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PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at  
Urbana-Champaign Library  
Large-scale Digitization Project, 2007.



# THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

June 1995  
Vol. 48 No. 10



University of Illinois  
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

University of Illinois Press

E.L. KONIGSBURG

# TalkTalk



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

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OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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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 Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* (ISSN 0008-9036) is published monthly except August by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak, Champaign, IL 61820.

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1 year, institutions, \$35.00; individuals, \$29.00. In countries other than the United States, add \$7.00 per subscription for postage. Japanese subscription agent: Kinokuniya Company Ltd. Single copy rate: \$4.50. Reprinted volumes 1-35 (1947-1981) available from Kraus Reprint Co., Route 100, Millwood, NY 10546. Volumes available in microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Complete volumes available in microfiche from Johnson Associates, P.O. Box 1017, Greenwich, CT 06830. Subscription checks should be made payable to the University of Illinois Press. All notices of change of address should provide both the old and new address. Postmaster: Send address changes to *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak, Champaign, IL 61820.

Subscription Correspondence. Address all inquiries about subscriptions and advertising to University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak, Champaign, IL 61820.

Editorial Correspondence. Review copies and all correspondence about reviews should be sent to Roger Sutton, *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820

Second-class postage paid at Champaign, Illinois

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Drawings by Debra Bolgla. This publication is printed on acid-free paper.

Cover illustration by Janet Stevens, from *From Pictures to Words: A Book about Making a Book* ©1995 and used by permission of Holiday House.

## *From Pictures to Words: A Book about Making a Book*

written and illustrated by Janet Stevens

“Hi Janet.” What a way to start the day—walking into your workspace being followed by a koala and a rhino (*and* a walrus and guinea pig, whom we couldn’t fit on the cover). Surrounded by her inimitably drawn animals, illustrator Janet Stevens settles down for a day in the studio, and, boy, does she have help: “Psst. Psst. J-a-a-a-n-e-t.” It seems that the menagerie is not content with being illustrated; now they want Janet to write a story, starring, of course, them: “We need to be in a book. We want something exciting to do. We need places to go, people to meet. We’re like actors without a stage, burgers without buns, aliens without spaceships!” Stevens grudgingly gives in (“OK, but don’t expect too much”), selects her cast (“Koala Bear, Cat, and Rhino. You’ve been in my imagination the longest”), and begins.

Where do you get your ideas? is a question posed to authors and illustrators by kids and adults alike. Artists, generally, dismiss the question as banal, but that may be because they simply do not know how to answer it. As Stevens replies to Cat’s suggestion that the story be about aliens and spaceships, “Hmmm.” *From Pictures to Words* is a breezy but blunt introduction to how books are created. While we’ve seen a number of books about the book production process (see Alikì’s *How a Book Is Made*, BCCB 11/86, and for specific information about art reproduction, Ruth Heller’s *Color*, reviewed below) and another bunch about creative inspiration (see Cynthia Rylant’s *Best Wishes*, BCCB 9/92), Stevens’ is a book that gets down to business, conveying what it means by what it does. Those animals are her ideas, and they give her ideas. They wander around inside her head, pursue her at the studio door, hound her at the drawing table. Sometimes they are helpful (as when Koala suggests introducing a pizza in the finale), sometimes they need to shut up (as when Stevens rebuffs Cat’s attempt to bring aliens into the story), sometimes they need to be left out (“Anansi, you stay out of this. You have your own book”).

Stevens is lucky in having an uncommonly commonsensical zoo to play around with. After she sketches out a narrative in which the animals prepare to go camping, search for the perfect spot, and end up in their own backyard, Koala puts her foot down: “CUT! This story’s boring! Most of it is a lot of yak, yak, yak about finding the perfect camping spot. *Nothing really happens . . .*” Those italics are ours, but they should be everybody’s in this era of glamorous picture books that have lots to look at but little to say. More authors and publishers should be paying attention to Koala’s demand: “You need to add a *problem*, tension, and drama!” To her credit, Stevens listens, as she does to her editor (Holiday House’s Margery Cuyler in a cameo appearance), and the finished story begins to take

form. Truth be told, it's not a story that will go down through the ages, but it does have a beginning, middle, and end, and something does *happen*.

Something happens in this book-about-a-book as well. It's a drama about the jump from mind to hand to page, and the decisions, both creative and technical, (one sequence shows the same scene in watercolor, colored pencil, markers, and black pencil) that allow the leap to be made. True to the theme, the book looks unstudied, with the imaginary characters rendered in color, the illustrator and her tools in black-and-white, and the whole with an impromptu, maybe-this-might-work line that captures the intuitive process of creating a book. While her information is forthright and sensible, Stevens doesn't attempt to answer all the big questions, such as why Koala, Rhino, et al. are in her head in the first place. It's enough that she lets them out to make the story.

*Roger Sutton, Editor*

## ANNOUNCEMENT

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Please note that the editorial office of *The Bulletin* is moving. As of June 1, 1995, review copies and correspondence about reviews should be sent to:

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## NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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ACKERMAN, DIANE *Monk Seal Hideaway*; illus. with photographs by Bill Curtsinger. Crown, 1995 36p  
 Library ed. ISBN 0-517-59674-1 \$15.99  
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-59673-3 \$15.00 Ad Gr. 3-5

Daydreaming about monk seals and unable to get any information about them at the library, Diane Ackerman (author of the adult bestseller *A Natural History of the Senses*) decides that she just has to go see the monk seals for herself. She joins a research expedition to a monk-seal habitat near Hawaii, observing and tagging the seals, and here reports back on their appearance and behavior. While the tone is amiable and engaging, the ratio of facts to scenery is fairly low, and what information there is seems stretched even for what is essentially a picture-book format. Budding naturalists will appreciate the eyewitness report, though, and the large color photographs, while repetitive, do a good job of capturing seal and sea. There's an index, but you won't need it. RS

ALEXANDER, MARTHA *You're a Genius, Blackboard Bear*; written and illus. by Martha Alexander. Candlewick, 1995 [26p]  
 ISBN 1-56402-238-2 \$12.95  
 Reviewed from galleys R 3-6 yrs

Making his first appearance in several years (see also BCCB 3/77, etc.), Blackboard Bear steps down from the chalkboard to help Anthony fulfill his wish to visit the moon. First he draws the parts of a spaceship, and then takes the pieces outside where the two friends assemble them into a eggshaped rocket. Anthony gathers his sleeping bag, water, and food in preparation for the journey, but decides to let Blackboard Bear go on alone after it strikes him that monsters may be on the moon. Anthony is snoozing soundly when his bear friend crawls back through the window, but, as the final picture shows, when he awakes he will find a souvenir from Blackboard Bear's starry trip left on his blanket. Alexander paints silvery nighttime watercolors with delicacy and humor and leaves some pages wordless and others with a single line of text, making this a book children can pore over alone once they have heard the story. Blackboard Bear combines the security and competence of an adult with the bossability of a toy, making him the perfect friend for preschoolers. SDL

ALMAGOR, GILA *Under the Domim Tree*; tr. by Hillel Schenker. Simon, 1995 164p  
 ISBN 0-671-89020-4 \$15.00 Ad Gr. 5-8

Set in an Israeli youth village in 1953, this explores the post-Holocaust lives of three girls: the narrator, whose mentally unstable mother will tell her nothing about her father, and two of her orphaned friends. The first friend, Yola, discovers suddenly that her own father is still alive, but he dies before she can visit him in Poland. The second friend, Mira, remembers, after years of amnesia, details of her own family just in time to avoid being forced to live with two concentration-camp survivors who claim she's their daughter. Each of these situations involves a mov-

ing climactic scene, as does the narrator's own search for her father's grave. Sometimes the plot, already stretched by the large cast, tries to incorporate too many stories and becomes unfocused. We especially need to know more about the narrator's background than occasional references ("I hated the old neighborhood. It was filled with bad people, and bad people have bad kids") and the two very brief scenes we witness between her and her mother. The translation, too, is occasionally stiff ("Like during a war, we ran from the dining room into the big hall"). On the positive side, the episodes are vividly realized, with an emotional tension underscoring the courage that children needed to start over after World War II. BH

**BARTON, BYRON, ad.** *The Wee Little Woman*; ad. and illus. by Byron Barton. HarperCollins, 1995 32p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-023388-5 \$12.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-023387-7 \$12.95 R 2-5 yrs

The wee little woman's wee little cat drinks the milk she got from the wee little cow, making the wee little woman shout in her loudest wee little voice "Scat cat!" The cat does scat for a "wee long time," but returns to find the wee little woman sitting at her wee little table with a (no doubt wee little) tear trickling down her cheek. The cat gets a big drink of milk, and even the cow looks happy. As in his previous easy folktale adaptations, Barton uses a bold, graphic style, with the brightest of colors against yellow and green backgrounds and with faces drawn in black. The cat and cow are endearing, but Barton's large, chunky style of illustration doesn't make anything in the book look especially wee or little. This is still a good fit for toddler storytime, and with its big print, short words, and repetitive text, it makes a great pre-primer as well. SDL

**BLOS, JOAN W.** *The Hungry Little Boy*; illus. by Dena Schutzer. Simon, 1995 26p  
ISBN 0-671-88128-0 \$14.00 R 18 months-3 yrs

A grandmother carefully and lovingly prepares lunch for her grandson. Each step is detailed: "Next she peeled the carrot until it was smooth and shiny. Then she cut it neatly into pieces nice to eat." When she is finished, the little boy eats the lunch just as methodically, drinking milk between each course, and putting the apple in his pocket "because now he wasn't hungry, but he might want it later." Small children will greatly enjoy the everydayness of the story as well as the warmth exemplified both by Grandma's caretaking and her eventual outdoor play with her grandson. Readers who rush through the book will be missing all the opportunities for stopping, pointing out the parts of the lunch, doing some simple counting, and predicting what will happen next. Schutzer's smeary oil paintings in gold, brown, purple, and green match the tone perfectly, creating a cozy atmosphere accented with softly realistic detail that is never too bold. The pleasures of ordinary days, caught so well in Marisabina Russo's similarly themed *The Lineup Book*, are captured here for even younger children. SDL

**BODE, JANET** *Trust & Betrayal: Real Life Stories of Friends and Enemies*. Delacorte, 1995 159p  
ISBN 0-385-32105-8 \$15.95 R Gr. 7-12

In *Heartbreak and Roses* (BCCB 9/94) Bode interviewed teens on the subject of love; here she deals with the perhaps even more important subject of friendship.

Her interviewees tell compelling stories of friends who help them through bad times, friends whose loyalty disappears in a haze of jealousy, friends who can't take it anymore, and friends who might be lovers; the format, more streamlined than it was in the previous book, follows most interviews with two or three feedback quotes from counselors, psychologists, or teens who are responding to the interview. The voices sound authentic, with a blend of self-knowledge, blindness, strong feeling, and often oddly dispassionate speech. The responses from clinicians are, unsurprisingly, often rather clinical, but the student respondents, negative as well as positive, are inclined to be bluntly honest: for instance, about a girl confronting her emerging lesbianism, one respondent says, "She should go back into the closet." This has the grit of true-life drama with the appeal of soap opera (including a great cliffhanger in the form of the sixteen-year-old boy who starts dating a twenty-eight-year-old woman he met on a computer bulletin board) combined with an easy-to-read format, making it an accessible and provocative book on a topic of import. DS

BRANDENBURG, JIM *An American Safari: Adventures on the North American Prairie*; written and illus. with photographs by Jim Brandenburg; ed. by JoAnn Bren Guernsey. Walker, 1995 [44p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8320-1 \$17.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8319-8 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

This portrait of the prairie and its wildlife is in some ways a self-portrait of the photographer himself, who grew up in southern Minnesota and who hunted (first with a gun, then with a camera) in the Blue Mounds prairie area as a boy. Brandenburg's first wildlife photo, a black-and-white picture of a red fox, is included alongside his many full-color contemporary photographs that show the range of life in this shrinking American landscape. As in his previous photoessays on Arctic wolves and Namibia (BCCB 11/93 and 4/94), Brandenburg has a casual and accessible writing style, telling us as much about photography as about his titular subject; the story of *how* he got the photo of the rising rattlesnake is even more dramatic than the picture itself, and everyone will stop for the cute shots of a busy prairie-dog town. RS

CLIMO, SHIRLEY, ad. *Atalanta's Race: A Greek Myth*; illus. by Alexander Koshkin. Clarion, 1995 32p

