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# THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

May 1994  
Vol. 47 No. 9



University of Illinois  
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

University of Illinois Press

★ "An exquisitely wrought work  
of striking beauty and lingering depth."\*

# PERSEPHONE

By WARWICK HUTTON

Illustrated in full color by the author

★ "Hutton's lyrical watercolors are an ideal vehicle for the story of the maiden whose ancient abduction to the underworld set in motion the changing seasons....The potent qualities of sorrow and loss take on special poignancy in Hutton's hand, for the delicacy of his lines and washes itself suggests the transience of earthly beauty and fecundity. Yet his paintings are forceful enough to capture the terrible majesty of the underworld."

—\*Starred, *Publishers Weekly*

"Hades' abduction of Persephone and her mother Demeter's subsequent search...makes a strong mythical context for artist Hutton's perpetual play with light and dark....Like Hutton's other interpretations (*Perseus, Theseus and the Minotaur, The Trojan Horse*), this compressed adaptation gains power from its restrained visualization."

—*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

"Once again, Hutton offers a simple...adaptation and accom-  
panies it with watercolors of  
unique power and delicacy....  
A worthy introduction to an  
oft-told tale."—*Kirkus Reviews*

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# T H E B U L L E T I N

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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

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### *The Mennymys*

by Sylvia Waugh

The Mennymys are a large English family—there’s Granpa (Sir Magnus); his wife, Tulip; their son, Joshua; his wife, Vinetta; and their children, Soobie, Appleby, Poopy, Wimpy, and Googles. And they are living, human-sized rag dolls. Please don’t stop reading, because this is not a coyly whimsical, frill-bedecked literary sachet but an inventive, funny, and convincing fantasy written with crisp discipline.

The Mennymys (plus Miss Quigley, who lives in the closet) have resided in their house since their maker’s death forty years ago, and since “even rag dolls have bills to pay and things they want to buy,” Sir Magnus writes, Joshua is a night watchman, and Vinetta sews, between them providing enough income for payment of rent and utilities. Soobie, the plain-spoken and serious oldest son, occasionally mourns the pointlessness of their lives; Appleby, rebellious teenager, haunts the London street markets as her whim takes her; Poopy and Wimpy, the ten-year-old twins, spend most of their time playing, and Googles, the baby, does typical baby things. They never get any older, however, they never eat or drink, and their pleasures are divided into “reals” and “pretends”—ironing crumpled Mennym clothes is a “real” that Vinetta enjoys, but Joshua equally treasures his ritual mug of “pretend” tea.

Yet this static and unaging community does change; that’s part of the point of the book. First the family is put in an uproar when their Australian landlord suggests paying them a visit (“You must have realised that man-size, talking, rational rag dolls do not exist anywhere else in the world,” Granpa reminds them all, whereupon “Vinetta thought briefly of the Muppets, but appreciated the difference even as she thought”), and they discover in the attic a nearly finished doll, who, once assembled, proves to be Soobie’s hitherto-unknown twin sister Pilbeam. Between the revelations occasioned by the landlord’s planned intrusion and the addition of strong-willed Pilbeam to the family, the Mennymys expand and adjust, finally inviting Miss Quigley out of her cramped quarters and into the family as nanny for Googles, who herself blossoms under the new attention.

The plotting and planning of the Mennymys, concealing their button eyes with glasses and their cloth hands with gloves to pass in the human world, is explored in entertaining depth, as is the peculiar facility of the rag dolls’ memory that enables them to “remember” the childhoods they never had. What makes the story so successful, in fact, is Waugh’s ability to combine logical fantasy rules (the kids have a birthday every year, always the same birthday) and absurd specific detail (Soobie is bright blue, so he rarely goes out as he makes an unconvincing human)

with a sense of effervescent family life, as these very distinct personalities struggle to coexist and survive in a family that ends up having three permanent adolescents. In some ways this is an old-fashioned English fantasy, the kind you don't see too much anymore, in that it uncynically conjures up a world of domesticated magic. The word "old-fashioned," however, suggests a preciousness at odds with this book and its antecedents, such as Mary Norton's *The Borrowers*. A delicately imaginative concept fares better when complemented with vigor, as it is here, rather than with yet more delicacy. Once one leaps the initial hurdle of belief, accepting the Mennymys as alive, it's all quite sensible, because the family dynamics are recognizable.

This could be read aloud to younger kids, but it would be a shame to keep it from older readers even though they might be leery of the rag-doll idea; as Vinetta wisely states, "There is some part in each of us that is never too old for a good tale of magic." Maybe you can suggest to secret junior-high readers of *The Borrowers* that they share this with a grade-schooler—for the younger child's good, of course.

*Deborah Stevenson, Assistant Editor*



## NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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ACKERMAN, KAREN *By the Dawn's Early Light*; illus. by Catherine Stock. Atheneum, 1994 32p

ISBN 0-689-31788-3 \$14.95

Spanish ed. *Al amanecer* tr. by Alma Flor Ada

ISBN 0-689-31917-7 \$14.95

R\* 5-8 yrs

A gently ironic title summons thoughts of stars and stripes and men triumphant in battle, but the cast here comprises women and children of color, and the struggle is a daily one to put bread on the table and keep a family together. Young Rachel describes a typical evening in which her mother leaves to work the factory night shift just as Rachel, her little brother Josh, and her grandmother Nana are setting the table for dinner. Alternately then, she tells what she and Mom do while most of the rest of the world winds down and rests, and finally, what a joyful reunion her mother's return at dawn brings for the sleepy children. It's more sequence than story, but the characters are warmly realized and the watercolor paintings strong enough to rivet kids' attention. Both text and art individualize rather than generalize, so the picture of a family coping with a situation that's admittedly difficult is filled with vivid particulars from the first double spread of a fog-bound city to the last sun-filled cuddle on the couch. Stock's figures, without being glamorized, are deeply beautiful in expression and comfortable in posture; there's something to be said for experienced drafting. Her colors, too, have a quiet grace that makes blended patterns seem second nature to each composition. Also available in a Spanish edition, this is a genuine introduction to real heroes. BH



AYLESWORTH, JIM *My Son John*; illus. by David Frampton. Holt, 1994 32p  
ISBN 0-8050-1725-9 \$15.95 R 3-6 yrs

"Diddle diddle dumpling,/ My son John," is just one of the kids in this big farm family; there are fourteen others, each one introduced with a celebratory verse: "Bonny bonny bridle,/ My daughter Rose./ Combs her mare/ In old work clothes./ Hay in hair/ And dirt on nose./ Bonny bonny bridle,/ My daughter Rose." The book takes the children from morning ("Yellow yellow sunup,/ My son Ed") through chores ("Chipper chipper woodpile,/ My son Neil") through bedtime ("Snowy snowy pillow,/ My daughter Kate"), each verse faced by a boldly lined, rustically curvy woodcut portrait in sophisticated hues. Here and there, inspiration flags among the verses, but echoing the verve of the pictures, the rhythms are always sturdy and call for chanting along. RS

BEDARD, MICHAEL *Painted Devil*. Atheneum, 1994 [224p]  
ISBN 0-689-31827-8 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

Alice's pleasant part-time job at the local public library turns sinister when the new librarian, Mr. Dwyer, becomes preternaturally obsessed with the Punch-and-Judy set he has resurrected from the basement and plans to use in a gala children's program. Children's librarians may find this a tempting premise for a horror novel, but as far as young readers go, the frights are a long time coming and the story is complicated by too many side issues. There's a doll family, for example, which at first seems an important part of the proceedings but then becomes tangential, and many contortions are required to fit the present threat of the puppet show into an old cycle of child-murder that has secretly haunted the town and that Alice's Aunt Emily, a childhood witness at a deadly magic show, has come back home to stop. If it sounds complicated, it is. The writing, too, often goes into overdrive, with pathetic fallacies ("An old manual typewriter teetered on the edge of the table, as if it might be contemplating suicide") competing for space with clichés ("the relentless drumming of fate demanding entrance"). The heavily ornamented writing takes some getting used to, but the story gathers power as it progresses, shedding the surfeit of motifs in favor of a more strongly focused narrative. Scariest of all is the Devil puppet of the title ("It's bad," says Alice's little sister. "Bad. It has scary eyes and it says things"), and the final confrontation between Alice, Emily, and the possessed Mr. Dwyer provides a satisfyingly gothic climax. RS

BOLDEN, TONYA, comp. *Rites of Passage: Stories about Growing Up by Black Writers from Around the World*. Hyperion, 1994 [240p]

ISBN 1-56283-688-3 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

Seventeen stories, all fairly contemporary, all previously published, comprise this collection. Authors represented are mostly writers of talent rather than fame, so the names may not be familiar to readers young or old; the contributors hail from all over, including the U.S., Britain, Jamaica, Barbados, Ghana, South Africa, Costa Rica, and Australia. While some of the stories are more successful than others, all tell with compelling voices about young black protagonists; a variety of genres (fantasy, realism) and themes (some stories deal overtly with race, some do not) enhances the breadth of the compilation. Particularly gratifying entries include Barbara Burford's "Dreaming the Sky Down," about a British girl who finds her-

self able to fly; Clarence Major's "My Mother and Mitch" about a boy's mother's serendipitous but doomed friendship with an older white man, and Toni Cade Bambara's stalwart "Raymond's Run," which starts off this collection. Quirky footnotes occasionally explain foreign terms or enigmatic allusions; superfluous epigraphs, apparently the editor's addition, precede each story; an "About the Contributors" section provides brief biographies that mention additional books should a reader wish to pursue a particular author further. Altogether, it's a fresh assortment of imaginative voices that would provide good material for globally themed reading aloud, and many kids will enjoy a private circumnavigation as well. DS

CARSON, JO *The Great Shaking: An Account of the Earthquakes of 1811 and 1812 by a Bear Who Was a Witness, New Madrid, Missouri*; illus. by Robert Andrew Parker. Jackson/Orchard, 1994 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08659-3 \$14.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06809-9 \$14.95

Ad 5-8 yrs

"The shakings began as if Mother was rising from her sleep. She sleeps in the winter like I do. Something itched her. I was pushed from my fold in her skin." Jo Carson, who so skillfully walked a fine line between personal narrative and poetry in *Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet* (BCCB 2/89), here imagines a bear's account of several violent nineteenth-century earthquakes. The leap from human to anthropomorphized animal makes this less successfully innovative, as the description of a real natural disaster assumes pseudo-mystical proportions: "And in the terrible thunders, The Great Bear reminded Mother that some of her children need to sleep in the cold season, and she remembered my kind and stood still again with only a leaning from time to time." It's evocative, but what's going on? Whereas folklore gives traditional clues to a magical context, and fantasy develops realism through carefully detailed inner logic (is The Great Bear an ursine god? A constellation? What's his relation to Mother Nature?), the combination of history, science, and animal fantasy is confusing for a picture book audience that hasn't sorted out the differences yet. A concluding note does lay out an explanation *ex post facto*, and the narrative is undeniably vivid. Parker's full-color, full-page pictures have a thicker texture and darker palette than usual, projecting a monolithic quality that heightens the drama of precipitous events. BH

CASEY, MAUDE *Over the Water*. Holt, 1994 [256p]

ISBN 0-8050-3276-2 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R\* Gr. 6-9

