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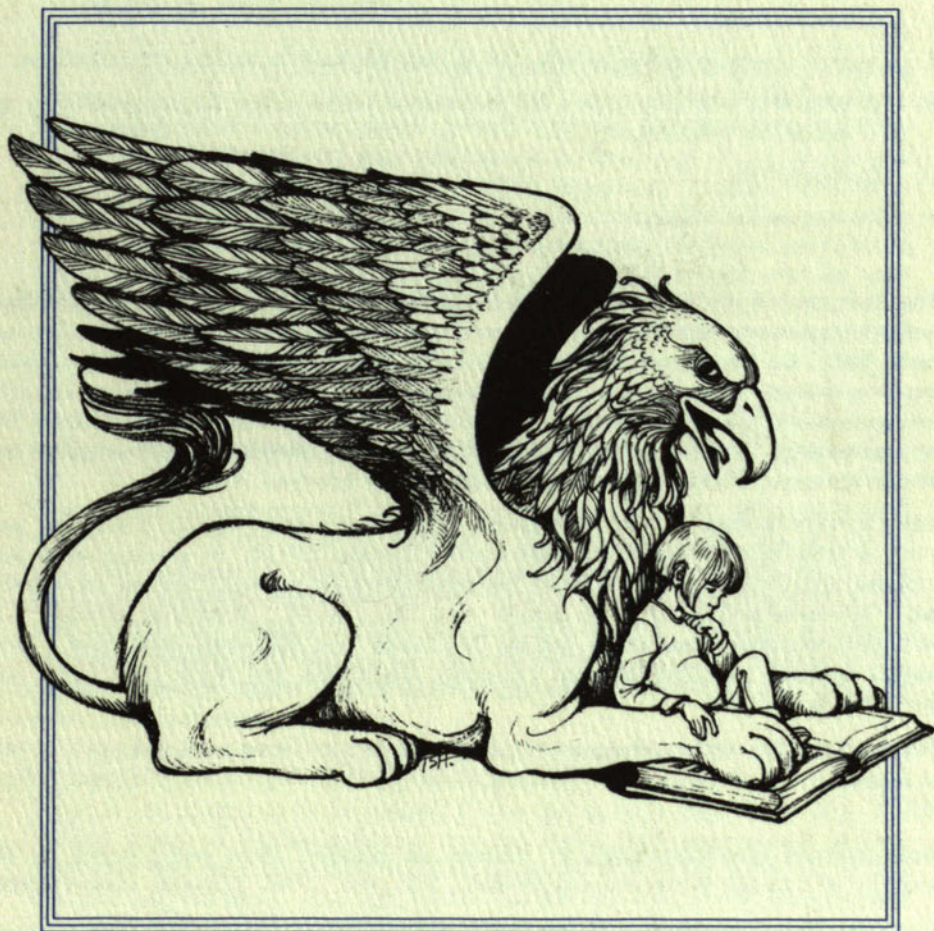


# THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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FEBRUARY 1992 VOLUME 45 NUMBER 6



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

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Volume 45

FEBRUARY, 1992

Number 6

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## "You did it, little teacup!"

In the two centuries that have passed since Madame Le Prince de Beaumont's literary tale "Beauty and the Beast" was published in France, many new versions have come and gone. Disney's motion picture will undoubtedly claim one of the largest and most enthusiastic audiences of all; perhaps it will even relegate the haunting black-and-white images of Cocteau to archival interest. Less long lasting will be the printed byproducts calculated to extend the commercial success of the movie. *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, available in both a lavishly produced hardcover edition and a small paperback with the same text, is adapted by A. L. Singer from the film and suffers on two counts: it repeats some of the movie's more problematic aspects, and it compounds them by translation into a medium that lacks live animation.

While Beauty was the hero of the fairy tale and her quest was for perception, the film adaptation has introduced swashbuckling villains and melodramatic action for a more typically male mythos—two guys fighting for a girl. "Roaring with fury, the Beast stalked after him. . . . He was burning with outrage. He wanted revenge!" (p. 87 in the hardcover edition). Whereas Beauty was free to come and go as she pleased in the fairy tale, in the film adaptation she's held prisoner by a Beast who bullies her before he courts her, and she can leave only after he releases her (p. 73). In fact, it is not Beauty's lack of love that almost kills Disney's Beast, but a rival's dagger. Between a pack of ferocious wolves, a vicious suitor, irate townsmen, and a treacherous insane asylum director, battle scenes heavily outweigh the one or two touching moments of affection.

Beauty's lonely rite of passage in the magic castle has been crowded with vociferous company, one of whom, a chipped cup, rescues her when the Beast is not around to do so himself ("You did it, little teacup!" p. 84). The alleged moral of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, that inner beauty is more important than outer, is defined and thus dispensed with in the beginning of both the film and the book. The real moral—let the best man win—surfaces, as it does in all stories, through the dramatic action and characterizations.

It is ironic to see a film tout an intelligent female (Belle reads) and mock a macho villain while actually turning a feminine tale into a matter of slugging things out. However, inner beauty is not one of our society's burning issues. The television series of "Beauty and the Beast" also abandoned its early focus on the couple's redeeming love for an emphasis on cops-and-robbers-style vengeance. The heroine was eventually killed off in favor of a son, a plot twist remarkably like that of *Hook*, the entertaining but heavily Oedipal film version of Peter Pan; Spielberg keeps Wendy out of the picture almost entirely to

spotlight Peter Pan and Captain Hook's battle over Pan's young son. Perhaps Iron John dominates our society more than Robert Bly can imagine.

However, the Disney factory's book spinoffs of an earlier Peter Pan film did not put James Barrie's play and novel out of print, nor will the present several printed adaptations of *Hook*. Nor will Disney's Beauty and the Beast spinoffs replace the picture books illustrated by Mercer Mayer, Warwick Hutton, Etienne Delessert, Winslow Penny Pels, Binette Schroeder, and Diane Goode; or the novel by Robin McKinley, the science fiction by Tanith Lee, and the short stories by Angela Carter; or the variants that include *Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady* (Hastings/Wjingaard), *Buffalo Woman* (Goble), *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe), *East of the Sun and West of the Moon* (Willard), and so on around the world. These versions will fulfill their own life-and-death cycle of publication only to be replaced by other creators' work. Some will achieve classic status, as did Walter Crane's, Edmund Dulac's, and Arthur Rackham's.

Disney's film of Beauty and the Beast will be with us a long time and we need to think about it carefully, because our cultural myths reflect who we are. The movie is successful on a technical level in a way that the book spinoffs are not. The hardcover book is royally designed and illustrated with images based on the film's. The paperback, with its small gallery of color stills drawn directly from the film, reveals more glaringly a major problem with both books: the words. Lacking music, motion-film visuals, and special effects, A. L. Singer's written descriptions of magic often fall flat: "The name of each dish was announced in song and dance" (p. 55) just doesn't sustain that musical dream of swirling tableware that lifts the movie above the ordinary into the fantastical realm. And alas for clichéd exposition: "Belle's eyes widened. A gasp caught in her throat" (p. 59). For practical purposes, librarians will want to have a copy of Disney's book around to satisfy clamorous demands. For the long haul, they'll want to keep ordering replacement copies of their own favorite versions.

Betsy Hearne, Editor

## *New Titles for Children and Young People*

Ackerman, Karen. *When Mama Retires*; illus. by Alexa Grace. Knopf, 1992. Library ed. ISBN 0-679-90289-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-80289-4. 33p. Library ed. \$15.99; Trade ed. \$15.00.

R      *Gr. K-2.*      Strong outlines and uncluttered composition are prominent features of broken-line and pastel wash pictures that illustrate a story set during World War II. Charley is the narrator, describing a day in which he and his brothers are taken through the procession of daily chores by their mother. They find that doing housework is arduous, but now they know they'll be ready—IF Mama does decide to retire from housework and take a wartime factory job. The writing has a pleasant flow and a convincing voice, and the book is nicely gauged in length and complexity for the read-aloud audience. ZS

Adams, Barbara Johnston. *The Go-Around Dollar*; illus. by Joyce Audy Zarins. Four Winds, 1992. ISBN 0-02-700031-1. [26p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad      *Gr. 1-3.*      Facts about dollar bills and paper currency accompany a "story" about the circuitous passage of a dollar bill. Dropped by a jogger,

found by some boys, spent, given as change to someone else, spun through the laundry . . . the dollar changes hands several times until it is spent by a girl at a new ice cream parlor, where it is immortalized under glass: "Our first customer." Pleasant, slightly awkward, illustrations do little to compensate for the slender excuse for a plot, but the real value, compounded with interest, is the variety of informational paragraphs, one to each double spread, about dollar bills. The information included seems arbitrarily chosen, but such facts as how much dollars weigh (490 bills to a pound); whose picture can appear on money (people "no longer living"); the formula for the printing ink (a secret), have the fascination of essential minutiae. Each fact is placed within a strikingly oversized reproduction of a bill. The first note explains the design: "For instance, a dollar drawn as an illustration for a book must be in black and white, not in full color. A dollar must also be shown either larger than one and one-half times the size of a real dollar; or smaller than three-quarters the size of a real dollar." Kids love money, and they will appreciate the detailed if scattershot attention it is given here. RS

Alcock, Vivien. *A Kind of Thief*. Delacorte, 1992. ISBN 0-385-30564-8. 192p. \$14.00. Reviewed from galleys.

R        *Gr. 6-8.*        Elinor is thirteen, and it is she to whom her father surreptitiously slips a railway storage receipt when he is being arrested. Elinor knows her father couldn't possibly have embezzled money. She's wrong—not only has he done just that, but it's the money of a great-aunt. When Elinor retrieves the locked briefcase and keeps it, does it make her, too, a kind of thief? That's the outline of the plot, but Alcock, with her usual combination of subtle characterizations and bold progression of incidents, has created a story with depth and suspense, as Elinor and her family (a young, volatile and loving stepmother, an unhappy younger brother, the aforementioned great-aunt, and a foster cousin) adjust to the situation and to each other, and Elinor decides what to do after opening the briefcase. ZS

D.V. Father-daughter relations

Arrick, Fran. *What You Don't Know Can Kill You*. Bantam, 1992. ISBN 0-553-07471-7. [160p]. \$15.00. Reviewed from galleys.

