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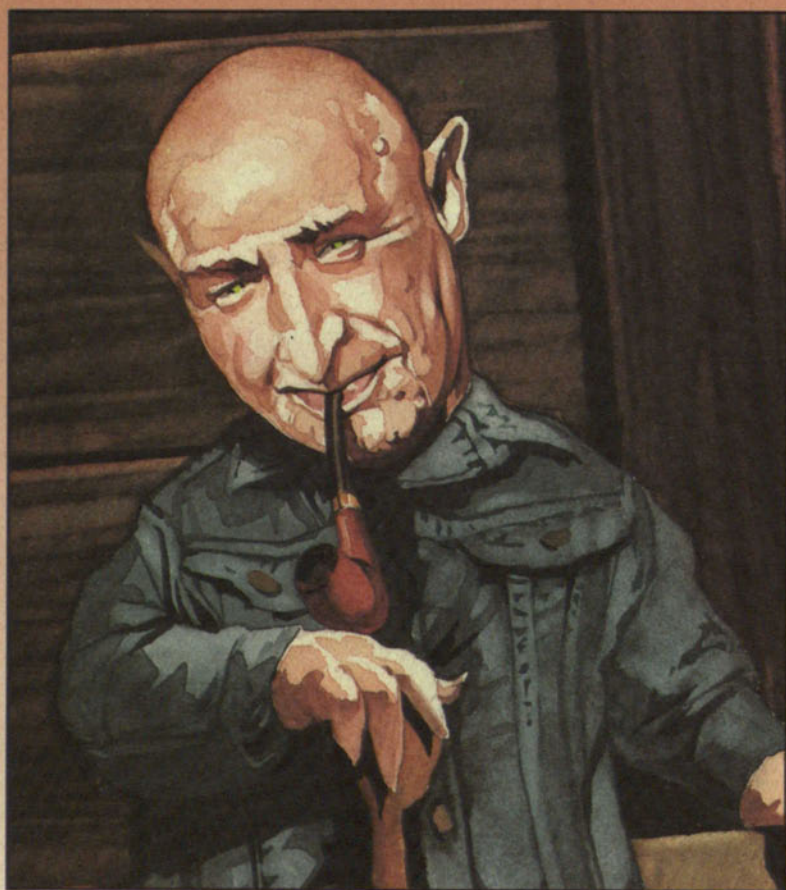
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THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

June 1994
Vol. 47 No. 10



University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

University of Illinois Press

"A handsome puzzle book that also enhances appreciation for our quirky mother tongue."*

JUDITH VIORST

The Alphabet from Z to A

(With Much Confusion on the Way)

Illustrated in full color by **Richard Hull**

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—*Kirkus Reviews*

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Ages 7-10

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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

June 1994
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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

*	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.

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THE BIG PICTURE

Tucker Pfeffercorn

written and illus. by Barry Moser

With that ominous little man on the cover, this probably isn't a *Bulletin* for someone's bedtime reading. The same goes for Barry Moser's spooky revisioning of Rumpelstiltskin, here known as Tucker Pfeffercorn, the name sought by the desperate Bessie Grace, who, sans palace helpers, all on her own, discovers the name of the hateful imp in order to save her young daughter, Claretta.

And it wasn't her stupid boasting father who got her into the mess, either. Bessie, a comely young widow, is the victim of a story spun by company store porch-sitter Jefferson Tadlock, who decides to spice up his yarn about a woman who can spin cotton into gold by giving her the name of that "little ol' widow woman up on the hill," Bessie Grace. Unfortunately, local land baron Hezakiah Sweatt is listening in and locks Bessie into his shed along with a half bale of cotton: "If n ya want yore baby back, ya best get to work, cause if n that there cotton ain't gold by mornin' . . . why, I'd just hate to think what might happen to yore sweet little ol' baby. Southern humorist Florence King would call Sweatt a "bad good ole boy," and Moser's portrait, complete with mean squint, mean mouth, and big ol' belly, sets us firmly down in mountain-gothic country. You wouldn't want to mess with this sucker.

Nor with his evil, tiny twin. Bessie Grace's cotton-spinning savior first appears hanging from the rafters of the shed—all we see of him are his pointy little feet while Bessie Grace looks from below. He doesn't ask for any payment the first night—"I don't want nothin,' he said in a sweet voice. 'Not now, no-how'"—but when on the third night Bessie Grace desperately promises him anything, he says "Ya got a deal," only returning for payment after Sweatt has mysteriously disappeared and Bessie Grace escapes—with the gold—and gives what-for to Sweatt's thugs. Safely home with her baby, Bessie Grace is reading her Bible when the little man reappears: "Ya said anything, an' the anything I want is her!"

"Rumpelstiltskin" is a pretty scary story to begin with; what's gained by its transplantation into local legend? "Inside many of us/ is a small old man/ who wants to get out," writes Anne Sexton in her version of the tale, and both Sexton and Moser know the power of story brought (down) home. The Appalachia he evokes is not real, exactly; it's a literary backwoods rooted in the popular American imagination. Bessie Grace is an angel from a country song, complete with grit and resourcefulness; Hezakiah Sweatt and the little man himself are Carson McCullers grotesques. By putting a European folktale into an American context, old roots in new soil, Moser surprises our expectations—*that's* not supposed to happen *here*—so we see the story and the setting each in a new light, whether it's the hard-baking glare on the faces of Sweatt's henchmen or the white-hot glow of the emerging gold as Tucker Pfeffercorn spins it from the wheel. An excess of portraits often

makes a picture book static, but Moser has here succeeded in making each (and the illustrations are almost exclusively portraits) work as narrative art, from the cover watercolor of Bessie Grace and Claretta in a tender embrace while the shadow of Tucker lurks behind, to the upside down, eye-popping rage of Tucker when Bessie Grace names his name. In a mischievous turn that makes manifest the intense fusing of text and art throughout the book, Moser mirrors Tucker's furious found-out stamping on the ceiling with a corresponding upside-down reversal of his words: "The devil told the devil!"

Just as folktales proceed from archetypes—the trickster, the fool, the princess—stories come from characters. And while it would have been easy for Moser to employ “characters”—hillbilly jim-cracker-dandies—he gives us instead real strength and terror, sometimes in combination. Tucker Pfeffercorn is wicked for sure, but in the picture mentioned above of the gold-spinning, there's an aura of sacred flame that gives his demonic features nobility, and reminds us that his magic is indeed marvelous. And Bessie Grace is nobody's fool. After she takes care of Tucker, she takes care of herself: “She gave a good bit of the gold to her church, but most of it she kept. A few months later, she and Claretta moved to Cincinnati, where they lived happily ever after.” Let's wish them the best, but people probably tell stories there, too, when they find them hanging from the rafters or standing beside the crib. And as Jefferson Tadlock learned, stories can cause trouble. Sleep tight.

Roger Sutton, Executive Editor



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

BABBITT, NATALIE *Bub, or The Very Best Thing*; written and illus. by Natalie Babbitt. di Capua/HarperCollins, 1994 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-205045-1 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-205044-3 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-7 yrs

After an argument about what's “the one and only very best thing” for their toddler, the King goes off to look for the answer in his books and the Queen walks the Prince through the castle asking whomever she meets. It's a regular parade, with the old family dog following them around and snatching a favorite toy dinosaur whenever he can. Of course, everyone has a different prescription for “the one and only very best thing,” from sunshine to songs; but, when the cook's daughter suggests asking the Prince himself, he repeats the only word he's spoken since the beginning of the story, “Bub,” an echo of his mother's endearment to his father, “my love.” The parents remain puzzled, but “the Cook's Daughter said to the Cook, “The Prince was right, Mama. Love is the very best thing.” It's a fine book for new parents, whose point of view it reflects entirely, but children themselves may fidget a bit at the Socratic abstractness of it all. Babbitt's studied watercolor scenes feature almost photorealistically literal characters and show limited varia-

tion of value, so that the contrasting hues sometimes appear flat despite carefully defined perspective and modelling. White muzzle notwithstanding, the dog is the liveliest element here—and, at the stage of a picture-book audience's development, the most likely suspect for the true meaning of the Prince's one and only word. BH

BIANCHI, ROBERT STEVEN *The Nubians: People of the Ancient Nile*. Millbrook, 1994 64p illus. with photographs (Beyond Museum Walls)
ISBN 1-56294-356-1 \$15.90 Ad Gr. 5-7

An introduction to the African people who challenged Egyptian power and controlled major trade routes for centuries, this is efficient, if distant, in summarizing the economic and cultural achievements of Nubians from around 8000 B.C. to A.D. 350. The emphasis is first on the Kerma Culture, later on the Nubian-dominated Twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt, and finally on the vastly successful kingdom of Meroë—overrun at last by nomads after the Ethiopian Axumites took control of the trade routes. Full-color and black-and-white photographs give samples of art from various periods, a map helps readers follow the political vicissitudes of changing dynasties, a chronology features important dates, and a list of museums (and one book) directs readers to places where they can get further information. The material is indexed and will be helpful to students reporting on African history, although the impersonal tone will probably limit their involvement to factfinding. BH

BOMANS, GODFRIED *Eric in the Land of Insects*; tr. from the Dutch by Regina Louise Kornblith; illus. by Mark Richardson. Houghton, 1994 197p
ISBN 0-395-65231-6 \$14.95 M Gr. 4-7

In this wry insect allegory first published in the Netherlands in 1945, Eric shrinks, then jumps into an insect-laden painting, whereupon he discovers the all-too-human foibles of the beasts within: snobbish wasps, honey-hoarding butterflies, war-mongering ants. While the novel is amusing in an arch kind of way, most of the jokes fly right over Eric's head ("They all think they're hot stuff, but in the end, they're all for the worms," says the worm), and young readers may catch only the breeze as well. It's not an adult book, exactly, but its reliance on a naive narrator to prove the errors of the adult world makes it a book about adult concerns, rather tediously limned through Eric's lengthy conversations with the different insects. Unlike Mary Pope Osborne's witty Spider Kane bug-fantasies, BCCB 6/93 and 5/92, this book is pretty plotless, and the closing revelation that it was all a dream—or was it?—is feeble. RS

BOND, NANCY *Truth to Tell*. McElderry, 1994 [336p]
ISBN 0-689-50601-5 \$17.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 6-9

Alice, fourteen, isn't at all pleased with her mother Christine's decision to pull up their Cambridge (England) stakes and move to New Zealand, where Christine has secured a job helping a reclusive old woman write the history of her family home, Florestan. Alice's ne'er-do-well stepfather, Len, is to follow when his summer job is finished. Florestan, as Alice and Christine discover upon their arrival, is far past its former glory, and its owner, Miss Fairchild, isn't even there yet, having been detained by illness while on a trip to Borneo. This long novel, set in 1958, takes

quite a while to get going; in fact, what turns out to be the central crisis of the story—could Len be Alice's real father?—does not appear until the twenty-first chapter. Until that point, what we have are several interesting situations: the thorny relationship between Alice and her mother, Alice's adjustment to a new home and school, Miss Fairchild's imperious demands and secret disappointment. These three women form an intriguing triangle, with Christine being especially compelling, but there's little sense of movement, either thematically or in terms of the plot, until Len appears in chapter fourteen. What the novel demonstrates, if not generates, is an intense concern with relationships, with what people say to each other while trying to find their places in the world. RS

BRENNER, BARBARA *If You Were There in 1776*. Bradbury, 1994 [144p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-02-712322-7 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

Toss aside the American Revolution textbook unit and try this out instead. All the usual quiz fodder is present—the Founders, the Continental Congresses, the Declaration of Independence, the opening battles. But Brenner's briskly paced social history connects landmark events with the everyday life of the colonists and encourages readers to imagine themselves into children's roles of the period (frontier daughter, planter's son, Indian captive, Patriot spy). Although chapter headings such as "The Way They Looked," "The Cities," "Religion," "At Play" suggest topical organization, each theme is introduced at a logically chosen point along the year's time line. Discussion of food, for example, appears early to coincide with pre-war shortages caused by British blockades. Discussion of religion is deferred until after the chapter on the Declaration, so that Brenner can explore varieties of religious response to independence and the "deliberately chosen language" of the document itself. Plentiful period illustrations, closely coordinated with the text, include more scenes of everyday life than stolid portraits. Some vocabulary may require further definition—hogshead, pemmican, grinders—and a separate chapter on the Tory experience would have been a nice addition. Annotated notes, bibliography (children's materials not explicitly identified), and index are included. An attractive and useful companion to the author's *If You Were There in 1492* (BCCB 10/91). EB