Between famine in the past and fury in the north, Ireland has suffered more than a century of dramatic conflict. It's all the more amazing, then, for a children's book to concentrate on—and to capture with such authentic subtlety—the common, everyday pain of emigration. "We live in England, but." Thus begins Mary's story as she recounts the family's yearly holiday back to Ireland, back to the farm and the loved ones and the land that holds their hearts. Yet Mary seems to belong in Ireland no more than she does in England, and her mother suffers so much alienation that the two cannot comfort one another: ". . . all she ever does is avoid me, or hit me, or tell me to pray!" The novel is rich in stories, both those commemorating the past and those unfolding the present. Granny's tale of a wedding proposal on the day her home was destroyed by the British, for instance, is as gripping as Mary's witnessing a fire that kills the baby pigs she has helped deliver. And her

aunt's account of Mammy's childhood beating at the hands of Mary's grandfather is as immediate as Mary's beating at the hands of her own father. Scene by scene, the protagonist's understanding is stretched to encompass the best and worst of her heritage, the consequences of poverty and oppression, the depth and comfort of traditions, and the necessity for self-respect in forging a life. For Mary, this trip holds heaven as well as hell, and if the closing dynamics seem strained toward resolution with each family member who's been at odds with her, Mary's development is hardwon and convincing to the end. Casey's writing flows with effortless grace, whether the scenario calls for an internal monologue of observations on a train trip, or the description of a dream-like horseback ride, or the angry dialogue of a fight among siblings. With some of the same complexity as *Shizuko's Daughter* by Kyoko Mori (also in Holt's Edge series, and reviewed in BCCB 5/93), this features a similarly strong voice and a sustained tension that will exert magnetic force over children facing today's myriad forms of exile. BH

CHERIPKO, JAN *Voices of the River: Adventures on the Delaware*; written and illus. with photographs by Jan Cheripko. Boyds Mills, 1994 48p  
ISBN 1-56397-325-1 \$15.95 Ad Gr. 4-7

Author-photographer Cheripko and fourteen-year-old Matthew Smith together canoed the 215 miles of the Delaware river, and this photoessay is an almost hour-by-hour journal of the ten-day trip. The book does both too much and not enough: while filled with details, the lengthy text often takes a summary tone and fails to distinguish big moments, such as shooting the rapids, from insignificant tangents, such as anecdotes about the hotels they stayed in and what the two had for dinner. The sightseeing reports, as well, are variable. The Delaware Water Gap is summarized as "magnificent," yet (boys being boys, one supposes) we get a very specific rundown on the riverside traffic: "We saw some of the cars that park in New Hope—Corvettes, Jaguars, Porsches, BMWs, and even an Alfa Romeo." Color photographs are clear but often too small and, like the text, take a desultory turn too often. While the book is subtitled "Adventures on the Delaware," there's little excitement here, and you have to wonder if these guys truly enjoyed themselves. What works best are all the little how-to examples that will allow readers to paddle off on their own imagined adventures. RS

COLE, BABBETTE *Winni Allfours*; written and illus. by Babbette Cole. BridgeWater, 1994 [32p]  
ISBN 0-8167-3308-2 \$13.95  
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

Winni Allfours is a typically obsessive horse-crazy girl, but her parents, "who were very strict and only ate vegetables," refuse to get her a pony. Winni eats so many carrots that she *becomes* a horse, and a promisingly speedy racehorse at that. After escaping from an evil horse dealer (by driving his van) she wins her race, carrying her frantic father on her back and setting a world record. This is relentlessly, satisfyingly silly, with bright writing and an entertaining idea taken to its absurd extreme (Winni, by the way, remains a horse in the end, finding it immensely more satisfying than attending school). The light-hearted line-and-wash art shows Winni as a rather gawky young girl but a very handsome horse in her own cartoonish way: with her two long braided pigtails and her rotundity of form, she would be horsily Brunnhilde-ish were it not for her spirit and agility. Cole clearly knows her

equine stuff, with small horsey details (such as Winni's fantasy of a three-day event) accurate as well as entertaining; a few Americanizations of the text clash slightly with the obviously British setting, but it doesn't really detract from the story. For all little girls who've firmly stated that they want to be a horse when they grow up, this is their fantasy taken to a degree they may not have dared and will deeply appreciate. DS

COLLIER, JOHN *The Backyard*; written and illus. by John Collier. Viking, 1993 32p  
ISBN 0-670-83609-5 \$14.99 R 6-9 yrs

In this imaginative journey back through time, an unseen child muses on the changes that have occurred in his own backyard on the Great Plains. Where a wide lawn now spreads, there once were carpenters who "sweated and laughed . . . and sang songs I never heard, all in my backyard." Before them came farmers, braves, chiefs; dinosaurs and fishes and volcanoes that "rose out of lifeless seas"; "hydrogen and darkness and the hand of God." Although this solemn, stately prose is hardly that of a child's voice, it harmonizes well with Collier's elegantly composed pastels. Spare in detail, heavily textured, and set against generous white borders, the illustrations comprise a gallery of child-compelling images—a dead cowboy, a tyrannosaurus, an explosive sun. The final large frame, in which wooden backyard swings are tossed as easily as leaves by an approaching storm, reminds the reader that human handiwork remains at the mercy of natural forces. The disproportion between historic and geologic time might disturb those who would force Creation into the Procrustean bed of an accurate time line. Seven turns of the page cover a few hundred years; the next four race all the way back to the cosmic abyss. But this very disregard of scale offers an object lesson in the difficulty of applying human time to evolutionary and earth-building processes. And a child's imagination, after all, must be allowed to set its own pace. EB

DUBOIS, MURIEL L. *Abenaki Captive*. Carolrhoda, 1994 180p (Adventures in Time)  
ISBN 0-87614-753-8 \$14.96 Ad Gr. 5-8

Based on historical events, this novel tells the story of John Stark, who with his friend Amos Eastman was captured by the St. Francis Abenaki in 1752 in what is now eastern Canada. Dubois provides a fictional foil for Stark in a young Abenaki man named Ogistin, whose brother has been killed by whites and whose desire for revenge makes him at first hate Stark, who wins favor with the Abenaki and stays among them for a time. There's not much characterization here, but there's drama in the capture (which leaves a third man in Stark's party dead) and the book treats some little-mentioned realities of colonial life (the divisions between French and English, Catholic and Protestant, for instance). The different philosophies of European and Abenaki are discussed, and there's a running thread about Ogistin's guardian spirit, a lynx, that never quite ties into the rest of the story, but the real-world plot remains the important one. Clearly written and easily readable, this is a historical episode that allows a glimpse into a time and place more often mythologized than chronicled. While there's no explanation of what exactly is fact and what fiction and no citation of source material, a note about the fate of John Stark, a glossary of Abenaki words, and a list of books for further reading are included. DS

FILIPOVIC, ZLATA *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo*; tr. by Christina Pribichevich-Zoric. Viking, 1994 200p illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-670-85724-6 \$16.95 R Gr. 5-8

"BOREDOM!!! SHOOTING!!! SHELLING!!! PEOPLE BEING KILLED!!! DESPAIR!!! HUNGER!!! MISERY!!! FEAR!!! That's my life! The life of an innocent eleven-year-old schoolgirl!!" At first, Zlata's writing style shows the immature dramatics of any preadolescent, but as the war wears on for two years, she becomes, alas, much older in her observations, as when she records the death of her cousin: "He was killed in Melic's garden. It was a sniper. Awful. Everybody was in the garden and the sniper picked him out." And three days later: "Our own tiresome sniper, we call him 'Jovo,' was in a playful mood today. He's really out of his mind. There he goes! He just fired another bullet, to shake us up." In addition to celebrating birthdays and trying to study without electricity, gas, or water, Zlata keeps track of shells (at one point, three to four a minute from four in the morning until ten at night), friends leaving the city (Zlata and her family later escape to Paris themselves), and journalists coming to sniff out the story of a successor to Anne Frank. Despite all the hype—and Zlata knows halfway through her diary that it's going to be published—she keeps a level head and deepens her tone. Although the entries are often repetitive and the book is in many ways intended for adults, it will also appeal to young readers, who can empathize with Zlata's naive but telling criticisms of "the kids," as Sarajevo's ordinary citizens call the politicians who play with their lives. If anything, the world's awareness and Zlata's own self-awareness increase the irony of "a STUPID war" (her family includes Serbs, Croats, and Muslims) that everyone decries and no one seems able to stop. BH

FLEMING, DENISE *Barnyard Banter*; written and illus. by Denise Fleming. Holt, 1994 32p  
ISBN 0-8050-1957-X \$15.95 R 16 mos.-3 yrs

Put 'em to sleep with Gliori (see below); wake 'em up with Fleming. Inventively constructed collages (the author note gives some information on the process) illustrate a very simple rhyming catalog that relies heavily upon animal onomatopoeia for its effect: "Cows in the pasture, moo, moo, moo/ Roosters in the barnyard, cock-a-doodle-doo." That's pretty much it, except for a game element, hinted at twice in the text, in which children are supposed to find the goose chasing a dragonfly in each big and boldly designed double-spread picture. This isn't very hard to do, but toddlers will love to point and crow, just as they will finger the spattered textures of the pictures and trace the vigorous postures of the barnyard creatures. While entirely appropriate for lap-sitting one-on-one, it's also a story hour natural, where group reciting will soon give way to mass shrieking—better save it for the end. RS

FRAUSTINO, LISA ROWE *Grass and Sky*. Orchard, 1994 155p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08673-9 \$15.99  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06823-4 \$15.95 Ad Gr. 5-8

After a long estrangement from the old man, Timmi (named for her grandmother Timothea) and her family have come to see her grandfather, living on a lake in the Maine woods. Timmi, after years of unanswered letters, is wary of Grampy, and besides, she'd rather be home pitching for the baseball team. The story of Grampy

and Timmi's gradual rapprochement is predictable, albeit satisfying, but the book, a first novel, needs to surround its characters with more of a story than it has. Timmi, her younger sister Rebecca, and Grampy (the parents spend most of the book in town at a high school reunion) cook together, do jigsaw puzzles, explore the lake and woods, get mad at each other and eventually find an enduring bond (just in time, too, as a hospital visit reveals that Grampy's days are numbered), but it's more dynamics than action. The closing revelation that Dad had severed ties with Grampy because of Grampy's alcoholism doesn't have the impact it should have, with everyone forgiving everyone else fairly easily. Grampy, now six years sober, spouts quaint down-east dialect ("Well, Jiminy Jehoshafat, it'll be dark soon! I'll hustle us up some eats") which, combined with a taste for tall tales, renders him somewhat two-dimensional, but Timmi is thoroughly believable, with the summery woodland landscape making an appealing backdrop for burgeoning family ties. RS

GILSON, JAMIE *It Goes Eeeeeeeeeeeee!*; illus. by Diane de Groat. Clarion, 1994 68p  
ISBN 0-395-67063-2 \$13.95 R Gr. 2-4

Richard (from *Itchy Richard*) and his friends in Mrs. Zookey's second-grade class are preparing for Endangered Animal Month, but troublesome Patrick, armed with a Super Soaker, a lurid imagination, and a glib tongue, keeps trying to make things difficult. Patrick is obsessed with bats after encountering one with Richard, and budding zoologist Dawn Marie, who's thrilled to have bats in her garage, eventually settles Patrick down some and teams up with him for an endangered species report on bats. This is a lively school story, and the bat information is woven smoothly into the story rather than being the obvious *raison d'être* of the book. Richard's narration is simple but credible and Patrick is realistically obnoxious without being completely unsympathetic. The *Eeeeeeeeeeeee!* of the title and the *eeeuuw* of the subject matter will draw curious young readers, who will be rewarded with a sprightly tale. Pencil illustrations are realistic without being overliteral. DS

GLASSMAN, PETER *My Working Mom*; illus. by Tedd Arnold. Morrow, 1994 32p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12260-4 \$14.93  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12259-0 \$15.00 R 4-6 yrs

What purports to be a flat bibliotherapeutic text ("It isn't easy having a working Mom") takes on another dimension as the illustrations spoof the young narrator's complaints about her mother's career. Mom is shown to be a witch who's often busy in her laboratory (dropping weird ingredients into a cauldron) or "flying off to a meeting somewhere" (on a broomstick). Still, she has her assets, primarily magic, and she certainly manages to impress the kids at school when she comes to talk about her job. Some of the other parent/child sets are a little strange-looking themselves, with an assortment of fangs, green fins, mummy wrappings, and out-size pointy ears which contrast with the cute blond narrator and show that this is a world where fantasy and reality blend in a cozy brew. Of course it's the payoff between the straightfaced account and the goofy pictures that gives the mix its kick. Arnold's colored pencil and watercolor art work features large-mouthed cartoon characters in scenes rampant with frogs, newts, toads, spiders, cat, and mouse.