ISBN 0-395-67322-4 \$15.95

R 6-10 yrs

Atalanta's abandonment by her father, her childhood with the hunter Ciron, and the famous race against Melanion in which she loses her reputation as undefeated runner but wins a chance at love, are smoothly recounted in this retelling of the classical myth. The heroine is portrayed as headstrong and dangerously defiant: "I can take care of myself!" she claims, but Ciron warns, "Only with the help of the gods." While listeners new to this tale will be drawn into the excitement of the race, Climo never allows her audience to lose sight of Atalanta's pride, which ultimately brings Aphrodite's curse down upon the two lovers. Koshkin's figures are theatrically posed and set within architectural borders, narrow red columns with ornate capitals between a marble base and cornice. His Atalanta is a broad-shouldered, self-assured athlete—in strong contrast to the pert, leggy sprinter of Claire Martin's *The Race of the Golden Apples* (BCCB 11/91), illustrated by the Dillons. A note on variations of the Atalanta myth is appended. EB

COLE, JOANNA *My New Kitten*; illus. with photographs by Margaret Miller. Morrow, 1995 40p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12902-1 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12901-3 \$15.00

Ad 3-6 yrs

Kitties and kiddies—it's a match made in heaven, and Cole brings them together with a text expertly geared to animal-loving lap-sitters. From mother cat Cleo's pregnancy and delivery (discreetly photographed and simply captioned, "Soon Cleo had her kittens. She pushed each one out of her body"), through the kittens' development and growing independence, Cole traces the stages of physical and behavioral maturity a kitten must attain before it is ready to become some lucky child's pet. Although Dusty, the featured feline, and his siblings are as adorable as any youngster could wish, their close resemblance to Cleo and to each other often makes them difficult to distinguish in Miller's generously-sized photographs. Backdrops of plain carpet and unadorned wall keep the kittens at center stage, but they inadvertently create a visual monotony that detracts from the book's overall appeal. Still, listeners are likely to overlook these objections in light of the furry star's appeal, and emergent readers may be enticed to stretch their skills on the accessible text. EB

CREWS, NINA *One Hot Summer Day*; written and illus. by Nina Crews. Greenwillow, 1995 26p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13394-0 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13393-2 \$15.00

R 3-6 yrs

Nina Crews comes by her strong sense of graphic design naturally as the daughter of award-winning picture-book artists Donald Crews and Ann Jonas; her medium here is photographic collage. An exuberant African-American preschool girl is featured in this book about a hot summer day in the city. Dogs pant, hydrants are opened, and though her mother wants her to play inside, "instead, I stand outside and tease my shadow." Though it seems "hot enough to fry an egg on the sidewalk" the uncooked egg lying on the rocky surface agrees with the next sentence, "Well, maybe not." The highlighted edges of the cut-out photographs make them pop off the page, and the intensity of the glaring sunshine contrasts with the splash of the sudden rainstorm, so that the reader can really appreciate the little girl's glee as she tries to catch raindrops with her tongue and dances in puddles. Crews makes the urban atmosphere both gritty and beautiful, and the changing angles and perspectives give an almost kaleidoscopic effect; the touches which might initially seem gimmicky, such as photos cut into puzzle pieces, are always purposeful (the puzzle shapes appear as the transition between the outside and the inside, where the girl's mother wants her to play quietly). The blurriness of some of the photos does occasionally detract from the images' clarity, but it generally adds to the book's energetic feeling. SDL

CROSS, GILLIAN *New World*. Holiday House, 1995 171p

ISBN 0-8234-1166-4 \$15.95

R Gr. 6-9

Miriam is excited, if apprehensive, about participating in a test of a new virtual reality game. As the game's creator, Hesketh, has repeatedly insisted, the testing must be top secret, so Miriam finds a wedge being driven between herself and her family and friends, something that becomes a real problem as the game becomes increasingly frightening. Miriam is convinced that Hesketh—or someone—knows

her deepest childhood fears and is playing on them for the purposes of the game; her fellow player Stuart finds himself plagued by his own nightmares as dreadful spiders pursue him through the virtual-reality world. This is a coming subgenre in YA fiction (see also E. M. Goldman's *The Night Room*, BCCB 2/95) and few can match Cross's skill at teasing out the requisite suspense. She also has a real sense of the obsessive nature of computer gaming, with Miriam and Stuart (and a mysterious third player) drawn deeper into the game's reality and determined to conquer its monsters even while it consumes their lives. The ending is a bit of a letdown, with some preachiness substituting for surprise, but the atmosphere throughout has been so convincingly edgy that readers may just be relieved the ride is over. RS

CROWTHER, ROBERT *Robert Crowther's Incredible Animal Alphabet*; written and illus. by Robert Crowther. Candlewick, 1995 12p  
ISBN 1-56402-427-X \$14.95 R 3-6 yrs

As in his previous lift-the-flap books, Crowther's tabs and flaps are more than gimmicks: they hide an abundance of visual humor that relates closely to the subject. When you pull the chameleon tab, the chameleon appears to change color; under the dinosaur flap is a dino talking to a dodo; the lemmings (true to legend if not to science) all run off a cliff; and a mole pops out of the ground. A few flaps go together, as when the seal under one door is swimming up to the school of "sardines" above, and the sheep are running from the skunk next door. The flexibility of the format, with varying numbers of flaps on each spread, makes a refreshing change from alphabet books where the reader easily anticipates which animal is likely to appear for each letter; however, Crowther does cheat a bit by using "gnu" for "u" and "ox" for "x." The final flap reads "zoo," and children will have a great time trying to identify each of the previously encountered animals crowded together. Sturdy construction will help this survive many more circulations than the typical paper-engineered book. SDL

DALY, NIKI *My Dad*; written and illus. by Niki Daly. McElderry, 1995 32p  
ISBN 0-689-50620-1 \$16.00 Ad 6-9 yrs

The unnamed narrator and his sister Gracie love their father, but Dad's Friday night parties with his friends are getting worse: "I like Dad when he is jolly, but I don't like him when he is boozy and silly." Dad's drinking is escalating, and the crisis comes when the two kids are in a school show and Dad interrupts their song-and-dance performance with drunken encouragements from the back of the hall. Dad finally realizes he needs help, he goes to an AA meeting, and there's hope for the future. This slice of bibliotherapy is a blend of realism and formula, its rough subject smoothed into picture-book compactness; the story reads a bit like an outline for a YA problem novel of the 1970s. The watercolor-and-pencil pictures have warm tones and an easy line, but some of the drunken-Dad pictures seem clichéd, and the man doesn't always resemble himself from page to page, even apparently changing shirts in the middle of a boozy Friday night. RS

DEVLIN, WENDE *The Trouble with Henriette!*; written and illus. by Wendé and Harry Devlin. Simon, 1995 32p  
ISBN 0-671-729937-6 \$15.00 Ad 4-7 yrs

When Jolie's grandfather moved hound dog Henriette from the farmhouse to the barn, hay fever destroyed her ability to sniff out truffles. No longer useful, Jolie's

beloved dog is to be taken to Paris and given away. The fresh-air trip clears Henriette's nose, though, and when she smells truffles inside a hotel, she can't be stopped. Though the dog wreaks havoc in the hotel's restaurant ("Skidding into a pastry cart, Henriette sent gooseberry tarts and fudge cakes sailing through the air. A whipped-cream banana pie landed in a woman's lap"), she proves her skill and even receives a toast from the truffle-appreciating patrons. The giddy story is matched by vivacious pictures—both seem slightly old-fashioned but appealing. However, placing the dramatic early part of Henriette's life before the book opens ("Grandfather had forgotten that Jolie had raised this dog from a thin, not-supposed-to-live puppy and that they had been best friends on a very lonely farm") distances the reader from the story and characters. There's also never so much as a glimpse of a truffle; they are merely defined as "mushroom-like delicacies." It's insubstantial, but dog lovers, Francophiles, and slapstick aficionados (and what child isn't?) will gobble this story up. SDL

DUBOSARSKY, URSULA *The White Guinea-Pig*. Viking, 1995 177p  
ISBN 0-670-85738-6 \$14.99 R Gr. 7-10

Geraldine is already the indifferent possessor of two guinea-pigs when her schoolmate dumps huge white Alberta on her for six weeks. Geraldine accidentally lets Alberta out of her cage, which signals the beginning of a strange and eerie period: Geraldine is haunted by dreams of a looming and vengeful Alberta, people keep seeing an apparition in her backyard, and two men seem to be watching her house. Additional complications are provided by Geraldine's neighbor, Ezra, a boy still mourning his baby sister's death and sublimating his grief through participation in an animal-rights group, and by Geraldine's sister, Violetta, whose affection is transferring from her pedantic boyfriend Marcus to one of Ezra's fellow workers for animal rights. Dubosarsky, a talented writer, weaves these strands together into a story of humor and notable eccentricity. Geraldine's viewpoint, which considers her father's arrest for fraud and Alberta's eventual end (under the wheels of the two men's car) to be approximately on a par for tragedy, is authentic and thoughtful; her increasing closeness with Ezra, who finds in Alberta's death a release from the guilt and grief he felt over his sister's, is touching but convincingly thorny. Teens who like their plots clearly laid out for them may find the book too enigmatic, but readers with particularly offbeat but literary tastes will appreciate this Australian import. DS

FRANK, LUCY *I Am an Artichoke*. Holiday House, 1995 187p  
ISBN 0-8234-1150-8 \$14.95 R Gr. 6-9

Sarah's family strikes her as bland and perfect, which she herself certainly isn't ("At least no one says about me, 'Isn't she *adorable!*' I'd rather be called loathsome or odious or unspeakable. That, at least, has dignity") so she leaps at the chance to spend the summer away from home. Her job in New York City is ostensibly as a mother's helper, though it evolves into being more of a paid companion to Emily, who at twelve is just three years younger than Sarah. Florence, Emily's mother, is flamboyant, overweight, and opinionated, and Sarah, who quickly proves to be a voice of reason in the household, realizes that Emily is using food to attain some form of control over her mother. Despite being annoyed that Florence didn't initially tell her the truth about Emily's anorexia, Sarah desperately wants to help

Emily and is terrified that she won't be able to. By the conclusion, the two girls have attained a certain balance to their relationship as Emily helps Sarah's self-confidence with her own family grow. Tart, witty narration, strong characterizations, and well-paced, realistic plot development make this writer's initial entry into fiction bode well for her future work. SDL

FRENCH, JACKIE *Somewhere around the Corner*. Holt, 1995 230p  
ISBN 0-8050-3889-2 \$14.95 R Gr. 6-9

Trapped in an increasingly violent labor demonstration in contemporary Sydney, Barbara takes the advice of an elderly picketer to shut her eyes and "just walk around the corner." She does, but still finds herself amidst a demonstration, only it's 1932 and Australia is in the depths of its Depression. Barbara meets a boy who kindly takes her along on his long trip home to Poverty Gully, a "susso camp" for the unemployed, where Young Jim lives with his despondent father (Big Jim), hardworking mother, and assorted siblings. While the time-traveling is neatly turned, the real focus of the book is its portrait of a strong family in desperate times. The camp contains a motley assortment of well-meaning folk: Dulcie, a dairy-farmer who provides for those in need; Gully Jack, who holds out hope in his gold-panning; Young Jim and his sister Elaine who become Barbara's friends and partners in finding diversion from their plight. If the characters and situation seem idealized, the author does explain in a historical note that Poverty Gully was far better off than most of the susso camps, and while the camp has its share of good times (Friday night dances, building a school), its poverty is not rendered picturesque. Some of the most moving moments come when Barbara tells stories to the younger children about her life "around the corner" only to see the adults listening with the greater intensity: "'Go on,' said Dad quietly. 'Tell us some more.'" In a neat—maybe too neat—conclusion, Barbara does come back to the present, but soon discovers that she can have the best of both worlds. An extensive glossary provides definitions for Aussie-isms, but most will be clear from their context. RS

FURLONG, MONICA *Robin's Country*. Knopf, 1995 140p  
ISBN 0-679-84332-9 \$15.00 Ad Gr. 5-8

