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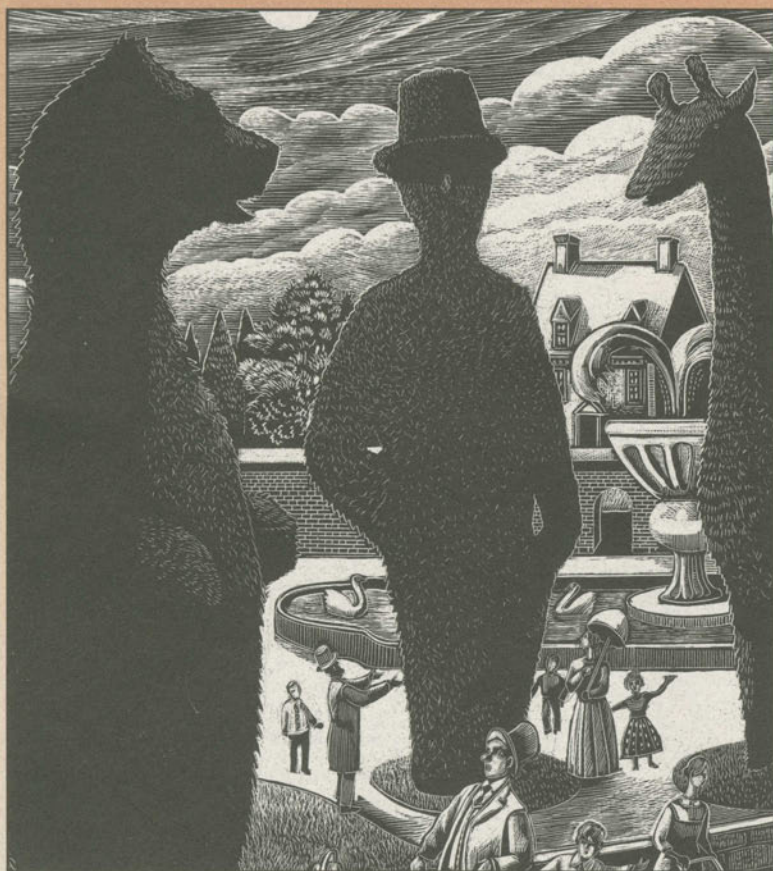
PRODUCTION NOTE

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

THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

September 1996
Vol. 50 No. 1



University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

University of Illinois Press

★ "... so hip and cool and strong it hurts." ★

RATS SAW GOD



ROB THOMAS

★ "From the intriguing title to the final page, layers of cynical wit and careful character development accumulate achingly in this beautifully crafted, emotionally charged story." —Starred review, *School Library Journal**

◆ "Readers will take heart from the way Steve grows past his rebellion as they laugh at the plethora of comic situations and sharply set up, well-executed punchlines." —Pointed review, *Kirkus Reviews*

★ "It's Thomas's first novel and he has such an accurate voice that it screams *read me now while I am hot and hot it is.*" —Starred review, *VOYA*

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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

September 1996
Vol. 50 No. 1



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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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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

1 year, institutions, \$40.00; individuals, \$35.00. 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 Janice Del Negro, *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820.

Periodicals postage paid at Champaign, Illinois

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

Cover illustration by Michael McCurdy, from *American Fairy Tales: From Rip Van Winkle to the Rootabaga Stories* ©1996 and used by permission of Hyperion Books for Children.

THE BIG PICTURE

American Fairy Tales: From Rip Van Winkle to the Rootabaga Stories

comp. by Neil Philip; illustrated by Michael McCurdy

A new collection of fairy tales is not unique. We get new collections nearly every month, every week. They are, with a few forgettable exceptions, relatively well-written, and they are often beautifully illustrated examples of bookmaking. The best of them have an inner logic that connects the tales to one another, making the book more than just a collection of individual stories but a unified whole with a unique perspective. Philip accomplishes this in a distinctly American anthology of a dozen fairy tales (or, as he says in his afterword, wonder tales, for not all of them contain fairies) and in the process has given an overview of the American impulse for creatively adapting the traditions of the European fairy tale to a robustly American context.

These fairy tales march through one hundred years of American history. In the opening story, Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* wakes to find his old country gone and a new country risen, while in the closing tale, Carl Sandburg's "How They Broke Away To Go To The Rootabaga Country," Gimme An Ax and his tough son and daughter, Please Gimme and Ax Me No Questions, sell all and buy a ticket to "ride to where the railroad tracks run off into the blue sky and then forty ways farther yet." In between these two tales, the first set in an America that is sleepily (and somewhat crankily) awakening, the last in an America that's wide awake and traveling, are stories about the transition between the two. The authors of these tales consciously transplanted the traditions of the western European fairy tale to American soil and nurtured a unique hybrid of fairy-tale motifs and American whimsy, optimism, and exaggeration. These tales differ from their European ancestors not only in the less ornamental style of their language but in their inherent values, having a cheerfully red-blooded belief in self-direction and a distinct distrust of wealth as a measure of a man's value.

Philip scatters uncommon gems among some well-known American jewels. Tales such as Frank Stockton's "The Bee Man of Orn" and Howard Pyle's "Apple of Contentment" nestle comfortably beside Helen Plumly Thompson's "The Princess Who Could Not Dance" and Louisa May Alcott's "Rosy's Journey." From Thompson's take on the ritual fairy tale opening ("Oh once—oh, once, dears and ducks, there was a beautiful princess who could not dance! Think of it!") to Alcott's Rosy and her father happily ending her quest on the backs of (American) eagles ("away they flew to a great city, where the little girl and her father lived happily together all their lives"), the language of the tales is a treat, both accessible and invigorating.

Each story opens with a short introduction that places it in its historical and literary context. Philip's afterword, an overview of "the coming of age" of the

American fairy tale, traces the genre's growth from derivation to original creation. He also provides a solid list of sources and background material as well as some inviting suggestions for further reading. Michael McCurdy's woodcuts are stylistically suitable for these tales, their confident black-and-white drama providing a sturdy visual connection to Philip's selections. Text and woodcuts are nicely juxtaposed on pages with a generous amount of white space. Stars, stripes, and McCurdy's handcolored engravings on the book's jacket employ a red, white, and blue palette, and, along with the rich red binding, gold letters, and dark blue endpapers, contribute a patriotic flavor most appropriate to the book's theme and content.

Examining the table of contents, one might frown over names of authors recalled from very long afternoons in American literature classes and wonder about the book's appeal for younger readers, or even older ones, for that matter. There is something delightful in discovering that one's first, off-the-cuff impression is not to be trusted. There is something delightful about rediscovering that notable American authors are not irrelevant relics to be relegated to a dusty classroom shelf or research library, but storytellers who revel in universal themes and emotional nuance, tongue-in-cheek humor, and engaging plots and who still have appeal across a wide range of age groups. It's been a long time since there's been a representative collection like this one. Making it widely available may well be a patriotic duty. (Imprint information appears on p. 25.)