M        *Gr. 7-12.*        "Ellen was eighteen, about to graduate from high school, about to start a new life in college, about to get everything she ever wanted because she was smart and gorgeous," and she's "nice in addition to everything else." Needless to say, Ellen is doomed. When she goes to donate blood, her doctor discovers that she is HIV-positive—unbeknownst to her, her boyfriend has had sex with other people at college, and has contracted and passed on the infection. The story is the reaction of Ellen, her family (including her younger sister Debra, whose point of view the narrative primarily takes), and the community; but since there's virtually no characterization, the book is really an endless series of sometimes confusing messages. Fact is occasionally subordinated to drama ("Ellen and Jack both had AIDS," states a paragraph, when they don't yet) but more often drama is subordinated to authorial infopreaching (Ellen's boyfriend, while proposing a suicide pact, raves "You have to get your T-4s checked every few months . . . !" to which Ellen responds "If you had a support system you wouldn't even consider this suicide talk"). A few sensible statements come from Debra ("She was stupid not to make him wear a

condom”), but otherwise Ellen is portrayed as a shining martyr to romantic love, betrayed by an erring knight. We know even nice people can contract HIV and that they need help if they do, and it’s laudable to want to make this clear to those most in need of the information, but it takes more than a mission to make a good book. For a fictional look at teens and AIDS, skip this and try Doris Humphreys’ *Until Whatever* (BCCB 11/91); to bring home the reality of the people who suffer from it, look at Susan Kuklin’s *Fighting Back* (BCCB 3/89). DS

C.U. Health

Asch, Frank. *Dear Brother*; written and illus. by Frank Asch and Vladimir Vagin. Scholastic, 1992. ISBN 0-590-43107-2. [32p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. K-2. Two young mouse-brothers stay up all night reading old letters they have rescued from their mother’s attic cleaning. The correspondence amounts to a loose version of “The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse”—the tale of Great-Uncle Timothy, the city tailor, and his brother Henry, the farmer. Each letter begins with the salutation, “Dear brother,” and the two young mouse boys forget their squabbles as they become engrossed in their great-uncles’ past lives. The illustrated letters are written in lively and expressively varying scripts, and it is disappointing when the great-uncles’ stories practically come to a halt with “Joey and Marvin read many letters that night.” The life of the book is the story told in the letters—the contemporary story merely provides a background. The appealing, brightly-colored gouache illustrations of mice-people in their comfortable home are warm, detailed, and cozy. A good book to inspire genealogical research. KPJ  
D.V. Brothers

Bahr, Mary. *The Memory Box*; illus. by David Cunningham. Whitman, 1992. ISBN 0-8075-5052-3. [32p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 3-5. Zach, the narrator, is spending his usual three weeks with his grandparents, a summer tradition. He’s a bit puzzled by some odd behavior on the part of Gramps but agrees that it would be fun to fill a “memory box,” which, Gramps explains, is a box that stores family traditions and must be filled by an old person and a young person together. Zach’s grandmother later tells him, gently, that Gramps has Alzheimer’s disease and knows that he will deteriorate further. The story is wistfully sad, adequately written save for an occasional flowery phrase. The paintings are very handsome, with spare, effective composition, sensitive use of color, and fine textural detail and depiction of light. ZS  
D.V. Grandparent-child relations

Betancourt, Jeanne. *Kate’s Turn*. Scholastic, 1992. ISBN 0-590-43103-X. [128p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 5-8. Kate is thirteen, and she’s been outstanding in her ballet classes in Eugene, Oregon. When she begins her story she is about to join the National Ballet School in New York, thrilled at being selected, yet apprehensive about being good enough in this more challenging milieu. Since Kate lives with five other girls in the home of a former dancer, there is opportunity for the exploration of a range of miniplots and behavior patterns (the



girl who forces herself to vomit in order to stay thin, the girl who has to give up dancing because she was afraid to say her knee hurt, the girl from Russia who—rather tediously—makes mistakes in understanding English words and idioms). This is believable as the account of a young adolescent, but it sags at the crucial point at which Kate decides—with little preparation for the reader—that she doesn't want to be a dancer. ZS

D.V. Age-mate relations

Bodecker, N. M. *Water Pennies and Other Poems*; illus. by Erik Blegvad. McElderry, 1992. ISBN 0-689-50517-5. 54p. \$12.95.

R Gr. 2-4. Bugs, insects, and other lowly creatures seem to have claimed their fair share of poetic attention lately, including Paul Fleischman's Newbery Award winner *Joyful Noise* (BCCB 2/88). Here, in Bodecker's last book (he died in 1988), are 32 poems celebrating the earth's most prolific—and sometimes most annoying—inhabitants. "Midsummer Night Itch" typifies the poet's clever address of a common irritant: "Mosquito is out./ it's the end of the day;/ she's humming and hunting/ her evening away./ Who knows why such hunger arrives on such wings/ at sundown?" I guess/ it's the nature of things." Many of the poems manage humor and resonance in one breath: "The silverfish/ is not a fish,/ and you should be/ suspicious/ if someone says/ that silverfish/ with parsley is/ delicious." Dragonflies, moths, centipedes, daddy longlegs, grasshoppers, butterflies, lacewings, beetles, June bugs, gnats—there's a cast of billions right on (or, alas, inside) your doorstep. Instead of listening to kids screech at the sight of a bug, teach them a couple of these chants, ending with Bodecker's climactic existential question in "The Louse, the Night, and the Star." Blegvad's delicate black and white hatch drawings give each poem fine-lined graphic balance. BH

C.U. Nature study

Brooks, Martha. *Two Moons in August*. Joy Street/Little, 1992. ISBN 0-316-10979-7. 199p. \$14.95.

R Gr. 8-12. "Nineteen fifty-nine has actually been a pretty good year so far. Nothing terrible has happened. Yet." Fifteen-year-old Sidonie has good reason to expect the worst after her mother's long illness and death, her father's withdrawal, and a friend's fatal accident. These misfortunes are not dumped precipitously as action in the first-person narrative, but are remembered in the protagonist's healing process and tentative establishment of new—or renewal of old—relationships. As in her collection *Paradise Café and Other Stories* (BCCB 12/90), Brooks sounds a true pitch in the voices of her adolescent cast, including Sidonie, who often reacts to pain spitefully; her sister, who treats both her gentle Chinese boy friend and Sidonie to bouts of self-centered caprice; and Sidonie's new teenage neighbor Kieran, moody from the throes of his parents' abusive relationship and divorce. There's a lot going on here, emotionally, but Brooks exerts control through dynamics that are developed subtly within a confined frame of time and place. Perceptive U.S. readers will find, in this small Canadian town, a situation rendered familiar by the intensity of what seems to be detailed recollection. BH

D.V. Death, adjustment to; Family relations

Burstein, Fred. *Whispering in the Park*; illus. by Helen Cogancherry. Bradbury, 1992. ISBN 0-02-715621-4. [32p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad 2-4 yrs. Line and wash drawings, softly colored and realistically detailed, are the most attractive aspect of a picture book that is appropriately simple for young children but decidedly tepid in structure and tempo. Sophie and Miriam play together while their mothers are occupied with caring for infant siblings. The two girls throw animal crackers to fish in the park pond, realize it's time to go when they notice both mothers are changing the babies' diapers, and wave a friendly farewell as they say "See you tomorrow." ZS

D.V. Age-mate relations

Chang, Ina. *A Separate Battle: Women and the Civil War*. Lodestar, 1991. ISBN 0-525-67365-2. 104p. illus. with photographs. (Young Readers' History of the Civil War). \$15.95.

R Gr. 5-9. Abolitionists, nurses, camp followers, soldiers and spies: the roles, official and de facto, played by women in the Civil War were many, and Chang uses them to illuminate the experience of the war as a whole. Some of the women included here, such as Angelina Grimké and Sojourner Truth, have long been famous; others, such as diarist Mary Chesnut, have only recently come to light. Young readers may be most interested in the portraits of soldiers such as Sarah Edmonds, who, disguised as one "Franklin Thompson," fought for the Union; or Southern spy Belle Boyd—"When she was only seventeen, she shot a drunken Yankee soldier who had insulted her mother." Chapters are organized by the varying roles women played in the war; boxed inserts profile particular women and events. Photographs and contemporary engravings are many and well-spaced in the large format; there are no notes, but an index and bibliography are appended. RS

C. U. U.S.—History—Civil War

D.V. Sex roles

Chew, Ruth. *Royal Magic*. Scholastic, 1991. Paper ed. ISBN 0-590-44742-4. 127p. illus. (A Little Apple Paperback). Paper ed. \$2.75.

M Gr. 3-5. A young black brother and sister, Jack and Cindy, are visiting the New York Museum of Natural History when they are suddenly tossed back in time and across the ocean to ancient Africa. Why?—who knows, but undemanding readers will probably appreciate this skipping of the preliminaries in favor of the action. Unfortunately, there isn't much of that, either, as Chew seems more intent upon showing the social structure, living conditions, and technological achievements of her mythical realm than she is in providing a coherent story. The sibs meet a friendly flautist, Atuke; the *Oba*, king of the nation; and his chief wife (of one hundred and eighteen), the *Enahan*; and the Queen Mother, who casts a spell to get the children home. All in all, it's pretty perplexing, but junior anthropologists might enjoy the details. Despite the story's mention of computers and such, fuzzy and anonymous illustrations make the book seem dated. RS

Conrad, Pam. *Pedro's Journal: A Voyage with Christopher Columbus August 3, 1492-February 14, 1493*; illus. by Peter Koeppen. Caroline House, 1991. ISBN 1-878093-17-7. 86p. \$13.95.

R Gr. 4-6. Another ship's boy joins the crowd who have kept journals of a voyage across the Ocean Sea with Christopher Columbus. This diary has the dramatic fate of being sealed in a barrel with Columbus' own proclamation during a terrible storm on the way back to Spain, so it ends with convincing abruptness. Although the account is not as thorough as Miriam Schlein's or Olga Litowinsky's (BCCB editorial, 10/91), it is manageably brief, readable, and accompanied by lively black-and-white sketches that Pedro purportedly makes on his trip, including one of the wrecked Santa Maria for which he's responsible. (The last drawing seems to be something of a slip, since it shows the barrel floating away after the journal has been enclosed in it.) The author's note admits to a limited amount of research, but at least she makes history smoother sailing for young readers. BH  
C.U. Columbus Day

Cooney, Caroline B. *Flight #116 Is Down*. Scholastic, 1992. ISBN 0-590-44465-4. [192p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-12. When a 747 crashes on her family's estate outside the tiny town of Nearing River, sixteen-year-old Heidi is the only one who sees it go down. After her emergency phone call, almost everyone in the area reports to the accident scene, and Heidi's empty mansion is turned into a temporary hospital. As the book begins, several young passengers are introduced, as well as teenagers from Nearing River who later assist at the accident. The story covers eight fast hours, documented in a minute-by-minute log-style format. Intermittent one-sentence paragraphs, such as "Rescuing ran in the family" and "Heidi's scream threw her to her knees," give a news-commentary flavor to the fast-paced narrative. When a child goes into shock, a 15-year-old boy is cut from the wreck, and a girl dies before she reconciles with her family, only the realism and timeliness of the story keep it from crossing the line between drama and melodrama. Readers who are fascinated by tales of tragedy will be held until the exhausting finish. KPJ  
C.U. Reading, reluctant

Cruz Martinez, Alejandro. *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun: The Legend of Lucia Zenteno*; adapted by Rosalma Zubizaretta, Harriet Rohmer, and David Schecter; illus. by Fernando Olivera. Children's Book Press, 1991. ISBN 0-89239-101-4. 32p. \$13.95.