Dummy—so called because of his inability to speak—runs away from his master after a severe beating and happens onto the forest hideout of Robin Hood. Robin, Marian, and the merry men are at first suspicious, but they warm to Dummy, and he becomes part of the band. Dummy takes part in Robin's adventures (including the famous archery contest), makes a close friend, and delights with the others when good King Richard, ready to bring order back to the land, reveals himself to Robin at the end. Many youngsters will relish the idea of someone their age (Dummy is eleven) breaking free of constraints to play as a boy and fight as a man alongside Robin Hood, and the book is faithful to most aspects of the old legend. It's quite unsubtle, however, with saintly good guys (although Robin sometimes seems less cheeky than snotty) and bone-wicked bad guys, and Dummy's psychological speech-block and final revelation of his noble origins (he's the son of a murdered supporter of King Richard) are downright corny. It's not the deftest take on the old tales, but readers who find Sherwood irresistible will appreciate a chance to romp through the forest. DS

GLIORI, DEBI *Mr. Bear's Picnic*; written and illus. by Debi Gliori. Artists and Writers, 1995 32p  
ISBN 0-307-17558-8 \$13.95 R 3-6 yrs

In this sequel to the lovable *Mr. Bear Babysits* (BCCB 5/94), Mr. Bear decides to give Mrs. Bear a break and take the baby out for a picnic. Fred, Ted, and Fuzz, the mischievous bears next door who gave Mr. Bear such a hard time in the first book, invite themselves along ("Mr. Bear groaned") and pout about the various spots Mr. Bear chooses for the picnic ("It's *boring*," moans Fred), complaining even more loudly when it turns out that Mr. Bear brought the wrong basket ("You can't eat toys," said Fred, glaring at Mr. Bear"). Mr. Bear's prowess at honey-gathering finally wins the little rascals over, and a good time is had by all. While the story here is not as aptly structured as that of the first book, the simple adventure and gentle humor will win young listeners, and Mr. Bear is a dad that any cub could wish for. The honey- and chocolate-browns of the bears and the spring-green pastoral landscape are soothing but livened up by some pratfall humor, as when Mr. Bear falls into a pond while (unsuccessfully) pawing for some fish. RS

GORDON, RUTH, comp. *Pierced by a Ray of Sun: Poems about the Times We Feel Alone*. HarperCollins, 1995 105p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-023614-0 \$15.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-023613-2 \$16.00 R Gr. 7-12

Gordon, compiler of significant anthologies such as *Under All Silences* (BCCB 10/87) and *Peeling the Onion* (10/93), here turns her attention to the subject of aloneness. She takes a "big-tent" approach to the topic, including poems about difference, pity, knowledge, loss, and fear (though little on Wordsworthian pleasures of solitude), with the loneliness sometimes that of the poem's speaker and sometimes that of the poem's subject. Poets included range widely, from Keats and Dickinson through Rainier Maria Rilke and Yevgeny Yevtushenko to May Sarton, J. Patrick Lewis, and musician Paul Simon, making for a refreshing variety of verse form as well as viewpoint. Poetry, with its tendency towards private observation, is peculiarly suited to this theme, and young adults, who are struggling to find their place in the world, will find it particularly relevant, especially when they encounter it in such a fine poetic assortment. DS

GRANGER, MICHELLE *Fifth-Grade Fever*. Dutton, 1995 135p  
ISBN 0-525-45279-6 \$14.99 R Gr. 4-6

Marty and her friend Nina are thrilled to find that their fifth-grade teacher is hunky young Mr. Truesdale, and they're determined to beat out "kiss-uppy" Beverly Bridges for the honor of being teacher's pet. This effort has a salutary effect on Marty's schoolwork and even her character: Marty responds to Mr. Truesdale's encouragement with more faith in herself, becomes less of a sidekick to Nina, and begins to realize that Mr. T is a good teacher because he appreciates *all* his students. This is a trip through familiar territory, but it's well-executed and unpreachy, as well as containing a few suggestions of complexity (it seems possible that Marty craves Mr. Truesdale's attention because her father is so distant with her) that are either belabored or ignored in many other light school stories. Kids more comfortable with *The Babysitters Club* series and other paperbacks may find this luring them into hardcover territory. DS



GRIFFIN, PENI R. *Vikki Vanishes*. McElderry, 1995 [160p]

ISBN 0-689-80028-2 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 5-7

Nikki is tired of being the youngest in the family, tired of everything she does turning into trouble, tired of not measuring up to the standard set by her half-sister, Vikki, who's nearly ten years older. She's particularly angry that Vikki's father has returned to see his daughter but isn't interested in Nikki, whose own father is nowhere in sight. It's Nikki, however, who has the clues and pushes towards the right answer when Vikki disappears. Griffin, particularly good at plainspoken middle-grades fantasy (*The Maze*, BCCB 1/95, etc.), tries a different kind of story here with limited success. The problem-novel aspect of Vikki's disappearance—her father beats her and leaves her in a remote place after she rejects his sexual advances—is undermined by the superficiality of the detective story; characterization tends towards the obvious and predictable, as in the helpful private eye from next door and Vikki's no-good father, whose assault seems carefully calculated, in its severe but not lethal brutality, to suit the book's demands. More interesting characters are a well-meaning but questionably talented psychic, truly obnoxious Nikki, and Vikki herself, whose strong attempt to save herself combines with her little sister's tenacity (and a foreshadowed contrivance) to bring about a happy ending. This sits in an uncomfortable middle ground between safe junior mysteries such as Pamela Service's *Phantom Victory* (BCCB 6/94) and Lois Duncan's truly scary adventures for older kids. DS

GROVE, VICKI *The Crystal Garden*. Putnam, 1995 [224p]

ISBN 0-399-21813-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

Eliza isn't at all happy that her mother has decided to pull up stakes—and her—to follow her boyfriend Burl to grimy, hot, little Gouge Eye, Missouri, leaving Kansas City and a dead-end job behind. Eliza hates Gouge Eye, hates the fact that Burl spends their money on his new "career" as a country-western singer in nearby Branson, and doesn't much care for Dierdre, the only other kid her age in the town. While Dierdre, serious and literal-minded, is oblivious to the subtleties of seventh-grade social life, Eliza will do anything to fit in with the popular and well-off girls who live in a richer suburb, even when she has to betray herself and Dierdre's respect to do it. This is a familiar theme in girls' realistic fiction, but the characterizations of Eliza and Dierdre have a rough-edged honesty that their mass-market sisters lack. The rural poverty of Gouge Eye is neither prettified nor stereotyped, and both girls' problems (Dierdre's father is an alcoholic who burns down their house for the insurance money) are faced honestly. The stormy climax—a tornado—is a bit much, but Grove has been turning up the heat carefully and convincingly enough that it comes as welcome relief. RS

HANSARD, PETER *Jig, Fig, and Mrs. Pig*; illus. by Francesca Martin. Candlewick, 1995 26p

ISBN 1-56402-540-3 \$13.95

R 3-6 yrs

Jig is one sad pig. All pinkish, sweet, and uncomplaining, she labors at endless tasks of drudgery, while Mrs. Pig and her wretched son Fig lounge around and get nastier with every turn of the page. One day Jig performs a generous deed and the

recipient of her goodness suddenly zaps into a wizard and rewards Jig with diamonds and gold nuggets tumbling out of her mouth whenever she speaks. Greedy Fig goes in search of the elusive riches and he, too, gets his just reward—toads and snakes hurl out of his miserable mouth. Patterned after Perrault's "The Fairies," this Pig-erella story has a fast paced plot and playfully comedic watercolors: Mrs. Pig is a squinty-eyed mass of uptight disapproval, all of the pigs balance precariously on their hooves, and Jig is charmingly discreet in her victory as she waves a handkerchief at the retreating villains. The text, however, has a tendency to impede the folktale with cutesy phrases such as "Higgledy-piggledy, figgery-joke!" and "He's my Figsy-pigsy darling." Jig's final triumph will nonetheless light up the eyes of those preschoolers who dream of freedom from troublesome family members and who, like little Jig, wish they could have the house all to themselves for once. HMW

**HARNES, CHERYL** *The Amazing Impossible Erie Canal*; written and illus. by Cheryl Harness. Macmillan, 1995 32p  
ISBN 0-02-742641-6 \$16.00 Ad Gr. 2-4

Although the frenetic, eye-scorching illustrations threaten to overwhelm this title, Harness's fluent and lively text nonetheless stays afloat. An opening section explains the young nation's need for a cheap commercial route connecting the East Coast and the Great Lakes and follows the political ups and downs of the canal's visionary, De Witt Clinton. A longer section traces the maiden voyage of the barge *Seneca Chief* as it is towed from Lake Erie to the Atlantic for a ceremonial "Wedding of the Waters." Harness handily evokes the excitement of the New Yorkers gathered along the towpath to marvel at this feat of hydraulic engineering. Less glamorous aspects of the canal also appear, such as the pathmaster's task of shoeing livestock off the towpath while "plugging leaks made by pesky minks and muskrats." Ambitious watercolors, replete with details that invite close inspection, are often quite amusing despite their garish hues; maps, which fancifully combine geographic data with a crazy quilt of miscellanea, sacrifice clarity in favor of visual pizzazz. The back cover sports the melody and lyrics to "Low Bridge, Everybody Down," and a bibliography is included. EB

**HAYES, ANN** *Meet the Marching Smithereens*; illus. by Karmen Thompson. Harcourt, 1995 34p  
ISBN 0-15-253158-0 \$15.00 R 4-8 yrs

The creators of *Meet the Orchestra* (BCCB 3/91) take their animal musicians and turn to the instruments of a marching band. A kangaroo with a joey in her pocket leads the way: "The drum major struts in front of the band. With her mace, she beats time and sets the pace for the Marching Smithereens. She uses hand signals and whistle blasts to say, turn! halt! march! play!" The instruments (included are such band staples as the sousaphone, mellophone, tom-toms, and bell-lyra) follow, and Hayes provides a clear description of each one's appearance and sound without resorting to the overelaborate metaphors that made *Meet the Orchestra* confusing. Thompson's watercolors are less successful than in the previous book: the animals are stiffer, the instruments not nearly so splendid and shiny. The author-illustrator pair, though, have filled a niche by giving young children the specifics they like without overwhelming them with too much information; many a story-hour crowd will enjoy marching with rhythm instruments after reading this book. SDL

HELLER, RUTH *Color*; written and illus. by Ruth Heller. Putnam, 1995 34p  
ISBN 0-399-22815-2 \$18.95 R Gr. 2-4

Heller, accomplished author of concept books on parts of speech (*Up, Up and Away: A Book about Adverbs*, BCCB 1/92) and other subjects, here tackles the subject of printed color. In her customary verse, she first discusses media ("pencils and markers and crayons and chalks," for instance, each producing its own distinctive style in the accompanying illustrations) and then moves on to printing. She explains and shows color separation, as an angelfish gets layers of yellow, magenta, cyan, and black, and she discusses secondary and complementary colors, warm and cool colors, and tints and shades. Transparent multihued overlays and an entertainingly playful sensibility enhance the book's appeal as well as help it make its points. Heller's meter isn't as smooth here as it's been before, and some of her concepts ("Cool colors recede, and warm ones advance") are less intuitive and more needful of explanation than the text would have you believe. This is still one of the neatest and most effective explanations of color printing for kids, however, and would usefully complement Janet Stevens' *From Pictures to Words*, reviewed in this month's Big Picture. DS

HOESTLANDT, JO *Star of Fear, Star of Hope*; tr. from the French by Mark Polizzotti; illus. by Johanna Kang. Walker, 1995 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8374-0 \$16.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8373-2 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R\* Gr. 2-4

"My name is Helen, and I'm nearly an old woman now. When I'm gone, who will remember Lydia?" The narrator gives us all a chance to remember her best friend, Lydia, as she recounts the events of a fateful night in Nazi-occupied France of 1942 when she and Lydia, a Jewish girl, spent the night together in anticipation of Helen's ninth birthday. Several mysterious night visitors with yellow stars on their armbands alarm the girls, and Lydia demands to go home, whereupon Helen calls out, "I don't care! You're not my friend anymore!"—words she will always regret. The next morning, all the neighboring Jews have disappeared, including Lydia, and Helen is left unwrapping a birthday present of a homemade cardboard doll with Lydia's photograph superimposed on its head and a full paper wardrobe, including a coat with a yellow star. There's lip service to hope at the end, when the narrator anticipates a possibility of someday hearing from the real Lydia, but the experience of the book is more realistic. Within the framework of catastrophe, we all do things that are far from heroic because we are human. It's a lesson many are still learning, both in context of the Holocaust and of more recent disasters. The fact that this story is framed in terms to which any child can relate makes Hoestlandt's tale an effective picture book as well as a poignant record of World War II. The restrained, buff-and-gray illustrations—composed with their own paper-doll shapes—suggest sadness without sentimentalizing it. Art and text together comprise a telling portrayal of a telling moment in time. BH