Janice M. Del Negro, Editor



ANNOUNCEMENT

It is an honor and a pleasure to assume the editorship of *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* in its fiftieth volume year. One of the major strengths of this journal is its traditional reviewing process: reviewers meet several times monthly, all books reviewed are seen by all the reviewers, and everyone has a chance to comment—on books, on reviews, on clarity. (“Vociferous” is a word that comes immediately to mind.) The results of these discussions, we hope, are balanced, considered, thoughtful reviews, reflecting not only the judgement of the individual reviewer but the input of the entire reviewing and editorial staff. It is a challenging and rewarding tradition, and one that will be enthusiastically continued. The focus of the *Bulletin* is its use as a critical selection tool for school and public libraries, and to that end the editorial staff will keep our receiving audience (and *their* receiving audience) firmly in mind. Readers may notice a slight shift in the recommended grade levels for picture books as we acknowledge their broader age appeal and more varied potential audience. Our new publishing venture, “Bulletin Blue Ribbon Storytelling,” a recommend-only review source for storytelling audio and video tapes produced between 1990-96, will be available in the spring of 1997. It's already an exciting year. Happy Anniversary to us! JMD

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

AWMILLER, CRAIG *This House on Fire: The Story of the Blues*. Watts, 1996 [160p] illus. with photographs (The African-American Experience) ISBN 0-531-11253-1 \$22.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

Any brief survey of blues history runs the risk of superficiality; Awmiller's account combines a lot of helpfully synthesized information with a lot of overgeneralizations. Following a sketchy background on African-American religious and work songs come introductions to musical giants such as W. C. Handy, Charley Patton, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Robert Johnson, Louis Armstrong, Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Leadbelly, Billie Holiday, Muddy Waters, the Rolling Stones (!), Eric Clapton, Lightnin' Hopkins, John Lee Hooker, B. B. King, Etta James, Buddy Guy, and Robert Cray. At this point the reader may detect some sidesteps into jazz and rock; they're justified in the grand scheme of creative cross-currents, but they crowd an already overpopulated book and lead to a blur of superlatives instead of selective depth. Speculation abounds ("no one has contributed more to today's surging popularity of the blues than Robert Cray"); strawmen rise to be knocked down ("those who care about the blues are sometimes in a state of near hysteria" that the blues will be forgotten); and questionable assertions come out of left field ("It's surprising, though, how few art forms take this realistic approach: for the most part, art tries to present an idealized, unreal world"). The writing includes a plethora of misplaced modifiers ("Although catchy, Clapton thought that the song was childish pop") and awkward phrasing ("Meant only to simply provide variety to the music"). Despite these flaws of scope and style, Awmiller is knowledgeablely enthusiastic when he settles into his subject, and the book may attract browsers on their way to more substantial fare. With black-and-white photographs, conscientious footnotes, bibliography, discography, and index. BH

BANNERMAN, HELEN *The Story of Little Babaji*; illus. by Fred Marcellino. di Capua/HarperCollins, 1996 [72p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-205065-6 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-205064-8 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R* 4-6 yrs

In yet another attempt to cleanse a durable story of racist associations, artist Marcellino has set the story of Little Black Sambo in India, where the tale's original author/illustrator, Helen Bannerman, lived for so many years and where her story appeared to be set despite its inclusion of stereotyped African characters. Except for a change of names (from Little Black Sambo, Black Mumbo, and Black Jumbo to Babaji, Mamaji, and Papaji), Bannerman's text is essentially unaltered, retaining the narrative rhythm that has always paced a tightly patterned plot. Marcellino's watercolor paintings project a toy-like quality that emphasizes humor over suspense. Working within a small-size format, he has kept the layout clean with lots of white space, cohesive coloration, and simply focused compositions. It's a jovial alternative to Julius Lester and Jerry Pinkney's *Sam and the Tigers*

(BCCB 7/96), which is high-spirited in a sly way that would appeal to a more sophisticated readaloud audience. Clearly there's no one correct choice to answer the charges brought against this ninety-seven-year-old story, but we now have a lot of creative alternatives, which—like many spontaneous publishing trends—seem generated by some subconscious cultural combustion. A librarian would do well to buy as many socio-aesthetically respectable versions as possible, mount a display with historical annotations for the education of parents, and observe the survival of the fittest. Even in times of critical adversity, this story has been a perennially popular choice. It's doubtful that new versions will sit long on the shelf, especially if they have as much child appeal as this one. BH

BLUMENTHAL, DEBORAH *The Chocolate-Covered-Cookie Tantrum*; illus. by Harvey Stevenson. Clarion, 1996 [32p]

ISBN 0-395-68699-7 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R* 3-6 yrs

As Sophie and her mother make their way home from the park late in the afternoon, they come across another toddler munching a chocolate cookie. "I want a cookie. . . . I want *that* cookie," Sophie insists. Whether her mother takes the moral high ground on discipline or there is simply no cookie to be had hardly matters. Sophie's pouty displeasure at her cookie-less state promptly roils into a tantrum of stupendous magnitude. Forget the proffered banana—it's gonna be that cookie or nothing, and so Sophie "kicked and kicked and kicked and kicked and kicked" and "cried and cried and cried and cried and cried." Stevenson's acrylics depict the emotional turbulence from Sophie's perspective—as the tot pounds the pavement, the earth shatters (literally), birds flee their trees, and the playground transforms into a vortex of sandbox toys and her own flailing feet set against the blues, greens, and reds of misery, jealousy, and rage. Exhaustion finally quells the storm; back at home, a nap and supper soothe the savage Sophie, and three guesses what's for dessert. The toddler placidly announces, "I like cookies," and her mother patiently concurs, "Yes. . . . I know you do." Toddlers who need some behavioral reflection (and parents who need a role model in fortitude) should put this toward the top of their reading list. EB

BROWN, RUTH *The Ghost of Greyfriar's Bobby*; written and illus. by Ruth Brown. Dutton, 1996 [26p]

ISBN 0-525-45581-7 \$14.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

Greyfriar's Bobby is a legendarily loyal dog of history, and here's a retelling of his story. This version sets the account of Bobby's fourteen-year vigil by his master's grave against a contemporary framework of tourist kids noticing Bobby's monument and hearing the story from the churchyard gardener. Unfortunately, this setup waters down the simple tale considerably and pointlessly; there's never any sense of location, and the characterlessness of the kids makes them an irritatingly bland foil to the story ("I don't think that we'll ever forget Bobby," Tom sappily sums up). Brown's watercolors, grained with brushstrokes and touched with Scottish sun and soot, are more satisfyingly evocative, although drafting problems in the muzzle area sometimes make Bobby look more Persian cat than Skye terrier. Bobby's story is a dramatic one for young listeners; if they can make it through the trappings here and focus on the art and the essentials, they'll enjoy it. DS

BUEHNER, CARALYN *Fanny's Dream*; illus. by Mark Buehner. Dial, 1996 32p
 Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1497-1 \$14.89
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1496-3 \$14.99 R 6-9 yrs