BYARS, BETSY *The Golly Sisters Ride Again*; illus. by Sue Truesdell. HarperCollins, 1994 64p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021564-X \$13.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021563-1 \$14.00

R Gr. 1-3

This is the third time the Golly Sisters have hit the trail (BCCB 10/90, 11/86). They've learned how to make the horse stop and go, but their traveling show still runs amok sometimes, as in the first story here about Rose's self-fulfilling prophecy: "There is a goat in the audience, and a goat in the audience means bad luck." A talking rock—shades of Anansi—takes advantage of the sisters' childlike competitiveness, which erupts again in a fight over who's going to star in a one-princess drama. These two, who sing their way through storms and holidays alike, will continue to leave struggling young readers with their tongues in their cheeks for all the right reasons. Just as Stevenson's illustrations do for Rylant's Henry and Mudge books, Truesdell's antic watercolors go a long way in sustaining the humor that anchors Byars' easy-to-read series. BH

CALMENSEN, STEPHANIE *Rosie: A Visiting Dog's Story*; illus with photographs by Justin Sutcliffe. Clarion, 1994 48p
ISBN 0-395-65477-7 \$15.95 R Gr. 2-4

Visiting dogs visit various environments to "cheer up people who are sad, sick, or lonely," and Stephanie Calmensen's dog Rosie follows this particular canine calling. We first see Rosie as a very fuzzy baby, then as a student of basic obedience at puppy kindergarten; when she's two, she attends visiting-dog school and learns the job's necessary skills, commands, and patience. Finally our author and Rosie, now a certified visiting dog, grace a children's hospital, where Rosie chases balls, enjoys a grooming, and naps with the patients, and they then visit a nursing home where Rosie provides cheer and companionship to the residents. The topic is engaging, the text is clear and simple, and a final note gives a little more bio on Rosie and information on visiting dogs (although it should say somewhere other than the book flap the range of locations visiting dogs may visit). The page design is spacious, the photographs are sharp and well-composed, and their subject is quite fetching: Rosie may be a purebred Tibetan terrier, but she has enough generic shaggy-dog appeal that one can immediately understand her effectiveness in her career. Pair this with Patent, below, for a look at some unusual working dogs. DS

COMPTON, JOANNE, ad. *Ashpet: An Appalachian Tale*; illus. by Kenn Compton. Holiday House, 1994 40p
ISBN 0-8234-1106-0 \$15.95 R 4-7 yrs

As a source note states, this Appalachian Cinderella (or more properly, Aschenputtel) variant is taken from Richard Chase's *Grandfather Tales*, omitting some of Chase's elaborations—as well as the somewhat crucial point that Ashpet is rendered unrecognizable by the red dress and all-important slippers that "Granny" (in Chase she's a witch) conjures for the scruffy servant girl. "Who does she think she is?" sniffs mean-sister Myrtle after the doctor's handsome son (in Chase, a king) takes her picnic basket to share with Ashpet, but neither text nor pictures will clue young listeners into the fact that the question is not entirely rhetorical. Still, the basic outline of the tale is clear enough and the frisky dialogue ("I declare! It's time for me to get on home!") adds zip to the familiar story. Compton's line-and-watercolor illustrations set amiably doltish cartooned figures against a gentle landscape; particularly funny is the sequence of the Dudley Do-Rightish doctor's son trying the red shoe out upon Ethel, Myrtle, and finally Ashpet (who's been shoved under the washtub by Widow Hooper). The caricatures are zesty even while they miss the romantic underpinnings of the tale; like the Comptons' *Jack the Giant Chaser* (BCCB 6/93), the book has a gleeful air of all-American fun. RS

CRAMER, ALEXANDER *A Night in Moonbeam County*. Scribner's, 1994 [208p]
ISBN 0-684-19704-9 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

Moonbeam County is where teenage Chas and his cocky friend Raul, traveling from Chicago to Miami, wind up when they jump off a freight train to avoid the railroad detectives who are sure to "crack heads when they catch folks riding free," according to a fellow hobo. If this seems vintage Depression fiction, it's deceptive. As Chas mulls over the moon, he lets us know that "the astronauts had landed on it before he'd even been born." What we do suspect long before Chas and Raul catch on is that the circle of storytellers they find camped out in the dark are really

ghosts spinning life-and-death tales that haunt the local countryside. The ten stories are engrossing, which is why the framework seems so intrusive: after each tale—one a time-travel back to the Civil War, another an Orpheus-like journey (gender reversed) to the afterlife, a third about a demonic game of cards—the reader is hauled back to an artificial dialogue calculated to set up the next tale. The stories themselves are redolent of spooky southern legend, but in the novel as a whole, the main characters' development is limited to a functional role of listening and then discovering by daylight where the storytellers were buried long ago, with a surprise grave for the two boys themselves in a previous incarnation. It's too bad this couldn't have been just a down-home collection of short stories, but kids drawn to the supernatural may very well tolerate the context for the sake of the texts. Adult storytellers, too, will want to latch onto some of these for middle-grade and junior high audiences. BH

CUSHMAN, KAREN *Catherine, Called Birdy*. Clarion, 1994 [192p]
ISBN 0-395-68186-3 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

High-spirited and high-born Catherine is thirteen, living in Lincolnshire in 1290, and this is the diary she promised her brother, Edward the monk, that she would keep. Her entries deal with various things, including her hated household duties ("Spinning. Tangled" is the entire entry for September the 16th), her wonderings about her future ("Mayhap I could be a hermit. I wonder what they do"), and her father's attempts to marry her off ("My father does not see it my way and seeks to improve our position through my marriage bed"). Throughout, her voice is that of a lively and adventurous adolescent, earthy and funny, questioning and observant. The details of medieval life are immediate and evocative, with Catherine sharing a bed with her old nurse, her mother having miscarriage after miscarriage, and the death of a seventeen-year-old acquaintance (he sustains a serious wound in a rowdy feast-day game and dies of gangrene, in Catherine's house, a few days later) casually mentioned, more notable for the drinking at his funeral than for loss. Cushman hedges her bet a little by making Catherine conveniently modern and rebellious in much of her outlook, but she writes with vigor and craft of a life most young people won't have contemplated but will find fascinating here. An author's note provides a brief summary of medieval living and includes suggestions, both fiction and nonfiction, for further reading. DS

DANZIGER, PAULA *Amber Brown Is Not a Crayon*; illus. by Tony Ross. Putnam, 1994 80p

ISBN 0-399-22509-9 \$12.95

R Gr. 2-3

Third-grader Amber Brown and her best friend Justin have always done everything together (even schoolwork—"I'll do the pasting. You do the cursive"), but now Justin's moving, and neither one of them knows what to do about it. This is a standard moving-away plot, but Danziger's brisk and empathetic writing brings her the same kind of intuitive connection with kids she's made in books for older readers, such as *The Cat Ate My Gymsuit* (BCCB 4/75). Amber's narration reveals a slightly jaundiced eye ("When I grow up and remember third grade, I'm going to immediately try to forget it"), but her pain at losing Justin slips through the wisecracks ("I keep waiting for him to mention the very important thing that his new school and neighborhood doesn't have—ME"). Brief paragraphs, short sentences,

and a steady focus make this a fine big sister to picture books such as Waber's *Ira Says Goodbye* (BCCB 10/88) or Sheila White Samton's *Jenny's Journey* (6/91). RS

DAVOLLS, LINDA *Tano & Bintu: Two Chimpanzees Return to the Wild*; illus. by Andy DaVolls. Clarion, 1994 26p
ISBN 0-395-68701-2 \$14.95 R 5-8 yrs

Shipped from the London Zoo in 1975 as part of the Gambian Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Project, two chimp siblings undergo a step-by-step adjustment after their release in the African forest. An older female shows them how to find food and shelter, and by the time this foster mother has a new baby, the two young chimps are able to survive on their own and become part of a family. The simple nature narrative is well paced to its picture-book format, with a personable tone and natural ease of style. Even more distinguished is the spacious pastel art, drafted with fluid grace against earthtone backgrounds. The animals are expressive without becoming cute, their dignity reflected in adeptly varied postures of exploration, social dynamics, foraging, and nesting. For an audience of young listeners, it's not easy to find information that's both appealing and responsible. Adults can explain the introductory note on programs for conserving endangered species, but it's the story and pictures here that will win attention to the cause. Try this on Curious George fans who are ready for real-life primates. BH

DEFELICE, CYNTHIA *Lostman's River*. Macmillan, 1994 [160p]
ISBN 0-02-726466-1 \$14.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

His father escaping a bum murder rap, thirteen-year-old Tyler and his family have moved from New York City to the western edge of the Everglades, which, in 1906, are wild and remote, their primitive beauty endangered by "plumers," poachers who prey on the native birds for their feathers. Tyler knows to stay away from the gun-toting plumers, but he's eager to guide a "naturalist" from up north who claims to be interested in collecting "specimens of flora and fauna" for research and museum display. To Tyler's horror, Mr. Strawbridge is no better than the plumers, indiscriminately shooting the herons and egrets and flamingos Tyler leads him to in a hidden rookery. And when Strawbridge himself is killed by plumers, Tyler is left on his own in the maze of mangrove-covered cays. While the ethical themes that inform the story plumb no great depths, with Strawbridge serving as a straw man, the storytelling is smooth and convincing, blending landscape and action in a satisfying whole. The story line after Tyler finds his way home, and his father goes to the sheriff in Key West and then decides to take the family back to New York and give himself up, seems summarized, lacking the intensity of detail the author brings to the Everglades setting. Throughout, though, Tyler's narration is truly felt and easy to follow, and readers who usually avoid historical fiction will find themselves pulled right in. RS

FINE, ANNE *Flour Babies*. Little, 1994 178p
ISBN 0-316-28319-3 \$14.95 R Gr. 6-9

Room 8 is a class filled with rowdies and academic losers, and they're not very happy when their assigned project for the Science Fair requires each boy to look after a six-pound bag of flour as if it were a child and to write a journal about the experience. Simon Martin, the most troublesome of the hapless and hopeless class,

grows attached to his flour baby and begins to ruminate on children and the responsibilities—and duration—of parenthood generally (“If instead of going off to the hospital to have a baby all those years ago, his mother had stabbed someone to death with a bread knife, she’d be out of jail by now”) and on his own father’s abandonment when Simon was only six weeks of age. The flour-babies conceit (see also Eve Bunting’s *Our Sixth Grade Sugar Babies*, BCCB 11/90) takes a lively turn here with Fine’s broadly drawn comic portrayal of the putative teen parents, who go along with the experiment only because they believe they’ll be permitted to kick 100+ pounds of bagged flour into smithereens as a finale. Simon’s yearning for and gradual understanding of his departed father (as well as his increased appreciation of his patient mother) is credible and touching, and his endearingly goofy character makes him an appealing focus. Fans of Fine’s other fine work (*Alias Madame Doubtfire*, *My War with Goggle-Eyes*, etc.) will relish this zesty comedy. DS

FLETCHER, RALPH *I Am Wings: Poems about Love*. Bradbury, 1994 48p
ISBN 0-02-735395-8 \$12.95 R Gr. 7-12

The cover picture of a boy looking over his shoulder towards a girl (caught in an incongruously Mae-West pose) will clue guys into the fact that this is a collection asking for—and meriting—their attention. While few of Fletcher’s thirty-one brief poems specify genders, mostly relying on an I-thou address that could go either or any which way, they have an unflowery simplicity of sentiment that young men new to the game of love will appreciate: “In the movie dark/ I explore it— notch by knuckle by/ smooth flat land:/ the new world/ that is your hand.” That’s “The New World,” from the first half of the collection, called “Falling In.” Part two, “Falling Out,” conveys the rueful side of the same story: “It was like nothing/ I’d seen at the movies.// You never sat me down/ with a husk in your voice.// It happened BANG: like you/ just changed channels.” While the poems aren’t as sophisticated as Betsy Hearne’s *Love Lines* or Ruth Gordon’s anthology *Under All Silences* (BCCB 10/87), they’re smoothly constructed and fully ardent, perfect for private musing or intimate sharing. RS

FRANKLIN, KRISTINE L. *The Shepherd Boy*; illus. by Jill Kastner. Atheneum, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-689-31809-X \$14.95
Spanish ed. *El niño pastor* ISBN 0-689-31918-5 \$14.95 R 5-7 yrs