HOFFMAN, MARY *Boundless Grace*; illus. by Caroline Binch. Dial, 1995 26p  
ISBN 0-8037-1715-6 \$14.99 Ad 4-6 yrs

Although Grace might not seem so boundless without her first story, *Amazing Grace* (BCCB 9/91), she is nevertheless irrepressibly exuberant in her pursuit of a father, who did not appear in the first book. Papa has started a new family back in

Africa, after divorcing Grace's mother, and Grace unexpectedly gets tickets to visit him with Nana. Despite an inevitable resentment of the new stepmother, Grace enjoys her young half-siblings, especially revelling in the chance to tell them stories, and she's sad to say goodbye at the end of the visit. Part travelogue and part case study of family adjustment, this nevertheless supersedes both modes with a kind of naïve energy and reassurance that families and stories are what you make them. Even the watercolors are caught between real and ideal, some appearing stiffly literal and others exuding mischievous invention. This may not be as imaginative a journey as Grace's earlier flights of fancy, but her fans will follow her anywhere. BH

JENKINS, STEVE *Biggest, Strongest, Fastest*; written and illus. by Steve Jenkins. Ticknor, 1995 32p  
ISBN 0-395-69701-8 \$14.95 R 5-7 yrs

A golden, graceful cheetah bounds across the front cover and his spotted tail wraps all the way around to the back of this meticulously designed book, in which cut-paper collages depict animal record-holders and their often surprising characteristics. Jenkins carefully balances art with science, and his double-page spreads celebrate the diverse beauty of the animals pictured. One particularly striking illustration shows the anaconda's intricately patterned body coiling past the page edges in hues of magenta, rose, and black. Clear factual tidbits are accessible to younger children ("The Etruscan shrew, the world's smallest mammal, could sleep in a teaspoon"), and small silhouetted diagrams demonstrate proportions (a human is pictured lifting his own weight, while one ant lifts up five of his companions) for older kids who understand mathematical comparisons. At times, the lack of scale distinctions in the collages is jarring (the ant and the African elephant are shown the same size on consecutive pages) but the corner diagrams make up for these minor lapses with keen differentiation between species' sizes. There is a handy chart at the back which adroitly compares animal records, sizes, diets, and ranges. The tantalizing page bleeds (many of the animal images begin on the recto and end on the verso) keep readers guessing, and the variety of animals portrayed shows kids that, when it comes to world record holders, four legs are sometimes better than two. HMW

JONAS, ANN *Splash!*; written and illus. by Ann Jonas. Greenwillow, 1995 26p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-11052-5 \$14.93  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-11051-7 \$15.00 Ad 3-6 yrs

A backyard pond is home to four goldfish, two catfish, three frogs, and a turtle. On a bright sunny day a variety of animals end up in the pond, and as the number in the pond changes, the reader is asked, "How many are in my pond?" When the narrator's cat and dog slip in, the little girl slips in too, and at the end as they dry off at the side, she says (lamely), "My dog is sad. My cat is mad. I feed the fish." The numbers range from a low of six to a high of twelve, providing an opportunity both for counting the critters and for kindergartners and first graders to do a little easy adding and subtracting. Jonas uses an electric blue for sky and water, with a brown pebbly pond bottom, muted green for grass, and the four orange goldfish giving a nice jolt of hot color; the splashes are satisfyingly splashy. The overly repetitive story remains just mildly entertaining, in part because none of the animals slipping into the pond look as if they are about to in the previous picture: in

fact, it's hard to see how the little girl could have fallen in at all. Still, a counting book with a dash of humor is always welcome. SDL

**JOSSE, BARBARA M.** *The Morning Chair*; illus. by Marcia Sewall. Clarion, 1995 32p

ISBN 0-395-62337-5 \$14.95

R 5-7 yrs

Bram, who looks from the pictures to be about five or six, lives in a seaside village in Holland in 1950. He especially enjoys sitting in "the morning chair" with his mother, sipping tea, looking out the window, and sometimes talking about America—where people eat green olives, and there are mountains and cowboys. Bram is disappointed when, after his family emigrates, the America they find is full of cars and noise, there are no mountains or cowboys (in New York City), and he dislikes the taste of green olives. Eventually the morning chair arrives, so Bram and his mother can cuddle up, sip tea, eat windmill cookies, and talk. His mother tells him, "America is a big, big place. There's room for mountains and cowboys and taxis. There's room for people who like green olives, and for people who don't." Many children will relate strongly enough to Bram's feelings of disorientation and disillusionment that they will sit through this very gentle, low-key, slightly melancholy story; it helps that food is featured throughout—raw herring, olives, hot dogs, and cookies. Sewall's gouache paintings are simple and tender, making effective use of restrained tones, thick black borders, and a quiet period flavor. A fine choice for curricular use in units on immigration, this is also a book about change and the discomforts that can accompany big adjustments. SDL

**KEELER, PATRICIA A.** *Unraveling Fibers*; written by Patricia A. Keeler and Francis X. McCall, Jr. Atheneum, 1995 36p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-689-31777-8 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 2-4

This attractive and browsable title invites exploration of a topic which might not, of itself, generate much interest. A definition of fiber and a brief overview of methods of converting it into thread, yarn, and fabric introduce three main chapters on fibers from plants, animals, and laboratories. Each section focuses on current production of the fiber—from age old methods of flax and jute retting still in use to the mechanized harvesting of cotton—and offers information on the source, advantages, and uses of the material. Although the claim that "all molecules, even polymers, are too small to be seen even with the most powerful microscope" is an unfortunate error, technical information is reliably and clearly presented. Layout is spacious and bright; comparative close-up photos of plants and fibers through stages of growth and processing are remarkably sharp, and shots of winsome angora rabbits, alpacas, and other wool providers reassure young readers that the plucked and sheared animals remain unharmed. An index is included. EB

**KEILLOR, GARRISON** *Cat, You Better Come Home*; illus. by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher. Viking, 1995 40p

ISBN 0-670-85112-4 \$15.99

Ad 6-9 yrs

What do you do when your cat wants to become a feline femme fatale? Puff scornfully chastises her owner for neglecting her finicky whims: "I'd rather be a cat who meets a terrible fate/ Than live with a man who can't appreciate/ That a

cat is independent and a true highbrow/ And needs a little high-class chow." So Puff takes off in a huff, and true to every child's running-away fantasy, she is sorely missed and her owner feels guilty. Puff's new life in the fast lane is glamorous, garish, and purrfectly divine as she travels in sophistication throughout Europe. All the while, her owner begs, "O CAT, YOU BETTER COME HOME!" and in the end, of course, she does (the pathos-tinged illustration shows her wistfully pawing the outside of a dripping windowpane). The paintings are richly developed scenes highlighting Puff's turquoise eyes and disdainful demeanor as she sashays across luxurious double-page spreads with characteristically sardonic humor. The folksy narration is appealing, but the inconsistent rhythm makes reading aloud a bumpy ride: "With tears in her ears and big puffy eyelids,/ Stood a former top cat who had hit the skids." References to such things as muscatel and Chateaubriand further muddy the text with unnecessary winks and nods aimed at adults, and kids may totally miss the final moral that "the very worst thing that a cat can do/ Is make all its dreams come true." Still, Puff's adventures are wryly fanciful, and the illustrations hypnotic in their ability to draw readers into her wanderings. HMW

KERR, DAISY *Keeping Clean*. Watts, 1995 48p illus. (Very Peculiar History)

ISBN 0-531-15353-8 \$14.42

Ad Gr. 4-7

A square and manageable trim size, a plethora of line-and-watercolor illustrations on every page, and a cheerfully bustling composition help make this an appealing and accessible history of plumbing, bathing, and waste removal. Each double spread deals with a particular region and/or time, starting with "The Ancient World: Planning and Plumbing" through, for instance, "The Middle Ages: Religion and Running Water" to "Past and Future: Managing Waste," and familiar subjects such Roman baths, nautical lavatories, and spaceship hygiene turn up in their appropriate places. The text sometimes jumps around a bit, sometimes repeats itself, and sometimes fails to explain concepts not already familiar to the audience (this is not the place to discover aqueducts or bidets for the first time); the draftsmanship of the art also tends to be awkward. This is less comprehensive but more fun than Penny Colman's *Toilets, Bathrubs, Sinks, and Sewers* (BCCB 2/95); kids will enjoy hunting for gross tidbits, of which there are plenty, and they'll pick up information as they do. A glossary, index, and list of fun facts are included. DS

KESSLER, CRISTINA *One Night: A Story from the Desert*; illus. by Ian Schoenherr. Philomel, 1995 [32p]

ISBN 0-399-22726-1 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

Muhamad, a boy of the Tuareg people who live in the desert (the Sahara, but the book doesn't get that specific) senses that his test for manhood is coming when his father gives him a herd of goats to care for. He takes his charge seriously and rejoices in the responsibility as well as in his daily solitude: "I taste the wind on my tongue and feel the sun touch my heart as finally I sit with my goats while they graze. Yes, I am the wealthiest of boys." There's a surfeit of such ponderous meditation and a shortage of action here, with the climactic event (Muhamad must stay out in the desert overnight while he waits for a goat to give birth) lacking tension: he's not worried and neither are we. While the story makes much of the Tuaregs' deep connection with nature and with their Muslim faith, the preaching is blandly universal ("the most powerful secrets are with nature, not with man")

rather than illuminating of a particular culture. Children will probably find the book difficult to sit through, but they may be held by Schoenherr's paintings; resembling Leonard Everett Fisher's full-color work but with a more graceful line, the pictures capture the mystery and beauty of the desert landscape that the text works too hard to convey. RS

KING-SMITH, DICK *Harriet's Hare*; illus. by Roger Roth. Crown, 1995 104p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-517-59831-0 \$15.99  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-59830-2 \$15.00 R Gr. 2-4

Harriet Butler is delighted to find herself playing hostess to an alien visitor from the planet Pars who, disguised as a hare, is vacationing among the "simple, ignorant natives" of a more primitive culture. While true-farm-girl Harriet clues in the hare, Wiz, to the dangers of combines and poachers, Wiz repays her kindness by playing matchmaker between her widowed father and their neighbor Jessica Lambert, thus securing for Harriet the maternal affection she craves. Sci-fi takes a back seat to warm family tale, and this Partian is more the benevolent pooka than space alien as he manipulates Jessica's destiny in the cause of true love. Realistic details of the pleasures and responsibilities of farm life, together with the appearance of plenty of field and farm animals, further extend the story's interest to the critter crowd. Appealing pencil sketches provide frequent visual breaks which will be welcomed by beginning chapter-book readers. EB

KRUPINSKI, LORETTA *Bluewater Journal: The Voyage of the Sea Tiger*; written and illus. by Loretta Krupinski. HarperCollins, 1995 32p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-023437-7 \$14.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-023436-9 \$15.00 R Gr. 2-4

Benjamin Slocum logs his adventures aboard the clipper ship *Sea Tiger* as his father, Captain Slocum, sails her from Boston to the Sandwich Islands. As Benjamin describes the mundane and the extraordinary details of the fictional 1860 voyage, readers form a vivid picture of four months at sea—the genteel but cramped nest of a stateroom, livestock for fresh milk, eggs, and meat, polite society that entertains them in Rio Janeiro and Honolulu, the treacherous waters off Cape Horn, and a race for port against the rival *Morning Star*. The text will entice independent readers, and the single-page journal entries will work well as a classroom read aloud; although the figures in Krupinski's gouache paintings are as stiff as a mainmast (Benjamin stands frozen at the wheel, oblivious to the gigantic whale surfacing just beyond his shoulder), the audience will be fascinated by the precision of nautical details, and viewers in the back of the room will appreciate the illustrations' size and clarity. Budding navigators can use Krupinski's map to trace *Sea Tiger's* route as she sets sail "on a rising tide and strong," laden with fresh cargo and bound for Hong Kong. Source notes, a glossary of nautical terms, and a note on the antebellum clipper-ship trade are included. EB

LAVENDER, DAVID *The Santa Fe Trail*. Holiday House, 1995 64p illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-8234-1153-2 \$15.95 R Gr. 4-8