Dad looks perennially baffled, never more so than when he sits down to a traditional red-checked tablecloth set with a meal consisting of sea monster. It's a one-joke book, but kids will chuckle the whole way through. BH

GLIORI, DEBI *Mr. Bear Babysits*; written and illus. by Debi Gliori. Artists & Writers Guild, 1994 [32p]  
ISBN 0-307-17506-5 \$13.95  
Reviewed from galleys R 3-6 yrs

Mr. Bear has to take over babysitting duties when his wife, preoccupied with their own cranky baby, can't fulfill her promise to look after the cubs in the Grizzly Bear home next door. That family has a baby too, and Mr. Bear's timid attempts to care for it aren't helped by the older siblings, Ted and Fred and Fuzz: "You're not very good at that," said Fred as Mr. Bear drenched himself in the bathwater." "I don't think you're a real babysitter," chimes in Fuzz, while the baby just keeps on crying. The havoc in the Grizzly-Bear household is gently limned by Gliori; the house is a mess, but it's a cozy mess, all soft lines and warm colors, with Mr. Bear himself a comfortable tawny presence. The picture of Mr. Bear and the baby (the others having been dispensed with via some serious tough love) snoozing together in front of the fire is apt to provoke fairly won cooing, it's so toasty and furry and adorable. And when Mr. Bear goes home and rocks his own baby the same way, everybody will be all set for a little nap. RS

GORMAN, CAROL *Jennifer-the-Jerk Is Missing*. Simon, 1994 135p  
ISBN 0-671-86578-1 \$15.00 Ad Gr. 4-7

Thirteen-year-old Amy is unhappy about babysitting her father's boss' kid for the weekend: Malcolm's a weird little genius with a penchant for fantastic tales, so when he maintains he saw his rich, disliked classmate Jennifer being kidnapped, nobody believes him. He sticks to his guns, however, and he and Amy investigate (the cops don't believe him because he's told them tall tales before), discovering that Jennifer really was kidnapped and that they must rescue her because her parents are out of the country and can't be reached. There's not a shred of reality here, and the characterizations are all pretty shallow, but it's a lively, silly adventure with gratifyingly youthful heroes succeeding in the face of adult incompetence. Kids may not remember the book afterwards, but they'll enjoy it during. DS

GOTTFRIED, TED *Libya: Desert Land in Conflict*. Millbrook, 1994 160p  
ISBN 1-56294-351-0 \$16.90 R Gr. 7-12

Libya is one of only a handful of countries the U.S. doesn't seem to mind officially regarding as an enemy, so it's a challenge to any writer to provide a balanced picture, reporting (and challenging) the saber-rattling that comes from both sides. Gottfried's is a fair report, placing the Qaddafi regime within an understandable historical and religious context and explaining the contemporary factors of pan-Arabism and oil politics that inform Libya's often belligerent presence on the world stage. While the historical chapters sometimes fall into a summary tone, the analysis of Qaddafi's revolution has a journalistic impact with a good balance of reportage and interpretation. Source notes are too few, but occasional black-and-white photos, a chronology, a reading list, and an index add reference and research value. RS

HAFEN, LYMAN *Over the Joshua Slope*. Bradbury, 1994 [160p]  
ISBN 0-02-741100-1 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

Twelve-year-old Brian Winsor wants to be home listening to music and doing regular modern kid things. Instead, he has to participate in the spring cattle drive, taking his injured father's place rounding up and moving cows. Brian feels unequal to the task and to his taciturn father's expectations, but he struggles through, getting to know his father's colleagues, Malcolm and Will, and finding a range-riding mentor in Will. The parameters of the boy-becomes-a-man plot are fairly traditional, with clichés such as the half-wild young horse needing to be conquered by the young man, but Hafen invests the situation with honest emotion and credible detail. Brian's a sympathetic character as he gets lost, nervous, and occasionally downright stupid when faced with this important challenge, and readers will understand his pride in his accomplishment. City slickers looking for a taste of contemporary cowboying will enjoy the wide-open spaces here. DS

HAN, SUZANNE CROWDER, ad. *The Rabbit's Judgment*; illus. by Yumi Heo. Holt, 1994 32p

ISBN 0-8050-2674-6 \$15.95

R\* 5-8 yrs

A thorough opening source note attests to the care that's gone into adapting this Korean variant of "The Tiger, the Brahmin, and the Jackal," akin to an ancient Jataka tale. The tiger who's fallen into a pit gets out with the help of a passing stranger, whom he then threatens to eat. Pointing out the injustice of such an act, the man persuades the tiger to accept judgment from a pine tree and an ox—both of whom, having suffered at the hands of men, urge the tiger to proceed with his meal—and finally from a rabbit, who demands to see a reenactment of the event and then tells the man to leave the tiger in the pit this time. It's a tough fable, and the text, which is written in Korean and English and which appeared in the author's earlier collection *Korean Folk and Fairy Tales* (published in Korea) is accompanied by surrealistic paintings that emphasize the symbolic without sacrificing the literal. Yumi Heo's highly patterned pictogrammatic figures, steeped in brown and antique gold, radiate a nervous energy that heightens the suspense built into the narrative. A dual-language book that satisfies aesthetic criteria as well as furthering multicultural causes. BH

HAUSHERR, ROSMARIE *What Food Is This?*; written and illus. with photographs by Rosmarie Hausherr. Scholastic, 1994 40p

ISBN 0-590-46583-X \$14.95

R 4-8 yrs

In the same format as her *What Instrument Is This?* (BCCB 10/92), Hausherr explores the tasty world of food: a color photograph of an energy-filled kid/food encounter shares a page with a question ("What food grows without seeing the sun?"); turn that page to find a more sober black-and-white photograph and a paragraph or two explaining the answer ("The crunchy orange CARROT is a *root* vegetable that grows from a tiny *seed*"). The question-and-answer format doesn't always work quite as smoothly as in the previous book (the first question, "What food comes from grass that an animal has eaten?" is rather oddly posed and the answer—milk—unexpected), but the information is generally clearly explained ("The part of a plant that has seeds in it is always the fruit"). Useful back matter includes "From Flower to Fruit" (an explanation of pollination), a glossary of words



italicized in the text, an explanation of the food guide pyramid and its individual components, and a page on "Good Nutrition: What Parents Can Do." The real draw here is the attractive format and the delightful multiethnic array of child food-presenters, one of whom beams over a bowl of rice, another slurps water from a drinking fountain, and a third balances a raspberry on his tongue. This is a cheerful and appealing introduction to the serious topic of food. DS

HESSE, KAREN *Sable*; illus. by Marcia Sewall. Holt, 1994 81p (Redfeather Books)

ISBN 0-8050-2416-6 \$14.95

R Gr. 2-4

Easy to read and as basic in appeal as an animal story can be, this is young Tate's account of how she got a dog her mother didn't want, and how she got to do the woodworking her father didn't want her to try. The dog comes first, wandering into the yard as a starved stray that Tate feeds, then names Sable and adopts despite the protests of her mother, who was badly bitten as a child. Sable is gentle but has the bad habit of wandering off and returning with neighbors' belongings. Tate is forced to give away the dog to someone with a fenced yard, which gives independent Tate the idea of fencing a dog run herself. She's too late—by the time she finishes the project, Sable has run away from the new owner. Tate experiences an agonizing sense of loss, but the dog reappears, starving again and this time injured as well. The reunion coincides with Tate's parents' recognition of her responsibility; yet none of this seems pat. The protagonist's anxiety is convincing and contagious to readers, her voice carries a direct authenticity, and even the stock device of a climactic storm seems freshened by the taut pace and simple writing. The rural hard-times New England setting, reinforced by Sewall's home-spun pencil drawings, has a sharp but unlabored presence of its own. Practicing readers will recognize this as an early chapter-book of the first order. BH

HURWITZ, JOHANNA, comp. *A Word to the Wise and Other Proverbs*; illus. by Robert Rayevsky. Morrow, 1994 34p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12066-0 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12065-2 \$15.00

R\* Gr. 2-4

Artist Rayevsky has frequently sharpened his razor wit on folktales. It's fun to see him change pace with Hurwitz' collection of proverbs, which are satirically linked by sly pictures into a story filled with contemporary as well as old-fashioned—and outlandish—images. Don't start looking at the endpapers until the end, or you'll never get past their hysterical mix-and-match detail. Go directly to the title spread, which cinches the tone with two illustrations, one of a master ordering his dog to fetch, and the other of the dog ordering his master to fetch (both return with sticks in the dedication spread). Now check out the preface picture poking fun at the very nature of proverbs, which are receiving a straightforward explanation on the opposite page while an audience stares adoringly up at a comical portrait of Benjamin Franklin. Typically, the first three proverbs are constructed, via illustration, into a kind of visual narrative with a loose but humorous plot. The early bird that catches the worm while his buddies nap becomes, in the next spread, the bird in the hand that's worth two in the bush and that later jumps out of the frying pan and into the fire—a fire that subsequently heats up a watched pot that never boils while too many cooks spoil the broth. It's free association with a vengeance, and both compiler and artist are keenly aware of the contradictory advice inherent in proverbs (there are, after all, two sides to every question), which Hurwitz points

out through several examples in her afterword. Rayevsky, meanwhile, satirizes everything: human, canine, feline, and rodent; rich and poor; male and female; black and white. It's all grist for his mill. Clean compositions feature intensely colored figures against a pristine background that offers humorous contrast with the chaotic level of activity. The artist has fully imagined each scene, developed sequences by chain reaction, and set into motion a visual riot of cause and effect that will inspire rebellious delight rather than the rebellious yawn that often greets traditional, tried-and-true wisdom. In fact, it's kids older than the preschool picture book audience who will get the full benefit of this sophisticated fun. BH

JOHNSTON, JULIE *Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me*. Little, 1994 180p  
ISBN 0-316-46990-4 \$14.95 R Gr. 7-10

Sarah is fifteen, and after a long series of unhappy foster homes she's mastered the art of detachment and control. Now she's been placed with the Huddlestons, Ma and Hud, and their other two foster children, clingy young Josh and nasty teenage Nick. Left in peace at the Huddleston farm, Sarah pounds out her feelings on her computer keyboard and finds herself settling in and growing fond of Ma and Hud. Her hopes of security are dashed, however, when tragedy befalls Hud, and Sarah's biological mother attempts to reclaim her daughter. Johnston, the author of *Hero of Lesser Causes* (BCCB 4/93), is a smooth and gifted writer, and while the plot here (somewhat similar to that of Rylant's *Missing May*) is fairly predictable, the evocation of Sarah's feelings is nuanced and sensitive. The Canadian small farm-town setting lends atmosphere, and the drama of abandonment and self-realization is touching. DS

JONES, DIANA WYNNE *Hexwood*. Greenwillow, 1994 [304p]  
ISBN 0-688-12488-7 \$15.00 R Gr. 7-12  
Reviewed from galleys

Sophisticated science fiction fans who enjoy jigsaw puzzles will go galactic over Jones' latest novel, which seems to unfold backwards as the story twists with the suddenness of a snake and Earthly characters turn out to be otherworldly. Less avid readers may just get confused as the action shuttles between several scenarios: a set of ominously powerful Reigners and their Servant from Homeworld, an adolescent protagonist and her family inhabiting a contemporary English town, and a machine-induced field of theta-space that draws in the whole cast and plays havoc with time and minds. This mischievous Bannus machine, determined to select new leaders for the universe, is just one complex aspect of a fictional world that crosses cybernetics with magic to produce Arthurian legend in future shock. Readers who get involved in the gradual assemblage of plot pieces will be rewarded with a highly concentrated ending when the variously disguised characters, including Merlin and two dragons, battle toward triumph or termination. BH