Ad Gr. 1-3. Adapted by poet Alejandro Cruz Martinez from a traditional story of the Zapotec Indians of Mexico and retold here again as a story, this is the somewhat diffuse legend of a mysterious woman who, shunned as a witch by her neighbors, finds her own quiet revenge. The river was in love with the "amazingly beautiful" Lucia Zenteno and when she went there to bathe, would rise from its bed and "flow through her shining black hair." After Lucia Zenteno is driven away by the frightened villagers, the river and the fish go with her. Faced with drought, the villagers seek out Lucia and her forgiveness, receive it, and mind her gentle admonition: "just as the river gives water to all who are thirsty, no matter who they are, so you must learn to treat everyone with kindness, even those who seem different from you." The simple structure

of the tale has an appealing and folkloric plainness, but its didacticism is bald and lacking fire. Olivera's watercolor illustrations add a welcome degree of mystery to the tale, with emblematic images of birds and the sun and a far-off range of purple mountains providing a ritualized background for the central figure of Lucia, a strong-faced Madonna with a stream of bright fishes flowing through her raven hair. English and Spanish texts are paralleled on each page. RS  
D.V. Kindness

Cushman, Jean. *Do You Wanna Bet?: Your Chance to Find Out about Probability*; illus. by Martha Weston. Clarion, 1991. ISBN 0-395-56516-2. 102p. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. 4-6. A series of chatty fictional episodes explores the ways in which chance enters the everyday experiences of two boys, Danny and Brian. Each episode concludes with a boxed conjecture headed "Do You Wanna Bet?" in which Cushman asks such questions as "Was Danny right? Were his chances as good as Brian's?" but does not give answers until an analysis that follows to explain the probabilities inherent in the situation. This doesn't do a bad job of popularizing the concepts of probability, sampling, and statistics, but it would be more effective if the illustrations either ramified or extended the concepts, or if there were more attention paid to principles than to story. ZS  
C.U. Mathematics

Day, David. *Aska's Animals*; illus. by Warabé Aska. Doubleday, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-385-42126-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-25315-X. 32p. Library ed. \$15.99; Trade ed. \$15.00.

Ad 5-8 yrs. As the title might indicate, this is more a gallery of paintings than a cohesive picture book; there's no doubt, though, that children, their imaginations prodded by the accompanying brief poems, will enjoy staring at the mysterious visions of animal genesis that appear herein. Horses rise from sea foam, lions from the grasslands; crocodiles are shaped from lava flows cooling "their stony fingers in the sea." Poem and picture appear on facing pages; each oil painting is vividly, sometimes garishly, colored, with slick effects that recall 1970s album-cover art. The best paintings have an eerie rightness to them, as in the picture of camels concealed within sand dunes or tigers emerging from the Rousseau-like fronds of the forest. Most of the poetry is fairly flat, but there are enough surprises in perception to keep kids' attention on both sides of the double-spreads: "When zebras come to drink at dusk,/ Watch the rippling dance of shadow and light./ It's easy enough to understand/ How this water music came galloping to life." RS

Drucker, Malka. *Frida Kahlo: Torment and Triumph in Her Life and Art*. Bantam, 1991. Trade ed. ISBN 0-553-07165-3; Paper ed. ISBN 0-553-35408-6. 160p. illus. with photographs. Library ed. \$16.50; Paper ed. \$7.00.

Ad Gr. 7-10. The daughter of an immigrant European Jew (he had changed his name from Kahl to Kahlo when he settled in Mexico), Frida Kahlo was a rebel whose life was shaped by her art and by the accident which almost killed her; in turn, her art was affected by her fierce independence, by Diego Rivera (to whom she was twice married), and by the ferment of political and cultural changes in her country. Informative and sympathetic, this biography is nevertheless marred to some extent by the author's penchant for hyperbole, and

by a lack of balance between small details and matters of import. It is also adversely affected by the reporting of thoughts or actions as though they were observed fact. Illustrations include several color and black-and-white reproductions of her work as well as photographs of the artist. ZS  
C.U. Art appreciation

Dunbar, Joyce. *Lollopoy*; illus. by Susan Varley. Macmillan, 1992. ISBN 0-02-733195-4. 26p. \$14.95.

Ad 3-5 yrs. There's a Blegvad-like freedom to Varley's line that makes her soft-colored watercolor illustrations vigorous despite their delicacy of execution. The story is less impressive. Lollopoy is Sophie's toy rabbit, in this English picture book, and he's left behind when she becomes engrossed in picking bluebells. The story shifts to a rabbit-hole, where young rabbits decide Lollopoy is "the Bogey-Rabbit" who will eat them all up. Their mother says that's nonsense, he's Lollopoy and he's lost. The rabbits take him into the wood, get frightened again, run home; next morning Mother Rabbit patches up a torn Lollopoy. Shift again, abruptly, to "It was Sophie's mother who saw him first. . . ." The story just doesn't hang together, being adequately told but less effectively structured. ZS

Early, Margaret, ad. *William Tell*; ad. and illus. by Margaret Early. Abrams, 1991. ISBN 0-8109-3854-5. 32p. \$17.95.

R 6-9 yrs. Applying the same elegance of pattern and detail to Tell as she did to Ali Baba (BCCB 12/89), Early miniaturizes the legendary Swiss marksman with little loss to his heroism. Her retelling of the William Tell story is straightforward and suspenseful, if sometimes pictorially belied by her delicate medievalism. The climactic scene of the apple and the arrow, for example, is a pastoral fantasy, its forest greens, misty mountains, and gold-flecked Lake Lucerne, pretty but undramatic. On the other hand, the painting of the captive Tell bound on the boat of the evil governor during a thunderstorm is an altogether satisfactory marriage of the theatrical and the stylized, a sharp white crack of lightning decisive against the gold-patterned rain. There's a lot of gold paint here, always tastefully applied and sometimes eerily atmospheric, as in the iridescence of the moonlit lake where the Swiss make their vow to resist the Austrian conquest. The figure drawing and the tone of the paintings is a bit like Pauline Baynes' work but less fluid and, on balance, more boldly rendered. It's a fairly bloody tale, and if the paintings suggest less of its violence and more of its venerableness, one feels that Tell would not refuse the handsome mantle. RS

Edwards, Michelle. *A Baker's Portrait*; written and illus. by Michelle Edwards. Lothrop, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-09713-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-09712-X. 32p. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$13.95.

R 5-8 yrs. Michelin the portrait painter doesn't get much business, not because the town of Hoshel contains no customers, but because she paints just what she sees—fat, warts, cross-eyes, and all. Now Aunt Liliane and Uncle Ferdinand, two of the ugliest bodies and sweetest souls in the world, have commissioned her to do their portraits. Michelin tries earnestly to lie on paper, but the hair and full set of teeth she draws (where Ferdinand and Liliane have none) look terrible. Finally the answer comes in affectionate metaphor, and Michelin paints what the couple have nicknamed each other: "my chocolate

cake! . . . my challah.” Next in line for a portrait stands Grandma Levy; somehow she reminds Michelin of the first snow of winter. Edwards, whose *Chicken Man* (BCCB 5/91) introduced an individualistic new talent in both story and art, displays a kind of painterly abandon in her thick-textured oil paintings. Although the lines seem freewheeling, there’s plenty of control in these faces and figures, not to mention in the solidly factual colors, and the shapes become more defined as the solution comes closer. The picture book’s combination of humor and insight provides an unlabored opportunity for discussing compromises between truth and consequence in social relationships and—as bonus—here’s a piquant introduction to symbolic representation in art. BH  
D.V. Honesty

Ellis, Sarah. *Pick-Up Sticks*. McElderry, 1992. ISBN 0-689-50550-7. 124p. \$13.95.

R Gr. 6-8. Thirteen-year-old Polly is the only child of a woman who is an artisan (in the medium of stained glass) and who had chosen deliberately to have a child but not to marry. Polly becomes irritated by Mum’s refusal to worry or pursue house-hunting when their building is sold. She goes to stay with her uncle’s family while Mum moves into the studio. It is largely through the experience of living with her reactionary uncle and a delinquent cousin that Polly comes to appreciate her mother’s tolerance and to realize that she loves and is loved by a woman of rare integrity. There isn’t a preachy note in all of this; in a smoothly-written story of an emotional coming of age, Polly reacts believably to experiences that provide perspective. ZS  
D.V. Mother-daughter relations

Fine, Anne. *The Book of the Banshee*. Joy Street/Little, 1992. ISBN 0-316-28315-0. 168p. \$13.95.

R Gr. 6-9. Will Flowers has been engrossed in (the fictional) William Scott Saffrey’s memoir of life in the WWI trenches, *The Longest Summer*. Being in the midst of a war himself, he decides to write his own book. “Our house is a battleground, too, in its own way. That’s what Mum says, at least. She claims that since Estelle turned into a shrieking banshee overnight, our house has been hell on earth.” Estelle’s adolescent angst and injuries are perfect material for Fine, who, when it comes to family fights, always has the best seat in the house. “You *hate* spending money on anything for me, don’t you? You’ll buy things for the others. You bought Muffy a whole bed last week—” To which Estelle’s mother replies, “Estelle, Muffy can’t sleep in a crib *forever*.” The battles are fast and furious, and the strategies, tactics, and subterfuges developed by each member of the family (to placate, prod, and infuriate Estelle) are both frantic and funny. Throughout, Will reads Saffrey’s memoirs; in fact, it seems as if everyone is reading something (including Will’s friend Chopper, who stays one step ahead of his parents via *Coping with the Awkward Adolescent*), and the way books and lives inform each other is a theme Fine develops with subtle humor. Her own book loses a little steam towards the (cute) ending, brought on by a funny but pedantically extended scene at a school Parents’ Night and a subsequent family fight employing the spice rack, but readers will be gratified by the final truce. RS  
D.V. Family relations

Fritz, Jean. *The Great Adventure of Christopher Columbus*; illus. by Tomie dePaola. Putnam, 1992. ISBN 0-399-22113-1. 12p. \$15.95.