Readers familiar with settlers' tales from the Oregon Trail will enjoy this engaging and informative history of the route that, for some sixty years, serviced the commercial and military wagon trade between Missouri and New Mexico. Lavender

traces the Trail's expansion from William Becknell's 1821 gamble on open trade with Mexico to the road's demise at the advent of the steam locomotive in 1879, liberally embellishing his narrative with period photographs and engravings. Although not divided into chapters, the text falls naturally into sections on the Trail's early importance in U.S.-territorial trade and in the War with Mexico, and its later roles in provisioning territorial forts and channeling Confederate troops westward. Lavender has a knack for blending just the necessary amount of political/military background information with those homelier details Western fans hanker after: "before rolling into Santa Fe, [traders] washed, shaved, and put on the clean clothes they had kept in the kitchen wagon. . . . They wanted to strut!" A large map and an index are included. EB

LEWIS, C. S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; ad. and illus. by Robin Lawrie. HarperTrophy, 1995 [64p]  
Paper ed. ISBN 0-06-443399-4 \$7.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-6

Beginning with *Classics Illustrated*, many works of literature have been abridged into comic-book format with some measure of success. This graphic-novel version of Narnia is no different in that it stumbles into the same pitfalls and rises to the same heights of the form. Obviously, this is not Lewis' original book, nor should it replace it any way. Lawrie's illustrations provide all of the battle excitement and background detail that propel the story into a well-paced and visually involving comic, but the tension and depth of the novel are lost and the characters flattened out. Edmund looks appropriately priggish and Lucy mousy yet full of mettle, but their personalities are conveyed mostly in their attire and facial expressions. The text (some Lewis, some Lawrie) is talky and too densely packed, particularly during scene transitions. Occasional double-page spreads are bold and inventive, but work best when the dialogue is trimmed to a minimum. The story is long and involved, and the speech balloons often distract from the marvelously detailed borders (which change for every chapter) and cozy interior scenes (one can almost hear the kettle boiling in Mr. Tumnus' cave). Although the rich complexity of the original is watered down and the message may be too big for the medium, reluctant readers might be visually enticed into an exploration of Narnia; an extended visit with the real thing could follow later. HMW

LOVE, D. ANNE *Bess's Log Cabin Quilt*; illus. by Ronald Himler. Holiday House, 1995 123p  
ISBN 0-8234-1178-8 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 3-5

Papa is missing somewhere along the Oregon Trail, Mama is stricken with swamp fever, and the moneylender is threatening to evict the family, but plucky ten-year-old Bess is sure she can keep the wolf from the door: for a whopping twenty-five dollar fee she can enter her log cabin quilt at the local fair in hopes of winning hundreds of dollars. Mama agrees to let her stake the last of the emergency money on this long-shot, and through the contrivance of a kindly neighbor, the second-prize money goes to Bess. She saves the farm, Papa shows up, Mama gets well, and they all sing and laugh and clap into the night. Stock characters and situations abound, and an unprovoked threat by whooping Indians (Bess scares them off with a blast from Papa's rifle as Mama faints in a heap) is straight out of matinee Westerns. Adventure buffs may enjoy the action, but the diehard cabin-in-the-woods crowd will probably want fresher material. EB



LUCHT, IRMGARD *The Red Poppy*; written and illus. by Irmgard Lucht; tr. from the German by Frank Jacoby-Nelson. Hyperion, 1995 28p  
 Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2043-8 \$13.89  
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0055-0 \$13.95 Ad 4-8 yrs

Although this could be considered a science picture book detailing the life cycle of the poppy, and it does lay out the botany clearly, the star attraction of the book is its enormous, intensely colored flower paintings. As her author's note reveals, Lucht achieved the ultra-realistic look of her paintings with the help of a binocular microscope, which, unlike a regular microscope, "allows the viewer to see in three dimensions instead of one" (two, actually). Using acrylic paint to capture each fold and crease of flower petals, stamens, and even the dusting of pollen in the flower's heart, her artwork is somewhat reminiscent of Georgia O'Keeffe in its close-up detail. In her end notes, Lucht points out the various flowers, animals, and insects which can be spotted in the pictures, but most are named too generally ("beetle," for instance), and her attention appears to be on the art more than the science. One's appreciation of this book will be very much a matter of taste: what some will see as garish and unsubtle will strike others as spectacular and magnificent. Although the book is an import from Germany and focuses on a kind of poppy that does not grow wild in America, it would still fit into storyhours on seasons and flowers, and certainly no one will complain that they can't see the pictures. SDL

MAYO, MARGARET, ad. *Tortoise's Flying Lesson: Animal Stories*; illus. by Emily Bolam. Harcourt, 1995 [76p]  
 ISBN 0-15-200332-0 \$17.00  
 Reviewed from galleys R 3-7 yrs

As the opening note tells us, Mayo has collected and "freely adapted and retold" eight stories from around the world with animal protagonists, in some cases combining elements from different cultures. Though purists may dispute such alterations, each individual story is sprightly, funny, and satisfyingly concluded. In the title story, Tortoise insists that Eagle teach him to fly, and after he plummets to the ground, he berates Eagle for not having taught him to land. Some of the animals are foolish or initially bad, but brains solve most problems, kindheartedness is the usual response, and adult figures help without scolding. For example, in "The Friendly Lion," based on English and Indian tales, the story of Chicken Little is retold using Indian animals, such as a tiger and a mouse; in the end, the silly animals are not eaten by a fox; instead King Lion points out the coconut that made the mouse think the sky was falling and then they take a nap. Mayo accomplishes an upbeat tone without ever seeming gooey or didactic, and her style is so lively that it begs for audience participation. There is plenty of material for storytellers here, and the typeface is large enough that primary-grade students could read the text themselves, but Bolam's cheery illustrations will encourage most people to use this as a picture book. Bold colors, patterned page borders, and most of all, comically expressive animals lend lots of child appeal in this well-designed book. SDL

MAZER, NORMA FOX *Missing Pieces*. Morrow, 1995 196p  
 ISBN 0-688-13349-5 \$15.00 R Gr. 6-9

Jessie grew up hearing the family story of her father's abandonment ("He never came back and you cried for three days!"). Now that she's a teenager, she wants

more explanation, and, noting with longing her friends' relationships with their fathers, she begins tracking hers down. In the meantime, with perhaps one plot thread too many, she feels torn between her oldest friend, Meadow, and her new friend, Diane; her Aunt Zis shows signs of losing her short-term memory; and the boy Meadow has a crush on likes Jessie instead. She also must cope with a mother who sees betrayal in her search for her father. By the novel's conclusion, she has a more adult understanding of her parents, and while her curiosity hasn't been entirely sated, she is willing to wait for a time someday when she may get to present her father with the person she has become. Mazer sets up her characters and their situation vividly and poetically, as when Jessie thinks about people who disappear: "Blurred figures on back roads, moving, always moving away, becoming smaller and finer, whittled down by distance, until at last, at the horizon, where sky met land, nothing remained but a black dot, the tiniest punctuation mark in the world." Jessie is a thoughtful and compelling narrator, neither passive nor reckless. Her mother is especially realistic, with her "pilly blue sweater with the cigarette burn holes," and, despite her mom's imperfections, Jessie clearly adores her. In this classic coming-of-age story, there are no big moments or spectacular plot twists, just solid characterization and a well-paced progression toward maturity. SDL

MORGAN, PIERR, ad. *Supper for Crow: A Northwest Coast Indian Tale*; ad. and illus. by Pierr Morgan. Crown, 1995 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-517-59379-3 \$15.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-59378-5 \$15.00

R 3-6 yrs

As she explains in her author's note, Morgan illustrates a story about the trickster Raven she heard from a Makah Indian woman. When Mama Crow goes looking for some seal meat to give to her hungry babies, Mischievous Raven follows her and substitutes a rock for the meat. Mama Crow sends the babies to Raven's house, where they smell the stolen meat cooking ("Oh MY, how good it smelled"); Raven distracts them by suggesting they dance, and then eats the meat himself. Morgan tells the story with a sprightly lilt and creates a cast of jaunty birds, painted in gouache with ink, who are comical without ever being cartoonish. Particularly noteworthy is Morgan's skill in painting landscapes with the sea, sand, and pine trees of the Pacific Northwest, and she captures both the peacefulness and movement of the coastal area. In the background, she depicts a potlatch set in 1899 (which is unmentioned in the text), but only those who have read the opening notes will realize that Morgan is not trying to show modern-day Indians. Like many trickster tales, this communicates in a funny way the message that it's not smart to be too gullible. SDL

MUCHMORE, JO ANN *Johnny Rides Again*. Holiday House, 1995 106p

ISBN 0-8234-1156-7 \$14.95

R Gr. 4-6

Rose, ten, is devastated by the deaths of her mother and the family's beloved dog, and she's especially angry that her brothers and father seem inclined to quickly replace them both. First comes the dog, known as New Johnny, and then her father starts dating a teacher from the local school. This is a fairly familiar adjustment story, and it's no surprise that Rose softens both towards the dog and her father's girlfriend, but Muchmore gives a lively Texan tone to the proceedings that keeps things fresh. There's plenty of humor here, with the slapstick moments smart as well as broad, and Rose is tough and honest without being clichéd; kids will enjoy her company. DS

MURPHY, CHUCK *One to Ten Pop-Up Surprises!*; illus. by Chuck Murphy. Little Simon, 1995 10p  
ISBN 0-671-89908-2 \$12.95 R 2-5 yrs

Pop-ups often run the risk of trying to do too many things at once; this small, modest book, on the other hand, takes one extremely simple idea and shapes it into an elegant and gracefully designed counting book. Blocky black and white numbers are completely unadorned on the outside, but the secret interior cutouts are vividly dramatic in colorful contrast. Lift flap "1" to reveal a fluorescently spotted gecko, arms splayed out in mid-jump; flap "4" shows jet-black cats lazing around bright red, blue, green, and yellow chairs; and "6" contains an amusing variety of black and white dogs—spotted, scruffy, sophisticated, and snappy—all wagging their tails in sync. Everything is easy to count, and the book's paper and hinges seem sturdy. There is a slightly disruptive surprise at the end, because initially it appears that "0" has replaced "10." Have patience, because once the flap is opened, the missing digit appears along with ten laughing, bouncy children who wave enthusiastically as they peek out from behind the gaping "0." Young children, upon reaching the end, might just be proud enough in their success to wave back with even greater enthusiasm. HMW

NAPOLI, DONNA JO *Jimmy, the Pickpocket of the Palace*; illus. by Judith Byron Schachner. Dutton, 1995 166p  
ISBN 0-525-45357-1 \$14.99 Ad Gr. 4-6

The author of *The Prince of the Pond* (BCCB 1/93) follows with a sequel as Jimmy, the smartest of the "fawglets," is transformed into a boy through the magic of a wicked hag and the kiss of a spoiled princess. The tone here is not as fresh and witty as in the first book. There's heavy emphasis on the mechanics of the transformation, and readers already know what it takes Jimmy so long to figure out: first, that he has been transformed; and second, that the empathetic prince is really his father, changed from frog back into his original princely shape. The real suspense is not in what will happen to the threatened pond or the evil hag, which is predictable, but in what form Jimmy and his father will choose to remain. That question is answered in a climactic deliverance: "I had wished that the ring would turn each of us who touched it into what we really were at heart. . . . The ring had turned me into a frog. The ring had turned the hag into an iron rock. . . . Would the ring turn him into Pin again? Was my daddy a frog at heart?" In a brave ending, we read in the last sentence the poignant fact that parents and children must sometimes separate according to differences of the heart. BH

NEUFELD, JOHN *Almost a Hero*. Atheneum, 1995 147p  
ISBN 0-689-31971-1 \$15.00 R Gr. 6-9

Benjamin is displeased when his history teacher assigns the class volunteer work during spring vacation: he'd planned to waste time doing normal twelve-year-old things, but instead he's working at a day-care center for homeless kids. Soon he's involved in spite of himself, and he sticks his neck out when he thinks one of his charges is being abused. While some of the book is a bit neat and predictable (Ben is wrong about his suspicions, and one of his school friends proves to be homeless himself), some of it is not: Ben doesn't adore all of the kids, and he learns that the center can't cure all problems. Neufeld, author of such classic problem novels as *Edgar Allan* and *Lisa, Bright and Dark*, proves he can still write a compelling story

but can also season it with some contemporaneous ambiguity; Ben ponders some difficult questions in ways that young readers, who may face similar moral challenges themselves, will relate to. DS