KOERTGE, RON *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright*. Kroupa/Orchard, 1994 179p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08690-9 \$15.99 R\* Gr. 5-8  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06840-4 \$15.95

Jesse's grandfather, a weathered old cowboy, swears he saw tiger tracks the last time he and Jesse went riding in the hills behind their rural California town, but Jesse, thirteen and anxious, won't let him tell anybody, " 'cause they'll tell Mom, and she'll say you're senile." Both Jesse and his mom have been worried about

Pappy's increasing forgetfulness, but Jesse won't hear of putting Pappy into Golden Oaks, the local nursing home in their dusty, rundown town, even though Mom, tough and loving, is becoming more and more definite on the subject. Nowhere else has Koertge better blended pathos and humor, as Jesse enlists the reluctant help of his African-American friend Kyle in keeping Pappy's forgetfulness, mental wanderings, and accidental fires a secret from Mom. Pappy is both hero and father figure to Jesse, and it's heartbreaking to watch his decline. "Sometimes I don't know if you're kiddin' me or not," says Jesse, and Pappy winks in reply: "Sometimes I don't know myself." A supporting cast of eccentrics and lots of fast-talking repartee don't lighten the drama so much as make it more real, placing Pappy in a community of all sorts of unlikely types jostled together, facing inevitable extinction but not ready to roll over just yet. RS

KRULL, KATHLEEN *City within a City: How Kids Live in New York's Chinatown*; ISBN 0-525-67437-3. *The Other Side: How Kids Live in a California Latino Neighborhood*; ISBN 0-525-67438-1. Each book: illus. with photographs by David Hautzig. Lodestar, 1994 48p \$15.99 (A World of My Own)

R Gr. 4-7

In a welcome pair of "at-home" versions of the colorful cultural profiles we've been seeing about kids in other countries, Latino children in Southern California's Chula Vista and Chinese-American children in New York City's Chinatown here talk about how they've learned to mediate two cultures, the one they were born into and the one to which their parents have brought them. In many ways, these books are a model for the genre. They're strongly focused on the young subjects, there's a greater emphasis on daily life than on exotic foods or "festivals," and the color photos are plentiful, sharp, and unposed. *The Other Side* shows Mexican-American kids in school; out with their friends; traveling to Tijuana, seven miles away, to see relatives (and doctors—medical care is much cheaper there). *City within a City* similarly follows its subjects through daily routines of school and family life. General facts and controversies (illegal immigration, bilingual education) are successfully drawn from the anecdotal portraits, although *City* demonstrates some ambiguity over the number of Chinese living in New York. Each book has a map, a reading list, and an index; further volumes in the series are planned. RS

KUKLIN, SUSAN *From Head to Toe: How a Doll Is Made*; written and illus. with photographs by Susan Kuklin. Hyperion, 1994 32p

Library ed. ISBN 1-56282-667-0 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 1-56282-666-2 \$15.95

R\* Gr. 2-4

Autumn is a rosy-cheeked, nattily dressed doll, presumably available in your local toy store, and this photoessay (reminiscent of Kathryn Lasky's *Dollmaker*, BCCB 1/82, although Kuklin deals with mass production and writes for younger readers) shows how she came to be, following her through her design, molding, eye-setting, hairdressing, and costuming. Kuklin focuses on the specific craftspeople along the doll-making line, allowing Wellington the eye-installer ("All the time I'm making a doll I look at her and say, "How ya doing?" To me, this is a little baby") and Greta the dresser ("Dolls are great because they smile back—they don't talk back") to comment on the work and the final product. Kuklin is a talented documentarian and she seems inspired by the slightly peculiar situation here: the conversa-

tional text is lively and entertaining, and the photos, filled with disembodied heads and naked doll-butts as well as tidy doll dresses, have a surreal charm. Kids who believe dolls to be small people may find some scenes (such as the eyeball being thrust into Autumn's bald but lipsticked head) a little alarming, but the let's-see-how-it-ticks school of youngster will get a kick out of all the mechanical details and the posterish double-spread filled with eyeballs staring right at the reader. DS

KUSKIN, KARLA *City Dog*; written and illus. by Karla Kuskin. Clarion, 1994 32p  
ISBN 0-395-66138-2 \$14.95 R 3-5 yrs

The scene opens with a stack of travel gear on the verso of the title spread and a loooooong red leash stretching, knots and all, across to the lower right-hand corner of the recto, where a happy tan-colored mutt looks back at his family as if to say, "LET'S GO." Later, a double spread solid with buildings that dwarf the car ("We took the dog") gives way to a sweep of open green fields ("to the country"). The rest is a verbal and visual romp as poetry and motion take over until both draw to a close: "And she/ the city dog,/ skipped out/ drinking dark air/ feeling a little wild// while floating in the middle of the night/ the melon yellow moon looked down/ at the pretty city dog/ kicking up the countryside,/ and smiled." Kuskin's soft-edged, sun-dappled watercolors make a spacious setting for the verses, which appear in one piece for a cohesive reading at the book's end. Words and pictures that at first glance appear naive accrue a rhythmic warmth that deepens with each runthrough. It will be clear to even the youngest listener that city dogs—and children—enjoy an occasional break from crowded urban routines. BH

LEVINE, ABBY *Ollie Knows Everything*; illus. by Lynn Munsinger. Whitman, 1994 [32p]  
ISBN 0-8075-6020-0 \$14.95  
Reviewed from galleys R 3-6 yrs

It's refreshing to see an unpretentious family book with wit and pizzazz. Levine provides the wit via Herbert, from whose younger-sib's view of know-it-all brother Ollie we watch the O'Hares take their vacation to New York. Munsinger provides the pizzazz with her pen-and-watercolor pictures, which feature some humorous details and clever drafting reminiscent of Wallace Tripp's art. All the characters are animals, allowing Munsinger to spoof the New Yorkers crammed on a subway (rabbit Ollie gets "stuck between a large lady and a tall, thin man"—actually an elephant clothed in pink and a blue-jacketed giraffe), as well as the main characters; take a gander at the O'Hares marching in their matching white robes to the hotel pool. There's even a plot: Ollie, who knows everything ("Will he always be older than me," Herbert asked Mother, "even when I'm seven?"), gets lost, much to the distress of his family, even Herbert in spite of himself ("Can I be the oldest now?"). For kids going on a trip to New York, this is a must; otherwise, just share it aloud with the local bunnies. BH

LINDBLAD, LISA *The Serengeti Migration: Africa's Animals on the Move*; illus. with photographs by Sven-Olof Lindblad. Hyperion, 1994 40p  
Library ed. ISBN 1-56282-669-7 \$15.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 1-56282-668-9 \$15.95 R Gr. 3-6

With an inviting balance of text, captions, and dramatic color photographs, ad-

venture mavens Lisa and Sven-Olof Lindblad chart the long migratory trek of zebra and wildebeest across the Serengeti, “the force of those nine million hooves pounding the earth and causing the ground to shudder [making] you feel as though you were in the middle of an earthquake.” Not to mention the predators “that follow them every step of the way.” Lisa’s text is brief and clearly sequenced along the stages of the nine-month migratory cycle; Sven-Olof’s photos—some crossing two-thirds of the double-spread pages—mix close-ups of animals with distance shots of herds and evocative landscapes. There’s a bit of confusion about time, with the animals seeming to take much more time going north than they do returning south, but the steps of the cycle are clear, and a map further delineates the route. The layout is spacious, and a glossary provides concise definitions of the terms used in the text. RS

LOTTRIDGE, CELIA BARKER, comp. and ad. *Ten Small Tales*; illus. by Joanne Fitzgerald. McElderry, 1994 64p  
ISBN 0-689-50568-X \$15.95 R 3-6 yrs

The compiler’s experience as a storyteller comes through loud and clear in this culturally varied collection of ten folktales that are well suited, in their narrative patterns, to very young listeners. Malaysia, Russia, Indonesia, Puerto Rico, China, central Africa, and India are the countries of origin for this lore, most of which has sources cited in the concluding notes. Fitzgerald’s pen-and-watercolor illustrations emphasize cozy pastel hues that lend a reassuring note to folkloric action such as a fox’s eating up the chicken and goose, “every bit,” in “The Fox and the Walking Stick” (other versions have the fox eating many more!). The plots, too, are geared to early concerns: “I want to sleep in the middle,” demands the little boy, thereby saving himself and his father from an attack by a puzzled tiger in “Four Legs, Four Arms, One Head.” Lottridge’s sound effects will have kids chanting along with the *screeeeee* of the door and the *boo-hoo* of the boy and the *ruff-ruff* of the dog and the *maaaaaaaaaa* of the nanny goat and the *naaaaaaaaaaaaaay* of the pony and the *squirt-squirt* of the oilcan in “The Old-Fashioned Bed.” Not to mention the *wa-wa-wa* of the boat and the *way-way-way* of the paddle in “The Journey of Tiny Mouse”; or the “pum, pum, pum/ Here I come/ In my drum” of the old woman in “The Magic Drum”; or the creeping turtle, slithering snake, boinging rabbit, tromping elephant, and “*bumpity, bumpity, bumpity, bumpity, CRASH!*” of “The Great Big Enormous Rock.” In combined effect, the rhythm of both the retellings and the art will captivate bedtime or storytime listeners. BH

MCCLELLAND, JULIA *This Baby*; illus. by Ron Brooks. Houghton, 1994 32p  
ISBN 0-395-66613-9 \$13.95 R 4-7 yrs

“This baby” is what Andrew’s family keeps calling Andrew’s sibling-to-be, but Andrew’s not sure he wants to be a sibling at all. “This stupid baby is wrecking everything around here!” he shouts, and when he’s sent to his room he screams “I’ll stay in there forever! I’ll never come out! I’ll die in there and then you’ll be sorry!” Eventually his family explains the importance of his new role to him, and when finally he sees his new sister, his superior status allows him to feel “sorry for anyone who came into the world looking like that.” First published in Australia, this is a cheerful dethronement story with high-spirited writing and cozy family drama. The plot, the animal characters, and the design make the book a dead ringer for *A Baby Sister for Frances*, although Andrew’s family looks a little more bearlike—or

perhaps wombat-like?—and the line-and-wash art has a fineness in the detail that counterpoints the straightforward story nicely. There's always room for a good funny story about adjusting to that interloping infant, and this is a well-executed and entertaining offering. DS

MACGRORY, YVONNE *The Secret of the Ruby Ring*; illus. by Terry Myler. Milkweed, 1994 [190p]

Trade ed. ISBN 0-915943-88-3 \$14.95

Paper ed. ISBN 0-915943-92-1 \$6.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-7

For those who like their time-travel fantasies jumpstarted and smooth-riding, here's an easy Irish entry in the genre. Lucy is given a ring by her grandmother, the ring can grant wishes, Lucy accidentally wishes herself into the past and loses the ring, thereby becoming unable to use the ring's *second* wish and get herself back home. Lucy finds that she's a new housemaid in Langley Castle, a stronghold of the English landlord class in 1885 Ireland, but while there's many an upstairs-downstairs glimpse at daily manor life (and some awkwardly worked-in discussion of nationalist resurgence), the historical aspect doesn't work for much more than atmosphere, since the past and present don't interact and the plot is entirely centered on Lucy's continuing attempt to regain the magic ring. For all the difference it would make to the story, Lucy could have gone back to Elizabethan England or ancient Rome. It is, though, a simple, straightforward tale, and while seasoned fantasy fans might want a few more complications, neophytes can just sit back and enjoy the search. RS

MCNEIL, M. E. A., ad. *The Magic Storysinger: From the Finnish Epic Tale Kalevala*; ad. and illus. by M. E. A. McNeil. Stemmer House, 1994 112p