Available in both English and Spanish editions, this describes a southwestern Navajo boy who cares for his father’s sheep during summers when school is out. Earth-toned paintings depict Ben’s herding routine with two dogs helping to drive the sheep across mesa and canyon to “the place where green grass grows” and back again. Suspense builds when Ben must set out once more to find a lost lamb among crumbling cave dwellings decorated with pictograms. Both the author and the artist let natural drama dominate without intrusive artificial story elements or graphic clutter. Except for a faux-Indian design element that looks like computer art superimposing a border between illustrations and text, simplicity carries the day, along with strong arid landscapes and a child’s sturdy independence in negotiating them. Youngest listeners will identify both with Ben’s competence and with his return “home to his hogan: a good place to be when Coyote barks and the night birds scream.” BH

FRITZ, JEAN *Around the World in a Hundred Years: From Henry the Navigator to Magellan*; illus. by Anthony Bacon Venti. Putnam, 1994 128p
ISBN 0-399-22527-7 \$17.95 R Gr. 5-7

At a younger level than Harold Faber's *Discoverers of America* (BCCB 5/92) but covering some of the same explorers from a more global perspective, this begins with a brief overview of early mapmakers' concepts of the world and Prince Henry the Navigator's determination to pioneer a passage along the west coast of Africa. In the course of covering Diaz, Columbus, da Gama, Cabral, Cabot, Vespucci, Ponce de León, Balboa, and Magellan, Fritz perforce acknowledges that "once European curiosity was unleashed on the world, so was their cruelty, arrogance, and greed." As usual, the author relishes her primary-source details ("Their fresh water had 'gone sick,' as the sailors said, and the only way they could bear the smell was to hold their noses as they drank"), and her signature quips about famous historical figures get plenty of exercise, although the material dictates the more serious end in her stylistic spectrum. She's honest about heroes such as Balboa, who tried to play fair with what he found, being punished while more fanatical conquerors were rewarded in proportion to the profits they produced from their voyages ("Columbus, driven to distraction by the need for gold, introduced a brutal kind of slavery to this part of the world. Future explorers followed his example, often inflicting unspeakable cruelties . . ."). Consequently, some of the black and white drawings, competent but comical, seem a bit out of joint with the information, but in general the book offers researching students a good starting point toward understanding Europeans' motivations and actions during the key century of their pioneer voyaging. Footnotes include anecdotal explanations but don't cite sources for information in the text. A bibliography and index are included. BH

FRYDENBORG, KAY *They Dreamed of Horses: Careers for Horse Lovers*; illus. with photographs by Tanya Wood. Walker, 1994 104p
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8284-1 \$16.85
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8283-3 \$15.95 R* Gr. 5-9

This book, addressed to that "certain kind of person who seems to be born loving horses," and who "knows that someday she will find a way to be with horses," examines the career of thirteen equine-oriented professionals, each in a different field. Youngsters who were thinking their horsey career options were limited to jockey or veterinarian will be pleased to see the array here: equine artist, polo coach, mounted police officer, mobile tack shop owner, therapeutic riding worker, and more. The emphasis is female, and all the professionals are women, discussing the training, duties, income, and pleasures of their respective jobs. Frydenborg writes smoothly, incorporates interview information naturally, and asks the right questions, so that the difficulties of starting up a business and the occasional drudgery of work come through, but it's also clear that these women consider their jobs worth the trouble. Most important is the author's understanding of and empathy for young women hoping to make a living with the animals they love. A final chapter, "What Else Is There To Do?," not only lists other possibilities but also encourages readers to design their own careers. The blend of practical advice and narrative appeal makes this book unusually successful, and it will provide concrete assistance for horse-loving kids stronger on yearning than planning. One or two black-and-white photographs appear with each chapter, and a couple of diagrams (points of the horse and points of a saddle) are included; a glossary and a wonderfully complete list of sources "For More Information" are appended. DS

GAUCH, PATRICIA LEE *Noah*; illus. by Jonathan Green. Philomel, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-399-22548-X \$14.95

PAPARONE, PAM, ad. *Who Built the Ark?: Based on an African-American Spiritual*;
ad. and illus. by Pam Paparone. Simon, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-671-87129-3 \$15.00 R 4-6 yrs

Both these retellings, Paparone's based on a spiritual, and Gauch's "drawn from the roots of African culture," feature black Noahs as well as significant variations on the biblical events. Paparone's story takes place in the context of an African-American church service, and the two-by-two becomes a counting song (with music supplied on the endpapers): "In come the animals three by three: two big cats and a bumblebee." "Two by two!" is the reiterated call that Gauch's Noah makes to the embarking animals, but the Flood goes on for longer than usual: "For one hundred days and fifty days more, it rained and rained, rained and rained." These clearly aren't ur-text editions, but when it comes to Noah, there's always room for one more story in most collections, and both versions are supported by strong art. Paparone's acrylic paintings are precisely lined and deeply colored in a manner reminiscent of Fulvio Testa's work; the "nine by nine" cattle feature several breeds, alike only in their exotic elegance. Green's paintings, while occasionally crowded, are loudly, exuberantly colored, with a multi-hued human family enfolded by birds of every feather and beasts of every spot and stripe, joyfully rewarded in the end with a rich green land. RS

GOBLE, PAUL, ad. *Iktomi and the Buzzard: A Plains Indian Story*; ad. and illus. by Paul Goble. Jackson/Orchard, 1994 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08662-3 \$14.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06812-9 \$14.95 R 5-8 yrs

Like Goble's previous Iktomi stories (*Iktomi and the Ducks*, BCCB 12/90, etc.), this portrays the antic trickster with energetic graphics and intertextual commentary inviting audience participation ("I bet the kids want to make this rude sign"). The humor is sly, starting with a title spread where the artist makes fun of himself, his subject, and his society: "Don't read this book. That white guy, Paul Goble, is stealing my stories and making money off of them." One of the first adaptors of Native American folklore to give full and careful sources for his picture books, Goble paradoxically roots his playful disrespect in longstanding respect. Such confidence is important to the inherently irreverent tone of Iktomi, who in this episode sets out for the Eagle Dance, only to be stopped by a stream of water and then transported by a buzzard that dumps him midflight for his impudence. Iktomi falls headfirst into a hollow log, gets stuck, and persuades two passing girls to chop him out. The end is a bit anticlimactic and too obvious a setup: "Can anyone guess what Ikto will get up to next?" Still, this series, which retains its innovative freshness with visual surprises sharpening Goble's signature stylization, has by now have won a faithful following and can keep listeners guessing just what Ikto will get up to next. BH

GREENE, JACQUELINE DEMBAR *One Foot Ashore*. Walker, 1994 196p
ISBN 0-8027-8281-7 \$15.95 Ad Gr. 5-7

A historical novel set in the seventeenth century follows the fortunes of Maria Ben Lazar, sister of the heroine in Greene's previous *Out of Many Waters* (BCCB 1/89). The two girls—members of a Jewish family forced to convert—were sepa-

rated after escaping from Catholic monks in Brazil, to which they had been kidnapped from Portugal by agents of the Inquisition. While Isobel eventually landed in New Amsterdam, Maria stows aboard a ship to Amsterdam and finds shelter with the painter Rembrandt until she can locate her parents. The ocean voyage is especially involving because of Maria's resourcefulness in hiding and befriending a baby rat, which she watches being born and feeds when the mother fails to return from foraging for food. Her stay in Rembrandt's household is also convincingly portrayed despite a simplistically villainous servant girl. The book's ending is directed too neatly, however, as everything conspires to Maria's benefit, including the discovery of her parents in Amsterdam and of Isobel's safe haven in New Amsterdam, where the family plans to immigrate. Young readers probably won't mind the predictability, accompanied as it is by storytelling that's enriched but not diverted by period detail. BH

HAMILTON, MORSE *Yellow Blue Bus Means I Love You*. Greenwillow, 1994 180p
ISBN 0-688-12800-9 \$14.00 R Gr. 9-12

A New England boarding school, Aviary Prep, is the setting for this sophisticated romance that charts the bumpy course of love between Timur, a mostly Americanized Russian emigré, and Phoebe: "She was in two of his classes—Sex and Human Values, and English. . . . She always sat with one arm over the back of the empty seat next to her, breathing loudly as if pissed or bored." Both are semi-misfits, Tim for his intellectualism, and Phoebe for being an all-around handful—sexually aggressive, smart, assertive, and troubled. Phoebe's self-absorbed parents are clichéd typecasting, but otherwise the characterization, and the writing throughout, is fully imagined. The third-person narrative is putatively (and unnecessarily) Tim's journal, which is given as the reason for dubbing the characters with the names of birds (Tim's roommate Freddy Goatsucker, teacher Ms. Snipe-Dowitcher); it's annoying. The love affair, though, is ever-intense and sexy, with even its turbulent demise passionate in its heartbreak. RS

HESSE, KAREN *Phoenix Rising*. Holt, 1994 [208p]
ISBN 0-8050-3108-1 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Nyle, who helps run her grandmother's Vermont sheep farm, still has painful memories of her mother's and grandfather's deaths and father's desertion. In fact, she has experienced too many losses in her own life to welcome ailing refugees from a nearby nuclear power plant disaster that has just devastated the countryside and killed an untold number of citizens. Yet when Gran takes in young Ezra and his mother, Nyle's drawn to the boy, who is weakened from radiation poisoning and struggling with the sudden destruction of everything he's loved. It's a credit to Hesse that she concentrates on character dynamics instead of exploiting situational dramatics. The love between teenaged Nyle and Ezra is delicately developed, as is the prickly friendship between Nyle and a girlfriend who's a dwarf. In fact, the generally complex scenes and personalities render unnecessary the occasional overstatements ("It scared me, thinking about a world polluted by radiation"), repetitions ("people always leaving"), and political reflections ("If people really understood how big this was, how far it went, how deep, something would be done. Now. To change things. So this could never happen again"). The story speaks for itself, as "Ezra and his mother huddled together, alone in the dark country of his illness."

The friends, family, and loyal dogs that personalize this tragedy will move kids to their own thoughts about social action. BH

HITE, SID *It's Nothing to a Mountain*. Holt, 1994 214p
ISBN 0-8050-2769-6 \$15.95

Ad Gr. 7-12

It's 1969, and Lisette, fourteen, and Riley, twelve, are grieving over the sudden death of their parents in a car accident, while their loving grandparents are trying to help them adjust. What helps Lisette is the wearing of her mother's gold locket, which she regards as a talisman, a protection by a guardian angel sent by her parents; Riley is soon distracted by and absorbed with Thorpe, a local boy eking out a living in the woods after his mother was imprisoned. Hite is an imaginative writer, and he conjures up the picturesque Virginia mountains well, but the sensibility here is adult and the emphasis is on philosophy rather than plot; the constant piling up of images ("The zeitgeist was wearing flowers in her hair") and the frequent pondering of eternal verities make the book—well, ponderous. The story of Thorpe, living on his wits, and Riley, trying to solve Thorpe's dilemma, is involving, and the sweetly sentimental tale of Lisette trying to track down her guardian angel with the aid of an elderly neighbor may please dreamier readers. DS

HOUSTON, GLORIA *Mountain Valor*; illus. by Thomas B. Allen. Philomel, 1994 239p
ISBN 0-399-22519-6 \$14.95

M Gr. 5-8

Ten-year-old Valor, named after her father's medal for bravery on the frontier, cowers in a closet while her pregnant mother is attacked by a red-bearded Yankee soldier in 1861. By the end of the Civil War, Valor is fifteen and has proved her courage by helping her cousin and two ex-slaves run their Appalachian farm, frustrating bounty hunters, fending off soldiers or renegades who raid the countryside for supplies, killing a bear, and retrieving the family's livestock by dosing an entire company of men with sleeping-herb tea. This is an extremely busy plot, with characters that are—as Houston explains in a concluding note—symbolic. While her picture books (*My Great Aunt Arizona*, BCCB 4/92; *The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree*, 10/88) realize situations with focused detail, the novel seems dominated by purposive intent, including narrative that's awkwardly loaded with information: "Who be your papa?" said the voice like a soft song in Valor's ears, asking the important question which members of the Appalachian culture used to establish a stranger's place in one of the area's families or as an outsider." There's also a great deal of repetition in describing characters who are one-dimensional to begin with. A local wisewoman is constantly asserted to be kind, the red-bearded raider always referred to as being the man who hurt Valor's family, the ex-slave Savannah too often exclaiming "Lordy, Lordy"; and over and over we hear of Valor's ambition to be "a sister to the wind." While the action and touch of romance at the end will appeal to young readers, the heavy-handed writing results in over-programmed historical fiction. BH