Ad Gr. 3-4. An odd use of paper engineering squeezes the usual good style and careful reporting of Jean Fritz into an unfortunate arrangement. Like so many pop-up books, this one, lavishly illustrated, uses the device to no discernible purpose; in fact, the pop-ups get in the way of the reader, since the text is printed on a recto flap that begins on the closed fold, then is continued on the back of that fold. Fritz describes, in simple and direct prose, the long wait that Columbus had before he obtained the royal sanction and royal financial backing so that he could sail the Ocean Sea to the Indies; she makes it clear that Columbus never knew how erroneous his conclusions were and never wavered in his conviction that what he wanted to believe was true. With the pop-ups constructed in shadow-box style, DePaola's paintings are opulently but darkly colored, and have a solemnity of tone that is unusual for this prolific illustrator. ZS

Gay, Kathlyn. *Caution! This May Be an Advertisement*. Watts, 1992. ISBN 0-531-11039-7. [208p.] illus. with photographs. \$13.90. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-10. In a mixture of history, reportage, and advice, Gay offers consumers an intelligent and informative guide to advertising. Opting for breadth rather than depth, the book touches on topics such as marketing research, packaging as promotion, image creation, and public service advertising (the memorable example: an Oregon safe-sex campaign showing an attractive raingear-clad man, with the caption "Good boys always wear their rubbers"), as well as the more obvious media and direct mail methods of advertising. The overall message of the book is "Consumer, be aware," and Gay offers sound advice, suggesting readers analyze product claims ("Is strength an important factor in regard to paper towels?") and acknowledging the likelihood of a teenager being at least partly responsible for the family grocery shopping as well as his or her own purchases. An occasional example or topic is unclear (a discussion of video news releases, for instance, fails to convey what exactly they are), but overall the book is a readable and useful resource. Toll-free numbers and addresses for some federal consumer agencies appear in the text; endnotes and a remarkably extensive bibliography are included. DS  
C.U. Social studies

Ghan, Linda. *Muhla, the Fair One*; illus. by Elise Benoît. NuAge Editions, 1991. Paper ed. ISBN 0-921833-30-X. 40p. Paper ed. \$14.95.

R Gr. 2-4. "Just remember, you're not to open the big pot, no matter what little voice whispers in your ear," warn Muhla's parents as they leave her in charge of her little sister Lungile. This prohibition sets readers up for the appearance of a hungry evil spirit, Izume, who pops out of the pot when Lungile inevitably lifts the lid, who pursues 13-year-old Muhla to the village where she's supposed to find a husband, and who forces her to change shapes with him. This is a long, complex story for a picture book format, but the elements are strong and the theme—that appearances are deceiving to all but the most perceptive—is worth comparing to European tales such as "Beauty and the Beast." If the source is folkloric, it's too bad there are no notes outside of an acknowledgment that this was commissioned by the Black Theatre Workshop of

Canada: our only clue is a first sentence that sets the tale "on the brown hills of Africa overlooking the vast plain." The striking art, gray halftones with some full-color illustrations interspersed, features a smoothly modeled cast of black characters who are costumed in vividly patterned clothing and coifed with elaborately braided hair. With such visual dignity and a narrative that only occasionally falters, this well-produced Canadian paperback will hold independent readers or serve as a read-aloud to younger listeners. BH

Gorog, Judith. *On Meeting Witches at Wells*. Philomel, 1991. ISBN 0-399-21803-3. 119p. \$14.95.

R Gr. 5-8. The framing device for a series of offbeat stories told by equally offbeat characters is this: in a school about to close because of cracking walls, children from the eighth-grade class gather to observe a school tradition—each student makes a pillow while three teachers participate in storytelling sessions. That is the adequate but not strong linkage between the stories, which are not of equal effectiveness but range from good to very good, and yield several surprises, including the fact that some anecdotes are told by ghostly visitors to vary the pace. One of the best is "An Old, Often Retold, Story of Revenge," which has an unexpected ending that outdoes the drama of the plot. Readers will also enjoy the eerie inevitability of "The Silver Skier" and the magic of the title story. ZS

Graff, Nancy Price. *The Call of the Running Tide: A Portrait of an Island Family*; illus. with photographs by Richard Howard. Little, 1992. ISBN 0-316-32278-4. 80p. \$16.95.

Ad Gr. 4-6. The island of the subtitle is Swans Island, off the coast of Maine, and the family of this photodocumentary consists of Spencer Joyce, his wife, and their three children. To the extent of their experience and ability, each member of the Joyce family takes part in fishing for lobsters, as their forefathers (and mothers) have done. Black-and-white photographs augment but do not often extend the text. Graff follows family activities and interests through the year, emphasizing the details of lobstering and the satisfactions of the islanders' way of life. The text is informative albeit weakened by a writing style that is at times heavy and quite often florid. ZS

D.V. Occupational orientation

Hamilton, Morse. *Little Sister for Sale*; illus. by Gioia Fiammenghi. Cobblehill, 1992. ISBN 0-525-65078-4. 32p. \$13.00.

Ad Gr. K-2. Clean, bright drawings in line and wash illustrate a story that is mildly amusing and might be more so were it not so determinedly cute. Angry because her little sister Abby has taken a bite of every strawberry (they were supposed to share) and has used Kate's toothbrush and damaged some of her toys, Kate goes on the offensive. Changing the lettering on an old lemonade stand, Kate puts Abby on the counter next to a sign that announces she's for sale. An elderly woman called Nonna (a neighbor? their grandmother?) comes out of her house, pays a quarter, and goes off (temporarily) with Abby. There are no parents or caretakers in the story, which ends with the sisters sitting outdoors, cuddled together in a twilight scene. Predictable dénouement: regret followed by reunion. ZS

D.V. Sisters



Haugaard, Erik and Masako, ad. and tr. *The Story of Yuriwaka*; illus. by Birgitta Saflund. Roberts Rinehart, 1991. ISBN 1-879373-02-5. 42p. \$12.95.

R *Gr. 4-6.* A preface advises readers that the story of Odysseus, brought to Japan in the sixteenth century, was adapted to become a tale about Yuriwaka, a legendary warrior of great strength and courage. Sent on a punitive mission by the Emperor, Yuriwaka is betrayed by two scoundrels and left marooned on an island. Eventually he finds a rescuer, returns to his wife (who has spurned Yuriwaka's betrayer even though he has insisted that her husband is dead), and proves his identity by his skill at archery—using his own stolen iron bow that no other can bend. An interesting adaptation and a capable retelling/translation, this is minimally flawed by what appears to be careless editing and by some poor placement of pictures. The illustrations, whether full color or black-and-white, are distinctive for their strong sense of design and composition. ZS

C. U. Storytelling

Hayashi, Akiko. *Aki and the Fox*; written and illus. by Akiko Hayashi. Doubleday, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-385-41948-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-41947-3. 40p. \$14.00.

R *4-7 yrs.* Kon the toy fox and his young human friend Aki, whom he has played with since her birth, decide to take a train to Grandma's house—to get Kon's frayed seams repaired. In the course of their journey, his tail gets squashed, as well, and he's briefly buried in a sand dune by a dog. However, a needle, thread, and long hot bath set things right again. The real adventure here is the art work, an open bridge between Japanese cultural details and western children's book art of the 1940s; Elizabeth Orton Jones comes to mind. There's even a miniature reminder of earlier times with Tenniel's Mad Hatter and Duchess (and is that Mr. McGregor?) profiled through the train windows. Hayashi's art, while spaciouly innocent, never becomes boring or oversweet. The compositions are slyly varied, strongly focused, and subtly colored without becoming bland (spotlight reds and oranges make sure of that). Most of all, these pictures are warm, especially in scenes such as Grandma's welcoming hug and bath. The text, while it's not A. A. Milne vintage, reads smoothly and maintains a sense of adventure at a basic level. Perhaps the book's most immediate appeal is the independence of the two main characters combined with the reassurance that someone will come to their rescue. BH

D.V. Love for toy

Hoberman, Mary Ann. *Fathers, Mothers, Sisters, Brothers: A Collection of Family Poems*; illus. by Marilyn Hafner. Joy Street/Little, 1992. ISBN 0-316-36736-2. 32p. \$14.95.

R *4-7 yrs.* "What is a family?/ Who is a family? One and another makes two is a family!" The emphasis here is on diverse situations, and young listeners from nuclear, extended, fractured, foster, and adoptive families will all find a place in these poems and pictures. Rhythms and rhymes are jingly but energetic, making for brisk read-aloud sessions. Although the general tone is bouncy, Hoberman acknowledges the rivalries ("Big Sister"), drudgeries ("Eat It—It's Good for You!"), and practicalities ("Half-Whole-Step") that plague families, along with the sadness of separations ("My Father"). Hafner has bloomed here in full color. Her scenes are action-packed and skillfully varied to

provide a page setting for each block of text. After a sequence of jovial graphics, there's a well-timed pause in the full-page picture of a little boy waving goodbye to his departing dad at the end of a wintry day together. When the verses fall to the level of a sing-song message (in "Our Family Comes From 'Round the World," for instance), the illustrations offer engaging distraction. Both writer and artist have a good sense of what holds families together—a sense of humor—and they've conveyed it with catchy verses and eye-catching visuals. BH

C.U. Reading aloud

D.V. Family relations

Horton, Tom. *Swanfall: Journey of the Tundra Swans*; illus. with photographs by David Harp. Walker, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8107-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8106-3. 42p. Library ed. \$16.85; Trade ed. \$15.95.

R Gr. 4-6. "Only a windpipe that looped and stretched nearly four feet within those long necks could produce such otherworldly music." With an elegant, sometimes convoluted style, Horton recounts the migratory journeys of the tundra swans. At both the wintering and summering grounds, a realistically dramatic incident transpires when a cygnet is killed by a hunter near Chesapeake Bay and when another is left behind to die because it is not ready to fly before the arrival of the first Arctic storm. An environmental message emerges effortlessly from information about the birds—for example, their shift to feeding inland as the bays become too polluted to sustain aquatic grasses. Harp's color photography is lyrical in capturing the motions of flight and the play of light and dark on swan feathers. This is a sharply focused photodocumentary that will stretch the awareness, as well as the vocabulary, of independent readers and the concentration of younger listeners. BH

D.V. Ecological awareness

Joose, Barbara M. *Anna and the Cat Lady*; illus. by Gretchen Will Mayo. HarperCollins, 1992. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020243-2; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020242-4. [176p]. Library ed. \$13.89; Trade ed. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. Best friends Anna and Bethie, first introduced in *Anna, the One and Only* (BCCB 2/89), make a new friend of Mrs. Sarafiny when she rescues the two girls—and a kitten—from a local "haunted" house. Mrs. Sarafiny has six cats of her own and is regarded by the town as being rather peculiar; despite the fact that she rescued the girls, Anna's father tells Anna not to speak with Mrs. Sarafiny anymore. But Anna and Bethie are loyal to the "cat lady," even as they become aware that her oddities (fear of Martians, for example) indicate real trouble. While Mrs. Sarafiny's mental illness is sentimentally rendered, there is a realistic crisis when she puts the television in the oven as a "TV dinner," and it's up to the girls to save her. With nicely woven subplots that include Anna's determined, and hopeless, efforts to keep the kitten she found in the haunted house, and her (ungrounded) fear that her parents are divorcing, the book is amiable middle-grade fare with a bit more personality than most. RS

D.V. Older-younger generations

Kandoian, Ellen. *Molly's Seasons*; written and illus. by Ellen Kandoian. Cobblehill, 1992. ISBN 0-525-65076-8. 32p. \$13.00.