ISBN 0-88045-128-9 \$16.95

R Gr. 4-7

"When Väinö was born, he was an old man," begins this adaptation of Finland's national saga, which continues with sly and often contradictory humor throughout many episodes, from the creation of the world to two suitors' struggle for Louhi's daughter, who wants no part of either. Although the cast may be confusing to readers with no background—and there's no glossary or list of *dramatis personae* to guide them—many of the stories make fine reading aloud: how iron turned dangerous, for instance, when a wasp sent by Hiisi the evil-doer dropped poison into the iron-tempering liquid that a bee was supposed to sweeten with honey. "And so Iron became angry when he came out of the forge. He forgot his promise and cut his clan, bit his kin and made blood flow everywhere." These tales will also make intriguing comparison with other mythologies, "Death's Island" with the Greek underworld, for instance, or "In the Belly of the Giant" with Jonah and the Whale. McNeil has retained an understated wit ("She heard a moaning from the direction of the sea. 'That is a man. The wind does not complain so much,'" says Louhi) which is not always apparent in her art; the stylized images and landscapes are more graceful than several realistic scenes featuring awkwardly drafted characters such as those at Louhi's feast. Still, aside from de Gerez and Cooney's picture book *Louhi, Witch of North Farm* (BCCB 10/86), it's hard to come by this lively material in a form accessible to children. An afterword gives a bit of background on the Finnish tradition of oral poetry, and on the collection and publication of the epic itself. BH

MAHON, K. L. *Just One Tear*. Lothrop, 1994 [64p]

ISBN 0-688-13519-6 \$10.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

Quietly lugubrious, this fictional diary charts the emotional recovery of a thirteen-year-old boy (so indicated by a single pronoun halfway through the text) after his father's death. The entries are brief, sometimes just half a page, and the circumstances of the death, a murder, are revealed gradually. While there's much melodrama in the events related, the writing itself is spare and controlled, as in this scene where the boy is seeing the school counselor: "It was good in there with him. Just his voice. No background noise. No screaming. No murmuring. Just his soft, soothing voice. I'll be going there often now, I think." Reflecting the depressed state of the narrator, the tone is unvarying and distanced, flattening such dramatic events as the suicide of an unnamed friend with an unnamed problem. Written by a fourteen-year-old Australian girl, this is a hi-lo *The Bell Jar*, and will grab the interest of problem-novel fans. RS

MARX, TRISH *Echoes of World War II*. Lerner, 1994 96p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-8225-4898-4 \$14.96

R Gr. 4-7

While Jewish victims' experiences of Nazi persecution have been amply recounted in children's literature, this is one of the few attempts at a more inclusive picture of how children suffered in other arenas of the war as well: a girl in the French Resistance, a child sent away to escape the bombing of London, the daughter of an anti-Nazi German, a British boy interned by the Japanese in a Philippine camp, and a Japanese girl who fights starvation. These, in addition to a family of German Jewish children who escaped as refugees to England, show how much the children of enemies had in common. Based on interviews and laced with quotations, every account begins with some background information on the war and proceeds with the young person's story. After an initial photograph of each subject, the other pictures are drawn from general wartime photo files, which can seem to conflate the subject's experience with those of the often unknown persons pictured. However, the blend of personal anecdote and factual account brings the war into immediate focus, and Marx has a clean, selective style that never interferes with the voices she's echoing. BH

MEDEARIS, ANGELA SHELF *Our People*; illus. by Michael Bryant. Atheneum, 1994 32p

ISBN 0-689-31826-X \$14.95

R 5-8 yrs

"Daddy says our people built the pyramids," opens this child's-eye mini-history, and the intention to boost black pride with a recitation of accomplishments by African-Americans' ancestors is an admirable one. "I wish I could have been there," continues the narrator, finishing an elaborate construction of wooden blocks. "I would have helped them with the plans." This litany of what they did and what she would like to have done culminates, after her father's steady encouragement, with a fantasy of herself as an astronaut: "I want to do something great. Just like the rest of our people." It seems odd to launch the book with ancient Egyptians, which implies a hotly contested Afrocentrist view of the building of the pyramids, but that's the pitfall of generalized history. The kings, queens, poets, mathematicians, and artists of Africa, along with the explorers, underground railroad leaders,

cowboys, politicians, businessmen, teachers, doctors, farmers, and inventors whom Daddy cites as examples—and whom the narrator then envisions—are the main point here, and both parents and teachers will find the lesson useful. Bryant's watercolor illustrations emphasize the inspirational aspects of the text, alternating dramatic historical scenes with cozy interiors in which the narrator acts out her fantasies—leading her dolls and stuffed toys to freedom in a little red wagon, for instance, or riding on her father's back past a poster with "Black Cowboys" crossed out to read "Black Cowgirls." There's even a touch of humor here and there (the other poster depicts a stolid cow and reads "Moooo") to animate the purposeful. BH

MURPHY, CATHERINE FREY *Songs in the Silence*. Macmillan, 1994 [192p]

ISBN 0-02-767730-3 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

With her little brother Josh in intensive care for a bad burn he received, Hallie is out in the Portland (Maine) harbor off her island home in a dinghy, brooding over her self-determined guilt for the accident, when she finds herself capsized and drowning. A mysterious voice tells her what to do and eventually lifts her to safety onto a rock. It's a whale, staying in the harbor to nurse her sick baby, and Hallie soon figures out that when she's on a boat or in the water she can telepathically communicate with the whale, who calls herself Melae. The fantasy element isn't very imaginative, relying on new-age whale stereotypes of ecologically conscious gentle giants, but Hallie's pain at Josh's crisis is quite real, as is her longing for someone to confide in, her parents being absorbed in Josh and spelling each other at the hospital on the mainland. The most finely drawn relationship here is between Hallie and her best friend Melissa, whom Hallie has shut out, first from her pain, and then from her secret talking with Melae—who has troubles of her own, as scientists are trying to force her from the harbor in the fear that she will beach herself. Melae's end of the conversation is a bit Yoda-like ("SMALL ONE, THERE IS NO ALONE. ALL OF US ARE TOGETHER") but she's a comforting presence, as are Melissa's family, as is the cozy Maine island setting. RS

NAYLOR, PHYLLIS REYNOLDS *Alice In-Between*. Karl/Atheneum, 1994 144p

ISBN 0-689-31890-1 \$14.95

R\* Gr. 6-8

The indefatigable Alice—who has been in agony, rapture (BCCB 6/89), reluctance (4/91), and April (3/93)—now undertakes that most difficult period of all, the summer between seventh and eighth grades. It starts in spring, actually, with her thirteenth birthday, which has not brought the mature beauty for which Alice had hoped. And without a mother, she doesn't have all that much help from her family. "Look at my face and tell me what you see," she asks her twenty-year-old brother. "Cheez Whiz on your chin," replies Lester. But Lester, whose love life is of great interest to Alice, does take her out for a dress-up birthday evening, whereupon she accidentally falls prey to her first "pawing" by an older man. And later on, in a vividly realized scene, the pubescent Pamela gets into a sexually threatening situation on an overnight train trip that she and Alice and their shy friend Elizabeth take to Chicago. Like Betsy Byars, Naylor has the ability to treat serious problems with funny flair. Alice's yearning for her long-dead mother, which overcomes her unexpectedly in the middle of a classroom recitation of poetry, will have readers crying right along with Alice. Yet it's all slipped between laugh-aloud lines that dominate the tone and will lure fans back for more of the same. While the



characters have been confidently established already, Naylor's energetic dialogue and sprightly episodes keep the series fresh. BH

NIXON, JOAN LOWERY *Shadowmaker*. Delacorte, 1994 [192p]

ISBN 0-385-32030-2 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

Dogs barking in the night alert Kate Gillian and her mother to the shadowy figure lurking outside their ill-protected beach house. These women have cause to be afraid. Mom is on leave from her Houston-based job as an investigative reporter; her reputation as a muckraking journalist has already aroused the hostility of the townsfolk; a boy in Kate's sophomore English class has made veiled threats against her. Worst of all, local sheriff *cum* literati Everett Granger seems unwilling to take their fears and reports seriously. As he says, only a few misdemeanors have ever disturbed the peace of Kluney—outsiders either bring or make their own trouble! At first the sheriff's attitude seems prophetic, as Mom begins investigating possible toxic waste dumping by the town's major employer. But as in any good mystery, so obvious a motive for threats and harassment must be a red herring. Nixon rapidly weaves a deadly web of connection between the shadows outside the beach house, the murder of a carnival worker, the disappearance of an emotionally unstable high school girl, an English teacher's prop closet, and the sudden romantic interest of the school heart-throb in Kate herself. Tension between daughter and mother over the waste investigation and their protracted stay in Kluney adds a nice touch of realism. And the character of the awkward and annoying Lana Jane, around whose disappearance the action pivots, is beautifully realized in its painful vulnerability. A solid, read-it-straight-through thriller. EB

PAULSEN, GARY *The Car*. Harcourt, 1994 [176p]

ISBN 0-15-292878-2 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

"He was alone. His name was Terry Anders. He was fourteen years old, living in Cleveland, Ohio, and his parents had left him." This is vintage Paulsen, with the isolated boy undertaking a journey not with a boat (*The Voyage of the Frog*, BCCB 1/89), dogs (*The Haymeadow*, 5/92), or implement (*Hatchet*, 12/87), but with a car he's built from a sophisticated kit with and a middle-aged Shakespeare-quoting hippy he's picked up who's also a Vietnam-vet fighting machine and student-of-life ("I am learning" is a favorite phrase). The two of them—three, since the car's an important character—pick up the veteran's buddy, who owns a super-souped Harley Davidson and who summarizes the two men's friendship, which verges on telepathic, with a kind of tough, offhand casualness that the author often uses to take readers by surprise. "Oh, we go back a long ways. Did a little war, a little peace together. There was a time when he thought he was in love with me. . . . Yeah. He's gay. You didn't know?" The point is that Waylon's homosexuality isn't important (that's all we ever hear about it), and it's Terry's job to figure out what is important about the characters or situations that highlight their odyssey, including a wise old Native American living alone on the prairie, a religious commune that oppresses women, an archetypal poker game that brings in some of the money they travel on, the brothel of a prostitute who had a heart of gold before she died of AIDS, the site of Custer's last stand ("The soldiers were the losers. And the Indians, of course"), and a series of drunken rednecks and/or cowboys who threaten the voyagers and end up bloody and bruised at the hands of the two martial arts

experts. A lot of posing goes on here, but macho kids, to whom there are not enough young adult books directed in this world, will soak it up. BH

PERRAULT, CHARLES *Puss in Boots*; tr. by Naomi Lewis; illus. by Stasys Eidrigevicius. North-South, 1994 26p  
Library ed. ISBN 1-55858-120-0 \$14.88  
Trade ed. ISBN 1-55858-099-9 \$14.95 Ad 5-8 yrs

Compared to the flamboyant editions of "Puss in Boots" illustrated by Fred Marcellino (reviewed under Perrault in BCCB 12/90) and Alain Vaës (4/92), Stasys Eidrigevicius' art is somber indeed. His penchant for portraying victimization through surrealistic images (see Ramachander's *Little Pig* in BCCB 11/92 and Baumann's *The Hungry One*, BCCB 3/93) highlights the horrific elements of a story that's basically a sequence of cat and mouse games. Puss trick-traps a rabbit, a king and his daughter, and an ogre, in that order—and some say his own master also, as translator Naomi Lewis points out in her introductory note on the story's variants. Each of the dark full- or two-page paintings here shows one of the characters in a subtle form of entrapment: even Puss is tied by his bootstrings to the sack that holds what he catches. This visual theme gets heavy, as when the minor character of a fieldworker, asked whose fields she works, occupies a distracting double spread that's rendered dramatic by her being tied to the earth with her hair. As Perrault points out in his moral, wit and charm can overcome brute power; although the tale may be cruel, it's also playful. The pictures per se are arresting, and Naomi Lewis' translation and adaptation are skillful, but this particular cat should lighten up to suit this particular story. BH