HOWLAND, NAOMI *ABC Drive! A Car Trip Alphabet*; written and illus. by Naomi Howland. Clarion, 1994 [32p]
ISBN 0-395-66414-4 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 3-5 yrs

Softly ruffled colored-pencil and acrylic pictures cruise through the alphabet

from ambulance to zoom as a young mother, child, and dog take a leisurely recreational drive through San Francisco and the Bay area. There's no story beyond the sightseeing, but the various vehicles (*bus, cement mixer, dump truck*) and objects (*keys, red light, yield sign*) have a high toddler recognition quotient, and each of the amiably detailed double spreads link the letters, as with the *ice cream truck* supplying treats to the soldiers in the jeep. While the pictures are too busy for littler kids to pick out the object to be identified, and there's not enough going on to hold older kids entranced with automotive doings, it's an appropriate accessory for a car trip, where kids can I-Spy in alphabetical order. RS

JOHNSON, SCOTT *Overnight Sensation*. Atheneum, 1994 [224p]

ISBN 0-689-31831-6 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

After a summer away, Kerry Dunbar is new and improved—slimmed down, trendily coiffed—and she has been welcomed into the popular senior crowd. Despite her previous commitment to good grades and social change, Kerry is dazzled by the attention and revels in her new insider status, taking to partying, drinking, having sex, and participating in vandalism, which gets out of hand when her crowd drunkenly trashes and then accidentally burns down the garage of Kerry's former best friend. The group keeps silent, and Kerry bears her guilt through a school year of changes, self-doubt, and maturation. The underlying message of the dangers of pandering to popular appeal isn't subtle, but Kerry's story is complex and honest, with relevant plot threads about her irresponsible father and her too-restrained mother. In addition to weakness and guilt, Kerry's narration displays a believable blindness as she periodically advises other people to do the right thing in other circumstances but holds silently to her uneasy secret without seeming to see a conflict. Reminiscent of Richard Peck's *Princess Ashley* (BCCB 6/87), this is a dark and involving story of peer dynamics. DS

JONES, K. MAURICE *Say It Loud: The Story of Rap Music*. Millbrook, 1994 128p illus. with photographs

ISBN 1-56294-386-3 \$19.90

R Gr. 7-12

With a cover design that's sophisticated if slightly indecipherable, this history and overview of rap music taps into the appeal of its subject to bring fans to a broader consideration about how popular-culture phenomena gestate, get born, and change. Jones finds cultural and musical roots for rap in the West African griots, in slavery and the black church, in jazz and poetry, and in James Brown. Its expression is just as myriad, with party rap, political rap, PG rap, white rap, gangster rap each having a place in the hip-hop world, and each explored by Jones: "Whereas Shanté was a razor-tongued girl from the projects, Queen Latifah was rap's female cultural ambassador." Jones is stronger on social commentary and controversy than on literary analysis, but he quotes lots of lyrics ("The Constitution says we all got a right to speak,/ Say what we want, Tip, your argument is weak"—Ice-T's rap to Tipper Gore) that will give neophytes a quiet place to start. Confirmed fans will appreciate the respect, fair but not adulatory, shown to their heroes and they'll love the two color-photo inserts of rap "ancestors" and current stars. A glossary defines patois and a discography lists selected recordings; there are also a reading list and an index. RS

JOSEPH, LYNN *The Mermaid's Twin Sister: More Stories from Trinidad*; illus. by Donna Perrone. Clarion, 1994 63p
ISBN 0-395-64365-1 \$13.95 R Gr. 4-6

Amber, who inherited Tantie's storytelling beads in *A Wave in Her Pocket* (BCCB 7/91), hears five more tales derived from the folkloric figures of Trinidad, including the mischievous *duennes*, sad *La Diabliesse*, and scary *Obeahs*—and then tells one of her own that scares her cousin into good behavior. Caribbean island celebrations center the stories, which assume the supernatural as part of the natural and grow as a lesson from social contexts; the title story, for instance, features a visitor who describes her sister's transformation into a mythical sea creature after defying a prohibition against swimming in the ocean on Easter Sunday, something Amber has been tempted to do. Although pronounced, the dialect seems consistent and the story frame unintrusive on the stories themselves. Energetic black-and-white drawings reflect cheerful activities in a lively setting, and the afterword gives some background on the uninhibited mix of Trinidadian ethnic traditions. BH

KIMMEL, ERIC A., ad. *Anansi and the Talking Melon*; illus. by Janet Stevens. Holiday House, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-8234-1104-4 \$15.95 R 5-8 yrs

While Elephant naps after a hard morning's work in his melon patch, Anansi picks his way into a melon with a sharp thorn and gorges himself on the juicy fruit. Now he is fat, trapped, and bored. What is there to do but trick his neighbors? When Elephant returns to pick the melon, Anansi talks to him from inside. Convinced he has discovered a rare treasure, a talking melon, Elephant sets off to show it to the king. Of course, other animals are duped along the way, and Anansi thoroughly embarrasses the king by accusing him of being stupid enough to talk to a melon. The king angrily hurls the talking melon, it bursts, and Anansi gets away scot-free. But is the tale really over? The artful arachnid now calls down to Elephant from his new hiding place in a bunch of bananas, "We bananas should have warned you. Talking melons are nothing but trouble." Kimmel rolls the action along with the rollicking cadence of a well-told joke, and Stevens' expressive animals are delightfully dopey. Source notes and/or suggestions of other Anansi stories would have been welcome, because this tale will surely whet the reader's appetite for more (see also Kimmel and Stevens' *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*, BCCB 10/88). EB

KUSKIN, KARLA *Paul*; illus. by Milton Avery. HarperCollins, 1994 48p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-023573-X \$16.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-023568-3 \$16.95 Ad 5-8 yrs

This is a book that was a long time in the making, as a prefatory note explains: Milton Avery did the illustrations in 1946, for a book that never got published and whose text has been lost, and the Avery family finally asked Karla Kuskin to write a new text to accompany them. To partner Avery's fanciful art, Kuskin has written a fanciful story about Paul, who makes up a new song and wants to sing it to his magic grandmother, who's traveling out West. A flying pig offers to take both the letter and Paul out West, but the pig drops the letter en route, so Paul hunts for it and his grandmother, asking assistance of the caterpillar, policeperson, wind, singing cat, and wolves he encounters along the way (all of whom are friends of his

grandmother). This is a tale of gossamer-light fancy, really too light to sustain a story of this length, and the plot has no conflict or cumulation, merely Paul's progression towards his grandmother's. Kuskin has a nice turn of phrase, however, particularly in Paul's periodic verses of his song, where scansion and rhyme make for pleasurable reading aloud. Avery's art appears on seven double-spread pages and one final full-page picture, with occasional elements lifted from the double spreads to decorate the text pages. These are vistas of fantasy and bold color, more concerned with the splendor of pigment and space than the detail of line; the wondrous characters are sunny and unthreatening. In fact, a more successful tale might result from letting the story-packed paintings wordlessly narrate themselves, or from asking young viewers to tell their own version. DS

LANKFORD, MARY D. *Quinceañera: A Latina's Journey to Womanhood*; illus. with photographs by Jesse Herrera. Millbrook, 1994 48p
ISBN 1-56294-363-4 \$14.40 R Gr. 4-6

As with the rituals displayed in Monty Roessel's *Kinaalda* (BCCB 1/94), the Catholic Latina *quinceañera* is a celebration of emergent womanhood, one that, according to Lankford's introduction, has its roots in ancient Aztec traditions that were syncretized with the beliefs of the conquering Spaniards. As with confirmation, a girl renews her religious commitment; as with a wedding, she gets to walk down the church aisle in a fancy white dress and with a host of attendants. Through the lens of one girl's *quinceañera*, Lankford conveys both the significance ("when she heard her mother's words of confidence in her as she approached womanhood, Martha embraced her mother") and the fun ("last but certainly not least, Martha decided what she and her attendants would wear"), and Jesse Herrera's color and black-and-white photos, if somewhat fuzzily reproduced, have a friendly snapshot quality. While in format and difficulty the book is at a younger level than for those actually preparing for their own *quinceañeras*, younger girls looking forward to the big day will enjoy it. A reading list and an index are appended. RS

LEUCK, LAURA *Sun Is Falling, Night Is Calling*; illus. by Ora Eitan. Simon, 1994 26p
ISBN 0-671-86940-X \$15.00 R 2-4 yrs

A sweetly simple bedtime verse ("Dusk's around us, / night is near. / Mama says, / 'Come snuggle here'") is illustrated with stylishly retro—but also sweet and simple—gouache paintings of a rabbit-child getting tucked in for the night. The matte colors of the pictures steadily deepen from warm salmons and sky-blues to cool greens and navy while Mama in her red skirt and white apron snuggles up, reads a story, sings a song and cozies baby rabbit into bed. The drawing is fine throughout, and the picture of Mama standing against a green wall and blue window makes a color-palette bow to *Goodnight, Moon*, with which this book shares, if not the same kind of inventiveness, then at least a similarly drowsy security. RS

LICHTVELD, NONI, ad. *I Lost My Arrow in a Kankan Tree*; ad. and illus. by Noni Lichtveld. Lothrop, 1994 30p
ISBN 0-688-12748-7 \$15.00 R 5-8 yrs

Don't throw away the dust jacket. It offers the only source information for this Surinamese cumulative tale which Lichtveld learned from her aunt and which, she explains, was often told in a "contest to see who could recite Jakóno's whole jour-

ney the fastest." Jakóno, the oldest of eleven children, leaves his forest home to find a job in town to help support his family. On his first day out he shoots a pigeon roosting in a giant kankan tree, but loses his only arrow. Undaunted by this inconvenience, Jakóno soon meets people with troubles greater than his own—a starving carpenter, an old man with uncooperative cows, a stone-broke king who rules a country so poor that "even the trash cans are empty!" At each encounter the boy tells the ever-lengthening tale of his adventures and makes a trade that will prove advantageous down the road. When at last Jakóno presents the king with a bag of gold, he is rewarded with farm land for his family and returns home a hero. In addition to Jakóno's journey story, which is the backbone of the tale, repetitive conversations and catchy phrasing ("Hey, Cowman, say, Cowman, what will you give me?") make this an inviting read-along. While most of the text is unattractively boxed in translucent overlays in the page corners, all the colors of the crayon box flow through the lively, fantastical scenes in which perspective has been thrown to the wind. And the visual fun continues to the endpapers, which celebrate the family's prosperity—citized clothes, a sewing machine, and a lean-to complete with chamber pot! EB

LINDBERGH, REEVE *If I'd Known Then What I Know Now*; illus. by Kimberly Bulcken Root. Viking, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-670-85351-8 \$13.99

Ad 5-8 yrs

Marketing moguls have evidently aimed this one at Father's Day shoppers, belly-banding it with the slogan "For Your Favorite Do-It-Yourself Dad." As the terrified title page cat flees the scene of hammer and bent nails, a ten-thumbed father can't be far behind. His teenage son delivers a rhymed chronicle of Dad's bumbling attempts to build their house and farm. Each verse reveals one year's accomplishment—leaking roof, faulty plumbing ("When my mom takes a bath and lets it drain/ The soap bubbles go right down the lane"), disastrous electrical wiring, etc.—and concludes with Dad's cheerful assessment that the results would have been better "if I'd known then what I know now!" The theme will surely strike a sympathetic chord in many households, but the joke wears thin and the verses lose some bounce along the way. Root's gloriously detailed line and watercolor scenes carry the show. The bathtub perches atop a jungle gym of piping, the bedroom door is wallpapered shut, and melancholy cows straddle the hayloft beams while Mom and Dad, posed à la *American Gothic*, observe the chaos through the barn door. Muted shades of brown, gold, and blue are appropriate to the stoic family that endures each addition to their domestic comfort with expressions of affectionate resignation. In the final two-page spread, Dad is enthroned amid his handiwork, while long-suffering neighbors, livestock, and family pay him the feel-good tribute, "But we still wouldn't want any dad but you,/ If we'd known then what we know now." Have a good chuckle and pass Mom the hammer. EB

LIONNI, LEO *An Extraordinary Egg*; written and illus. by Leo Lionni. Knopf, 1994 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-95840-1 \$15.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-85840-7 \$15.00