Fanny is a rawboned farm girl who knows, just *knows*, that the storybook destiny of marriage with a prince lies in store for her. On the night of the mayor's ball, Fanny waits eagerly in her garden for her fairy godmother's arrival, but instead runs into Heber Jensen, a pleasant if unprincely young local. Fanny relinquishes her dreams of princesshood and marries Heber, only to encounter her tardy fairy godmother years later—now, however, Fanny turns the magical intervention down in favor of the life she's made for herself. Sure, there's a message, but it's a gently conveyed one; the book is succinct but convincing about both the hard work of Fanny's life ("She planted potatoes in the garden and pansies in the front. She thinned the beets, fed the chickens, threshed the beans. She held the sheep while Heber sheared them, churned butter, and slopped the pigs") and Heber's charms ("As for Heber, he figured that it hadn't been easy for Fanny to give up her dreams, so he made it a point to wait on her at least once a day, as if she were a princess, and every so often he wiped the grime off the windows"). The oil and acrylic illustrations show a big shiny world filled with big, shiny, earnest people; the homely shadows give the farm's solidity a reassuring gloss that contrasts with the garish flash of the fairy godmother. Less a revision than a reexamination of a fairy tale, this would pair interestingly with more classic versions of Cinderella. DS

CADNUM, MICHAEL *Zero at the Bone*. Viking, 1996 218p
 ISBN 0-670-86725-X \$14.99 R Gr. 7-12

Cray's world is forever altered when his beautiful, strong-minded seventeen-year-old sister, Anita, fails to come home one night, and he and his parents are plunged into a world of waiting, searching, and wondering. Cadnum's painfully deliberate intensity, which has sometimes impeded his storytelling, works effectively here, as Cray and his family get more numb and bewildered by Anita's disappearance. The inconclusive but incontrovertible evidence of Anita's keeping of important secrets (she wasn't working the late hours she claimed, and her diary suggests she was meeting a man no one knew about) adds a taunting layer of additional mystery without straining the book's credibility. Some of the subplots (Cray's ambivalence about playing football and his growing friendship with a teammate) don't blend in as well as they should, but the story and the compulsion to read it remain strong. This is the same topic as Susan Beth Pfeffer's *The Year without Michael* (BCCB 9/87), but Cadnum is detached where Pfeffer was explosive; a bigger difference is that Michael's youth cleared him of all culpability, whereas Anita is old enough and capable enough to have made an unspeakably cruel decision as an adult but still vulnerable enough to be a victim as a child. The book's pathos lies in the tension between these two possibilities. DS

CARLSON, LORI MARIE, ed. *Barrio Streets Carnival Dreams: Three Generations of Latino Artistry*. Holt, 1996 127p illus. with photographs
 ISBN 0-8050-4120-6 \$15.95 R Gr. 7-10

Thirty selections of prose, poetry, and art reflect Latino culture—both its contributions to and conflicts with a dominant Anglo-American society. The age levels of the material seem as varied as the genres: Belpré's Puerto Rican folktale rubs elbows with a series of maxims by Cuban poet José Martí and with Susan Lowell's

nostalgic recollection of her grandmother, who grew up in Mexico and Peru. Marco Rizo's happy biographical sketch of Desi Arnaz contrasts sharply with Johanna Vega's poignant description of a tormented boarding-school experience ("From the South Bronx to Groton"). Poems in Spanish and English are tonally diverse as well, from Magdalena Hijuelos' simple love song "Beautiful Spanish" to Jaime Manrique's long narrative "Leaving Ybor City." There's even a section, "Bolerobombabugalúcongacharangacorrido," describing common terms in Latin music. All this adds up to great browsing but fragmented reading, especially in the beginning when a mini-history of nineteenth-century Anglo-Latin relations and a drawing of traditional tinware is suddenly followed by a contemporary cartoon and then a poem from the mid-1900s. Except for the section decorations, the illustrations comprise samples of mural art, dress design, self-portrait, landscape, ornithological painting, etc., some with explanatory descriptions and some without. Like any sampler, this offers uneven but potentially rich fare. BH

CRAFT, M. CHARLOTTE, ad. *Cupid and Psyche*; illus. by K. Y. Craft. Morrow, 1996 40p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13164-6 \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13163-8 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 4-6

Craft retells the Roman myth of the beautiful mortal Psyche who runs afoul of jealous Venus, wins and loses the love of Venus' son Cupid, and endures trials to regain his love and earn immortality. Closer in tone to fairy tale than to myth, the story is an excellent choice for readers who prefer their Olympians more romantic than brutal or beastly, and while Craft doesn't turn the heat up too high, there is enough intrinsic steam to this tale to lure even older readers in for a closer peek. Narrative prose is smooth and direct, but conversations occasionally smack of melodrama ("Oh, Cupid," she cried, 'having lost you once, I wish never to lose you again. Can you forgive me?' . . . 'Only if you will forgive me, dearest Psyche'). Intricately bordered oil over watercolor paintings are overbearingly opulent and fantastical, with the Delphic oracle holding forth in a well-waxed hall, a diaphanous Cupid sporting wings that would make an archangel envious, and a leggy, Barbie-like Psyche whose little bow mouth and wide eyes ooh and aah at every twist of fate. No source notes accompany the text. EB

CROLL, CAROLYN *Redouté: The Man Who Painted Flowers*; written and illus. by Carolyn Croll. Putnam, 1996 40p

ISBN 0-399-22606-0 \$15.95

Ad Gr. 3-5

Pierre-Joseph Redouté was one of the first great flower artists, and his art had a diverse lot of admirers including Marie Antoinette, the Empress Josephine, and John James Audubon. Croll gives a brief account of the artist's early life, his affection for flowers, and his eventual success at painting the subject he loved most. Though the French names may challenge young readers (a pronunciation guide is included), the text is smooth and the story simply told. Unfortunately, neither the biography nor the art history are particularly substantive: one can only find Redouté's birth year in the CIP information, for instance, and there's no explanation of why his florals were artistically significant or how they differed from the rest of his era's art. The page describing "How Redouté Made His Book" offers a detailed account of the collecting, engraving, and printing processes for his important botanical (the name of which is never given), and it's a shame that more of the

book doesn't provide that sort of concrete interest. The art is sweet but bland: the figures are round with gently shaded lines, and the abundant flowers only occasionally give a hint of the intricacy that drew Redouté. Still, the famous figures add some color to the account, and it makes a change to have an artistic biography about such a devoted specialist. A bibliography is included. DS

CUSHMAN, KAREN *The Ballad of Lucy Whipple*. Clarion, 1996 [208p]
ISBN 0-395-72806-1 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-7