R 4-7 yrs. As in her previous books *Under the Sun* (BCCB 1/88) and *Is Everybody Up* (BCCB 12/89), Kandoian here extends a concept just a bit beyond the everyday, encouraging kids to think of the world as a bigger backyard. "The sun and the snow, the wind and the rain,/ Bring signs of the seasons to Molly in Maine," and a series of gentle double-spread watercolor illustrations shows Molly enjoying the fruits and fun of the four seasons, each picture also showing the primary calendar months for that season. (Summer may be Kandoian's favorite: while the other pictures are a bit conventional, the summer light brings a subtle palette to some atmospheric paintings). Many books, of course, show these changes, "but here is what Molly wants to know: Are the seasons the same wherever you go?" No—in the far north and south, "winter means darkness and noon looks like night/ Summer means sunshine and midnight is bright"; at the Equator there are two seasons, rainy and dry, and in New Zealand, the seasons are similar to Molly's, "but it's winter in June, summer in December, Autumn in march, and spring in September!" This is oversimplified: for example, the picture of the polar summer looks as warm as the temperate equivalent; and equatorial climate is more complex than rainy versus dry. Yet the basic concepts are sound, and the book will be a boon to all those kids who wonder why they, unlike the characters in the books they read, don't have snow at Christmas. RS

Kehret, Peg. *Terror at the Zoo*. Cobblehill, 1992. ISBN 0-525-65083-0. 131p. \$14.00. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 5-7. Grandma and Grandpa have gotten Ellen and her brother Cory an unusual birthday gift (she'll be twelve, he'll be eight) at a charity auction: a one-night camp-out at Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo. Through an unlikely series of coincidences, misunderstandings, and deceptions, the children end up spending the night without adult supervision—and locked in with a child-hating escaped convict who, upon discovering Ellen and Cory, wants to hold them for ransom. The kids scramble through various animal enclosures in the dark as they attempt to elude their pursuer until finally he corners them in the elephant compound, where Ellen (through telepathy honed in experiments with her dog) convinces the elephants to save them: "Good elephant, help us! We need you. The man is evil. Please help us escape." There's no characterization; the most interesting person is the hackneyed convict, who at least has solid roots in B-movie melodrama. The nocturnal chase through the zoo is atmospheric and suspenseful, but even the most credulous reader may quail at the absurdity of the plot. DS

Kendall, Russ. *Eskimo Boy: Life in an Inupiaq Eskimo Village*; written and illus. with photographs by Russ Kendall. Scholastic, 1992. ISBN 0-590-43695-3. [40p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 2-5. Explaining in a prefatory note that "Eskimo" is the ethnological term used by many Native Alaskans, the author/photographer introduces Norman Kokeok, a seven-year-old Inupiaq Eskimo who lives on a small island off of Alaska's northwest coast. Kendall's text is minimal, little more than captioning for his often stunning color photographs. Alternating dramatic perspectives of the sweeping landscape with observant portraits of

Norman and his family, Kendall conveys the particulars of Eskimo life without making them seem exotic. Although Norman's mother, for example, cleans the meat her husband hunts with her traditional *ulu* knife, she performs this task in jeans and a t-shirt. In school, Norman learns about polar bears (which occasionally visit the village) from a videotape. And while snow machines are ubiquitous, "most families still ride dogsleds for fun and sometimes to race." For kids in the lower forty-nine, Norman will seem like the kid next door—but what a neighborhood! RS

C.U. Intercultural understanding

Lasky, Kathryn. *Double Trouble Squared*. Harcourt, 1991. Trade ed. ISBN 0-15-224126-4; Paper ed. ISBN 0-15-224127-2. 232p. (Starbuck Family Adventures). Trade ed. \$15.95; Paper ed. \$5.95.

M Gr. 5-8. There are two sets of Starbuck twins: eleven-year-olds July Burton (sometimes known as J. B. or Jelly Bean) and Liberty Bell (the two were born on the 4th of July); and five-year-olds Charlotte and Amalie (aka Charly and Molly, born—guess—in the Virgin Islands). What's more, all four are telepathic with each other, the younger children less proficiently than their older brother and sister. Due to circumstances as contrived as their names, the kids find themselves in London, where July and Liberty discover a mysterious and invisible fifth presence added to their telepathic network. This is the sort of madcap mystery/fantasy story that Jane Langton does very well; unfortunately, Lasky seems entirely out of her element. The eccentricity (Mrs. Starbuck being the largest manufacturer of ballet tutus in the country, for example) is often forced and irrelevant; and characterization is minimal (despite a cloying appendix in which family member introduce themselves). While the twins' telepathy has inherent appeal, it isn't really necessary to the story, which is a belabored affair involving the restless ghost of Sherlock Holmes' twin brother, Shadrach, unknown to most of us because he disappeared in an early draft of a story (and, of course, because Lasky made him up). Shadrach likes jelly beans, but he cannot digest color, leaving little "pastel puddles" on the table. He calls this bioluminescence (Lasky made this up, too). The narrative has an improvisational aimlessness that occasionally tips into total confusion. Along the way, Lasky offers some nuggets of literary wisdom as well as explanations of the Gulf Stream and the genesis of thunderstorms. This is the first in a projected series. RS

D.V. Brothers-sisters

Levinson, Nancy Smiler. *Snowshoe Thompson*; illus. by Joan Sandin. HarperCollins, 1992. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-023802-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-023801-1. 64p. (I Can Read Books). Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$13.00.

R Gr. 1-3. In this very easy beginning-to-read book, Danny O'Riley is sad because he cannot send a letter to his father, who is mining for gold on the other side of the Sierra Nevadas. "No mail until spring. The snow is too deep." But John "Snowshoe" Thompson comes to the rescue, enlisting Danny's help in making a pair of skis and crossing the mountains himself. Based on a real Gold Rush hero, Levinson's story is a satisfying blend of heartache (Danny writes to his father, "I do not care if you strike it rich. I miss you") and action ("The wind howled. It blew so hard that John could barely see"). Sandin's paintings amplify the contrasts between the warm browns of

cozy, wood-stove interiors and the gray-white sweep of snow and mountains. Newly independent readers will appreciate the part Danny plays in making the skis, and they will also enjoy his reward, a return letter from Pa: "I miss you too. I will be home for Christmas." RS  
C.U. Reading, beginning; The West

Levy, Constance. *I'm Going to Pet a Worm Today and Other Poems*; illus. by Ronald Himler. McElderry, 1991. ISBN 0-689-50535-3. 40p. \$11.95.

R\* Gr. 2-5. A generous collection of forty poems marks the debut of a writer with fresh senses of sound and sight. Never beyond the reach of children, Levy's verse will nevertheless stretch their verbal awareness with rhyming surprises, as in "The Color-Eater": "Sunset mixed this recipe:/ Orange and grape and raspberry/ . . . Night came sniffing/ Like a pup;/ Licked it/ Liked it/ Lapped it up." She's adept at both internal and end rhyme, at keeping rhythms light without turning them into fluff, and at focusing the subject of a poem for new perspective. "How awkward while playing with glue/ To suddenly find out that you/ Have stuck nice and tight/ Your left hand to your right/ In a permanent how-do-you-do!" Although the title poem is narrative, most of these are lyrical poems with a strong stress on the immediate relationship between kids and their natural surroundings. The descriptions are never boring or condescending but will encourage the reader to close observation: "Water looks thin/ but weighs thick." Himler's adroit pen-and-ink drawings picture bits and pieces from key lines and leave the rest to the reader's imagination. BH

Lindenbaum, Pija. *Else-Marie and Her Seven Little Daddies*; ad. by Gabrielle Charbonnet; written and illus. by Pija Lindenbaum. Holt, 1991. ISBN 0-8050-1752-6. 32p. \$14.95.

R 5-9 yrs. You think your family is strange? Pity poor Else-Marie, who has seven identical knee-high fathers. "My daddies always take turns reading my good-night story. Each daddy reads one line." And while Else-Marie loves her daddies, she is horrified by the fact that on this day, *they*, instead of her (remarkable) mother, will be picking her up at playgroup. "What if, when my daddies come to pick me up, the kids try to play with them? My daddies might be in a hurry to get home, but the kids will pick them up and say, 'Now, now, let's just sing "Rock-a-bye, Baby," okay?'" But the daddies come, the teacher is blasé ("It's so nice when parents come and we can show them what we do every day") and Else-Marie's classmates are properly admiring. The line-and-watercolor sketches further the text's good-humored tone by treating the little, briefcase-bearing, trenchcoat-wearing daddies with gentle respect: lined up on the couch with the paper, grouchy standing in line for the bathroom ("What does she do in there for so long?"), and trotting by for a morning goodbye kiss from Else-Marie's mother. Else-Marie's fears of playgroup mayhem (the teacher sitting on her daddies, for example) are catastrophically pictured; the reality (her daddies checking the insides of the class's new birdhouses for nails) a paternal pleasure. Daddies (and mommies!) can be different—so what? That's the friendly message here. Besides, it's an intriguing look at what might have happened if Snow White hadn't opened that door to the witch. RS  
D.V. Father-daughter relations

Lipsyte, Robert. *The Chemo Kid*. HarperCollins, 1992. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020285-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020284-X. [192p]. Library ed. \$13.89; Trade ed. \$14.00. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-9. Fred, the narrator, has always felt that he's so nondescript as to be almost invisible. His story begins when, at a prom, his date Mara discovers a lump on his neck; it proves to be a rare form of cancer. Depressed and self-conscious, Fred goes back to school (after his chemotherapy program is over) having lost his hair, and having drug-caused puffy skin that looks greenish. It's a candid picture, augmented by descriptions of other adolescent patients in a cancer clinic. It is also the story of a dedicated effort on the part of Fred and his friends, spurred by environment-conscious Mara, into cleaning up their town and their school. The third element is Fred's chemically-induced superpower, so that he can accomplish such feats as lifting a heavy desk, snapping police handcuffs, etc. What emerges is a very tall tale which is laced with humor (Fred's doctor is an almost-farcical comic character) and in which the disparate elements don't coalesce. Still, Lipsyte's writing style is resilient and Fred's delivery is convincingly juvenile; the medical material is interesting, the parental support cheering, and the concern for the environment admirable. ZS D.V. Age-mate relations; Courage; Parent-child relations

Lyons, Mary E. *Raw Head, Bloody Bones: African-American Tales of the Supernatural*. Scribner's, 1991. ISBN 0-684-19333-7. 88p. \$11.95.