R 3-6 yrs

Jessica the frog is the latest addition to Lionni's gallery of pint-sized visionaries and adventurers. The eccentric in a frog trio on Pebble Island, Jessica is "always somewhere else." Naturally it is she who brings home a remarkable trophy from a day's

exploration—a beautiful object, “round like the full moon on a midsummer’s night.” Marilyn arrogantly states, “It’s an egg. A chicken egg.” Deferring to Marilyn’s reputation for superior wisdom, Jessica and August agree that the creature who breaks out of the shell is indeed a chicken, although viewers will plainly see it is an alligator. Jessica and the hatchling become inseparable friends until “little chicken” is reunited with her mother. Jessica reports to the frogs that mother chicken called her baby “my sweet little alligator,” and the three friends can’t control their laughter. Lionni’s signature artwork—cool blue and gray palette, streamlined and bright-eyed animals—is comfortably familiar to old fans. And the broad humor of the simple fable should delight any child who enjoys being in on a joke. EB

MCKINLEY, ROBIN *A Knot in the Grain and Other Stories*. Greenwillow, 1994 192p
ISBN 0-688-09201-2 \$14.00 R Gr. 7-12

Three of the five stories here—“The Healer,” “The Stagman,” and “Touk’s House”—have been previously published in Terri Windling’s *Ace* fantasy collections. Along with a fourth tale, “Buttercups,” they’ll attract readers familiar with the kingdom of Damar (from *The Hero and the Crown* and *The Blue Sword*) where they are set. Each features McKinley’s signature blend of the magical and the mundane in the shape of heroines who begin with a mark against them (typically, one is mute, another orphaned) and end triumphant, with a true love as well. It’s an appealing formula that McKinley fosters smoothly and imaginatively. Of the two new stories, “Buttercups” is the most successful, about the relationship between a poor but pretty young woman and an older farmer whose suspicion of magic (and love) nearly blights their marriage. The title story, set in a contemporary rural house to which the protagonist has reluctantly moved with her parents for her last two years in high school, has a less clearly defined fantasy element, which limits the realization of both plot and characters. However, fans will settle happily into the book as a whole; it’s romantic enough to gratify those between-stage kids who yearn—but fear they’re too old—for a favorite fairy tale. BH

MAGUIRE, GREGORY *Missing Sisters*. McElderry, 1994 [160p]
ISBN 0-689-50590-6 \$14.95
Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 5-8

Alice Colossus, twelve years old and living in a Catholic orphanage, achieves an ambiguous kind of celebrity for her performance as Eliza Doolittle in a school production of *My Fair Lady*: while she sings and acts creditably, Alice’s speech impediment means that she only performs the part up until Eliza’s transformation from flower girl to Lady; classmate Naomi then takes over. The nuns say it’s because *My Fair Lady* is “such a long show.” When the two girls reprise their roles at summer camp, Alice is shocked to hear her performance bring forth from the audience cheers and applause—for someone named “Miami.” It turns out, credibly and suspensefully, that Alice has a twin sister who was adopted and who now is part of a family in nearby Albany. When the two girls meet—in a strong, scary scene—their lives are changed forever. As Vivien Alcock did in her similarly themed *The Cuckoo Sister* (BCCB 4/86), Maguire uses a melodramatic, even banal, premise to structure an involving story about people finding themselves in each other. Alice and Miami are equally fierce and stubborn, and their insistence that they belong together has a magnetic force. The adults that surround the girls—Miami’s

parents, Alice's nuns—are as complicated as their charges, with the possible exception of Alice's beloved Sister Vincent de Paul, who dispenses all the wisdom of Harriet the Spy's Ole Golly but has none of her rough edges. Still, she is a comforting presence, and the subtle characterization of the nuns in general reveals both their kindness and their unthinking heedlessness. The 1968 setting is lightly conveyed ("The three Sister Franks like a team of Green Berets all leaped up and began to run back to the chapel") and the storytelling is sure and steady. RS

MANITONQUAT (MEDICINE STORY), ad. *The Children of the Morning Light: Wampanoag Tales*; illus. by Mary F. Arquette. Macmillan, 1994 72p
ISBN 0-02-765905-4 \$16.95 R* Gr. 3-6

Despite his stated concern that the oral tradition will freeze in print, Manitonquat's style here is fluid and full of the kind of language that keeps storytelling alive. Part of what's so refreshing about these creation myths is the informal humor that keeps surprising us around every corner. Like Julius Lester's Brer Rabbit stories, these are told with a voice that's never ponderously reverential. Because Manitonquat is Native American—and steeped in the tradition of his people—he doesn't have to worry about achieving a politically correct tone. After Matahdou the troublemaker creates sharks, his helpful twin brother asks the porpoises to help humans whose fish weirs (and fishermen!) are getting chewed up. At first the porpoises hesitate. "You don't want to mess around with that fish. It doesn't listen to anybody. It's just plain mean. . . . Have you seen the teeth on that guy? We don't have any weapons like that; besides, we're nonviolent." What they do have is brains and a sense of fun ("Just party animals, that's what we are"), which they finally use to play the shark into distant waters. It's that very spirit of play that buoys up these eleven stories; as wise as they are, they never get heavyhanded, and kids will love listening to them read aloud or told in new words as storytellers make the book a source for their own re-creations. The acrylic paintings, while not as adroit as the tales, make a pleasant visual accompaniment for independent readers. BH

MAYO, GRETCHEN WILL, ad. *Big Trouble for Tricky Rabbit!*; ad. and illus. by Gretchen Will Mayo. Walker, 1994 [48p] (Native American Trickster Tales)
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8276-0 \$13.85
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8275-2 \$12.95

Here Comes Tricky Rabbit! ad. and illus. by Gretchen Will Mayo. Walker, 1994 [48p] (Native American Trickster Tales)
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8274-4 \$13.85
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8273-6 \$12.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

Like Mayo's earlier books on Coyote (BCCB 5/93), these two easy readers about Rabbit feature five stories each, more smoothly styled this time around, and unusually well documented as to sources and cultural context. Some of the same lore has found its way into collections such as Gayle Ross' *How Rabbit Tricked Otter and Other Cherokee Trickster Stories* (reviewed below), but this will be more accessible to younger children. Storytellers will recognize a number of motifs in common with those of African-American Brer Rabbit tales, including a tar-baby variant, and with African tales such as a tug-of-war like the one Hare sets up between Elephant and Hippopotamus—here Tie-snake and Man Eater—who both think

they are pulling against Rabbit. Mayo's smooth acrylic paintings are well modulated and variously shaped for a lively page layout, as animals play tag with the text. If the short sentences sometimes suffer from textbook cadence, at other times the repetition is calculated to build suspense ("Bobcat waited outside. Rabbit waited inside") or humor ("'Ha ha!' Rabbit laughed. . . . The hole is too small for you, Bobcat.' 'Ha ha!' Bobcat laughed. . . . But now you are trapped"). In general, the selections are amusing and the compression capable; acknowledgments, notes, and an afterword are included in each book. BH

MEAD, ALICE *Crossing the Starlight Bridge*. Bradbury, 1994 122p
ISBN 0-02-765950-X \$14.95 R Gr. 3-5

Rayanne has lived her entire nine years on the Maine island where her people, the Penobscot, have always lived. After her unemployed father leaves, however, she and her mother have to cross the "starlight bridge" to the mainland coast, where they can live with Rayanne's grandmother. Shy Rayanne is deeply miserable at first, but she begins to blossom under the eye of a sympathetic teacher and demonstrates an artistic talent that wins her mainland friends. Mead deftly establishes a child's point of view with simple and unpretentious language. Rayanne's Penobscot heritage is a natural part of her life and of the story, with Grandma telling a few *pourquoi* tales and, less pleasantly, some mainlanders resenting the Penobscot possession of previously private land. Rayanne's attitude towards her sad father, who must leave his home to find work and finds a new wife as well, veers realistically between longing and resentment. This is a gentle and understanding story of a young girl's adjustment to change, and young readers who may sometimes feel outpaced by smart-mouthed middle-grades stories will particularly welcome it. DS

MOSER, BARRY *Tucker Pfeffercorn: An Old Story Retold*; written and illus. by Barry Moser. Little, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-316-58542-4 \$15.95 R* 6-9 yrs

See this month's Big Picture, p. 311, for review.

MULLER, GERDA *Around the Oak*; written and illus. by Gerda Muller. Dutton, 1994 40p
ISBN 0-525-45239-7 \$14.99 R 5-9 yrs

Illustrated with crisply delicate, less romantic but just as sturdy, paintings that recall Barbara Cooney's work, Muller's four-seasonal portrait of a forest tree and its environs frames some facts of nature study within a likably unobtrusive fictional context. Nick lives with his father, a forest ranger; each season his cousins come to visit, and all revel around an honored old tree they discovered in a clearing. They chart the progress of its leaves, observe its inhabitants and neighbors and visitors, and, in summer, celebrate its birthday as determined by measuring its trunk: "I know!" said Caroline. "Uncle Hank told me. You measure around the trunk of the tree. Ours is one hundred and twenty inches. It takes about two and a half years for an oak to grow an inch. That's three hundred years." As with Nathaniel Tripp and Juan Wijngaard's *Thunderstorm!* (BCCB 4/94), the paintings provide the atmosphere along with the information, offering detailed rendering when necessary, and providing a landscape of the moonlight dip of a raccoon family, for example, to show us why these kids love this tree. It's seductive science,

and appended all-facts spreads of several topics ("Plants that Caroline Found in the Clearing," "Animals Found in the Forest") add to field-trip value. RS

NEUMANN, PETER J. *Playing a Virginia Moon*. Houghton, 1994 [240p]
ISBN 0-395-66562-0 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 8-10

In his last year of high school, cross-country runner Chet is determined to break the local record held by the legendary Johnny Fiske, but he's worried about the appearance of Johnny's younger brother Jimmy, who has suddenly returned from military school and seems to have inherited his dead brother's talent. The training and racing scenes in this first novel, set in the 1970s, are tough and suspenseful, with each race (scorecards provided) shifting the balance of competition between Chet and Jimmy, among others who include Chet's best friend, smartmouthed Bernie. Less successful are Chet's interior monologues as he thinks about his Civil War term paper during his morning runs; while we seem meant to find parallels between Chet's (racing) strategies and General Lee's, Chet's analytical musings are deft but not very interesting, dragging the otherwise efficient pacing. Chet's wise coach, "the Vee," is Central Casting ("the rawboned face told you he was a scrapper, but there was a spring to his step that hinted at a buoyancy"); Chet's sort-of girlfriend is more promisingly original, but, like Chet, we don't see enough of her (we also don't see anything of his parents, of whom glancing mention is first made in chapter twenty-four). What works best is the running, and the book has the plethora of technical detail more usually found in books about team sports. While it's not as good a novel as Voigt's *The Runner*, Neumann's is a better sports book, and cross-country loners will appreciate the attention. RS

ORGEL, DORIS, ad. *Ariadne, Awake!*; illus. by Barry Moser. Viking, 1994 74p
ISBN 0-670-85158-2 \$15.99

R Gr. 5-9

Orgel's version of the Theseus myth is related by Ariadne and begins—after a brief prologue describing Pasiphae's passion for a sacred bull, and the Minotaur that's born as a result—with Ariadne's early memory of trying to find and comfort her bestial half-brother in the Labyrinth. She's almost killed in the process and is punished by her tyrannical father, so when Theseus appears and wakes her own passion, she determines to save his life in defiance of her King Minos. Her appeal to Daedalus for help, the golden thread he gives her, Theseus' killing the Minotaur, and their escape from the guards all lead to Theseus' abandoning Ariadne on the Isle of Naxos, where she's saved by a satyr and wedded to Dionysus. Like Nancy Willard's *Beauty and the Beast*, also illustrated by Barry Moser (BCCB 11/92), this is a tale that's been fictionalized far beyond its usual length but not quite to the full development of a novel. Gracefully written and cannily illustrated with vivid portraits (though Minos looks more like a Viking raider than a king of Crete) or scenes playing on unexpected perspectives, the book will especially appeal to readers who think they've outgrown picture-book editions of myth but aren't ready for dense historical fiction such as H. M. Hoover's *The Dawn Palace: The Story of Medea* (BCCB 6/88). BH

PATENT, DOROTHY HINSHAW *Hugger to the Rescue*; illus. with photographs by William Muñoz. Cobblehill, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-525-65161-6 \$13.99