ORLEV, URI *The Lady with the Hat*; tr. from Hebrew by Hillel Halkin. Houghton, 1995 183p  
ISBN 0-395-69957-6 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 6-9

Orlev's previous three novels translated into English are a tough act to follow. The drama of *The Island on Bird Street* (BCCB 6/84), the complexity of *The Man from the Other Side* (6/91), and the subtlety of *Lydia, Queen of Palestine* (11/93) perhaps raise our hopes unfairly for yet another feat. *The Lady with the Hat* is basically an adventure story. Although it starts out with the main character, Yulek, returning to his prewar home to find all the Jews gone, unregretted, and unwelcome, there's a strangely detached tone to his grieving. Yulek's subsequent journey from Poland to Italy to Palestine, his struggle to run the British blockade, and the attempts of his sole surviving relative to find him (she spent the war in England as the wife of an aristocratic barrister) are almost like a puzzle; there's suspense in the missing pieces, but we know they'll fall into place, though we're not quite sure how or when. In effect, Orlev has described an experience rather than recreating it. Nevertheless, Yulek's story tells a lot more than most history books, with some realistic secondary characters who layer the plot mechanics considerably. BH

PARK, BARBARA *Mick Harte Was Here*. Apple Soup/Knopf, 1995 89p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-679-97088-6 \$15.99  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-87088-1 \$15.00 R Gr. 5-8

Eighth-grader Phoebe and her younger brother, Mick, are as emotionally close as siblings can be, and she's devastated when he's killed in a bicycle accident. She describes the month following the tragedy, and her family's reaction to it, with an up-front statement: "This isn't the kind of book where you meet the main character and you get to like him real well and then he dies at the end." And yet, because of Park's subtle development, it is that kind of book. Although we know from the beginning Mick is dead, we begin really to feel it as we get to know him through his sister; and to the exact extent that her grief is realistically detailed, we feel for her as well and finally cry. The tone, honoring Mick's zany sense of humor, is light and the reading is easy. The only false note, strangely enough, is the author's note, in which Park suddenly seems to mistrust her own storytelling and breaks the spell of a powerful ending with a mini-lecture of exactly the sort that kids pay no attention to. Fortunately, the rest of the book comes first—and will last. BH

PAULSEN, GARY *The Tent: A Parable in One Sitting*. Harcourt, 1995 86p  
ISBN 0-15-292879-0 \$14.00 Ad Gr. 6-9

Steven's father, oppressed by grinding poverty despite his labor, decides that the way to riches is to become a traveling preacher, so father and son, assisted by a stolen Bible and a few audience shills, make their way through Texas healing and saving souls. Steven is at first embarrassed, then gradually comes to despise the flocks he and his father fleece; finally, however, both he and his father hear a different message in the gospel, see their false evangelism as wrong, and decide to visit towns simply to "talk about God and maybe read some more about Jesus." There's little mainstream fiction for youth that takes Christianity, particularly fun-

damentalism, seriously (Cynthia Rylant's *A Fine White Dust*, BCCB 9/86, and Stephanie Tolan's *Save Halloween*, 10/93, being notable exceptions), so it's good to see the subject tackled; Paulsen is also good at evoking a flat and dusty world of small southwestern towns, where a visiting preacher is a welcome relief from everyday life. Unfortunately his treatment of the subject often lacks subtlety, making the book seem—well—preachy and the evil more appealing than the good. Steven's father's corruption manifests itself in predictable forms, there's no exploration of what difference the audience finds between Steven's father the charlatan and Steven's father the genuine believer, and while a more dramatic ending might have been theologically unsatisfying, the final scene here is abrupt and anticlimactic. This is still a sincere and thoughtful story of spiritual growth, however, that could prompt some serious discussion. DS

POLIKOFF, BARBARA GARLAND *Riding the Wind*. Holt, 1995 131p  
ISBN 0-8050-3492-7 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 4-7

Twelve-year-old Angie adores her favorite horse, Lila, owned by the local stable, and she hopes soon to be able to buy her. When Angie's nemesis, Sage, takes Lila for a ride one day, the mare is hurt in a fall, and Angie spends weeks at the stable nursing "her" horse back to health. This is a slight variation on the traditional horse story, since the victory here isn't a championship but the horse's return to soundness (and Polikoff acknowledges the strong chance that Lila will never again be the jumper that Angie dreamed of). Unfortunately, the characters are rather shallowly depicted, the subplot of Angie's rapprochement with troubled Sage is predictable, and Sage's dramatic life is overdrawn. More successful is the story of Angie's budding romance with Horatio (of *Life's a Funny Proposition*, Horatio, BCCB 9/92), who proves a loyal friend in these difficult times. Since most horsey kids relish the caretaking as much as the adventure, they'll enjoy reading about Angie's efforts and her success in finally bringing her horse home. DS

SCHMIDT, JEREMY *Two Lands, One Heart: An American Boy's Journey to His Mother's Vietnam*; written by Jeremy Schmidt and Ted Wood; illus. with photographs by Ted Wood. Walker, 1995 [44p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8358-9 \$16.85  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8357-0 \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-5

What could simply have been a well-executed travelogue gains additional interest through its focus: TJ, who is the son of an American father and a woman who came as a child-refugee to the U.S. during the Vietnam War. TJ and his mother, Heather, travel from Denver to Vietnam to visit Heather's parents and brothers on their farm, a two-day car journey north from Saigon. Excellent and plentiful color photos show just about every step of the way, with especially close attention given to the work of the farm, silkworms, musk oxen, and all. The family feeling is warm but unsentimentalized, and what readers will get is an unusual picture of a "visit-to-Grandpa's" summer vacation, where bonds both old and new are enjoyed in a context of everyday living. RS

SEABROOKE, BRENDA *The Haunting of Holroyd Hill*. Cobblehill, 1995 137p  
ISBN 0-525-65167-5 \$14.99 Ad Gr. 5-8

It's summer, Melinda and Kevin and their parents have moved to semi-rural Holroyd

Hill in Virginia, and the two kids and a new friend, Dan, have discovered a ghost that wanders through their house each evening just before midnight. Library research, a fortuitously published local history, and an equally fortuitous discovery of a diary lead the three to the romantic story of a Union soldier, his Confederate wife, and her enraged father, the ghosts of whom seem destined to enact their tragic triangle into eternity. The story is formulaic but diverting, as Melinda and the boys piece together the evidence—and the bones—that help them to lead these souls to rest. In books such as *Ammie, Come Home* and *Patriot's Dream*, adult writer Barbara Michaels has handled similar plots with greater cunning and sense of atmosphere; junior-high kids who start the summer with Seabrooke could find in Michaels a writer to take them all the way to fall. RS

SIMEON, S. *In and Out and Roundabout: A Pop-Up Book of Directions*; ISBN 0-671-89832-9. *Pink Drink: A Pop-Up Book of Color Rhymes*; ISBN 0-671-89833-7. Each book: illus. by Chris Reed. Little Simon, 1995 10p \$8.95 Ad 2-5 yrs

These neatly square board books open to show double-spreads of two doors, with one word written on each. When the doors in *Pink Drink* open, a scene featuring something that rhymes with the door-color pops out; behind the yellow door is a yellow cello. Most scenes contain plenty of movement as the door is opened, and Reed has included some entertaining details to examine. In a few instances, the pop-ups do not straighten out enough to be seen without overbending the pages, as in the "brown town" where the buildings remain tilted down, or the "red bed" which never fully unfolds; this is a problem which will not only frustrate young readers but will add to the wear-and-tear for libraries, though the books are otherwise reasonably durable. In *In and Out* some of the concepts are served well by the format—the "up" rocket really shoots up when the door opens, and the "down" parachutist plunges down—but not all concepts are clear: there are as many objects "over" as there are "under" on the "under" page, for instance. The books are not entirely successful, but libraries looking to liven up their toddler storytime may find these useful. SDL

SIMON, NORMA *Wet World*; illus. by Alexi Natchev. Candlewick, 1995 [26p] ISBN 1-56402-190-4 \$12.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 2-4 yrs

Natchev's gray, smoky blue, and cloudy white watercolors streak and bleed across page after page of damp and wet: "wet windows/ wet trees/ wet leaves/ wet grass/ wet street/ wet rooftops/ wet world." A small child awakens in a bedroom deluged with a thunderstorm; walls, ceiling, and floor are drenched with the visual representation of the wet world outside. In contrast to the external haze of slick streets and shimmery skies are the warm interior hues of browns, golds, and reds. Simon's 1954 poem (BCCB 4/55) was originally illustrated by Jane Miller with stylized scenes of a wealthy estate. Natchev changes venues in favor of an ordinary bustling city and he portrays the child venturing out into the rain to go to school. The poem and pictures together present a melodic celebration of the dripping city and the soft comforts of home ("A warm kiss kissed me/And now I'm in bed") and hearth, although viewers may wonder why the toast mentioned in the text is absent from the laden table. Nonetheless, lapsitters will snuggle closer under the covers to hear this one read at the end of a drizzly, dull day. HMW

SMITH, ROLAND *Thunder Cave*. Hyperion, 1995 250p  
ISBN 0-7868-0068-2 \$16.95

Ad Gr. 5-8

It's rare—and kind of refreshing—to see a children's novel in which parental death is not subject but springboard, in this case sending the young hero off on a *Jonny Quest*-like adventure in the wilds of Africa. When his mother is fatally struck by a car, Jacob evades his stepfather's plan to have him go live with relatives in Nebraska by flying off to Kenya to find his father, a scientist researching the diminishing herds of elephants. Jacob's father is in the bush and incommunicado, and most of the book follows Jacob's unlikely but exciting journey to find him. While it sits squarely in the old-fashioned adventure genre, the story is cognizant of contemporary issues of prejudice and power; Jacob's outwitting of a band of evil poachers ("they were a rough-looking bunch") is both environmentally and dramatically correct. But action is paramount—this is precisely the kind of book people are thinking of when they ask for a "boys' book." RS

SORENSEN, HENRI *New Hope*; written and illus. by Henri Sorensen. Lothrop, 1995 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13926-4 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13925-6 \$15.00

R 5-8 yrs

Jimmy never tires of hearing Grandpa tell the story about the park statue that commemorates Lars Jensen, the founder of New Hope. When a minor wagon mishap befell the Danish immigrant and his family near a forested riverbank, Lars decided to settle on that spot. In spring he built a small ferry boat to transport other settlers across the river; the ferry business attracted a blacksmith to set up his forge. As lumbermen and farmers moved into the area, Lars serviced the building boom with a general store; New Hope burgeoned, the Jensen family blossomed, and five generations later Jimmy admires the statue of Lars—his own ancestor "who started this town because his axle broke." Young listeners will easily grasp the interplay of serendipity and purpose that fuels the growth of this fictional community. Sorensen's impressionistic townscapes, brushed in broad, confident strokes and peopled with keenly individuated villagers, traces New Hope's inexorable expansion and modernization. This title will be an engaging addition to the primary-grade social studies curriculum; older audiences might also look to Renata von Tscherner's *New Providence* (BCCB 3/87) for a more detailed picture-book presentation of urban development. EB

SPINELLI, JERRY *Tooter Pepperday*; illus. by Donna Nelson. Random House, 1995 85p (First Stepping Stone Books)

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-94702-7 \$9.99

Paper ed. ISBN 0-679-84702-2 \$3.99

R Gr. 2-4

When first we meet Tooter, she has handcuffed herself to a pipe under the bathroom sink in an attempt to prevent her family from leaving their old house for a new home on a farm with Aunt Sally. Clearly, this will be a feisty heroine for a new series of early chapter books. Once on the farm, she is furious that pizza can't be delivered, that McDonald's is nowhere to be found, and that she is expected to take care of an egg in an incubator, turning it every day or "the egg will never become a chick." She gradually finds things to fascinate her on the farm, such as the tiny purple flower in the middle of the Queen Anne's lace, and before the chick is born, "the old Tooter went away and never came back," and the new

Tooter is as happy as "a hog in slop." Spinelli occasionally sacrifices authenticity for effect, as in the unrealistically odiferous compost heap, but the broad humor and mischievous heroine will appeal to new readers both urban and rural. Soft-edged but vigorously cartoonish pencil drawings appear throughout. SDL

SPOHN, KATE *Night Goes By*; written and illus. by Kate Spohn. Macmillan, 1995 32p  
ISBN 0-02-786351-4 \$15.00 R 2-4 yrs

It's a cloudless day, so Sun, "on all day with no nap," is glad to see Moon, "wide-awake and ready to take over the sky." Moon, in turn, is waiting for her friend Star, and when she pops up the two dance and play the night away until it's time for Sun to come back on the job. You can't get much simpler, and while science-minded parents might want to consign this to the cabbage patch, others will enjoy the sweetly symmetrical story and Spohn's bravely naive oil paintings. Sun looks like a golden egg overflowing its cup; Moon is dressed in a silvery sheath; Star is royal blue in her glittery skirt. The three are painted in warm, bold strokes against a sky awash with pinks and aquas, greens and grays. With the current emphasis on complex picture books for older kids, it's good to see something that still has the younger set in mind. RS

STEVENS, JANET *From Pictures to Words: A Book about Making a Book*; written and illus. by Janet Stevens. Holiday House, 1995 32p  
ISBN 0-8234-1154-0 \$15.95 R 6-9 yrs

See this month's Big Picture, p. 335.

