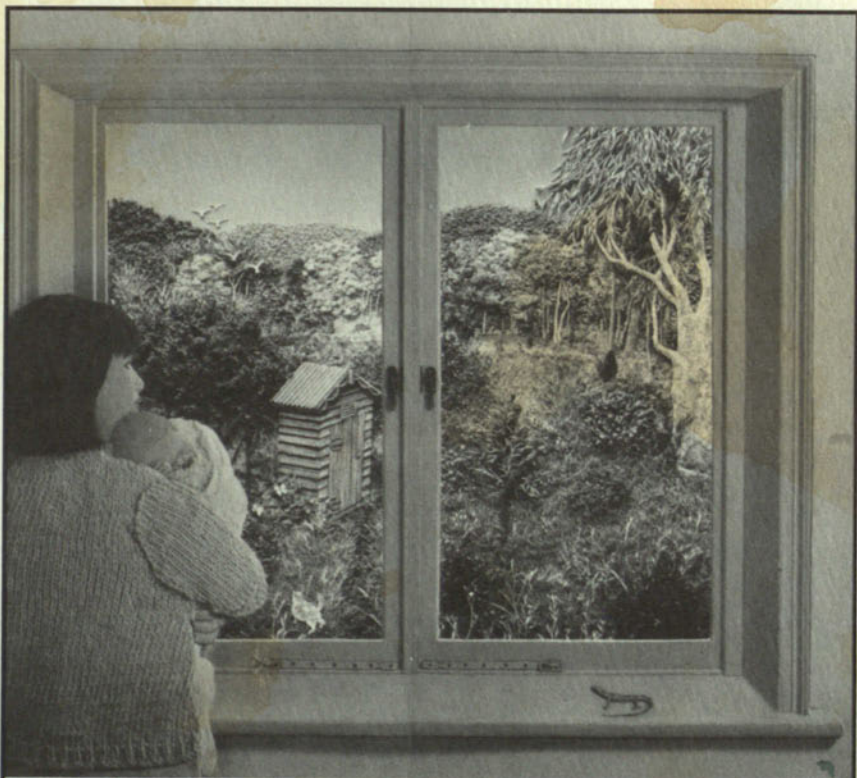
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