R Gr. 2-4

Well, not just Hugger—also Panda, Chelsie, and Hydra, who are all Newfound-

land dogs and all members (or in Hydra the puppy's case, prospective members) of Black Paws Search, Rescue, & Avalanche Dogs, in Montana. The book talks about the natural rescue instincts of the water-loving Newfoundland and shows the dogs training for their task of finding lost or trapped humans in water, snow, or wilderness (Patent avoids mentioning the common occurrence of finding dead bodies). The drama of the canine mission is brought home by the photographs, which show Newfs rappelling across ravines, dangling from helicopters, and bounding through the snow; even the puppies—and there are some great Newf puppy pictures—have an appealing bearlike quality that makes them awesome and cuddly at the same time. Dog-loving kids will revel in this, of course, but it might also make a lively and thought-provoking addition to a “people that keep us safe” unit on community service. DS

PEARSON, KIT *The Lights Go On Again*. Viking, 1994 201p
ISBN 0-670-84919-7 \$13.99

R Gr. 4-7

Anticipating return to their native England from Toronto as the end of the war nears, evacuees Gavin, ten, and Norah, fifteen, are shocked when a telegram announces that their parents were killed by a bomb. This Canadian novel, final volume of a trilogy that includes *The Sky Is Falling* (BCCB 6/90) and *Looking at the Moon* (6/92) is somewhat picturesque in its shading of such dramatic scenes; there's a bit of the theatrical—effectively so—in dialogue such as “This is Dad's writing. The last letter from them before they died. Do you want me to read it to you?” Nora is intense, and stubborn in her insistence that she and Gavin return as soon as possible to their grandfather. Gavin, cosseted by the majestic “Aunt” Florence since he was five years old, and having made good friends in school, wants to stay. The children's grandfather, aided by Gavin's recovered memories of toddlerhood, straightens everybody out. Characterization is square-footed but satisfying; while Gavin—who here takes the center stage from his sister—changes from child to man and gets his first kiss in a rather formulaic sequence, his sensitivity, even priggishness, is (even if the cover doesn't think so) blessedly unlit by sentimental hallowing. RS

RANSOM, CANDACE F. *Jimmy Crack Corn*; illus. by Shelly O. Haas. Carolrhoda, 1994 72p
ISBN 0-87614-786-4 \$14.21

M Gr. 3-5

Although the Great Depression provides fertile possibilities for exciting historical fiction, this volume signals “curriculum tie-in.” Jimmy Watkins and his preternaturally cheerful, down-on-his-luck father abruptly decide to join the 1932 veterans' Bonus Army marchers to Washington, D. C. (Historical background of this expedition is provided in textbook-sized chunks of dialogue. “When were you there [in Europe], Pa?” “A long time ago, Jimmy. The war lasted from 1914 to 1918. America didn't get into it until 1917. But we did our part.”) At Camp Marks, Jimmy helps Pa build a pleasant shanty out of readily available rubble, befriends a nice old man, earns some money singing a sprightly rendition of the title song, and finally helps subdue a frantic mob by playing his harmonica as they are charged by bayonet-wielding mounted soldiers. The Watkinses return home without their bonus money, but with the knowledge that “every man in Camp Marks had tried his darnedest. . . . They all faced hard times with bravery and good spirits.” An afterword explains that a second Bonus Army march in 1933 netted the veterans some Civilian Conservation Corps jobs and in 1936 the bo-

nuses were distributed early, but no indication is given of how the Watkins family weathered the economic storm. Dreamy, double-exposed pastel watercolors jar against the sober Depression theme. Factual information from the story could be used to reinforce or extend a history unit on the Depression, but the light-hearted treatment of the marchers' hardship provides a skewed view of this event. EB

RASCAL *Oregon's Journey*; illus. by Louis Joos. BridgeWater, 1994 [34p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-8167-3305-8 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

SpR 6-9 yrs

The narrator, a dwarf circus clown, determines to free a performing bear he's met in Pittsburgh, so after their "final performance," they walk into the night and—by bus, foot, train, and occasional car rides—journey together to the snowy north-west mountains. The hero is a taciturn man whose loneliness comes out in flashes, as when he hopes to "meet Snow White" in the forest, or explains to a trucker why he continues to wear white makeup and a red nose: "Because they've become a part of me. . . . It isn't easy being a dwarf." ("Nor is it easy to be a black man," answers the trucker, in an exchange that reveals the adult subtext for this picture book.) The paintings are brilliantly hued and spontaneously composed with sweeping movement. Both the art and the fate of the bear will absorb children's attention, though what they'll think about the mystical ending—"I walked into the white morning, light at heart, and happy"—is anybody's guess; they may or may not figure out that the red ball in the snow is the dwarf's false nose, and that metaphorically, both bear and dwarf have cast off society's false guises. Encouraging kids to discard trappings of civilization they have yet to acquire also seems pretty paradoxical. Between the existential tone of the text and the expressionistic tone of the art, this may be one of those picture books needing special introduction to kids older than the usual preschool/primary grades audience. BH

REMKIEWICZ, FRANK *The Bone Stranger*; written and illus. by Frank Remkiewicz. Lothrop, 1994 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12042-3 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12041-5 \$15.00

R 6-9 yrs

Return with us now to the thrilling days of yesteryear, when dogs inhabited the prairie and the center of the "wild and woolly west" was a little dog-run delicatessen called Boney's. Boney and his loyal assistant Wolfgang happily serve the breakfast and the lunch crowds (jumping rope out back for exercise between times), until one day the Raccoon Brothers hijack a box of bones destined for the orphanage. Boney, enamored of the young widow who runs the orphanage, rides off in masked disguise, subdues the Raccoon Brothers with hard salamis, ties them up with jump ropes, and returns to town in time to regain his ordinary identity and make breakfast for the morning customers. Boney's white horse, Sauerkraut ("Smell kinda funny, but go good with hot dogs," says Wolfgang), and his faithful German-Indian companion may remind astute young listeners of another western legend. Remkiewicz pickles melodramatic westerns nicely, seasoning his takeoff with wit, affection, and dashes of absurdity (the jump-rope rhymes printed in the illustrations are readaloud musts); his map of Dusty Little Town has an archetypal rightness to it even as it includes geographical landmarks such as Where the Buffalo Roam. His casually drafted art offers earth-toned prairie colors in unshaded acrylics, with pleasing details such as the line of hand-holding orphans (including

a diapered puppy at the end) and the distraught and operatically posing widow. As with good fractured fairy tales, this story depends on myth known through osmosis, whether personally encountered or not, so youngsters will probably find it funny even if they don't always know why. DS

RIDE, SALLY *The Third Planet: Exploring the Earth from Space*; written by Sally Ride and Tam O'Shaughnessy. Crown, 1994 48p illus. with photographs
Library ed. ISBN 0-517-59362-9 \$15.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-59361-0 \$15.00 R Gr. 3-5

Exploring is the key word in the title, as the former astronaut conducts a Cook's tour of Earth from several hundred miles up and explains how and why surface information is collected by remote sensing instruments aboard satellites and space shuttles. Although not divided into chapters, the text is organized into five distinct sections: the advantages and methods of exploring Earth from so far above its surface, and traits and phenomena of the atmosphere, water, land, and biosphere, respectively. The combination of informal tone, concise explanation, and spectacular color photography is most appealing. Eyecatching photos of a hurricane over the Indian Ocean, Alaskan glaciers fanning into the sea, and the eruption of Mount Pinatubo will attract browsers, but browsing isn't enough. Clues to interpreting these images are included within the text, not in the photo captions, and composite and false color images in particular may be misleading if viewed without reading the explanation. A brief index will help students with reports, but this volume will also appeal to budding Earth scientists who enjoy poring over and interpreting the aerial images. Watch out for an inaccurate definition of a delta as an area "where fresh water mixes with salt water." Otherwise, enjoy the ride and admire the view. EB

ROSS, GAYLE, ad. *How Rabbit Tricked Otter and Other Cherokee Trickster Stories*; illus. by Murv Jacob. HarperCollins, 1994 [80p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021286-1 \$16.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021285-3 \$17.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-6

A noted Native American storyteller who has made videos and personal appearances, Ross here presents fifteen tales introduced by a map of southeastern Indian groups and a foreword by the principal chief of the Cherokee Nation. Her writing style is as confident as her oral delivery, with a no-frills simplicity that foregrounds the animal characters in a broad range of shenanigans. Both adults and children will recognize relatives of African American stories here in "Rabbit and the Tar Wolf," "Rabbit Races with Turtle," "Rabbit Steals from Fox," and others. Some of the pourquoi tales, such as "Flint Visits Rabbit," will make particularly appropriate accompaniments to an elementary-school study of tribal traditions. Murv Jacob's deep-hued paintings, framed in designs of each picture's dominant color, make sharp use of white highlights on contrasting forest shades. Although the compositions are sober, there's straightfaced humor in the animals' expressions and postures, and the drafting is excellent. There's no note on sources, either personal or printed, so we don't know from whom these were passed on, but the collection itself will prove a valuable resource despite its anonymous past. Easy-to-read versions of "Rabbit and the Tar Wolf," as well as several other tales here, are also available in Gretchen Will Mayo's books, reviewed above. BH

RUMBAUT, HENDLE *Dove Dream*. Houghton, 1994 119p
ISBN 0-395-68393-9 \$13.95

Ad Gr. 7-10

At thirteen, Eleanor feels herself on the brink of womanhood, but her frequently invalid mother and alcoholic father aren't giving her much assistance. She's thrilled, therefore, to spend the summer of 1963 with her father's sister Anna, a twice-divorced waitress who calls Eleanor "Dove" and who takes seriously the girl's desire for maturity. Through Anna, Dove learns about her father's Chickasaw heritage and her mother's sad childhood; she also learns about fast cars, handsome young men, sex (from overhearing the sounds of Anna and her boyfriend making love), and menstruation. The writing is smooth, subtle, and understanding, and the joy of female bonding readily apparent. The plot turns sometimes hamper the themes, however, with Dove's going off on a vision quest (which she admits is an irregular and non-Chickasaw practice and she doesn't really know what to do) an unnecessary device and her final menarche an anticlimactic and overly physiological expression of the intricate emotional process the book otherwise treats with depth. It's still a good summer-of-growth story, however, filled with respect for the power of womanhood and the possibilities of life. DS

SACHAR, LOUIS *Marvin Redpost: Alone in His Teacher's House*; illus. by Barbara Sullivan. Random House, 1994 83p (First Stepping Stone Books)
Library ed. ISBN 0-679-91949-X \$9.99
Paper ed. ISBN 0-6769-81949-5 \$2.99

R* Gr. 2-4

Marvin Redpost, ur-third grader, seems to be a magnet for trouble: he's been kidnapped at birth (BCCB 10/92) and undeservedly picked on (BCCB 2/93) and now he's got serious trouble with his teacher. It starts out as *good* luck: Mrs. North hires Marvin to dog-sit for her beloved old Waldo while she is out of town, but despite Marvin's scrupulous care (including getting the vet's advice on how to tempt the reluctant dog to eat) Waldo dies. "Oh, man," says his friend Nick, "you are the unluckiest kid in the whole world." When Mrs. North comes back, of course, she reassures Marvin that it wasn't his fault, she appreciates his caring for Waldo, and she's paying him for a full week's dogsitting and taking him to lunch. Sachar displays his usual knack for conveying the full misery of kid-dom in a few well-chosen and humorous words; Marvin's tactful and polite note to Mrs. North ("Dear Mrs. North, If you are looking around for Waldo, don't. You won't find him. He's not in your house. And he's not outside. Well, he's dead. I hope you had a nice time on your trip. Yours truly, Marvin Redpost") is both woebegone and funny. His attempts to do the right thing by everyone and stave off the evil fates that always seem to threaten him make him not just a protagonist but a real hero, one that kids can both empathize with and admire. The title and the cover (Marvin peering with trepidation out of a closet filled with teacher's clothing) will lure the most reluctant readers, who will be as glad to make Marvin's acquaintance as his old fans will be to greet a new adventure. Shaded pencil drawings, cheerful and with a touch of caricature, appear throughout. DS

SERVICE, PAMELA F. *Phantom Victory*. Scribners, 1994 [128p]
ISBN 0-684-19441-4 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Terri's family has lived on South Bass Island in Lake Erie for years, and she's used to—if not excited about—the influx of summer tourists; Brian's a tourist, coming

to the island for the first time, although at the turn of the century his family used to spend summers at the island's posh resort hotel, the Victory. The Victory has long since burned down, and Terri is working on an excavation project that the islanders hope may mean renovation of the glorious and revenue-earning structure. She meets Brian when he discovers a diary—written, it turns out, by his great-aunt—that's being used to guide the archaeologists. Terri and Brian discover that his great-aunt was in love with her great uncle, and the two lovers, both long dead, had playfully hidden a valuable necklace that had never been found; the man funding the dig, Mr. Stephenson, is doing so to cover up his hunt for the jewelry. The kids follow Great-Aunt Charlotte's and Great-Uncle Joe's clues, aided occasionally by their ghosts and threatened periodically by Mr. Stephenson, and they find the necklace which will fund a rebuilding of the Victory. This is not a sophisticated mystery, but it's a lot of fun, with the kids following the rhymed clues (Service notes in an epilogue that the locations—except for the cave that actually holds the necklace—and the history of the island are all true), outsmarting the adults, and saving the day while becoming friends along the way. The occasional presence of the friendly but still eerie ghosts, who follow the hunt with spectral interest, adds atmosphere to an already entertaining plot. A good summer mystery for young Nancy Drews and Hardy Boys. DS