PORTE, BARBARA ANN *Harry's Birthday*; illus. by Yossi Abolafia. Greenwillow, 1994 48p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12143-8 \$13.93  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12142-X \$14.00 R Gr. 2-3

When it comes right down to it, forget the clown, forget the party at Charlie Cheese, all Harry really wants for his birthday is a cowboy hat. He gets it—and more—but not before hearing stories of assorted birthday dramas from his friend Dorcas (about the time her birthday party was wiped off the boards by an expansive competitor) and from his Aunt Rose (who recalls the party where Wendy Wallerstein, a "somewhat overdressed child who loved to eat," choked on a silver sugar bead). What Harry's party may lack in theatrics, it more than compensates for with a really good time for all concerned, especially Harry, now the proud owner of *seven* cowboy hats. Anticipation and gratification: a perfect birthday formula. Abolafia's pen-and-watercolor sketches sit nicely within the expansive white space of the pages, and the lower right-hand corners feature a flip-cartoon of Harry's hat trick. RS

RASCHKA, CHRIS *Elizabeth Imagined an Iceberg*; written and illus. by Chris Raschka. Jackson/Orchard, 1994 32p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08667-4 \$14.99  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06817-X \$14.95 Ad 5-8 yrs

Elizabeth is a young girl who encounters an alarming personage when she's out on her own. Madam Uff Da (she doesn't *look* Norwegian, but who knows?) is large, loud, and eager to make Elizabeth's acquaintance, but "it seemed to Elizabeth that

somehow something was not right." When Madam Uff Da scoops her up and dances with her, Elizabeth takes inspiration from her strong friend, the imaginary iceberg, and tells the lady to "get away from me!" and then departs in safety. The moral of the story ("Elizabeth imagined her own self and remembered how strong she could be") is laudable if didactic and the overwhelming Madam U. D. inventively unpleasant in a way that adults really can be with kids. The pivotal iceberg motif never really fits in with the rest of the plot, however, and the sing-y text is sometimes nicely balanced between poetry and prose but other times more rhythmic than sensible. Raschka's scribbly and vigorous black lines, with charcoal smudging over the slightly smoky colors of the art, keep the situation both intense and playful, and there's a classic eat-you-up picture of Madam Uff Da's huge and grasping hands and voracious red mouth reaching towards a buffeted Elizabeth. DS

RATHMANN, PEGGY *Good Night, Gorilla*; written and illus. by Peggy Rathmann. Putnam, 1994 36p  
ISBN 0-399-22445-9 \$12.95 R\* 2-5 yrs

Is *Good Night, Moon* too sedate for you? Well, here's a livelier bedtime goodnight: a zookeeper makes his final rounds of the day, bidding his charges good night, while unbeknownst to him the gorilla, who has taken his keys, lets each animal out after the keeper has passed. The critters (gorilla, lion, hyena, giraffe, and armadillo, plus a bonus non-zoo mouse) cheerfully follow the zookeeper home to *his* house and curl up for the night in his room, undiscovered until his wife says "Good night, dear" and gets more responses than she had bargained for. Mrs. Zookeeper then trudges back to the zoo and returns the would-be guests, but the gorilla and his mouse sidekick sneak back again for a little creature comfort. Except for the final sleeping "Zzz" of the gorilla, the text is simply the repetition of "Good night, —" to the appropriate animal or person, but the storytelling art unfolds the plot delightfully. Small entertaining touches abound, such as the ubiquitous but never-mentioned mouse (an illustrative tip of the hat to Clement Hurd?) diligently dragging around the gorilla's banana; the toy Babar in the elephant's cage and the toy Ernie in the armadillo's enclosure; and the elephant's comradely grasp on the lion's tail as they both fall asleep in the zookeeper's bedroom. Rathmann's lines are rounder here than in her previous work, the animals have a cheerful simplicity of mien, and the palette relies on a twilight glow of pink and green that lends a gentle circus flavor to the proceedings. The comedic blackout spreads (just speech balloons and startled eyes against the blackness) add punch to the punchline. Really young kids, who don't get enough involving stories, will enjoy being in on the gorilla's secret return (on the cover, he peers out at the audience with his finger on his lips in a conspiracy of hush) and they'll relish both the dragging out of bedtime and the final multi-species slumber. The book is even manageably small, so if one were to fall asleep with it in bed, it wouldn't push any stuffed animals aside. DS

REAVER, CHAP *Bill*. Delacorte, 1994 [224p]  
ISBN 0-385-31175-3 \$14.95  
Reviewed from galleys

R\* Gr. 5-8

It sounds like the ingredients for formula fiction: a motherless Kentucky mountain girl, her loyal dog, her alcoholic absentee father, a good-hearted revenue officer who wants to adopt her, a newfound boyfriend, a hidden treasure that she digs up in the deep woods, and a heartless villain in hot pursuit. So it's all the more

extraordinary that Reaver's perfect sense of pace, flawless downhome style, humorously individualized characterizations, and absolute fidelity to the protagonist's viewpoint make for unique reading. Although the plot is a gripper, the relationships are what dominate Jessica Gates' narrative, especially her relationship with the dog who has saved her from profound loneliness and who ultimately saves her life. She's a smart, funny kid, and Bill is a smart, funny dog, but Reaver, who died in 1993, knew that sadness was an essential part of comedy: Jess must learn to let go a father doomed by his fatal flaw even while she never lets go the dog who seems doomed by his great heart. That all this unfolds naturally with a light touch and witty tone is another tribute to the author. Part of his trick is planting clues that are subtle enough not to sound like clues till they add up to action. When a bull whose ferocity will play a crucial role later in the book first appears, the revenue officer questions Jess about how her father usually gets through the field: "I pointed to the sledgehammer, leaning against the gatepost. 'He bangs it down on top of Howard's head and it sort of calms Howard down.'" The writing shows how well dialect can be managed when it's not artificially strained, and the narrator reveals herself unselfconsciously. "I wanted to be nice and have manners but I didn't know what all of them were. Except don't eat with your fingers. Except biscuits." Her reflection precedes a hilarious scene in which Jess, during a dinner at the revenue officer's house, must cope not only with unaccustomed manners but also with Bill, who steals napkins off the guests' laps and brings them, one at a time, for a tug-of-war game under the table. This is storytelling in the best southern tradition, and readers (or listeners, if it's shared aloud with kids put off by the amateurish cover art) will eat it up. BH

REYNOLDSON, FIONA *Women and War*. Thomson Learning, 1994 48p illus. with photographs (World War II)  
ISBN 1-56847-082-7 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 5-8

Covering subjects such as evacuation, food and supply shortages, job roles, combat, resistance, forced labor, and imprisonment, this survey summarizes women's global experiences during World War II. Given the vast scope and brief treatment, it's commendable that the author has balanced generalizations with individual eyewitness accounts, though the format seems to work against her attempt at organization. Captioned photos and margined blocks of narrative vie for attention with the text itself, which jumps around considerably trying to cover so many bases. Most quotations are cited, though the six-book bibliography is woefully inadequate. A glossary and chronology will help students, who should see this as no more than a starting point toward in-depth coverage elsewhere. While the book does not flinch from the tragic facts women faced during the war, including rape and concentration camp brutality, occasional passages reveal a devastating paucity of thought, as when the conclusion seems to imply frivolity on the part of women *not* at war. Historical black-and-white photographs and color reproductions of war posters will draw browsers. BH

ROYBAL, LAURA *Billy*. Houghton, 1994 236p  
ISBN 0-395-67649-5 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 7-10

Billy Melendez is a high-school junior living in rural New Mexico with his father, working hard to earn money for college, and lately in trouble because of his feud with another kid at school. When this feud escalates into a fight that requires police intervention, the cops turn up the information that Billy is in fact a missing

boy named William Campbell, and within a day Billy is whisked away from his biological father (who had taken Billy away from his mother's sister and her husband, who had adopted him after his mother's departure) and back to Iowa. Billy has a difficult time adjusting to the family he left when he was ten, particularly because he believes that they never cared enough to look for him, but also because his independent rural ways and western comportment don't suit his Iowa family or school. The story is sort of a masculine version of Pfeffer's *Twice Taken* (BCCB 3/94), and the concept of kidnaped-child-unwillingly-returned remains as compelling as ever. Unfortunately, Roybal has a tendency to sacrifice credibility for drama (Billy's martyrdom in the face of unjust opposition is a little excessive), and Billy's impetuous actions (he tends to punch people or take off), however well-rationalized, are foolish enough that his constant resentment seems self-indulgent. It's still a good read, and the classic teen themes of misunderstanding and desire for control over one's own life will find a sympathetic audience. DS

RYDELL, KATY *Wind Says Good Night*; illus. by David Jorgensen. Houghton, 1994 32p  
ISBN 0-395-60474-5 \$14.95

R\* 3-6 yrs

Sleepy-soft colored pencil drawings swathe a nocturnal mood around a simple, cumulative bedtime story about a girl who cannot sleep because Mockingbird is singing, and Mockingbird can't stop singing until Cricket stops playing, and Cricket can't stop playing (the fiddle) until Frog stops strumming the bass, "but Frog was deep in the swing, lost in the beat, with a night full of rhythm in his hands and feet." And on it goes, as Moth and Moon and Cloud keep each other—and the little girl—up. Rhymes and rhythms are easy here, in tune with the hazy greens and charcoal grays of the pictures. It's an appropriately hypnotic sequence: after each creature makes its apologies, Wind carries Cloud to cover Moon, "so Moth will stop dancing, so Frog will stop strumming, so Cricket will stop playing, so Mockingbird will stop singing, so the child can go to sleep," and each in succession nods off. The sequence is sweet but not sticky, with Jorgensen's drawing giving an individualized, quietly eccentric flair to each character. The writing is expertly cadenced, and by the last page you'll find yourself whispering. RS

RYLANT, CYNTHIA *Something Permanent*; illus. with photographs by Walker Evans. Harcourt, 1994 64p  
ISBN 0-15-277090-9 \$16.95

Ad Gr. 7 up

Walker Evans' Depression-era photographs, many of which appeared in a moving collaboration with writer James Agee (*Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*), tell stark and sometimes desperate stories of their own. They also stimulate viewers to imagine the lives of the subjects depicted. The introduction of a third element, Rylant's poetic reflections accompanying a selection of Evans' work, variably enhances, limits, or contradicts the photographic images. The most successful of the twenty-nine poem/picture sets are the simplest: "Birdhouses," for instance, is a three-line poem ("People said they were/ a good excuse/ for looking up") opposite the striking composition of a pole with gourds hanging from it against a clouded sky. These verbal and visual images enrich each other. A longer poem, "Shoes," is also a good fit for Evans' photo of two worn workboots in the dirt, as is "Mule" for the patient creature harnessed in the picture beside it. "Gunshop," on the other hand, is a poem that seems to ignore the complex irony of the photograph: Rylant concentrates on the figure framed in Todd's Gun Store without addressing the

strange Chinese dummy that dominates the top half of the picture. Similarly, the warmth of her poem "Barbers" seems tonally at odds with the bleak interior portrayed in Evans' photo. Students who explore the relationships between word and picture here would do well to have been guided into writing their own responses first, to clarify the potential variations of interpretation generated by these extraordinary photographs. The silver endpapers, in themselves a clever representation of the early photographic process, nevertheless seem a posh bit of bookmaking in contrast to Evans' plain style and the poverty accentuated by many of the scenes he captured. Those of Rylant's poems that don't depend on the pictures for subject clarification can stand alone on their tightly compressed narrative quality. BH

SCOTT, MICHAEL *October Moon*. Holiday House, 1994 158p  
ISBN 0-8234-1110-9 \$14.95