"Bodaciously sorrow-burdened and wretched," California Morning Whipple has been transported by her free-spirited, widowed mother to Lucky Diggins, California, where they will run a boarding house out of an oversized tent; California Morning (call her "Lucy," please) intends to return to the home of her civilized New England relatives just as soon as she can sell enough pies to earn her coach fare. As Lucy pours out her miseries in letters to grandparents and aunts and cousins, the reader quickly recognizes the girl's kinship with the less-than-couth 49ers she initially despises and senses from her feisty narration ("I liked writing letters. There wasn't much else to do for fun in Lucky Diggins if you didn't dig or drink") that she will eventually put down roots here. Over the course of three years, Lucy matures from adolescent to young woman, loses a brother and gains a stepfather; Lucky Diggins itself booms and burns, and its itinerant population commits to making the settlement into a town. While Cushman delicately limns the ever-strengthening bond between Lucy and her new home, the episodic story lacks momentum, and the host of intriguing characters (a runaway slave, an abused neighbor girl, the amorous Gent who woos but fails to win Lucy's mother) who influence her decision to stay are shallowly developed. Surely the death of brother Butte and Mama's departure with her new husband could have been more touching had the reader been afforded the opportunity to know them better. Still, the audience wholeheartedly shares Lucy's satisfaction when at last she smells "burned beans and mules and privies . . . as familiar as morning" and proudly reclaims her birth name, California Morning Whipple. EB

DUFFY, CAROL ANN *Stopping for Death: Poems of Death and Loss*; illus. by Trisha Rafferty. Holt, 1996 134p
ISBN 0-8050-4717-4 \$14.95

R Gr. 6-12

Duffy has turned what might have become a single-track or even sentimental project into a multifaceted anthology of poems ranging from lyrical to narrative, humorous to mournful, youthful to seasoned, Western to Eastern, sixteenth to twentieth century. Here the survivors of death's visits memorialize family, friends, lovers, pets, villains, heroes. "Come from that window child/ a bomb blow up daddy car tonight/ but daddy words still burning bright," chants John Agard in tribute to Walter Rodney, a Guyanese revolutionary killed in 1980. "Here's how they rated him when they looked back:/ sometimes he did this, sometimes he did that," says Simon Armitage several pages later in his ironic description of an "ordinary" man. Matthew Sweeney's whimsical "Fishbones Dreaming," Elizabeth Bartlett's eerie "Charlotte, Her Book," Debjani Chatterjee's softly challenging "Yama," and Sabahattin Kudret Aksal's three-line "Memento Mori" are samples of an anthology so full and richly representative of both famous and lesser-known poets that any library—junior high, high school, or public—would be the better for it and

any librarian the wiser for booktalking it. British editor Duffy has included American poets such as Anne Sexton, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Gary Soto, Lucille Clifton, and Cynthia Rylant as well as representatives of Britain and its other former colonies. Scattered pen-and-ink sketches have a light touch that's surrealistic enough to win over older readers who might disdain more earnest illustration. BH

DWYER, KATHLEEN M. *What Do You Mean I Have Attention Deficit Disorder?*; illus. with photographs by Gregg A. Flory. Walker, 1996 42p
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8393-7 \$15.85
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8392-9 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 3-5

Maintaining concentration and sitting still are hurdles that loom as high as Math and Social Studies in the course of Patrick's school day; teachers have complained and parents have nagged, but Patrick is simply unable to control his behavior. Now Patrick and his family are encouraged by his sixth-grade teacher to consult a physician, and after an evaluation, Patrick is diagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). The doctor prescribes a course of treatment which includes drug therapy and a host of organizational techniques and memory aids to help the boy manage his condition. Although Dwyer (also author of *What Do You Mean I Have a Learning Disability?*, BCCB 9/91) never explicitly states that her work is based on an authentic case, the chain of school and medical interventions is plausible, and Patrick's frustration with his own unsettled behavior is credibly presented. However, Dwyer does not explain the relationship between ADD and hyperactivity, nor does she tackle some of the thornier problems of condition management, such as medication side effects and the often complicated process of curriculum readjustment. Her text, simple enough to be read aloud to a quite young audience, is choppy as well as ill-matched to its subject—an adolescent boy. Exchanges such as "Why do you act so silly in school?" "Mr. Norris, I really don't mean to be in trouble so much" don't match accompanying black-and-white photos (often fuzzy and grainy) of a boy whose legs no longer fit under his desk. However, the message that ADD need not doom home and school life will be comforting to those with the condition and instructive to classmates who may not understand that these children are "as smart as anyone else." EB

EVANS, DOUGLAS *The Classroom at the End of the Hall*; illus. by Larry Di Fiori. Front Street, 1996 132p
ISBN 1-886910-07-3 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 4-6

Strange things happen in the classroom at the end of the hall, which is presided over by the tall teacher: Mary is followed by a lamb until she learns to pay attention, Roger calls up a genie who makes him realize how others see his behavior, and the Messy-Desk Pest makes it clear to Emily just how desirable organization can be. In all, there are nine stories of peculiar school happenings, and there's a gentle humor and some clever ideas that will appeal to kids. Overall, however, this pales compared to Louis Sachar's conceptually similar but far more ingenious *Wayside School* stories (*Wayside School Gets a Little Stranger*, BCCB 3/95, etc.) or even to Daniel Pinkwater's *Mister Fred* (BCCB 1/95): the prose here is glib, the plotting seems labored rather than fizzily inventive, and the ultimate didacticism of many of the stories gives them a disconcertingly medicinal flavor. Di Fiori's breezily scrawled illustrations, however, have a Feifferesque feel that keeps things lively. A surreal classroom is always an entertaining idea, and readers who've worn out the classic stories in the genre may appreciate this newcomer. DS

EWING, LYNNE *Drive-By*. HarperCollins, 1996 85p
 Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027126-4 \$13.89
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027125-6 \$13.95

Ad Gr. 5-8

The title tips us off to the gang shooting in the beginning, and the action surges on relentlessly in this disturbing novel. Twelve-year-old Tito lives in Los Angeles with his little sister, Mina, and teenage brother, Jimmy; their mother works as a hotel housekeeper. Mom's wages and Jimmy's "work" provide barely enough income for the family to rent a house in a gang-infested neighborhood—until Jimmy is gunned down one night in front of Tito and Mina. The author's terse declarative prose propels the story forward as Tito learns that his adored brother who preached against gangs was, in fact, a gangbanger himself and was murdered for skimming from dealers. Despite overwhelming peer pressure, Tito resists the urge to avenge his brother's death; instead, he becomes a real hero by forgoing violence and setting up Jimmy's killers for arrest. In Tito's world, the adults are incompetent (shouldn't Mom have known that Jimmy didn't really work at a restaurant downtown?) or ineffectual (policemen and teachers especially), and kids can't even count on each other (Tito's best friend has thrown in his lot with Jimmy's killers). This isn't up to the caliber of Myers' *Scorpions* (BCCB 7/88); the plotting is often contrived, and the subject has a movie-of-the-week superficiality. It's a fast-paced story, however, and the dark topic, flashy cover, and short paragraphs will lure reluctant readers. SSV

FARLEY, STEVEN *The Black Stallion's Shadow*. Random House, 1996 182p
 ISBN 0-679-85004-X \$16.00

M Gr. 5-8

Picking up where his late father left off, Steven Farley tells the story of a new chapter in the life of the famous stallion: after a tragic racetrack accident, the Black seems to have developed a fear of shadows that will endanger him if he races again. His devoted owner and rider, Alec Ramsay, takes him to a gifted trainer's movie ranch, where, in addition to working on the Black's problem, Alec becomes embroiled in the struggling business' fight to break even despite a run of bad luck that may be the result of sabotage. The writing and characterization here are shallow, as is the plotting: the Black's problem as it's presented doesn't have the import to sustain a whole book, and the danger-at-the-ranch subplot has a Hardy-Boys patness to it. The movie-making tidbits have some interest to them, and there are a few (too few) scenes of Alec and the Black together that convey the bond that has made this series so popular. While obligations to series readers may require this title's purchase, you may want to wait for the paperback. DS