R Gr. 5-9. It's a real test when real folklore tries to fit into the world of children's literature—that is to say, folklore with goblins, ghosts, monsters, and superhumans let loose on the imagination in blunt, minimally edited narrative form. Lyons has selected fifteen such stories, many originally collected for various phases of the Federal Writers Project. Several are in the Gullah dialect, which she has altered only if the spelling was unrecognizable. Her introduction, source notes, and bibliographies (the latter organized into sections on the stories, on information she used to describe the stories, and on books for further reading) are invaluable, as are the brief explanations at the end of each tale placing it in cultural context. These are not bedtime or toddler hour selections: older elementary graders and junior high students will relish meeting the Hag, Plat-eye, the Duppy Ghost, the Big Worm, the Night Doctor, and Dead Aaron (familiar to readers of *The Dancing Skeleton* by Cynthia DeFelice, BCCB 10/89), all characters who haunt African-American lore with a vengeance. Storytellers will recognize the more popular figures, including *Big Sixteen*, which generated controversy in an illustrated picture book by Mary Calhoun and Trina Schart Hyman (BCCB 12/83). These will make quick, unforgettable read-alouds for kids who think they're too sophisticated to listen. You'll have them discussing society's fears past and present; TV violence will pale by comparison. C.U. Reading aloud

Marzollo, Jean. *I Spy: A Book of Picture Riddles*; illus. with photographs by Walter Wick. Cartwheel/Scholastic, 1992. ISBN 0-590-45087-5. [37p]. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 3-5 yrs. On oversize pages, brightly colored photographs are crammed with small objects; each double-page spread is organized by theme (Tiny Toys, Arts & Crafts, Odds & Ends, At the Beach, etc.). The rhyming captions at the foot of each page suggest objects to be found; this is, in fact, less

a riddle book than a find-the-object challenge. While the pages are very busy, it's the sort of crowding many young children enjoy, and it certainly fosters observation of detail. ZS

D.V. Perceptual acuteness

McGovern, Ann. *Swimming with Sea Lions and Other Adventures in the Galápagos Islands*; written and illus. with photographs by Ann McGovern. Scholastic, 1992. ISBN 0-590-45282-7. 48p. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 3-5. In a follow-up (with the same attendant flaws and strengths) to *Down Under Down Under* (BCCB 10/89), an anonymous girl is the author of a diary chronicling a trip with Grandma to the Galápagos Islands. The description of the boat tour around the islands is fascinating, as are the accompanying color photographs of the unusual Galápagos animals. On the other hand, the fictional elements of the story don't have enough follow-through and leave the reader dangling—what is the narrator's name and age? (She looks about ten.) Why doesn't she mention any of the other passengers? Why are there no pictures of her and Grandma together? Some of the language the diarist uses is not that of a ten-year-old (“Wonder of wonders” and “the dismal bellowing of the sea lions”). Excerpts from Grandma's diary become an informal glossary, providing more detailed facts about the animals. For the most part, the narrator's enthusiasm and the great quantities of information slipped into the diary entries will serve nicely as an introduction to the unique Galápagos Islands. KPJ

C.U. Nature study

McKenna, Colleen O'Shaughnessy. *Mother Murphy*. Scholastic, 1992. ISBN 0-590-44820-X. [160p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. At the ripe old age of thirty-five, Collette's mother is expecting a baby—just as Collette, eleven, was about to finally get her own room. Understandably, Collette is ambivalent about the situation, and—good Catholic girl that she is—feels terribly guilty when she finds out that Mom is in danger of miscarrying: “maybe God was trying to teach Collette a lesson about being selfish. As soon as she thought about it, Collette knew God didn't work that way. But she felt responsible anyway.” But the fact that Mom has to stay in bed for a while at least allows Collette a chance to demonstrate her maturity and babysitting skills, taking care of her three younger siblings. She thinks. This is another likable entry in a lively series (see also BCCB 4/91), and the disaster humor of Collette's childcare mishaps is nicely balanced by the children's concern for their mother, who, it seems, will be fine. The baby and the next book will probably arrive around the same time. RS

D.V. Family relations

McMillan, Bruce. *Play Day: A Book of Terse Verse*; written and illus. with photographs by Bruce McMillan. Holiday House, 1991. ISBN 0-8234-0894-9. 32p. \$14.95.

R 3-6 yrs. As he did in this book's companion volume, *One Sun* (BCCB 5/90), McMillan here photographs children (of various ethnic origins) engaged in activities described in rhyme on the facing page. “Fat bat” shows a small hand reaching for one of those oversize bats that toddlers wield so enthusiastically toward a plastic ball. “Shirt dirt” needs no explanation! While

the last volume had a seaside theme, this one is squarely set in a grassy backyard, which lends vivid green backdrops for the color photography. Although one or two shots are just a touch cutesy ("goat boat" shows an expensive-looking stuffed toy floating atop a handcrafted raft), others reflect the children's natural enthusiasm ("fun run") or intense involvement ("feet seat). The pictures that show body parts and objects lack the emotional punch of facial expression but will serve admirably for identification games. The book as a whole seems a bit younger in its target audience than the previous one, though it generates the same creative possibilities for read-aloud chanting and word play.

BH

C.U. Language arts

D.V. Imaginative powers

Mennen, Ingrid. *Somewhere in Africa*; by Ingrid Mennen and Niki Daly; illus. by Nicolaas Maritz. Dutton, 1992. ISBN 0-525-44848-9. [32p]. \$13.00. Reviewed from galleys.

R 4-7 yrs. Clearing up several popular misconceptions, this book shows a little boy who lives in Africa, but "not Africa where lions laze in golden grass, not Africa where crocodiles glide through muddy rivers, silent and hungry." Ashraf, who looks East Indian, lives in a city, presumably Capetown, "a city at the very tip of the great African continent," where he enjoys city things, such as traffic, alleys, shops both ordinary and exotic, and the library: "slowly, Ashraf stalks the shelves for something special. Something wild and untamed." But Ashraf always picks the same book—about lions, crocodiles, and zebras. The portrayal of urban delights alongside an ancient heritage ("Next to the supermarket is the place where drummers drum almost forgotten stories") is a welcome rejoinder to jungle stereotypes, but local color takes precedence over story, giving the book more conceptual interest than narrative appeal, unlike, for example, Niki Daly's *Not so Fast, Songololo* (BCCB 4/86). The thick paint of the illustrations, along with heavy black outlining, gives an energetic if sometimes crude effect; color is applied liberally and vigorously. Both Ashraf's city neighborhood and his dreams of wild Africa will seem unusual to most American kids, who will welcome a visit to either place. RS

Mills, Claudia. *A Visit to Amy-Claire*; illus. by Sheila Hamanaka. Macmillan, 1992. ISBN 0-02-766991-2. 32p. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. K-2. Rachel, five, looks forward to visiting her cousin Amy-Claire, two years older. Last time they had had great fun; this time Amy-Claire seems more interested in Rachel's baby sister Jessie. Rachel feels rejected as the day goes on and Amy-Claire's interest in baby Jessie continues. Finally, on the if-you-can't-beat-them-join-them theory, Rachel asks if she too can play house and is assigned the role of "big sister." The jealousy and pouting seem more believable than Rachel's quick conversion to appreciation of the very sibling who has caused Amy-Claire's attention to be diverted. The story has an easy, simple style and the illustrations, large-scale and sun-bright, show two branches of an attractive Asian-American family. ZS

D.V. Jealousy, overcoming; Sisters



Molnar, Dorothy E. *Who Will Pick Me Up When I Fall?*; by Dorothy Molnar and Stephan Fenton; illus. by Irene Trivas. Whitman, 1991. ISBN 0-8075-9072-X. 32p. \$12.95.

R 5-7 yrs. When she wakes up, Sarton can't remember what day it is. Sorting through the possibilities leaves her overwhelmed: gym on Monday, swimming on Tuesday, dance on Wednesday, soccer on Thursday, library on . . . which day?, with different rides to and from school and afterschool activities. So she hides under the covers until her mother fusses, then lines up brown paper bags ("like traffic") to pack for each day, including a no-day bag equipped for running away. This kind of juggling represents a typical schedule for working parents' children, and if the resolution is a bit unrealistic (Mommy promises, with a conciliatory hug, to take all day Friday off to do anything Sarton wants), the book nevertheless presents a sympathetic platform for discussion of harried family routines. Fenton's bouncy watercolors keep the tone light without becoming frenetic and assert Sarton's case with convincing energy. Parents, prepare to slow down. BH  
D.V. Cooperation; Parent-child relations

Morgan, Helen. *The Witch Doll*. Viking, 1992. ISBN 0-670-84285-0. [144p]. \$14.00. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 4-7. Courtesy of Mr. Baldock, the junkman, Linda has acquired a mysterious, rather menacing, doll: "Linda stared at it—and as she stared it seemed to her that the doll's expression changed . . . the blue eyes had a new and glittering brilliance, the red mouth was set in a disapproving line, the dark brows had come together in a frown." The doll's appearance is later proven out, when, as friend Joanna begins to brush its hair, it grows larger and comes to life. "'I have some unfinished business to attend to,' said the doll-child, with a grim little smile." Potent stuff; unfortunately, the supernatural element is not consistent throughout the story, with the rules for what brings the doll to life being both confusing and contradictory. However, the central concept—that the doll is a puppet of an evil French witch—will appeal to genre fans, who will also enjoy all the complications of the plot (and maybe a true fan can figure out the puzzling conclusion). Both characterization and atmosphere are sketchy, but a spooky-eyed cover painting by Neil Waldman makes an irresistible invitation. RS

Munro, Roxie. *The Inside-Outside Book of Paris*; written and illus. by Roxie Munro. Dutton, 1992. ISBN 0-525-44863-2. 48p. \$15.00.

R Gr. 4-6. As she has in books about London and Washington, Munro uses oversize pages for bright colorful paintings that pair exterior views with interior close-ups of famous buildings such as the Musée d'Orsay or the Pompidou Center. There are also illustrations of famous sites such as L'Arc de Triomphe or ones typically Parisian, including a sidewalk café. The book succeeds in evoking the effervescent atmosphere of Paris and in conveying details, architecturally precise and true to the laws of sometimes dizzying perspective. In a few instances, the unusual perspective may confuse children, as in the picture of a *bateau-mouche* below a bridge, although the text explains the situation. ZS

Newman, Lesléa. *Belinda's Bouquet*; illus. by Michael Willhoite. Alyson Wonderland, 1992. Paper ed. ISBN 1-55583-154-0. 24p. Paper ed. \$6.95.