Ad Gr. 5-9

Things have gone wrong from the first day Rachel's family came from California to the stud farm they've purchased in Ireland: arson plagues the barns and stables, someone's slashed Rachel's waterbed, the library is destroyed, and the servants are creepy. Rachel's wealthy father suspects a protection racket, the local police inspector suspects Rachel, but Rachel learns that the farm is the locus for a werewolf cult, determined to pass on their curse by attacking the new family on Halloween. This is straight genre fiction, with a beleaguered but headstrong heroine, an ancient curse, a humane monster who attempts to save the family from his more bloodthirsty relatives, and, in the end, a victory for evil: "Rachel Stone opened her mouth and howled." Sorry to give everything away, but the book *is* predictable, if lots of fun to read. As is usual for formula horror fiction, at least a grudging suspension of disbelief—on the part of the characters as well as the reader—is required, but Scott spins the tale with efficient zest. RS

SHELDON, DYAN *Under the Moon*; illus. by Gary Blythe. Dial, 1994 [26p]  
ISBN 0-8037-1670-2 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-9 yrs

A rapturous meditation on Indian America, "when every thing on earth had a voice and a heart, and time was measured by the changings of the moon," is accompanied by photorealistic oil paintings that positively dazzle with elaborately lit special effects. When Jenny finds what might be an old arrowhead in her backyard, she begins to imagine the beautiful, pre-lapsarian times of buffalo and braves on horses, of "the voices of women bent over their fires; the voices were soft and laughing." When she sleeps outside in her tent that night, "the arrowhead still fast in her hand," those soft voices come back, and Jennie finds herself dreaming of Indians who, softly, gently, want their arrowhead back, so she hands it over and listens to the drum and the flute and the stories about the good old days, "when the land was as large and as open as the sky." The tone is hushed but affected, and the pictures are ostentatiously romanticized. It's the kind of book that many adults will call "beautiful," but it's lacking both the vigor and the poetry that could make it come alive for children. RS

SHERMAN, JOSEPHA *Gleaming Bright*. Walker, 1994 [176p]  
ISBN 0-8027-8296-5 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

For those who take their fantasy neat, here's an uncomplicated quest-tale with

some forthright role-reversal, as a young princess goes off in search of the magical box, "Gleaming Bright," that can save her father's kingdom from drought and pillage—as well as saving her from an unwanted marriage to a cruel king. The story is swift, as Finola, all the while sought by her worried father's men, goes through the forest to the lair of evil Rhegeth, the "Dark Druid," who stole Gleaming Bright from her grandfather. Along the way, she acquires a friend in a talking stag and an unwanted suitor in Fiain, a sexy outlaw. Despite the feminist theme, there are some purple patches that seem more appropriate to a bodice-ripper ("she couldn't keep from thinking about the strange, hot thrill that had shot through her at the feel of Fiain's lips on hers"); true to form, Finola rejects the outlaw (who turns out to be an enchanted weasel) in favor of the stag (who turns out to be the long-missing prince-next-door she was supposed to marry all along). While the story is formulaic, kids uneasy or unskilled with the elaborate world-building that's a part of so much high fantasy will have a much easier time here, and Finola is an impetuous heroine ("All right, Gleaming Bright," she cried, 'no more cute tricks") who makes an attention-getting focus for the action. RS

SPONNER, J. B. *The Story of the Little Black Dog*; illus. by Terre Lamb Seeley. Arcade, 1994 [32p]  
ISBN 1-55970-239-7 \$14.95  
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

Captain Douglas enjoys his solitary life in his Martha's Vineyard house and on his schooner in the harbor, so he's reluctant to take in the small black puppy his friend found stranded. The pup tears up the house and pees on the rug, but she turns out to be a sea-dog, happy on board and skilled at getting around the boat. When a permanent home is found for the pup, Captain Douglas realizes how attached to her he's become and keeps her for his own. The story, supposedly based on the legend that inspired the name of the Black Dog Tavern (although the connection is never made clear—did Captain Douglas start the restaurant?), is an appealing doggy tale with some judiciously restrained sentimentality and even a touch of suspense as the captain races to get Black Dog back from the New Yorkers who plan to take her home on the ferry. The watercolor art is full of deep tones and careful detail, but there's more labor than fluidity in the awkwardly drafted faces and figures. It's hard to go wrong with a puppy, a boat, and a crusty old sea captain, however, and this is a gentle tale that kids will warm to. DS

STEVENSON, JAMES *Fun/No Fun*; written and illus. by James Stevenson. Greenwillow, 1994 [32p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-11674-4 \$13.93  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-11673-6 \$14.00  
Reviewed from galleys R 4-8 yrs

In a style and format akin to his *Don't You Know There's a War On?* (BCCB 11/92), Stevenson reminisces about the very ordinary activities of his childhood. Each snappy bullet of a memory is categorically labeled as "fun" or "no fun" (except for Valentine's Day and a tour of a "ghost room," which defy offhand assessment). Many judgments will elicit sympathetic agreement from youngsters: "Fun was when the ice cream truck came," and "Fun was when the teacher was busy." Others will require some explanation: "Fun was listening to 'The Shadow' on the radio." And still others may prove inspirational: "Fun was . . . wrapping the mud

in the skunk cabbage leaf . . . and throwing it at your friends.” A rough, blurry, and often quite tiny watercolor sketch accompanies each memory. The style works well—the small pictures encourage intimate intergenerational sharing, and the smudgy, energetically brushed images level the differences in age and experience between narrator and child. Trust the man who knows that toasted almond was the best flavor! EB

VITEBSKY, PIERS *The Saami of Lapland*. Thomson Learning, 1994 48p illus. with photographs (Threatened Cultures)  
ISBN 1-56847-159-9 \$16.95 R Gr. 3-6

Less sentimental than Jan Reynolds' *Far North* on the same people (BCCB 4/92) this survey of the Saami, often known as the Lapp, is comprehensive in coverage, with equal attention given to old traditions and new directions. While the Saami have been popularized as a picturesque reindeer-herding people, the author points out that only ten percent of them actually work as herders while the rest “live in a way that seems almost exactly the same as their Scandinavian neighbors.” That said, the sharp color photographs of the traditional costumes, Christmassy reindeer, Nordic landscape—and snowmobiles—have a crisp allure, accenting the double-columned text. In addition to the herding Saami, the book pays attention to Norway's coastal Saami, who traditionally have engaged in fishing and farming, and explores the ecological and development controversies that affect both groups. Unlike many current books indulging in nostalgia for “peoples” who follow “the old ways,” this one is honest about the paradoxes of cultural independence and sociopolitical assimilation. Maps, glossary, directory of organizations, reading list, and an index are all included. RS

WALLACE, BILL *Blackwater Swamp*. Holiday House, 1994 185p  
ISBN 0-8234-1120-6 \$15.95 R Gr. 5-7

Ted is intrigued with the so-called “witch” of Blackwater Swamp, an old African American woman who lives alone on a small island in the swamp near Lakeview, the Louisiana town where Ted's family has recently moved. Unfortunately, Ted's friend Jimmy is interested in her, too, throwing out dark hints that the woman is responsible for the spate of burglaries that is worrying the town. Readers will spot before Ted does that Jimmy is No Good, but that won't keep them from wanting to see how it all works out. Is it a boys' book? You bet, though girls, too, will enjoy the plain prose, easy-to-follow plethora of action, and appealingly ordinary hero. The anti-racism message is clear but sufficiently plot-driven, and the witch is of course no witch (although she does manage to put a big scare into the main villain, Bubba). She's instead a wise woman who cares for the creatures of the swamp (who in turn protect her from guys like Bubba); this characterization will easily prove just as compelling to readers as would the more lurid imaginings of the local bigots. RS

WAUGH, SYLVIA *The Mennymys*. Greenwillow, 1994 [216p]  
ISBN 0-688-13070-4 \$14.00  
Reviewed from galleys R\* Gr. 5-8

See this month's Big Picture, p. 279.



WILD, MARGARET *Our Granny*; illus. by Julie Vivas. Ticknor & Fields, 1994 32p  
 ISBN 0-395-67023-3 \$13.95 R 3-5 yrs

Alternating between observations of what other grannies are like and what “our granny” is like, the narrator describes a wide variety of housing situations, bodies, clothing, work, activities, relationships, kisses, and—most important of all from the narrator’s viewpoint—grandchildren. In case you’re wondering, “our granny lives with us in our house. . . . has a wobbly bottom. . . . wears a funny bathing suit. . . . marches in demonstrations. . . . does special exercises to make her bottom smaller.” She also wears her dead husband’s old red sweater sometimes and never forgets goodnight kisses. It’s Vivas’ exuberant watercolors that give this catalogue personality. The cheerful diversity of color and shape creates, in turn, a cheerful diversity of visual characterization, with portraits and postures activating the startling white background of each double spread. Overall, the tone is warm, and if there’s no story or real punchline, “We love our granny” may be enough for intergenerational readaloud bonding sessions. BH

WILDSMITH, BRIAN *Jack and the Meanstalk*; written and illus. by Brian and Rebecca Wildsmith. Knopf, 1994 26p  
 Library ed. ISBN 0-679-95810-X \$15.99  
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-85810-5 \$15.00 Ad 5-8 yrs

“Now we shall see how fast my vegetables grow,” crows Professor Jack after subjecting his garden seeds to a collection of chemicals delivered via a mad-scientist array of tubes and vats and Bunsen burners. Whoops—up through the laboratory ceiling, up through the roof of the house, growing and growing into space climbs a wildly developing plant, no two of its many leaves the same pattern. The government tries to shoot it down, its enormous roots are toppling towns, and worse yet, a satellite sends back pictures of a big space monster making its way down the stalk to earth. While what went up does not come down (nibbling of the plant’s roots by woodland creatures causes the plant to float off into space, taking the monster with it) it does go away, leaving Professor Jack a much wiser gardener. It’s a slender lesson upon which to hang a tale, but the extravagant pictures of the plant growing feverishly across expansive double-spreads have their attractions—much more so, ironically, than the peaceful, pretty tomato vines Jack grows in its stead. RS



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

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Bauer, Caroline Feller. *New Handbook for Storytellers, with Stories, Poems, Magic, and More*; illus. by Lynn Gates Bredeson. Rev. ed. ALA, 1993. 550p. ISBN 0-8389-0613-3. \$44.00 (ALA members \$39.60).

Bauer's popular introduction, which incorporates a broad variety of media and props into the storytelling process, is here updated from the 1977 edition with new suggestions, examples, and book lists. Beginners and veterans alike can benefit from this practical approach to program planning and promotion, story selection and preparation, and activities extending various themes or occasions. BH

McGovern, Edythe M. and Helen D. Muller. *They're Never Too Young for Books: A Guide to Children's Books for Ages 1 to 8*. Rev. ed. Prometheus Books, 1994. 342p. Paper ed. ISBN 0-87975-858-9. \$14.95.

Emphasizing titles published for children since 1980, when this book was first published, McGovern and Muller outline the uses of literature with young children and provide briefly annotated lists organized by theme and genre. Criteria for evaluation and tips for reading aloud are also included. BH

Schmidt, Gary D. *Katherine Paterson*. Twayne, 1994. 153p. (Twayne's United States Authors Series—Children's Literature) ISBN 0-8057-3951-3. \$22.95.

Taking Paterson's conclusion from a 1977 National Book Award speech—"I want to be a spy for hope"—as a keystone, Schmidt explores the author's prolific work in thematically connected, and to some extent chronological, groupings laced with comments from Paterson herself, especially on the dialogue between her Christianity and creativity. An introductory biographical sketch and a full bibliography add to Schmidt's discussion of Paterson's historical fiction, realistic fiction, and picture books. BH

From the journals:

Campbell, Patty, "The Sand in the Oyster [YA horror fiction]," *Horn Book*, March/April, 1994.

Freedman, Russell, "Bring 'Em Back Alive: Writing History and Biography for Young People," *School Library Journal*, March, 1994.

Meyer, Nadean J., "Hypertext and Its Role in Reading," *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries*, Winter, 1994.

Phillips, Jerry, "The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions: Some Reflections on the Class Politics of *The Secret Garden*," *Lion and the Unicorn*, December, 1993.