SMUCKER, ANNA EGAN *Outside the Window*; illus. by Stacey Schuett. Knopf, 1994 26p

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-94023-5 \$15.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-84023-0 \$15.00

R 3-5 yrs

Five baby birds will not settle down for the night without their evening ritual. Mother Bird must answer all their questions concerning the strange activities of the little boy they see beneath their tree branch by day and through the nearby window at night. As Mother Bird explains the boy's quite ordinary behavior, each fledgling visualizes the explanation in bird terms. When Mother says, "He doesn't eat the sand pie. He likes juicier things than that," the little bird imagines the boy preparing to bite into a plump, wiggly worm. "He is climbing into his bed now" evokes an image of the boy snuggled into a leafy nest. Meanwhile, on the other side of the window, the boy is going through his own nightly ritual of story, prayers, and goodnight kiss. The little birds abandon their struggle to stay awake when they are assured the boy is finally asleep too. Rich, vibrant tones of twilight blue and green set a bedtime mood, and the boy's bird book and poster, which attest to his reciprocal curiosity, are nice touches. However, why the baby birds understand "brush," "book," and "prayers" but not "teeth" remains a mystery of the animal world. A pleasant tuck-me-in. EB

STEIN, R. CONRAD *The Mexican Revolution 1910-1920*. New Discovery, 1994 [144p] illus. with photographs (Timestop Books)

ISBN 0-02-786950-4 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

"If I am to die tomorrow/ Let them kill me today," quotes Stein from a song popular with the early Zapatistas, and it was that sense of desperation that drove "the costliest war ever fought on the American continent, dwarfing even the great Civil War" in the U.S. During the decade of the Mexican Revolution, "as many as two million Mexicans—one in every eight of the population—had died either in

battle or from the disease and famine brought about by warfare.” Yet most of the war’s impact was too localized to affect the rest of the world or even Mexico’s neighboring countries, and the complexities of changing leadership, military alliances, and political compromises have obscured the struggle for many U.S. students. This fact, along with the importance of the Mexican Revolution to current Mexican affairs and to the large immigrant population in the U.S., makes Stein’s book an important resource. He’s done a clean overview: the narrative is carefully organized, the style is neat, and the balance of background and detail is consistent. He lets the inherent drama of the stories anchor his presentation, which, although it’s not footnoted, is supplemented with a chronology, biographical sketches of important characters, and a list of books for further reading. With black-and-white historical photographs and an index. BH

THESMAN, JEAN *Cattail Moon*. Houghton, 1994 197p
ISBN 0-395-67409-3 \$14.95

Ad Gr. 6-9

Challenging piano study and the close friendships of other serious high school musicians dictate that Julia remain with her mother and stepfather in Seattle, but Mom’s relentless pressure to remake her into a social butterfly drives Julia off to Moon Valley to live with her father and grandmother. Julia soon admits that the domestic peace of the Moon Valley household has forced her to compromise her dreams of a professional music career, for which self-study and the local high school choir cannot prepare her. As her dissatisfaction and indecision crest, Julia begins to see the figure of a young woman in white who wanders the cattail marsh behind Grandmother’s house. This vision, she discovers, is shared by Luke Sutherland. A romantic, enigmatic boy whose sudden smile makes Julia “think that the sun has come out,” Luke seems to know the vision’s history but refuses to discuss it, so Julia singlemindedly delves into the history of Christine, the local ghost, who shares her own love of classical music. At this point, the contrivances of ghost-hunting story and love story threaten to overpower the coming-of-age theme that Thesman had so artfully introduced and lovingly developed. But after the Puccini-singing spirit’s somewhat convoluted past comes to light, Julia takes a lesson from her unhappy story, returning to Seattle and forcing aside her deepening love for Luke. Ghost-story aficionados may find Christine a bit tepid, while love-story enthusiasts will regret Julia’s decision. But those independent-minded young women who dream of transforming their ambitions into reality may find a kindred spirit. EB

TREVOR, WILLIAM *Juliet’s Story*. Simon, 1994 105p
ISBN 0-671-87442-X \$15.00

Ad Gr. 4-6

Trevor’s first novel for children flails around a bit getting started but flies before it’s over. The premise is rather complex for the scope of development: when Juliet’s storytelling friend Paddy Old dies, she goes into a depression that alienates her from her family (there’s a baby on the way) and best friend. It’s only when Grandmamma takes her on a trip from her Irish home to France, spinning tales along the way, that Juliet begins to find her own stories and let go her grief. Besides the tales within a tale, there’s a lot going on here. In the beginning we don’t get quite enough of Paddy to feel Juliet’s loss, and we get rather too obvious a contrast between story-loving Juliet and her television-loving friend Kitty Ann (“*Star Trek’s* on now,” she says as the gravediggers reach for their shovels).

Grandmamma, on the other hand, is a subtly realized character despite her meandering stories, and Juliet's days on the French seacoast have the colored clarity of *A Room with a View*. The scene where Juliet engineers a swap between five toy fish and the trout waiting to be eaten in their hotel restaurant tank is memorably funny ("Better to make a joke than a living," says the toymaker). Thus Trevor becomes a perfect example of his own premise: where the messages about stories fail, the story well told succeeds. BH

TURNER, GLENNETTE TILLEY *Running for Our Lives*; illus. by Samuel Byrd. Holiday House, 1994 198p
ISBN 0-8234-1121-4 \$15.95

M Gr. 4-6

Luther, Carrie, and their family decide to escape from Missouri slavery in the late fall of 1855, and when the brother and sister become separated from their parents (after a dangerous night crossing of the Mississippi River), they continue the long journey to Canada on their own. It's an exciting, if fact-filled, adventure, as the two children travel along the Underground Railroad, hiding in false-bottom wagons, meeting Frederick Douglass and Allan Pinkerton, and eventually happening on an aunt, hitherto unknown to the children, who had escaped from Virginia and now offers the children a place to live while they look for their parents in Canada. Quite a bit of information about slavery and history is awkwardly worked into the story ("Speaking of Chicago, do you know who Chicago's first permanent settler was?") and the definitions of unfamiliar words such as "towpath" and "trousseau," are artificially handed out in dialogue. The dropping of "g's" in both dialogue and in Luther's narration is consistent but odd-looking and distracting, as it's pretty much the sole deviation from standard grammar or spelling found throughout the book. What will pull kids in is the perilous journey taken by Luther and Carrie, whose sibling camaraderie and squabbling make an appealing focus for the history, but the writing has a textbookish tone that impedes the flow of the story. RS

WESTCOTT, NADINE BERNARD, comp. *Never Take a Pig to Lunch and Other Poems about the Fun of Eating*; comp and illus. by Nadine Bernard Westcott. Kroupa/Orchard, 1994 64p
ISBN 0-531-06834-X \$18.95

R 6-9 yrs

This humorous anthology separates its menu into four courses: poems about eating silly things, poems about eating foods we like, poems about eating too much, and poems about manners at the table. Silly things range from broccoli to school lunch, eels to slugs ("Swallow a slug/ By its tail or its snout/ Feel it slide down/ Feel it climb out," by David Greenberg). "Foods we like" include the sweet (Jack Prelutsky's "Fudge") and the savory (X. J. Kennedy's "Spaghetti! Spaghetti!"). Writers as diverse as Miss Piggy ("Never eat more than you can lift"—really an aphorism rather than a poem, but who cares?) and John Ciardi ("Betty Bopper," who tragically attempts to pop seven pounds of popcorn in her popper) address the spectre of overeating. And Arnold Adoff's free verse lament "I Am Learning," in which a child struggles with chopsticks, accompanies other poems on polite eating, such as Richard Armour's immortal "The Catsup Bottle" ("Shake and shake/ The catsup bottle/ None will come/ And then a lot'll"). There's a smorgasbord-like variety here, with poems varying in length, form (a few pithy prose entries sneak in as well, in fact), and age (good old Anonymous provides a few welcome standards, including, with wonderful appropriateness, a section of "There Was an

Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly”). Aside from the poets mentioned above, reliable contributors such as Ogden Nash and Florence Parry Heide spice up the stew. Occasional technical glitches—“How to Eat Like a Child” is wrongly credited to Nora Ephron instead of Delia Ephron, and Ogden Nash’s “Celery” is slightly misquoted—don’t mar the fun. Line-and-watercolor pictures show a sharp-edged and cartoonish multicultural (and multi-species) cast cavorting through pages of interestingly varied compositions and upbeat jellybean colors. This is popcorn-easy reading for first and second graders, and if you serve up a slice at a readaloud they’ll laugh till the milk comes out their noses. DS

WEXLER, JEROME *Queen Anne’s Lace*; written and illus. with photographs by Jerome Wexler. Whitman, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-8075-6710-8 \$14.95 R Gr. 2-4

Whether city or country dwellers, most of us are familiar with this hardy wildflower, and Wexler uses it to explain some basic facts of plant life as well as discussing its specific characteristics. The text describes the plant’s similarity to the common carrot (photos show a root-to-root, leaf-to-leaf, and flower-to-flower comparison), its separate components (pictured nestled in a human hand or measured with a ruler for scale), and its reproductive process (we see seeds, looking like insects, clinging to cloth as they would to the fur of an animal that would carry them far from the mother plant to grow). As always, Wexler’s tone is bright and casual; he’s happy to admit when no one knows the answer and he’s forthcoming with nifty science experiments (“Make a bet that you can make a dead object move without touching it!”). The page composition is restrained, with white space accented by a slender-lined green frame surrounding one or two compact but easily understandable photos. This is an intriguingly photographed introduction to basic botany. DS

WHITELEY, OPAL *Only Opal: The Diary of a Young Girl*; ad. by Jane Boulton; illus. by Barbara Cooney. Philomel, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-399-21990-0 \$14.95 R 6-9 yrs

As a note at the end of the book explains, the text for this book is adapted from Opal Whiteley’s diary; Opal was born in about 1900 and wrote her diary when she was five and six years old and went to live with a new family after her parents died. She does extensive chores—churning butter, bringing in wood, and sweeping floors for “the mama where I live,” but she finds time to enjoy the Oregon countryside, go to school, chat with neighbors, and think of her dead parents. She also has a penchant for animals and for naming things: she’s named her pet mouse Felix Mendelssohn, her dog Brave Horatius, her crow Lars Porsena, and her favorite tree Michael Raphael, to mention a few. The CIP summary calls Jane Boulton’s text a “lyrical adaptation” of Opal’s diary, so it’s not clear exactly how much is verbatim; the text here is arranged in free-verse paragraphs on the page, and it’s simple and emotional but with a literary sophistication and occasional romantic floweriness not commonly found in contemporary American six-year-olds (“Grownups do not know the language of shadows”). Cooney’s acrylic and colored-pencil art suits the gentle but serious tone of the text, as barefooted Opal, dwarfed by trees, walks through forest paths in a double-spread landscape or sits quietly with one or another of her pets in a small islanded image drifting in white space under the text (Cooney’s particularly good with the doe-eyed calf). The book offers an interest-

ing viewpoint and slice of life, and Opal's eventual departure for a mill town gives effective, if sad, closure to the story. DS

WILD, MARGARET *Toby*; illus. by Noela Young. Ticknor & Fields, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-395-67024-1 \$13.95 R 5-8 yrs

"Our dog Toby is fourteen. That's pretty old for a dog." Right away we know what's coming, but it comes with an effective first-person narrative and sensitively composed watercolor paintings, so be prepared for a moving death scene. Toby originally belonged to the narrator's twelve-year-old sister, Sara, and Mom has to explain that part of Sara's rejection of her pet is pain at his aging—he's "a little blind and a little deaf, and he often makes such bad smells that everyone shouts and leaps for the window." He's also sick, and when a decision for euthanasia finally comes, it's Sara whom the narrator finds staying up with Toby the last night before the vet puts him to sleep. The problem is that no one will be able to get through this without bawling, which dims the effectiveness of a readaloud even as it proves the effectiveness of the book. In the realm of canine-centered bibliotherapy, it's right up there with Hans Wilhelm's *I'll Always Love You* (BCCB 1/86), with more intensely realistic, sometimes poignantly tender pictures. Kids drawn to the handsome golden retriever portrayed on the cover will benefit from a comforting hand to hold by the last page. BH