FLEISCHMAN, SID *The Abracadabra Kid*. Greenwillow, 1996 198p illus. with photographs
 ISBN 0-688-14859-X \$16.00

R Gr. 6-10

Sid Fleischman is a pro, and it shows in this autobiography as much as it does in his fiction. A magician by training and trade, the author of *The Ghost in the Noonday Sun* (BCCB 11/65), ten McBroom tall tales, *The Whipping Boy* (1986 Newbery Medal winner, BCCB 3/86), and many other comic adventures here turns real life into a story complete with cliffhangers. And it's a classic *boy's* story, from card tricks and traveling magic shows to World War II naval experiences and screen-writing gigs for John Wayne movies. En route, we learn how Fleischman learned the craft of writing: "When Wild Bill [Wellman] insisted that every scene

end with a strong curtain line, I carried this over as an effective writing habit into my novels. Unless my imagination dries up, my chapters inevitably end with the dramatic flourish of a curtain line." Racing through snappy episodes—with dramatic flourishes at the end of almost every chapter—readers will intuit the connection between sleight of hand and the art of fictional illusion, though Fleischman's twelve tips for young writers seem less mysterious than straightforward and practical. Chapter headings quoted from fan mail prove that Fleischman's sense of humor is matched by his readers' ("I read *The Ghost in the Noonday Sun*. Keep your day job"), while the spacious format features just enough black-and-white photographs to be friendly without distracting attention from an inventive balance of personal and professional information. Fleischman fans will also appreciate the appended bibliography of the author's work. A smooth act. BH

GERSTEIN, MORDICAI *Behind the Couch*; written and illus. by Mordicai Gerstein. Hyperion, 1996 58p (Hyperion Chapters)
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-0116-6 \$13.95
Paper ed. ISBN 0-7868-1139-0 \$3.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

Zachary drops his stuffed toy pig, Wallace, behind the sofa, and when he scoots under to retrieve it, Zachary emerges in an alternate world where lost stuff carries on an animated existence. Zachary's Uncle Yankle from Baltimore is there, looking for his glasses, and Zachary's classmate Ralphine is there too, searching for her toy duck, Beverly. The toys, feeling somewhat slighted at having been lost in the first place, now have fulfilling lives of their own and are reluctant to come home; Wallace is, in fact, President of all the stuffed animals in the universe and, moreover, is engaged to Beverly. Gerstein has created a sort of lost objects Wonderland, with toys clamoring for their President and First Duck, and Uncle Yankle volunteering to stay behind the couch as their surrogate leader; but unlike Carroll, Gerstein never develops within any character the "madman's logic" necessary to make their surreal actions credible. This tale may pique the interest of confident readers with a taste for the bizarre, but rookies who need some structure and plot to their chapter books may feel a little lost themselves. Gerstein's tidily bordered black-and-white illustrations, with their combination of soft shading and intricate crosshatchings, compactly convey this strange toy world. EB

GIBBONS, FAYE *Mountain Wedding*; illus. by Ted Rand. Morrow, 1996 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-11349-4 \$14.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-11348-6 \$15.00 Ad 5-8 yrs

North Georgia is blooming with spring when Mr. Long's seven children and Mama's five (including narrator Mandy) line up for their respective parent's marriage—but show themselves unready to forever hold their peace. Insulting faces are made, fisticuffs flash, a swarm of bees stings the dog that chases the rooster that flies at the cat that scares the mules that bolt with the loaded wagon that spills armfuls of household goods. With both families running pell-mell to pick up their belongings (and each other), the mules finally stop and everyone gathers together, somewhat tattered and torn but bonded by a breathless experience. It's a one-track plot, but chase scenes hold time-tried appeal and the down-home style sets up an easy camaraderie between book and listener. Rand's watercolors are accurate, action-packed, and peppery in tone. From the first aerial view of a tranquil landscape, he speeds up and winds down the pace with experienced control. What this lacks in innovation, it makes up for with flair. BH

GUIBERSON, BRENDA Z. *Into the Sea*; illus. by Alix Berenzy. Holt, 1996 [32p] ISBN 0-8050-2263-5 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 6-10 yrs

The life of a female sea turtle is depicted here from its first moment after hatching until it returns to its birthplace some twenty years later to lay its own eggs. Unlike their freshwater cousins, sea turtles cannot pull in their heads or flippers and are totally defenseless the first several years of their lives. Yet some of them do survive long enough to reproduce, which Guiberson handles with a G rating: "They mate and he fertilizes the eggs." Guiberson's understated, just-the-facts-ma'am text is rich with information and carefully paced. While the text is calmly pragmatic, Berenzy's artwork is lush, with illustrations evoking the warmth and overabundance of the tropics. Blending color pencil and gouache on black and on white paper, the artwork has a true Caribbean sparkle. And the pictures do just what they should—drive home the point that even a technicolor coral reef is just a hideaway if you're a sea turtle on another creature's lunch menu. An endnote gives a capsule summary of the state of the species today, while also providing some background on the causes of their near extinction. Share this one with a group and have fun identifying all the lurking sea critters. SSV

HARDING, DONAL *The Leaving Summer*. Morrow, 1996 180p ISBN 0-688-13893-4 \$15.00

Ad Gr. 7-10

Although Austin is eleven when he and his Aunt Ada assist an escaped convict named Bass, Austin narrates the story at a later—presumably adult—age; the grown-up sensibility shows. He accurately records a child's sense of exclusion from meaty family discussions and the insistent nature of childhood fears, but an adult perspective informs some of the novel's themes (the ambiguities of adult romantic love, the difficulty in understanding and balancing compassion and justice) and the narrator's language. Austin tells how his "eyes refused to close; they burned from lack of reprieve" and ruminates on "the unnatural way the [hospital] building seemed to breathe, a white breath in calculated rhythm." The self-consciously literary language undercuts the immediacy of Austin's experiences, possibly distancing a young reader from the character, and dilutes the impact of Austin's intense emotions. Still, Harding never flinches from acknowledging ugliness (including racism, particularly in one hard-edged scene) or confused emotions (such as Austin's struggle to understand why his mother fled to Winston-Salem). Finely tuned descriptions and observations lift a plot that sags under occasional clichés. The book seems better suited to adults who want to look back on early adolescence than to children poised at the precarious brink of adolescence themselves, but some young readers may appreciate a mature take on an exciting event. LM

HARRISON, PETER *Claude Monet*; ISBN 0-8069-6158-9; *Vincent Van Gogh*; ISBN 0-8069-6156-2. Each book: Sterling, 1996 32p illus. with photographs (Art for Young People) \$14.95 Ad Gr. 4-6