STEVENSON, JAMES *The Bones in the Cliff*. Greenwillow, 1995 [128p]  
ISBN 0-688-13745-8 \$15.00  
Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 6-8

Eleven-year-old Pete has been moving around with his alcoholic father for two years: his mother is in a mental hospital and his father seems to be on the run from something. Forbidden to contact anyone from their old life, Pete has the responsibility for watching to see if a man with whom his father claims he has had a "business misunderstanding" gets off the ferry at their East Coast island. He meets a girl his own age, Rootie, who has a troubled family herself, and gradually they learn to confide in each other. When the crisis finally comes, Pete attempts to save his father from the bad guy, and Rootie is there to help. This grimly realistic novel is a surprising departure from Stevenson's usual gently humorous (picture) books. In one especially vivid scene, Pete recalls waiting in the car for his father, passing the time with a prostitute and trying not to stare at her "bare behind," until his father emerges from a garage while being beaten up: "Two men took turns hitting him. With each punch, I could see a fine spray of blood against the lights of the garage." The author has attempted to combine adventure and suspense with a coming-of-age story, but unfortunately, his tone remains so flat that the two children never come to life. Psychological insights studded throughout Pete's narration ("That made him really mad. Because it was so close to the truth") do too much in informing readers what everything means. Though there are several evocative passages, such as when the children crawl into a decaying movie theater, they get no help from the heavy-handed characterization and bare-boned plot. SDL



STRASSER, TODD *How I Changed My Life*. Simon, 1995 186p  
ISBN 0-671-88415-8 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

Life is change: Kyle Winthrop fears that the knee injury which ended his star career with the school football team has essentially ended his life as well; Bolita Vine, known occasionally as Bo and more often, alas, as Bo Vine, has a crush on Kyle and a steely determination that she will finish up high school as more than the plump, mousy behind-the-scenes stage manager of the school play. Bo and Kyle take turns narrating as Kyle takes a role in this year's play, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and he and Bo develop a friendship as a result. The significant figure in both their lives is Kyle's girlfriend, Chloe, the head cheerleader and queen of perfection who gets starring roles in the school play by natural right, who seems perhaps to be losing interest in Kyle, and who makes Bo madly and completely jealous. What's interesting here, though, is that the plot isn't what you'd predict: Kyle's drifting from Chloe doesn't lead him to Bo but to a reassessment of his life, and Bo undergoes a gradual but effective physical makeover, makes an abortive pass at Kyle, and ends up becoming friends with the driven but not unlikable Chloe. The writing is slick but agreeable, with smartmouthed Bo providing some good comic touches; the blend is reminiscent of Kaplow's Alessandra books (BCCB 2/93 and 5/89). Strasser has given his story and characters enough integrity that the unconventional ending is satisfying rather than disappointing, and although he's kept the story complex the writing has a smooth and unintimidating flow that will reel in a variety of readers. DS

SWIFT, JONATHAN *Gulliver in Lilliput*; ad. by Margaret Hodges; illus. by Kimberly Bulcken Root. Holiday House, 1995 32p  
ISBN 0-8234-1147-8 \$15.95

R Gr. 4-6

Gulliver's Lilliputian adventure might well be the original tall tale, and that's how Hodges treats it. Sometimes quoting Swift and sometimes paraphrasing him, she has focused on the absurdity of the size disparity and the strangeness of this strange land, sensibly leaving most of the political satire out of her adaptation. Gulliver's capture, gradual acceptance into Lilliputian society, conquest of the neighboring island of Blefuscu, and departure from the diminutive communities in order to escape a charge of treason makes a pretty good story in itself. Root's line-and-watercolor illustrations use spidery hatching (which slyly suggests period engraving) and occasional subtle but multi-colored borders, making them a meet accompaniment to the Augustan formality of Hodges' prose; they also offer a poker-faced presentation of funny details, such as the rats sated from devouring Gulliver's tiny sheep. This is a classic example of "what if?" taken to its limits, and kids may relish the idea of being on the side of the giants for once. The text here, as does Swift's original Lilliputian account, ends with Gulliver going off on another adventure; we may see him in Brobdingnag yet. DS

THOMPSON, JULIAN *Philo Fortune's Awesome Journey to His Comfort Zone*. Hyperion, 1995 200p  
ISBN 0-7868-0067-4 \$16.95

Ad Gr. 7-12

Philo Fortune has been counting on hitting the road with his buddy Eddie the summer before senior year, but when Eddie's dad ships him off to an Outward-Bound style camp, Philo is on his own. With his parents' gingerly blessing, he

drives west with a cooler full of snacks, a promise to call home twice a week, and a vague intention to pin down the secret of success so that he can possess half a million dollars by the time he's thirty. Philo picks up the hitchhiking Thea, a young woman whose philosophy, she says, is diametrically opposed to Philo's own, and their relationship just begins to extend beyond travelers' camaraderie when it falls apart in a failed sexual encounter; Philo flees the scene and ends up alarming a family of good ol' boy (and girl) drug dealers, who imprison him until the faithful Thea arrives to save the day. The road story is the best and most appealing stuff here: Philo's dreams of rambling and the strong touch of fantasy to their realization will strike a chord with many readers, and Philo's dialogue, with its leisure-suit level of hipness, will be both rued and appreciated. The book has some tonal problems, however: the more serious notes don't blend well with the flipness, which particularly undermines the entire ending sequence with the drug dealers, as the threat is neither quite farcical enough to be taken lightly nor serious enough to be suspenseful. It's still an easy book to like, with its romantic roaming, eccentric cast of characters, and sense of adventure, and many a teen will enjoy the ride. DS

WELLS, ROSEMARY *Max and Ruby's Midas: Another Greek Myth*; written and illus. by Rosemary Wells. Dial, 1995 25p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1783-0 \$12.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1782-2 \$12.99 Ad 4-6 yrs

Max once again (see *Max and Ruby's First Greek Myth*, BCCB 11/93) fails his classical mythology lesson when big sister Ruby, trying to discourage Max from too many cupcakes, spins a little story about "someone whose sweet tooth got out of control." Little Prince Midas can't stand his mother's healthy cooking and hits upon the trick of laser-beaming the good-for-you food with his eyes, turning prune whip into a hot fudge sundae—and his mother into a cherry float ("Unfortunately, his mother's hand had gotten in the way of the laser-beam"). He eventually turns his whole family into desserts, but manages to reverse the trick and even transforms the now-dreaded sundae into broccoli. The message is lost on Max, who eats another cupcake, and it may be lost on young listeners as well, who will likely have a hard time sorting the interior story (Midas looks just like Max) from the frame even as they appreciate Max's last laugh, er, gulp. The myth itself loses quite a bit in adaptation and while Wells' characteristically cozy wit is exhibited to advantage in the ink-and-watercolor illustrations, Midas' red laser-beams resemble nothing more than spurts of blood from his eyes. RS

WESTALL, ROBERT *Falling into Glory*. Farrar, 1995 [304p]  
ISBN 0-374-32256-2 \$18.00  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 9-12

Robbie Atkinson is seventeen and in his last year at his British grammar school when he begins to find himself drawn to Emma Harris, one of his schoolteachers. Chance keeps bringing them together until they finally embark on an illicit affair. The late Robert Westall was always a master of atmosphere, of fleshing out simple situations into rich and complex chronicles, and his take on this story is no exception. The slow, inexorable progress of Robbie and Emma towards each other—and towards the affair's inevitable end—makes the book very sexy, but, like the romance itself, it's also intelligent and poignant. The characters are remarkably

credible: the despairing but needy Emma; Robbie, who senses a world beyond that of his mates and school but can't quite put together what it is or how to get there; and a host of significant, realistic minor characters such as Robbie's pro forma girlfriend, the weedy outcast who attempts to blackmail him, and the working-class soccer player who lifts Robbie's rugby team out of obscurity. Rugby in fact plays a major part in the book, and Robbie's casually intense narration makes the games swift and suspenseful, with more than the score at stake every time. Although the book is set just after World War II the emotions are as current as ever, and teens with patience for a subtle and thoughtful unfolding of a story will find this well worth their time. There's a glossary in the back to help readers with the British terms. DS

WILLNER-PARDO, GINA *Jason and the Losers*. Clarion, 1995 120p  
ISBN 0-395-70160-0 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 4-6

Jason must move in with his cousin's family when his parents split up. A sports-loving, girl-hating fifth grader, he quickly realizes that cousin Everett and his circle of friends are science-loving, stamp-collecting "losers." When challenged by popular kid Matt to prove, by being "really mean," that he doesn't have "loser blood," Jason remarks loudly that Everett smells and then trips him in gym class. However, his science fair project brings him in contact with the other group, and though they still seem strange to him, he inevitably realizes that it is Matt who is the creep. Like Judy Blume, the author does a good job of realistically conveying the unpleasant side of children, and at the book's midpoint her hero is rather unsympathetic, but by giving insight into Jason's churning emotions surrounding his parents' breakup, his growing regret of his actions, and his new discovery that some nonsports activities are interesting too, she lures the reader into liking him by the end. Unlike Blume, Willner-Pardo doesn't use much humor, and her tone is generally somber and a little flat, while the action is predictable. Since children often do fall into divided camps, however, they may appreciate this look at clique dynamics. SDL

WILSON, BUDGE *The Dandelion Garden*. Philomel, 1995 [168p]  
ISBN 0-399-22768-7 \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 9 up

Wilson, author of the short-story collection *The Leaving* (BCCB 6/92), returns with ten more stories. The entries here all have, with the exception of the title story, been published before in Wilson's Canadian collection *Cordelia Clark* or in magazines, but they'll be new to most young-adult readers. Her subjects, often conveyed by adult narrators looking back, are children and childhood: in "Cordelia Clark," the nameless narrator remembers the perfidy of the story's namesake, whom she's soon to meet for the first time since childhood; in "The Canoe Trip" a man out for a day's aquatic jaunt with his son realizes how one replicates one's parents, for good or bad; in "Janetta's Confinement" a child staying with family friends waits desperately for her mother to return home from the hospital after giving birth. The adult viewpoint will limit this collection to high school and up, and Wilson's didacticism sometimes makes her plotting heavy-handed and predictable, as in the title story and "The Happiness Pill." The smooth, tranquil prose, however, explores some less-than-tranquil situations with subtle fluidity; the stories offer some sharp insights and nuanced understanding of changing relation-

ships of all kinds. Teens who appreciate Martha Brooks' story collections (*Traveling on into the Light*, BCCB 12/94, etc.) will appreciate another keen Canadian observer in Wilson. DS

WRIGHT, BETTY REN *Nothing But Trouble*; illus. by Jacqueline Rogers. Holiday House, 1995 119p  
ISBN 0-8234-1175-3 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 3-5