WILLIS, JEANNE *In Search of the Giant*; illus. by Ruth Brown. Dutton, 1994 26p
ISBN 0-525-45242-7 \$13.99 M 5-8 yrs

An unseen narrator recalls the day his older sister took him into the woods to look for a giant. Carried away by their imaginations, they interpreted ordinary natural phenomena to be signs of a giant's presence. They fled the woods in fear; but looking back from the forest edge, the woods no longer looked frightening. The narrator concludes, "The less we see, the more giant our imaginations grow." This theme of self-fulfilling expectations has promise, but uneven coordination between text and illustration flaws its development. The handsomely painted woods are detailed with gnarls and burls and tangles that suggest the lair of some netherworldy creature, but in most scenes they are too sun-dappled to be ominous. The children purport to be awed or frightened by things they are not in a position to see. As they look into the treetops, they claim, "Then we found another clue"—a tangled vine of giant's hair on a stump. The sentence "I noticed the fox kits, unafraid, gnawing on the giant's fingertips," is represented by the boy far in the background and the kit curled under the opposite side of a fallen tree trunk. Even the menacing "giant yawn," scarlet toadstools in the gaping knothole of a gnarled tree, is angled away from the children, whose expressions register delighted surprise rather than fear. And if that sturdy tree was indeed the giant, why did the forest floor shake "as he rose to stand before us" on the following page? Attractive, but confusing and therefore ultimately dissatisfying. EB

WILSON, NANCY HOPE *The Reason for Janey*. Macmillan, 1994 [176p]
ISBN 0-02-793127-7 \$14.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-7

Philura Higley Mason, known as Philly, is a pragmatic sixth-grader who's determined to know the reason for everything. At school, this characteristic drove her

to win last year's science fair, and at home she tries to figure out her family. New to the family is Janey, a recently de-institutionalized, mentally retarded woman who's living with Philly, her brother, and her divorced mother while she learns the life skills necessary to function independently, and Philly thinks "there's got to be a reason why somebody I never knew till four months ago fits into my family better than Dad *ever* did." Janey's father rejected her; Philly's father lives in disorganization and bitterness and supplies Philly with pizza, tension, and a case of the hives on her monthly visits to him. Eventually Philly discovers the real "reason for Janey," a family secret about a mentally retarded aunt; she also begins to understand what she can expect from her father, who may not provide emotionally for her in the way she would like but does truly love her. This is a good solid family story, with the likable but never completely understandable character of Janey woven as naturally into the narrative as she is into Philly's family. The author is somewhat over-obliging in providing Philly's life with reasons for everything, making the plot a little too tidy, but it's still a satisfying read about an appealing and gutsy girl. DS

YEOMAN, JOHN, ad. *The Singing Tortoise and Other Animal Folktales*; illus. by Quentin Blake. Tambourine, 1994 96p
ISBN 0-688-13366-5 \$18.00

R Gr. 4-6

Eleven stories from almost as many traditions get handsome treatment here, with Yeoman providing dexterous adaptations and Blake providing jaunty pen-and-wash illustrations. Unfortunately, nobody has provided source notes ("The Impudent Little Bird flew in from Spain" just doesn't qualify), so all we know are the countries from which these came, named in an afterword and marked by red Xs on a blank world map that will leave most kids mystified. The stories themselves are a mix of familiar (the Zuni "Turkey Girl") and less commonly anthologized (the Hindi "Ranee and the Cobra"), and Yeoman has, to his credit, never happified endings of the more poignant selections such as Ghana's "Singing Tortoise," where a man is beheaded for breaking a promise. A brisk style gives proper folkloric distance on such incidents, and Blake's sly, adroitly drawn caricatures of human and animal alike lighten any weighty moral lessons that happen to attend or even generate these ancient tales. Despite the lack of citations, this is a volume that children will find attractive and easy to read independently. BH



PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

Natov, Roni. *Leon Garfield*. Twayne, 1994. 144p. (Twayne's English Authors Series) ISBN 0-8057-7042-9. \$22.95.

The intelligence of this book derives both from its subject—one of children's literature's wittiest writers—and from its treatment, Natov's insightful and articulately argued analysis. After a lively interview reprinted from *The Lion and the Unicorn*, she approaches Garfield's work in two ways: thematically, with special emphasis on the child protagonist's search for a father and salvation from social injustice; and formally, with an exploration of the elements of comedy, history, and folklore that emerge in Garfield's fiction. This is an author who's frequently been compared to Dickens. He's prolific and complex enough to make this one of the most challenging volumes of Twayne's series, and Natov has done full justice to his range and depth. Fans of *Smith*, *The Golden Shadow*, *The Confidence Man*, *The Wedding Ghost*, and other titles of Garfield's fifty-plus, will enjoy rediscovering them; readers who haven't sampled much of his output will be tempted by pungent quotes and sharp discussion to do so. Chronology, notes, bibliography, index, and a few reproductions of black-and-white art work by Maitland, Keeping, and Wegner are included. BH

Peck, Richard. *Love and Death at the Mall: Teaching and Writing for the Literate Young*. Delacorte, 1994. [176p] ISBN 0-385-31173-7. \$16.95. Reviewed from galleys.

If any writer could be said to enjoy a sense of oxymoronically stern nostalgia, it's Richard Peck, who here plays easily from memoirist to moralist as he rambles around the country of the young, first as a teacher, then as a novelist, always secure in his own midwestern roots: "Because she [Peck's mother] intoxicated me with words, I entered grade school with a vocabulary I can't find in the letters ninth-graders send to me now." His observations on teaching are acute, witty, and proved out with anecdotes delivered with the flair and economy of a born storyteller, as evidenced by his recollection about the time he assigned *The Member of the Wedding* to a seventh grade class: "With too much gusto I ordered a class set and handed out the copies one fatal Friday. On the following Monday they'd all been returned to a pile on my desk. A spokeswoman for the class said, briefly, 'We won't be reading a book about a crazy girl.'" Writing about his own books, Peck explores the question of where-he-gets-his-ideas (which for authors, is one of two "perennially popular questions because they don't require the reading of a line we ever wrote") with honesty and crisp professionalism, and indulges in no mystification about his craft (on *Remembering the Good Times*: "I tried the novel from Kate's viewpoint. She's an articulate problem-solver, but readers are too likely to trivialize a story told by a girl about a boy as a romance"). As in his popular books for young people, Peck in this book for adults writes cleanly, clearly, and ever quotably. RS

SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject headings, the subhead "stories" refers to books for the readaloud audience; "fiction," to those books intended for independent reading.

- Adoption–fiction: Maguire
 Adoption: Whiteley
 Africa–folklore: Kimmel
 Africa–history: Bianchi
 African Americans–fiction: Turner
 African Americans: Jones
 ALPHABET BOOKS: Howland
 Aunts–fiction: Rumbaut
 Bears–stories: Rascal
 BEDTIME STORIES: Leuck;
 Smucker
 BIBLE STORIES: Gauch;
 Paparone
 Birds–stories: Smucker
 Boarding schools–fiction:
 Hamilton
 Brothers and sisters–stories: Wild;
 Willis
 Canada–fiction: Pearson
 Careers: Frydenborg
 Caribbean Islands–fiction: Joseph
 Catholics–fiction: Maguire
 Catholics: Lankford
 Child care–fiction: Fine
 Chimpanzees: DaVolls
 Civil War–fiction: Houston
 Cliques–fiction: Johnson
 Clowns–stories: Rascal
 CONCEPT BOOKS: Howland
 Death–fiction: Hesse; Hite
 Death–stories: Wild
 Death: Whiteley
 Depression, the–fiction: Ransome
 Disasters–fiction: Hesse
 Divorce–fiction: Wilson
 Dogs–fiction: Sachar
 Dogs–stories: Remkiewicz; Wild
 Dogs: Calmenson; Patent
 England–fiction: Cushman
 Everglades–fiction: DeFelice
 Explorers: Fritz
 FANTASY: Bomans; McKinley
 Farm life–fiction: Hesse
 Fathers and sons–fiction: Ransome
 Fathers–stories: Lindbergh
 FOLKTALES AND
 FAIRYTALES: Compton;
 Goble; Joseph; Kimmel;
 Lichtveld; Manitonquat; Mayo;
 Moser; Orgel; Ross; Yeoman
 Food and eating–poetry: Westcott
 France–fiction: Trevor
 Friends–fiction: Danziger
 Frogs–stories: Lionni
 FUNNY STORIES: Fine
Geography: Fritz; Ride
 GHOST STORIES: Thesman
 Grandmothers–fiction: Trevor
 Grandmothers–stories: Kuskin
 Growing up–fiction: Rumbaut
 Growing up: Lankford
 HISTORICAL FICTION:
 Cushman; DeFelice; Greene;
 Hite; Houston; Maguire;
 Pearson; Ransome; Turner
History, African: Bianchi
History, Mexican: Stein
History, U.S.: Brenner; Ransome;
 Turner; Whiteley
History, world: Fritz

Horses: Frydenborg
 Housebuilding—stories: Lindbergh
 Insects—fiction: Bomans
 Ireland—fiction: Trevor
 Islands—fiction: Service
 Jews—fiction: Greene
 Journeys—stories: Kuskin;
 Lichtveld
 Lake Erie—fiction: Service
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 Hesse; Neumann; Thesman
 Love—poetry: Fletcher
 Maine—fiction: Mead
 Mental retardation—fiction:
 Wilson
 Mexican Americans: Lankford
 Mexico—history: Stein
 Middle Ages—fiction: Cushman
 Moving—fiction: Danziger; Mead
 Music: Jones
 MYSTERY STORIES: Service
 MYTHOLOGY: Orgel
 Native Americans—fiction: Mead;
 Rumbaut
 Native Americans—folklore: Goble;
 Manitowquat; Mayo; Ross
 Nature study: DaVolls; Muller;
 Wexler; Willis
 New Zealand—fiction: Bond
 Parents and children—fiction:
 Bond
 Parents and children—stories:
 Babbitt
 Physical disabilities—fiction:
 Maguire
 Pioneer life: Whiteley
 POETRY: Fletcher; Westcott
 Rabbits—fiction: Mayo
 Rabbits—stories: Leuck
 Ranch life—stories: Franklin

Reading aloud: Cramer;
 Manitowquat; Ross; Westcott
 Reading, easy: Byars; Danziger;
 Mead; Sachar; Yeoman
 Reading, reluctant: Fletcher
 Running—fiction: Neumann
 Safety education: Patent
 SCARY STORIES: Cramer
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 South, the—fiction: Cramer
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 Space travel: Ride
 Spiders—stories: Kimmel
 SPORTS STORIES: Neumann
 Story hour: Babbitt; Compton;
 Franklin; Gauch; Goble;
 Kimmel; Leuck; Lichtveld;
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 Paparone; Rascal; Remkiewicz;
 Smucker; Westcott
 Surinam—folklore: Lichtveld
 Teachers—fiction: Sachar
 Trees—stories: Muller
 U.S.—folklore: Compton
 Virginia—fiction: Hite; Neumann
 War: Stein
 West, the—fiction: Byars
 West, the—stories: Remkiewicz
 World War II—fiction: Pearson



In our April issue's list of awards, we accidentally omitted *Owen*, by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow) from the roll of Caldecott Honor Books. Our apologies and belated congratulations.

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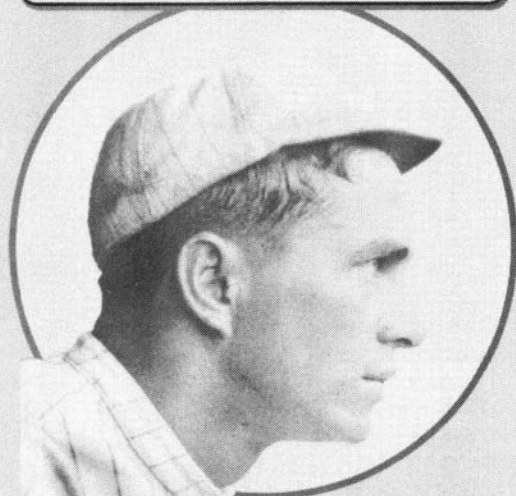
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