M 5-8 yrs. After Daniel's best friend Belinda is teased by the schoolbus driver for getting fat, she refuses an afterschool snack. "Maybe if I stop eating so much, I won't be fat." "One of" Daniel's mothers tells Belinda a story, a didactic allegory about a "very wise woman" who, while gardening, makes a very big mistake when she tries to make her short, fat marigolds tall and thin like the irises. "She put all the marigolds on a diet." The marigolds wither and droop, and Belinda understands the analogy, that her body is just fine the way it is. The message of self-acceptance is welcome, but it needs a story, not a sermon. Much more casually and convincingly conveyed is the fact that Daniel has two mothers, one "Mama" and one "Mommy," who together sit down for snacks with the kids. The family situation and characters are inviting possibilities that lack only a plot to show them to best advantage. Cartoon illustrations by Willhoite (*Daddy's Roommate*, BCCB 3/91) are amiably and disarmingly suburban. RS  
D.V. Self-acceptance

Parks, Rosa. *Rosa Parks: My Story*; by Rosa Parks with Jim Haskins. Dial, 1992. ISBN 0-8037-0673-1. 192p. illus. with photographs. \$17.00.

R\* Gr. 6-9. A remarkable story, a record of quiet bravery and modesty, a document of social significance, a taut drama told with candor; whatever the role of James Haskins, he has helped achieve a fine book, and the voice of Rosa Parks is consistently strong. One phrase she uses (in the "Stride Toward Freedom" chapter) reflects the attitude that dominates her behavior: "I do not like to form in my mind an idea that I don't have any proof of." More than an account of the bus boycott or the personal history of Rosa Parks (although this gives a detailed personal history), the book is both a record of an important series of events in the struggle for black equality and an explanation of its motivation and rationale. Illustrated with photographs. ZS  
C.U. Social studies; History—U.S.

Passen, Lisa. *Fat, Fat Rose Marie*; written and illus. by Lisa Passen. Holt, 1991. ISBN 0-8050-1653-8. 32p. \$14.95.

R 5-8 yrs. "Fat, fat Rose Marie! Fattest girl I ever did see!" shouts Genevieve, but Claire persists in her friendship with the plump newcomer until mean Genevieve persuades her to abandon Rose Marie at the carnival ("It's fat, fat Rose Marie! She's going to get on this ride and break the ride and we're all going to DIE!"). What rings true here is the dynamic and dialogue of ostracism, which starts at an early enough age to make this picture book immediate as a story and useful as a springboard to discussion. The watercolor art is as intense as the peer group drama. Passen's purposefully distorted, doll-eyed characters emphasize the fact that we're *all* homely to some extent, even if some of us suffer special effects. By the way, Claire comes to her senses by the time her class gets to the scary fun house, and she's not too angelic about it, either. Genevieve gets what's coming to her ("You're not a nice person, Genevieve!" I shouted): a double-scoop French-vanilla ice-cream cone (with chocolate sprinkles) pushed into her face. BH  
D.V. Age-mate relations

Pattison, Darcy. *The River Dragon*; illus. by Jean and Mou-Sien Tseng. Lothrop, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-10427-4; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-10426-6. 32p. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$13.95.

R 5-8 yrs. The illustrators of Margaret Mahy's *The Seven Chinese Brothers* (BCCB 7/90) here apply their art to a folk-like tale about a humble blacksmith who overcomes a dragon. Ying Shao, betrothed in childhood to a goldsmith's daughter, must politely eat the cooked swallows served him at three pre-wedding banquets even though he knows that the smell of swallows will attract the local dragon. Ying Shao's future father-in-law is counting on the dragon to get rid of a bridegroom whom he now considers too lowly in rank; but luck, love, and quick wits save the hero. Although the details have been drawn from Chinese dragon lore, the story bears structural kinship to European fairy tales. Both art and narrative show strong linear movement, with dramatic, intensely colored full-page or double spreads supporting a complex text. Any child who has feared crossing a dark place will sympathize with Ying Shao's night journey across the bridge where the river dragon lurks—and will pay close attention to the next fortune cookie that rounds off a meal! BH

Pettit, Jayne. *My Name Is San Ho*. Scholastic, 1992. ISBN 0-590-44172-8. [192p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 5-8. San Ho begins his story with a chapter that gives historical background and creates a framework for his sad narrative about the Vietnam War and the terrible effect it had on his family and on their small South Vietnamese village. When San Ho is ten, his mother takes him to the safety of a friend's home in Saigon—and it is years before they are reunited. By then, Mother is in the United States, married to an American. The rest of the story (less dramatic, but perhaps more appealing to readers) is interesting (if perhaps expectable) as an account of acculturation, of slow bonding between San Ho and his stepfather, and of the boy's growing sense of belonging and of acceptance into his peer group. ZS

D.V. Adaptability; Stepparent-child relations

Peyton, K. M. *Poor Badger*; illus. by Mary Lonsdale. Delacorte, 1992. ISBN 0-385-30561-3. [112p]. \$14.00. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 3-6. Horse-crazy, nine-year-old Ros and her tadpole-hunting friend Leo find a beautiful pony tethered on their local common: "He was strong and pushy, but kind (like Ros, Leo thought. They were a good match)." The children dub the pony Badger, but the pleasure in their discovery grows sour when they discover that Badger's owners are neglectful and abusive. Ros and Leo decide to stage a rescue (complete with rehearsal), taking Badger to a bit of pasture owned by local shady character Sid the Pigman ("We want someone dishonest," Ros says). While Badger's nasty owners are overdrawn, the rest of the cast has great character—Sid is a terrific anti-hero—as does the writing itself. Peyton here demonstrates that she can take her talent for atmospheric and well-paced storytelling to younger readers, paving the way for later requests for *Fly By Night* and *Flambards* (BCCB 5/69). DS

Philip, Neil, comp. and ad. *Fairy Tales of Eastern Europe*; illus. by Larry Wilkes. Clarion, 1991. ISBN 0-395-57456-0. 157p. \$19.95.

R Gr. 2-5. Of the twenty-two tales in this volume, many have motifs from stories in the familiar collection of the Grimm Brothers. However, the flavor of these Eastern European versions is slightly different from that of their Germanic counterparts. The narrative is fluid, and the dialogue is informal. For example, in "The Feather of Bright Finist the Falcon," a kindly Baba-Yaga asks the adventuring young heroine a natural question, "Are you flying from work or seeking work?" When the king in "The Useless Wagoneer" wants to spy on Jack, he asks his daughter and his wife to do anything to distract Jack, even if Jack "asks a piece of your flesh." The cruel stepsister in "The Twelve Months," "lolling near the stove" and longing for strawberries, possesses mood and motivation seldom wasted on the bad guys in folklore. On the other hand, the versions of "The Longed-for Hedgehog" and "Cinder Jack" are both so abridged that there is practically no dialogue and the characters seem flat. Each tale has one full-page watercolor illustration and a few smaller pen-and-ink drawings. The best of these are in the story "Goldenhair," in which George the servant is a comical and common-looking hero. Notes regarding variants and an introduction describing the linguistic organization of the tales complete the book. With its several gems, this collection is a find for storytellers. KPJ  
C.U. Storytelling

Pillar, Marjorie. *Join the Band!*; written and illus. with photographs by Marjorie Pillar. HarperCollins, 1992. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021829-0; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021834-7. 32p. Library ed. \$14.89; Trade ed. \$15.00.

R Gr. 2-4. Color photographs use most of the space in a photoessay, and the minimal text (direct, simple, enthusiastic in tone) is purportedly written by one of the flautists in an elementary school band. This may not answer every question posed by its readers (Do participants have to buy their instruments? Does all instruction come from the school's band teacher/conductor?) but it certainly gives a picture of the range of instruments, the patterns of rehearsal, the musician's obligation to practice at home and to take care of his or her instrument, and, in closing, the excitement and satisfaction of giving a concert. ZS  
C.U. Music

Raymond, Patrick. *The Maple Moon*. Hutchinson/Trafalgar Square, 1992. ISBN 0-09-174389-3. 107p. \$17.95.

Ad Gr. 7-10. Cassie has come to Canada from England to meet her father and half-brother for the first time, her parents having divorced soon after her birth. They all like each other very much, and Cassie's father has hopes that she will marry rich and handsome Don McFall, the son of his chief business rival who lives on the other side of the lake. Instead, Cassie falls for Brent, a handsome Indian (whose sister Lita, incidentally, is having an illicit affair with Cassie's half-brother). Brent is a noble stereotype in the Harlequin romance mold; the story as a whole owes more to that genre than it does to Raymond's previous—and excellent—YA novel *Daniel and Esther* (BCCB 3/90). However, the wilderness setting is atmospherically evoked, and while the story only

superficially explores the theme of cultural conflicts, the more ancient theme of star-crossed lovers will sustain reader interest. RS

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Intercultural understanding

Rosenberg, Liz. *The Scrap Doll*; illus. by Robin Ballard. Zolotow/HarperCollins, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024865-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024864-5. 32p. Library ed. \$13.89; Trade ed. \$13.95.

R 4-7 yrs. There's no money for the fancy doll that Lydia sees advertised on TV, but her mother does produce her own childhood doll homemade from scraps—"scruffy-looking . . . with staring eyes and a bald head"—not exactly what Lydia had in mind. "Why don't you fix her up a little? Name her anything you like," suggests Lydia's mother. A disgruntled Lydia renames the doll Ugly Old Thing but proceeds to paint a new face, make yarn hair, and sew some clothes (at which she's perhaps a wee bit too capable). Soon, Ugly Old Thing finds a place in Lydia's heart, bed, and breakfast table to become Sarah once again. The ruddy hues and rounded shapes of Ballard's spacious, open-faced art reinforce the understated simplicity of the text; yet the message is not oversimplified. Lydia's experience is less a sermon on being content with what you have than a suggestion that contentment lies in creative independence. Her relationship with her mother is full of empathy; her relationship with her doll is full of activity. Red-blooded young listeners will still whine for a trip to Toys-R-Us, but this book paves the way for alternative survival routes. Get busy, kids. BH

D.V. Love for toy

Singer, A. L., ad. *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*. Disney, 1991. Paper ed. ISBN 1-56282-051-6. 70p. illus. Paper ed. \$2.95.

Gr. 4-6. See editorial

Singer, A. L., ad. *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*; illus. by Ron Dias. Disney, 1991. Library ed. ISBN 1-56282-050-8; Trade ed. 1-56282-049-4. 96p. Library ed. \$14.98; Trade ed. \$14.95.