In this new series of artist biographies, each title contains a brief overview of the artist's personal and professional life and a multitude of illustrations, including reproductions of paintings, photographs, and diagrams. The text is simple and accessible, the open format is appealing, and a helpful chronology starts off each volume. The analyses of paintings, however, are often frustratingly broad, vague,

and presumptuous ("His pictures are not careful copies of a scene but make you feel what it would be like to be there"; "Vincent makes you understand just how important the Bible is to him"), and several egregious typos appear ("He went with his new friends on painting drips in the open air"). While some of the supporting illustrations are useful, some (the diagram showing points of a nineteenth-century French steam locomotive) seem peripheral at best. Mühlberger's *What Makes a . . . art titles* (BCCB 1/94) are more efficient on much of the same territory, but this series' plethora of clear reproductions and big-print text will help young readers get a foot in the gallery. A glossary and an index are included. DS

HERMAN, GAIL *Flower Girl*; illus by Paige Billin-Frye. Grosset, 1996 48p (All Aboard Reading)

Library ed. ISBN 0-448-41107-5 \$13.99

Paper ed. ISBN 0-448-41108-3 \$3.95

R Gr. 1-3

It is clear from the zesty narration of our unnamed heroine that being her sister Donna's flower girl is the high point of her life to date. From the mushy wedding announcement, to the serious "flower girl business" of dress selection, through the prenuptial jitters, the flower girl is understandably the center of the attention—at least her own. And when fate calls upon her to save the ceremony by producing her gaudy pink plastic ring (a sartorial solecism relegated to the flower basket by an edgy Donna), her triumph is complete. The four-chapter format keeps the reading easy, and Herman achieves a quite naturalistic tone within the constraints of an easy reader ("The wedding starts. There is lots of stuff about love. Blah, blah, blah. . . . Then I hear a gasp. It is Bill. 'Where is the ring?' he hisses. His brother turns red. 'I left it home,' he says in a whisper"). Billin-Frye's watercolors supply plenty of light touches: Donna's mooning at her bespectacled beau, a parade of rejected flower-girl dresses, and of course the cheesy splendor of the narrator's plastic gem. This wedding features enough bows and frills and emotional ups and downs to satisfy flower girl veterans and wannabes alike. EB

HEST, AMY *Jamaica Louise James*; illus. by Sheila White Samton. Candlewick, 1996 26p

ISBN 1-56402-348-6 \$15.99

R 4-7 yrs

Jamaica Louise James, age eight, budding artist and storyteller, narrates this tale of special birthday presents and family devotion. "Everything I see is something I want to draw," says Jamaica, and her ambition is fueled by her family with the gift of "a real paint set—with eight little tubes of color and two paint brushes." Jamaica spends the next few weeks making energetic paintings, and on the morning of Grammy's birthday, she and her mother go down into the subway station, where Grammy works as a token collector, and hang them all over the walls. Not only Grammy, but all the subway riders love Jamaica's paintings—the mayor even puts up a plaque with her name on it. Samton's gouache/acrylic/watercolors have a childlike innocence and energy combined with a sure hand for composition and expression. Opening endpapers depict a blue skyline at sunset; closing endpapers show the same skyline by moon and starlight. The family apartment, the city, and the subway are shown in vibrant tones and positive light, and the coloring-book-style illustrations utilize vivid geometrics outlined in black. Jamaica's first-person narration suits this tale just fine—there is a sort of pell-mell rush to the text, with Jamaica's words falling over one another in her eagerness to get the story out. JMD

HILL, PAMELA SMITH *Ghost Horses*. Holiday House, 1996 216p
 ISBN 0-8234-1229-6 \$15.95 Ad Gr. 6-9

Sixteen-year-old Tabitha Fortune's longstanding fascination with the nascent science of paleontology has often put her at odds with her father, a preacher who views evolutionism as one of the many moral evils threatening the righteous at the turn of the century. Tabitha learns that rival research teams will be excavating sites near her Badlands home and, in the guise of Tom Fortune (Tabitha's fictitious twin), she secures a job as scout with Dr. Parker's party. However, when important finds are unearthed by each team, a disillusioned Tabitha discovers she has wrongly idealized scientists and has allied herself with a researcher who values academic accolades more than scholarship and professional integrity. Hill provides some refreshing twists to the stock girl-in-disguise plot—Tabitha's year-long preparations for her ruse fool no one except the woman-hating Dr. Parker. Scholarly rivalry between Parker and his learned opponent Dr. Harding (egads, a woman!) is also presented with lively immediacy. However, Tabitha is surrounded by cardboard characters, from her ignorant, Bible-thumping father ("New sermons needed research—or at least, Papa's version of research. He pored over outdated newspapers and magazines"), to dimpled paleontologist Harding ("so feminine, so utterly fashionable"), to Tabitha's tobacco-spitting confidante, Abby, who teaches her to shoot, smoke, and swagger. Still, Tabitha herself is a credible heroine whose determination to strike out on her own will win her some fans. EB

HO, MINFONG, comp. *Maples in the Mist: Children's Poems from the Tang Dynasty*; tr. and comp. by Minfong Ho; illus. by Jean and Mou-sien Tseng. Lothrop, 1996 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-14723-2 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12044-X \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 4-6

For more than ten centuries, Chinese children have learned poems from the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), passing those cultural treasures "in one long unbroken chain" from generation to generation. These poems may be "little windows to . . . China," but they can also be enjoyed for the potent simplicity of their images and language: "We stop our cart to sit among the twilight maples;/ After the frost their leaves glow redder than spring blossoms." Ho describes how she went about translating the poems (for example, not forcing Chinese rhyme patterns onto the English versions); in any case, she produces strong aural effects, as in "Riverside Song": "The spring stream churns with the twilight storm./ Deserted, a single ferry tosses near the crossing." An appendix provides some literary comment that may be over the heads of younger readers ("Many of his poems allude to the mystical interplay between man and nature and influenced the 'Ching Hu' style of poetry during the following Sung Dynasty") but also gives intriguing biographical information. Smoky watercolor illustrations reveal nature's mysterious beauty through rich colors that range from vivid greens and yellows to smeared and subtle grays and purples. If Ho had somewhere discussed the Chinese characters accompanying each illustration (which offer the poems in their original Chinese), the characters might have come off as more than ornamental, but this is a quibble with a book that will let contemporary children experience the literary artistry of China's past. LM

HOOKS, WILLIAM H. *Freedom's Fruit*; illus. by James Ransome. Knopf, 1996 42p
 Library ed. ISBN 0-679-92438-8 \$17.99
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-82438-3 \$16.00 R Gr. 4-8