Vannie gets dumped in the middle of nowhere to live with an old cantankerous aunt for the summer. Worse still, Aunt Bert is hostile towards Vannie's yippy poodle, Muffy, and it looks as if Vannie is going to have one boring, rotten vacation. Enter mysterious night noises, slashed tires, and threatening graffiti. Vannie slowly discovers the culprit behind these frightening events and in the process she and Aunt Bert each learn to respect one another. As a family drama, the intergenerational conflict is sketchy and undeveloped primarily because Aunt Bert is not really a believable character. She is too much of a backwoods grump who is clichéd and clueless: "‘This is cool,’ Vannie said. ‘Really cool.’ Aunt Bert looked annoyed. ‘You won’t be cool under my mama’s comforter,’ she snapped. ‘Too warm, if anything.’ And she was off to find sheets and the comforter before Vannie could explain what she’d meant by ‘cool.’" Wright is at her best writing suspense scenes, and the mystery subplot offers some light tingling anticipation for younger middle graders just beginning to venture into mysteries. Although this is not as enticing as some of Wright's ghost stories (*The Ghost of Popcorn Hill*, BCCB 6/93) and the mystery behind Muffy's disappearance is disappointingly pat (she wasn't kidnapped—she ran away), Vannie's shining moment of heroism (accompanied by a humorous drawing of the fateful event) is classic slapstick fun. HMW

YATES, JANELLE *Woody Guthrie: American Balladeer*. Ward Hill, 1995 142p illus. with photographs (Unsung Americans)  
Library ed. ISBN 0-9623380-0-1 \$14.95  
Paper ed. ISBN 0-9623380-5-2 \$10.95 R Gr. 6-9

The series title, "Unsung Americans," is rather ironic for this biography of one of the most sung Americans of all time. Yates traces Guthrie's life from his childhood in Oklahoma, his entry into the music business and social activism in California, his increasing fame, his problematic family life, and his gradual deterioration and eventual death from Huntington's Disease. The author does a good job of explaining the politics that both assisted in Guthrie's popularity and made him suspect in the eyes of many, and she also paints a picture of the emerging folk scene with people such as Leadbelly, Cisco Houston, Lee Hays, and Pete Seeger (who was interviewed for the book) appearing throughout the pages. There are a few lacunae—it's never stated, for instance, where Guthrie was living in his last few years or when he finally had to be hospitalized—but it's a competent overview of a significant American life. Black-and-white photographs (with occasionally unhelpful captions) appear throughout the text; notes for quotations (although not for other information), a chronology, a bibliography (containing audio as well as print sources), and an index are included. DS

YEP, LAURENCE *Hiroshima: A Novella*. Scholastic, 1995 56p  
ISBN 0-590-20832-2 \$9.95 Ad Gr. 3-5

Subtitled a novella, this book is actually a straightforward nonfiction chronology

of the Hiroshima bombing interspersed with brief fictional scenes of a girl, Sachi, who survives the attack and later becomes one of the “Hiroshima maidens,” women who came to the U.S. after the war for free surgery to correct disfigurements caused by the blast and radiation. Yep’s clipped, present-tense writing resists editorializing, letting the terrible facts speak for themselves (“Two hundred yards away [from ground zero] people vanish. However, in that instant, their outlines are burnt into the cement like shadows”). As the afterword states, Sachi is “a composite of several children who were in Hiroshima when the bomb dropped,” and perhaps inevitably, she lacks individuality, particularly as she is surrounded by so much nonfiction exposition about the bomb, how it works, and the effects of the explosion. But this is easy reading—as far as language and sentence structure go—and kids not ready for more comprehensive accounts can here gain a clear and fair introduction to a epoch-defining event. A bibliography of sources is included. RS

YOLEN, JANE *And Twelve Chinese Acrobats*; illus. by Jean Gralley. Philomel, 1995 54p  
ISBN 0-399-22691-5 \$15.95 R Gr. 2-4

A family story about Yolen’s mischievous Uncle Lou coming of age in a Ukrainian village, this centers on the pranks that lead to his leaving (in disgrace) for military school in Moscow. Everyone misses his wild sense of humor, especially his younger brother Wolf—the author’s father—and when Lou returns (again in disgrace), the troop of Chinese acrobats he brings with him attests to his new career in a Russian circus. The relationship between the two brothers, Lou and Wolf, lends an immediate dynamic to the historical setting; while simply told, the story is nevertheless detailed and individualized enough that it does not become oversimplified. The compressed narrative, brief chapters, spacious format, large print, and vivaciously drafted pen-and-ink illustrations dancing across almost every page all make this a prime choice for young readers venturing into historical fiction for the first time, or, for that matter, considering a probe into their own family stories. BH



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

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Avery, Gillian. *Behold the Child: American Children and Their Books 1621-1922*. Johns Hopkins, 1995. 226p. illus. with photographs. ISBN 0-8018-5066-5. \$29.95.

"For American books there is no Darton," says Avery in her preface, and one can't help but compare this history of American children's books to F. J. Harvey Darton's famous *Children's Books in England*. It comes off reasonably well: Avery has achieved a useful breadth and an acknowledgment of most significant tendencies in the literature, and if her writing doesn't quite possess Darton's smooth readability it has a dry humor all its own. Her British point of view leads her to make frequent and interesting comparisons between British and American children and books; it also occasionally leads her to use British titles or editions (*Good Wives* for the second half of *Little Women*, for instance) and to miss bits of American culture. Although occasional editing glitches mar the pages (an asterisk without a footnote, names changing from page to page, a quotation mark on a line by itself, etc.), there's a wealth of information packed into them; frequent illustrations balance out the small double-columned print. A selected bibliography and an index are included. DS

Copeland, Jeffrey S. *Speaking of Poets 2: More Interviews with Poets Who Write for Children and Young Adults*; by Jeffrey S. Copeland and Vicky L. Copeland. NCTE, 1995. 204p. illus. with photographs. ISBN 0-8141-4620-1. Paper ed. \$15.95.

In a companion to *Speaking of Poets* (NCTE, 1993), Copeland and Copeland interview twenty more poets, both well-known and emerging, about their childhood writing and reading experiences, their techniques and inspirations for poetry, and their advice for young poets. Those interviewed include J. Patrick Lewis, Cynthia Rylant, Paul Janeczko, and Nikki Giovanni. RS

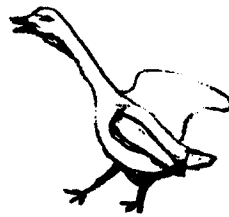
Whalen, Sharla Scannell. *The Betsy-Tacy Companion: A Biography of Maud Hart Lovelace*. Portalington Press, 1995. 515p. illus. with photographs. ISBN 0-9630783-0-5. \$39.95.

In her jacket-copy bio, Whalen notes that her husband "looks forward to choosing a vacation spot without reference to its Betsy-Tacy significance." Those who have not fallen under the Betsy-Tacy spell will empathize with the long-suffering spouse, but those who have will revel in Whalen's no-stone-untuned compendium of what seems to be every detail that ever found its way from Maud Hart Lovelace's real life into that of her fictional alter ego, Betsy Ray. For example, after citing (from *Betsy Was a Junior*) the names on Betsy's dance card at a party, Whalen presents the contents of Maud's own: "According to the actual program, Bob Hughes did take the first dance, as her escort, as well as three additional dances. Maud two-stepped with Pin and Mike. She had two schottisches with Bob. She had a waltz with Mike and a barn dance with Edward Dodds. She danced a half-step with Clayton Burmeister. The fifth extra she danced with Paul Ford." This

certainly puts the *clef* in the *roman*, and all Betsy-Tacy fans will welcome Whalen's monumental efforts. RS

Stewig, John Warren. *Looking at Picture Books*. Highsmith, 1995. ISBN 0-917846-29-X. 269p. illus. with photographs. \$49.00

Students just starting to look at picture books critically have little, excepting MacCann and Richard's *The Child's First Books*, to aid them; here Stewig addresses that deficit with this broadly researched, widely knowledgeable text discussing picture-book art. Chapters include an overview, Pictorial Elements, Composition, Media, Book Design Elements, and The Influence of Art Movements, and examine children's books ranging from Caldecott's *John Gilpin and Other Stories* to Allen Say's *Tree of Cranes*. The book sacrifices some clarity of image in order to fit in the multitude of black-and-white reproductions, and one must often search the text to find an illustrator's or book's name, but it's exceedingly useful to have so many specific examples of Stewig's points; there's also an insert containing twelve color plates which are discussed at length in their appropriate place in the text. Marginal commentary, suggestions, and pointers to further research are bibliographized at the end of each chapter, as are the children's books discussed; appendices of "Books about Art and Artists," "Ethnic Bibliography," and "Picture Book Genres" are included, as is an index that comprises terminology as well as book titles and illustrators. DS



## 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.

- ADVENTURE STORIES: Smith  
 African Americans—stories: Crews  
 Alcoholism—stories: Daly  
 ALPHABET BOOKS: Crowther  
 Animals: Jenkins  
 Arithmetic: Jonas  
 Art: Heller; Stevens  
 Aunts—fiction: Wright  
 Australia—fiction: Dubosarsky;  
     French  
 Bears—stories: Gliori  
 BEDTIME STORIES: Alexander;  
     Spohn  
 BIOGRAPHIES: Yates  
 Books and reading: Heller; Stevens  
 Brothers and sisters—fiction: Park  
 Bullies—fiction: Willner-Pardo  
 Cats—stories: Keillor  
 Cats: Cole  
 Child abuse—fiction: Griffin  
 Christians—fiction: Paulsen  
 Cliques—fiction: Willner-Pardo  
 Computers—fiction: Cross  
 CONCEPT BOOKS: Crowther;  
     Heller; Jonas; Murphy; Simeon  
 COUNTING BOOKS: Jonas;  
     Murphy  
 Crime and criminals—fiction:  
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 Death—fiction: Dubosarsky;  
     Muchmore; Park  
 Depression era—fiction: French  
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 Dogs—stories: Devlin  
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 Erie Canal: Harness  
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 FANTASY: French; King-Smith;  
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 Farm life—fiction: Spinelli  
 Fathers and sons—fiction: Napoli;  
     Smith; Stevenson  
 FOLKTALES AND  
     FAIRYTALES: Barton;  
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     Devlin; Wells  
 Friends—fiction: Frank; Granger;  
     Grove; Stevenson; Strasser  
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 Frogs—fiction: Napoli  
 Geography: Brandenburg  
 Ghosts—fiction: Seabrooke  
 Grandfathers—stories: Devlin  
 Growing up—fiction: Mazer  
 Guidance: Bode; Daly  
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 Hiroshima—fiction: Yep  
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     Love; Westall; Yep; Yolen  
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     Lavender; Sorensen; Yates  
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 Kenya—fiction: Smith



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**Reading, reluctant:** Bode; Cross;  
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**Time travel–fiction:** French  
**TOY BOOKS:** Crowther;  
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**Virginia–fiction:** Seabrooke  
**Voyages and travels–fiction:**  
Krupinski  
**West, the:** Lavender  
**World War II–fiction:** Yep





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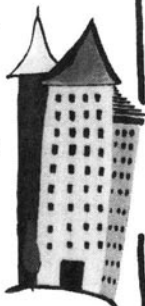
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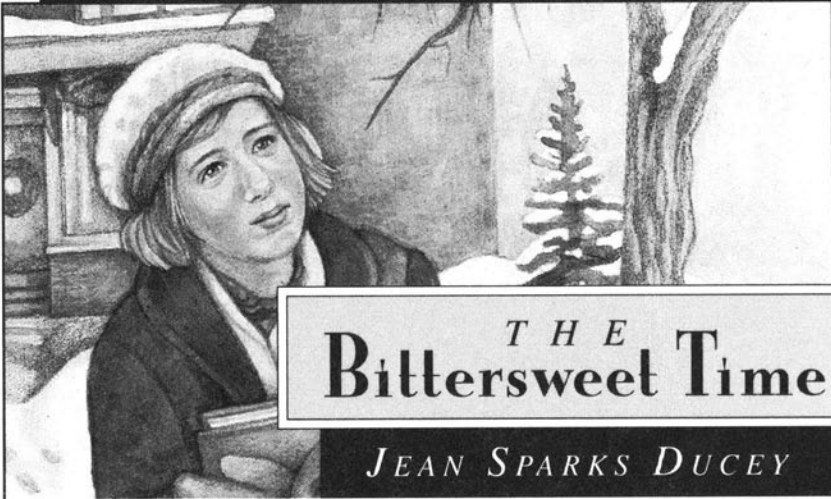
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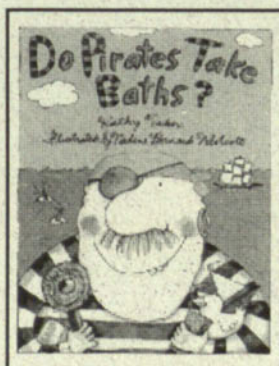
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