Sarland, Charles, "Attack of the Teenage Horrors: Theme and Meaning in Popular Series Fiction," *Signal*, January, 1994.

## SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

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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.

- African Americans—fiction:  
Koertge; Wallace
- African Americans—stories:  
Medearis
- Alcoholism—fiction: Fraustino;  
Reaver
- Asian Americans: Krull
- Aunts—fiction: Bedard
- Babies—stories: Gliori; McClelland
- Bats—fiction: Gilson
- BEDTIME STORIES: Ackerman;  
Gliori; Lottridge; Rathmann;  
Rydell; Sheldon; Spooner
- Bears—stories: Carson; Gliori
- Birthdays—fiction: Porte
- Blacks—fiction: Bolden
- Boats—stories: Spooner
- Brothers and sisters—fiction:  
Naylor
- Brothers—stories: Levine
- California—fiction: Koertge
- Canada—fiction: Dubois; Johnston
- Canoeing: Cheripko
- Cats—stories: Perrault
- Child care—fiction: Gorman
- Current events:** Filipovic;  
Gottfried
- Death—fiction: Mahon
- Dogs—fiction: Hesse; Reaver
- Dogs—stories: Kuskin; Spooner
- Dollmaking: Kuklin
- Dolls—fiction: Waugh
- Dreams—stories: Sheldon
- Earthquakes—stories: Carson
- Emotional problems—fiction:  
Mahon
- England—fiction: Jones
- Ethics and values: Han; Wildsmith
- EVERYDAY LIFE STORIES:  
Stevenson
- Family life—stories: Ackerman
- FANTASY: Jones; MacGrory;  
Murphy; Sherman; Waugh
- Farm life—fiction: Johnston
- Farm life—stories: Aylesworth;  
Fleming
- Fathers and daughters—fiction:  
Reaver
- Finland—folklore: McNeil
- FOLKTALES AND  
FAIRYTALES: Han; Lottridge;  
McNeil; Perrault
- Food and eating: Hausherr
- Foster children—fiction: Johnston
- FUNNY STORIES: Gorman;  
Naylor
- Geography:** Collier
- Grandfathers—fiction: Fraustino;  
Koertge
- Grandmothers—stories: Wild
- Growing up—fiction: Naylor
- HISTORICAL FICTION:  
Dubois
- History, American:** Dubois
- History:** Collier; Marx;  
Reynoldson
- Homosexuals—fiction: Paulsen
- Horses—fiction: Hafen; Scott

Horses—stories: Cole  
 Iowa—fiction: Roybal  
 Ireland—fiction: Casey; MacGrory;  
 Scott  
 Kidnapping—fiction: Roybal  
 Korea—folklore: Han  
**Language arts:** Hurwitz  
 Lapps: Vitebsky  
 Latinos: Krull  
 Libraries—fiction: Bedard  
 Libya: Gottfried  
 Louisiana—fiction: Wallace  
 Maine—fiction: Fraustino; Murphy  
 Martha's Vineyard—stories:  
 Spooner  
 Mothers and daughters—fiction:  
 Casey; Nixon  
 Mothers and sons—fiction: Koertge  
**MYSTERY STORIES:** Nixon;  
 Wallace  
 Native Americans—fiction: Dubois  
 Native Americans—stories: Sheldon  
**Nature study:** Lindblad  
 New Mexico—fiction: Roybal  
 New York City—stories: Levine  
 Nutrition: Hausherr  
**Photography:** Kuklin; Lindblad;  
 Rylant  
**POETRY:** Aylesworth; Kuskin;  
 Rylant  
 Prejudice—fiction: Wallace  
 Rabbits—stories: Levine  
 Ranch life—fiction: Hafen  
**Reading aloud:** McNeil; Reaver;  
 Waugh  
**Reading, easy:** Gilson; Hesse;  
 Porte  
**Reading, family:** Fleming;  
 Lottridge; Medearis; Stevenson;  
 Wild  
**Reading, reluctant:** Mahon;  
 Nixon; Scott; Wallace  
**Religious education:** Collier  
 Rivers: Cheripko  
 Sarajevo: Filipovic  
 Scandinavia: Vitebsky  
**SCARY STORIES:** Bedard; Scott  
**SCHOOL STORIES:** Gilson  
 School—fiction: Fine  
**SCIENCE FICTION:** Jones

Serengeti Plain: Lindblad  
**SHORT STORIES:** Bolden  
**Social studies:** Gottfried; Krull;  
 Vitebsky  
**Story hour:** Aylesworth; Cole;  
 Fleming; Glassman; Gliori;  
 Han; Hausherr; Kuskin; Levine;  
 Lottridge; Perrault; Spooner;  
 Wildsmith  
 Strangers—stories: Raschka  
 Time travel—fiction: MacGrory  
 Toys: Kuklin  
 Vacations—stories: Kuskin  
 Voyages and travel: Cheripko  
 Voyages and travel—fiction:  
 Paulsen  
 War: Filipovic; Marx; Reynoldson  
 Werewolves—fiction: Scott  
 Whales—fiction: Murphy  
 Witches—stories: Glassman  
**Women's studies:** Reynoldson  
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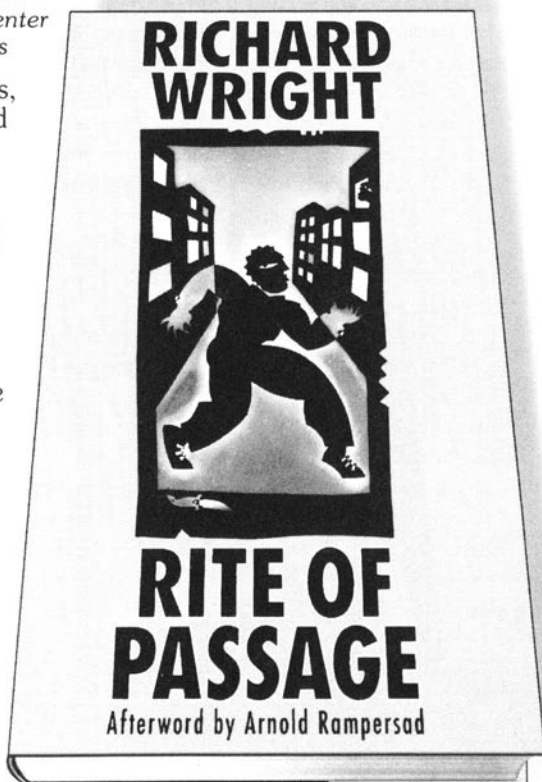
—*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

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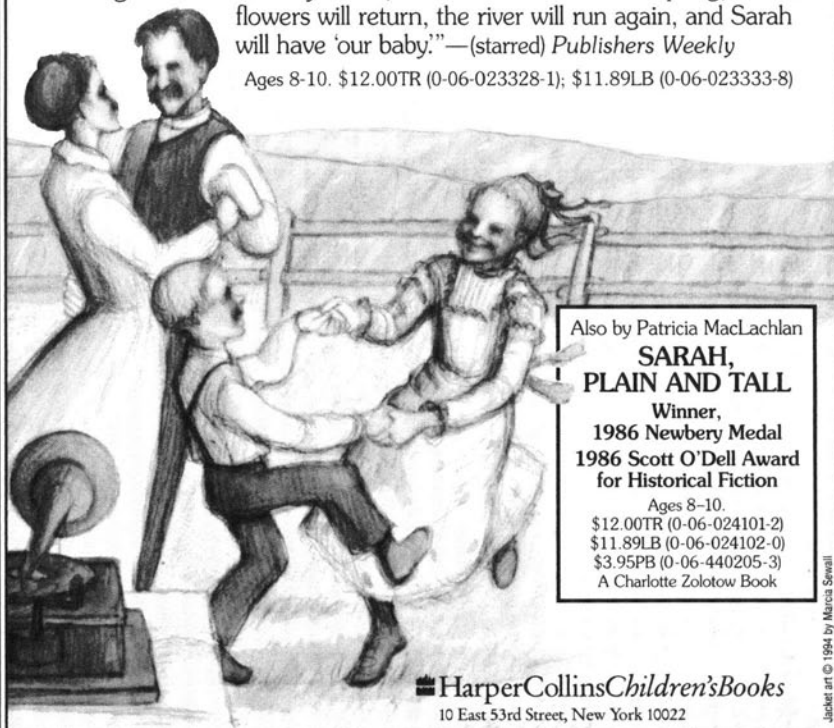
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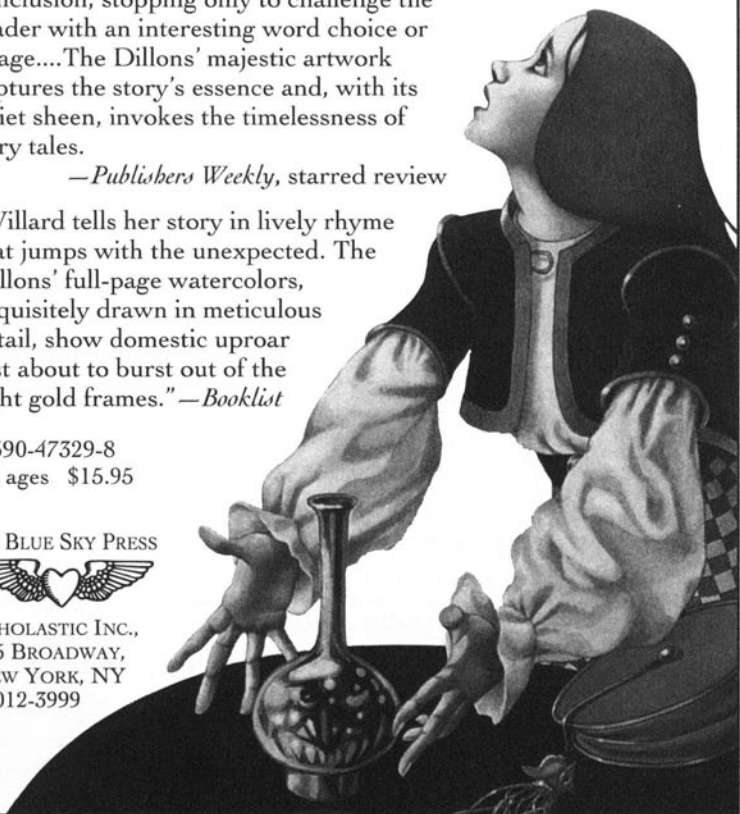
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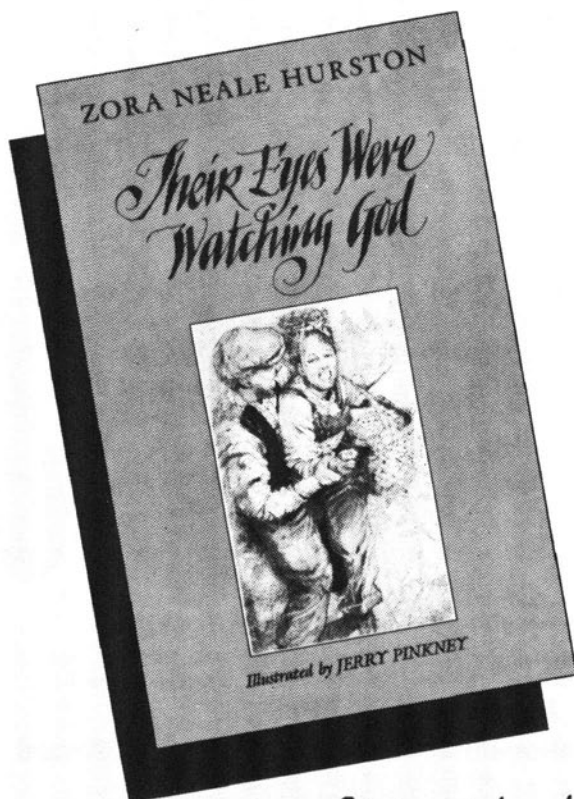
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