The author of *The Ballad of Belle Dorcas* (BCCB 12/90) conjures up another tale heard during his childhood in the Carolina Low Country. Mama Marina, a slave and conjure woman, accepts a piece of Master Alston's gold in return for casting a spell on his fine wine grapes; only magic will keep Master's slaves from eating the ripening harvest, and Mama Marina is anxious to earn her daughter Sheba's freedom. However, when Master Alston decides to hire out Sheba's beloved, Joe Nathan, to neighboring plantations during the coming winter, Marina must hurry to devise a freedom plan for the two lovers: advised by her spirits, she uses the conjured grapes to take Sheba and Joe near to death and all the way to freedom. Though the dialogue is less effective than the narrative, Hooks' storytelling nevertheless resonates with the rhythm and power of Marina's conjure-magic. Ransome's oils, rich and thickly applied, emphasize the story's mysticism in his swirling two-page spreads, but fail to extend the text in the single-page, bordered illustrations, where the figures are stilted and portrait-like. The story is reminiscent of the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone, in which Persephone's eating of pomegranate seeds consummates her marriage to the god of the dead and allows her to return to the earth only in the spring. But while Persephone remains prisoner to the seasonal cycle of life and death, Sheba and Joe Nathan's liberation from slavery is triumphantly uncompromised. AEB

HURWITZ, JOHANNA *The Down and Up Fall*; illus. by Gail Owens. Morrow, 1996 [128p]
 ISBN 0-688-14568-X \$15.00
 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-5

Bolivia and her friends Rory and Derek (from *The Up and Down Spring*, BCCB 4/93, etc.) are together again. Bolivia's parents are out of the country, so in their absence she's staying with her aunt and uncle and attending sixth grade with her two good friends. This at first seems a joyous prospect, but Bolivia begins to be irritated at Rory's jealous attempts to keep the threesome's friendship exclusive. This doesn't have the cohesion of the trio's earlier outings, with components such as Bolivia's poison-ivy attack, the school's mock rain forest, and the discovery of a litter of abandoned kittens entertaining but distracting, and the secondary characters are rather generically depicted. The friends are still congenial company, however, and Hurwitz has a light touch with both plot and dialogue that keeps things inviting. Reviewed from an unillustrated galley. DS

IRVINE, JOAN *How to Make Holiday Pop-Ups*; illus. by Linda Hendry. Morrow, 1996 [64p]
 Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13609-5 \$15.93
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13608-7 \$16.00
 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-6

For young children who have the drive but not the dexterity to tackle origami and older artisans eager to experiment with a paper craft, Irvine's offering is right on the money. Most of the greeting-card-styled patterns in this volume are based on easy measurements and simple snip-and-tuck operations, and although none will

leave Robert Sabuda's work in the dust, the designs and directions in clearly numbered steps yield satisfying (and reviewer-tested) results. The Valentine's Day and Mother's Day entries are easy openers that, as the reader soon learns, can be embellished or altered to fit other occasions; the projects increase in complexity to a fairly intricate cuckoo clock for New Year's Eve and a tricky Earth Day globe. A broad spectrum of holidays is represented, with an easy, effective Japanese Hinamatsuri doll, an oil lamp (complete with wick) to celebrate the Hindu Diwali, and other motifs outside European or Judeo-Christian cultural traditions. Guidance for executing the pictures to be attached to the paper folds often comes in the form of hints rather than explicit directions, but most crafters will concede that the fun here is in the popp-ing, not the pop-ee. Each holiday is briefly explained at the head of the directions, and an index of holidays arranged by date will be welcomed by teachers in search of timely curriculum stretchers. EB

JOHNSTON, TONY *The Wagon*; illus. by James E. Ransome. Tambourine, 1996 [34p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13537-4 \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13457-2 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

M 5-8 yrs

An unnamed ex-slave recounts childhood events which center on an open wagon built by his father for Master just before the Civil War. The narrator comes to regard this wagon and its mules, dubbed Swing and Low by his family, as a chariot that should take them to freedom, and when that chariot seems only to offer "false hope," the boy takes an axe to its wheels. But emancipation eventually comes, Master gives the family the wagon, and, after a journey to attend Lincoln's funeral, the family sets off in their "chariot" to build a new life. The narration is top-heavy with poetic, heartstring-plucking passages: "We were scared. Who could see down Freedom's furrow?" and the theatrical posing of Ransome's characters underscores the melodrama. As the narrator intones, "I had a dream. The President and I, chopping wood together. By moonlight," we view an image of the boy chopping wood as Lincoln the Railsplitter towers behind him in a midnight-blue haze. Much goes unexplained, and listeners may wonder why there was a time lag between emancipation and leaving Master's farm, how and when the broken wagon was repaired, and where the family was going when they made their sidetrip to the president's funeral. For a more clearly developed picture-book treatment of slavery, see Jeanette Winter's *Follow the Drinking Gourd* (BCCB 1/89). EB

JONES, CHARLOTTE FOLTZ *Accidents May Happen: Fifty Inventions Discovered by Mistake*; illus. by John O'Brien. Delacorte, 1996 84p

ISBN 0-385-32162-7 \$16.95

R Gr. 3-6

Well, not all these entries can reasonably be called "inventions" (consider gravity), and even "discovery" is a misnomer (how about nursery rhymes?), but there is an element of serendipity that unifies the products, systems, and artifacts that Jones so energetically describes. Her parade of did-ya-knows, each no more than a page or two long, scores high points for browsability, entertaining trivia enthusiasts with legendary successes (free perfume samples turned a bookseller into the founder of the Avon cosmetic empire) and even more stunning flops (celluloid billiard balls exploded on impact, and celluloid false teeth "curled and warped with a sip of hot soup"). Serious report writers won't find much in-depth information here,

and workbench lore, though clearly designated, mingles freely with verifiable fact. The “flabbergasting facts” appended to many articles occasionally fall flat—that Liquid Paper now comes in colors is hardly front-page news. Still, this is a good source for research ideas, and plenty of goofy, Gorey-esque line drawings and vignettes should have even hardened middle-grade bibliophobes (especially those who enjoyed Jones’ previous volume, *Mistakes That Worked*, BCCB 10/91) steadily flipping the pages. EB

JONES, REBECCA C. *The President Has Been Shot!: True Stories of the Attacks on Ten U.S. Presidents*. Dutton, 1996 134p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-525-45333-4 \$14.99 R Gr. 4-6

In this title, Jones employs her extensive experience as a fiction writer to spin lively and cogent accounts of four presidential assassinations and seven other attacks on chief executives. Motivations and machinations of assassins and would-be assassins, attitudes of their targeted victims toward personal safety, and changes in security procedures in the wake of each new attack are woven into a narrative that reads more like a plot-driven novel than a social studies discussion. Jones routs out a host of ironies amid these tragedies—a conspirator in the Lincoln murder escaped to become a papal guard at the Vatican; McKinley’s doctors, unable to locate the bullet lodged in their patient, never think to try out the “new contraption called an X-ray machine” on display at the exposition where the president was shot. However, Jones takes a few cheap shots herself, occasionally trivializing her subject: “Some people think Oswald was part of a conspiracy . . . others think he acted alone, and others are convinced he was innocent. Still others, perhaps, have no idea what happened but enjoy guessing.” A spacious layout and a generous sprinkling of contemporary engravings and black-and-white photos smooth the way for reluctant readers and report writers, and Jones offers tips for further research (but, alas, no specific source notes). EB

KELLER, EMILY *Margaret Bourke-White: A Photographer’s Life*. Lerner, 1996 127p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-8225-4916-6 \$17.21 Ad Gr. 6-10