4-9 yrs. See editorial

Siy, Alexandra. *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*. Dillon, 1991. ISBN 0-87518-468-5. 80p. illus. with photographs. (Circle of Life Books). \$13.95.

Ad Gr. 3-6. After a somewhat confusing introduction about "A Place Called Time," which seems to be there only—and at length—to set the stage for the "timeless" Arctic, Siy settles down to a discussion of the Arctic National Refuge, its geology, geography, flora and fauna. The text is occasionally repetitive, sometimes unclear (" . . . on the tundra there are no reptiles, which are animals that eat bird eggs") and metaphorically overreaching ("like time, living things have seasons"). With a strong ecological message, the book is most valuable in its clear "webbing" of life in the Arctic, explaining how plants and animals and weather are tied in a schema of survival: "Because lichens grow slowly, caribou must travel to new places to find plants that have not yet been trampled or eaten. Migration of the caribou gives the lichens a chance to grow back." The explanations of evolutionary adaptation are also clear, without recourse to anthropomorphism. Color photos are well-placed;

there's an appendix of "activity pages" for each chapter; a directory of environmental groups, a glossary, and an index are also included. RS

C.U. Nature study

D.V. Ecological awareness

Smith, Janice Lee. *Nelson in Love: An Adam Joshua Valentine's Day Story*; illus. by Dick Gackenbach. HarperCollins, 1992. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020293-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020292-0. [80p]. Library ed. \$11.89; Trade ed. \$12.00. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 2-4. Adam Joshua and his best friend, Nelson, are still in Ms. D's class (see *It's Not Easy Being George*, BCCB 10/89), and Valentine's Day is approaching. Adam Joshua is shocked when Nelson starts admiring Heidi's hair and dimples, but he's stunned when he learns that Heidi has a crush on him. The love triangle shortly turns into a quin-tangle, and soon practically everyone in the class is in love with the wrong person ("A lot of people kept their eyes on a lot of other people, but for the most part, nobody was ever looking at the person looking at them, so nobody's eyes ever met"). Even his dog, George, deserts him for a girl dog named Lucy, and Adam Joshua "put a lot of feeling betrayed into it." Although the story stands on its own, it's better if one reads the preceding books to understand things like Adam Joshua's dislike of Elliot, Martha's unique personality, and Nelson's fondness for fish. Smith's understated style is at its funniest during Adam Joshua's conversations with George, who manages to look sorry, amazed, disgusted, doubtful, very truly honored, and deeply touched, all in five minutes. Smith has captured the elementary school world so winningly that, with any luck, Adam Joshua will never grow up. KPJ

Soto, Gary. *A Fire in My Hands: A Book of Poems*; illus. by James M. Cardillo. Scholastic, 1991. ISBN 0-590-45021-2; Paper ed. ISBN 0-590-35582-1. 64p. \$11.95; Paper ed. \$4.95.

R Gr. 7-12. Twenty-three poems, eight of which are reprinted from Soto's book *Black Hair* and the rest from other sources, get brief, italicized introductions that may disarm teenagers who are ill at ease with poetry and who think they need explanations. Soto's informal free verse should do the rest, since the narrative flow makes them accessible, and the common subjects—from baseball to buddies—carry inherent appeal. While the language is consciously and unmusically plain, the strong visual imagery will stay with young readers as it has with the adults for whom the poetry was originally intended. Cardillo's pen-and-ink drawings are competent if uninventive, and the concluding question-and-answer segment is mildly informative. BH

Taylor, C. J. *The Ghost and Lone Warrior: An Arapaho Legend*; written and illus. by C. J. Taylor. Tundra, 1991. ISBN 0-88776-263-8; French language edition ISBN 0-88776-264-6. 24p. \$12.95.

R 6-9 yrs. Felled by a broken ankle, Lone Warrior is left in the wilderness while his tribe is on the hunt for buffalo. Providing him with food and shelter, his friends promise to rescue him on their way back, but they do not return, leaving Lone Warrior alone to survive, find more food, and . . . face a ghost in the form of a skeleton. This retold Arapaho legend is effectively pared, functioning both as a simple ghost story and as a more complex parable of the

Arapaho leadership structure. The skeleton, “the ghost of your ancestor who was a great chief,” tells Lone Warrior that his fellow hunters have been ambushed and killed by enemies and that he must assume leadership of his tribe: “I had to see if you could keep your courage when you felt like giving up, if you could shoot straight in spite of your pain, if you could look at my face and not show fear.” And so, Lone Warrior becomes the new chief. Taylor, a Native Canadian, is a naïve artist whose paintings are sometimes too literal, but who just as often shows a gift for dramatic coloring, as in a picture of a magenta-skyed blizzard, or for equally dramatic confrontation, as when Lone Warrior offers food to the red-robed skeleton. The final spread, of a buffalo-horn-crowned Lone Warrior surrounded by a panorama of the land and backed by the ghost, is assured and conclusive. RS

D.V. Courage; Leadership

Twohill, Maggie. *Valentine Frankenstein*. Bradbury, 1992. ISBN 0-02-789692-7. 135p. \$12.95.

Ad Gr. 3-5. When she puts fifty valentines into the class box with Walter’s name on them, Amanda doesn’t mean to create a monster; she simply wants to give her wimpy friend a boost of self-confidence. It works. Walter’s the new king of the fifth grade, and he has no time for Amanda anymore. And even when an exasperated Amanda tries to tell her friends that she stuffed the Valentine box, they don’t believe her. “Just admit you feel kind of funny about not having Walter all to yourself anymore and then you’ll feel better.” Although the premise is overextended and the writing made occasionally bumpy by a shifting point of view, the story has a farcical tone that’s a blessed breeze in the sometimes over-earnest world of middle-grade fiction. The resolution is fresh as well: Walter has changed, he’s not going to follow Amanda around anymore, and she cuts her losses. A good follow-up to Barbara Cohen’s *213 Valentines* (BCCB 1/92). RS

D.V. Age-mate relations

Wallis, Diz, ad. *Something Nasty in the Cabbages*; ad. and illus. by Diz Wallis. Caroline House, 1991. ISBN 1-878093-10-X. 26p. \$15.95.

R 4-7 yrs. The story is medieval—“a tale from Roman de Renard written in the 12th century by Pierre de Saint-Cloud and retold for this edition by the artist.” The treatment is modern, with an immediacy of narrative and artistic tone that will energize young listeners with a classic rhythm of suspense. “Now here is someone who knew the hens well, and his name is Reynard.” As Reynard creeps and then hurtles through these oversized pictures, with their brilliant foxy reds and cockerel golds, children will hold their breaths until Chantecler musters what few brains he has and tricks his foe into shouting back at the pursuing farmer—releasing Chantecler to fly free. The large print and larger-than-life action combine for quick pace and attractive design. A castoff bicycle updates the scenery, which veers from photorealistic animal closeups to surrealist landscape. The title is enticing, the conclusion a clincher: “beware a mouth that opens when it should stay shut”; or, if you prefer, “beware an eye that shuts when it should stay open.” Either way, this is as tempting as moral tales come. BH

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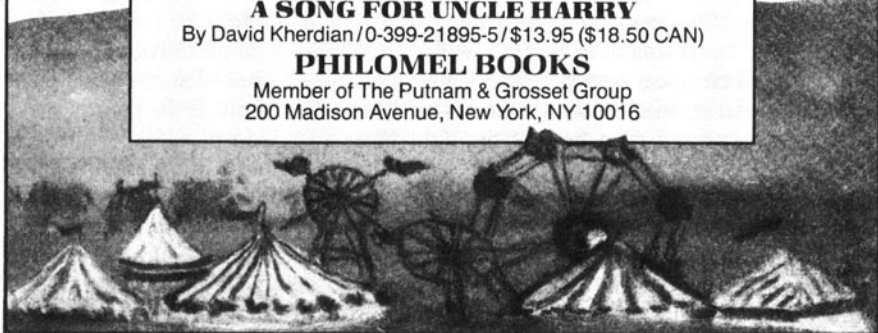
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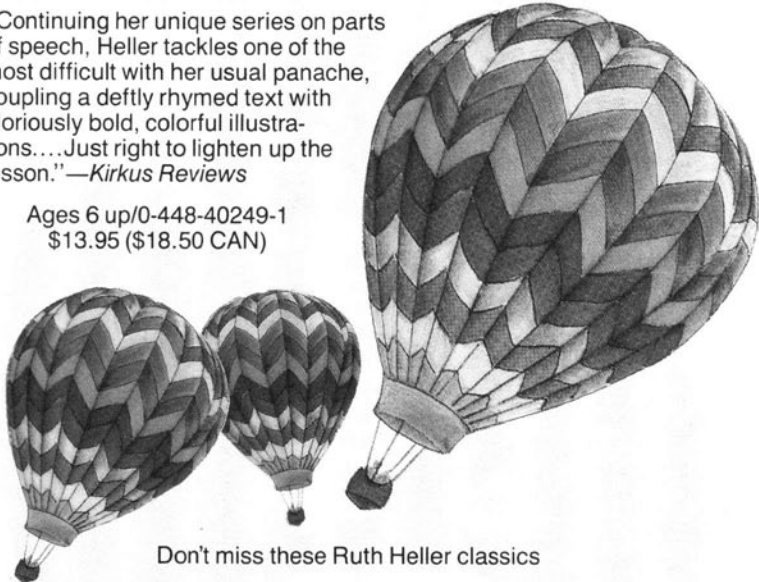
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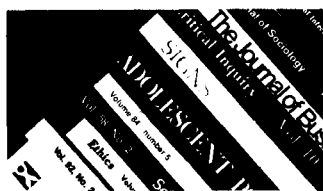
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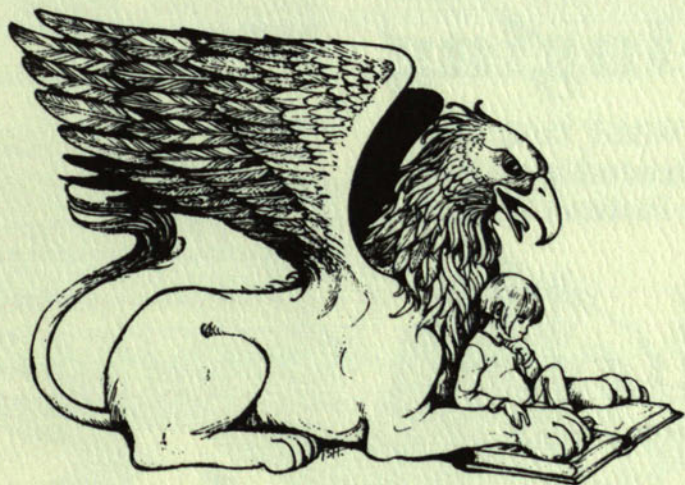
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