The life of Margaret Bourke-White, first woman photographer for *Life* magazine, first photographer to fly in a bomber during World War II, famous for her photographs of the steel industry, of Stalin, of Gandhi, of South Africa during apartheid, and of the United States during the Great Depression, is presented in this surprisingly unexciting biography. Keller relates Bourke-White’s life in accessible if uninspired prose, drawing predominantly on her autobiographies and other writings and on Vicki Goldberg’s *Margaret Bourke-White: A Biography*. Bourke-White took on enormous physical challenges to get just the right photograph, risked her life numerous times in situations of extreme danger, and developed from an observer to an interpreter of world events. Keller, however, skates over much of this accomplished artist’s life, providing only brief, tantalizing hints about the remarkable woman behind the camera. Even presented as a chronological series of episodes, Bourke-White’s life is fascinating: at a time when the status of women was still solidly traditional in the U.S., she became a visual artist of note in a new, technically demanding medium. While it never quite catches fire, there are at least enough warm snippets of information to make this interesting to readers. Indexed, with a bibliography. JMD

KUKLIN, SUSAN *Irrepressible Spirit: Conversations with Human Rights Activists*; written and illus. with photographs by Susan Kuklin. Putnam, 1996 227p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-399-22762-8 \$18.95
Paper ed. ISBN 0-399-23045-9 \$9.95 R Gr. 7 up

Eleven activists from countries all over the globe tell their stories here: some, such as China's Li Lu and Cuba's David Moya, are witnesses to their own persecution as well as that of their compatriots; others, such as Ivana Nizich (who describes her fact-finding in Bosnia) and Joe Ingle (who uses the example of a specific inmate to discuss his opposition to the death penalty in the U.S.), fight against injustices they feel fortunate to have been spared. Kuklin breaks the accounts up into seven chapters, which focus on subjects such as "The Right to Freedom of Expression," "The Right to One's Life," and "The Right to Vote." The testimony (which frequently tells of teenage experiences or addresses the status of children) makes compelling reading; the voices here are intense and individual, and they often demonstrate a vigorous sense of humor in counterpoint to their very serious subject. The interviewees' brief autobiographies and final messages don't preach but instead show how commitment can be translated into action in many different ways and by many different people. Far more energizing than series nonfiction about global strife, this will offer teens an idea of the varied forms "good works" can take and how challenging and exciting they can be. Additional material about Human Rights Watch (the organization with which most of the interviewees are affiliated), a list of other human-rights organizations, endnotes, and a bibliography are included. Kuklin's photographic portraits of the activists are interspersed with occasional photographs of the situations they hope to change. DS

LARSON, KIRBY *Cody and Quinn, Sitting in a Tree*; illus. by Nancy Poydar. Holiday House, 1996 86p
ISBN 0-8234-1227-X \$14.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

In this companion to *Second-Grade Pig Pals* (BCCB 12/94), Quinn and Cody's platonic relationship is almost ruined by that relentless rogue Roysel Hendricks. Roysel's heartless teasing about their non-existent romance brings their friendship to an abrupt halt ("I don't love her," Cody screamed. His heart pounded like a hammer on his ribs. "I hate her!") and sets the second-grade stage for Cody's revenge on Roysel. The tension mounts all the way to the principal's office as Larson's second-graders act out this typical school story with a generous measure of humor and sensitivity. Eleven short chapters with black-and-white watercolor illustrations allow the reader to progress quickly to a candy-coated conclusion with an unbelievably mature reconciliation between Cody and Quinn. The final scene where Roysel the repentant offers his "Chocobar" to Cody may leave kids pretty sure they liked Roysel better when he was rotten. Any practical second-grader may also be more than a little skeptical with a story about a girl and a boy who are friends: Cody and Quinn, you are very brave. PM

LEWIN, TED *Market!*; written and illus. by Ted Lewin. Lothrop, 1996 48p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12162-4 \$15.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12161-6 \$16.00 R 5-9 yrs

Lewin brings his audience into the heart of foreign marketplaces to learn how their neighbors around the world go shopping. Specialized merchants deal in horses in County Galway, Ireland or monger fish in New York, while foodstuffs and general

housewares briskly change hands in Morocco, Uganda, Nepal, and Ecuador. Jacket notes suggest that Lewin executed his lush watercolors from photographs taken at the world markets, and indeed, photographic influence is strong. Each light-drenched marketplace teems with individuated shoppers, and readers are always close to the action. A Nepalese boy, curious but passive, makes eye contact; a Ugandan merchant offers viewers a smoked perch; Moroccan sheep traders are simply too engrossed in their transactions to regard us at all. The details of the illustrations, though, are often out of sync with the litany of goods in the text—there isn't a motor bike to be seen in the Nepalese market, no sisal ropes for sale in Ecuador, no dried chameleons, pottery, or clothing in evidence in the Moroccan souks, and definitely no farrier who "hammers musically on a glowing red horse-shoe." Although Lewin shares his obvious delight in the vendors' patter ("You want a camel for a chicken price!"; "How much? Whaddaya, kiddin' me?"), some of his prose takes itself too seriously for the lively nature of his topic ("They come, descendants of the Incas . . . with names like Salasacas and Chimborazo"). Nevertheless, children with an emerging interest in geography or a taste for exotic locales should return well-pleased from their trek to five continents. EB

LONDON, JONATHAN *Jackrabbit*; illus. by Deborah Kogan Ray. Crown, 1996 32p
ISBN 0-517-59657-1 \$16.50 Ad 5-7 yrs

The natural world's beauty and its dangers illuminate Ray's gently glowing illustrations in this story of a baby jackrabbit that is separated from her mother, raised by a human family, and finally released into the wild. Dark, shadowy greens and browns emphasize the young rabbit's fear at being lost in a landscape savaged by bulldozers while brighter oranges, yellows, and greens radiate with the luster of thick meadows and lush berry patches; the scenes inside the adopting family's house possess an almost luminous warmth. The anthropomorphization of the jackrabbit at the story's conclusion clashes with the naturalistic elements that worked effectively in the first part of the book, and the plot lacks any real suspense or surprise. Nonetheless, details about this particular rabbit—how she likes to eat bananas and enjoys licking the woman's hand for the salt taste—add individuality to the story while Ray's depictions of gentle people holding the rabbit like a baby to feed her milk or sitting in the grass to stroke the rabbit's ears resonate with the concern these people have for nature. Those who enjoy a quiet and humane story about respect for wildlife will snuggle into this one like the baby jackrabbit cuddling into its makeshift nest beside a warm stove. LM

LORBIECKI, MARYBETH *Just One Flick of a Finger*; illus. by David Diaz. Dial, 1996 34p
Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1949-3 \$14.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1948-5 \$14.99 M Gr. 3-8

Jack is being terrorized by Reebo, "mean as a needle and skinny as a weenie," and brings his father's gun to school to scare him. The gun goes off, and both Jack and his best friend Sherms wind up in the hospital, Jack with a head injury and Sherms recovering from an accidental gunshot wound ("Now we're really blood brothers because I begged to share," says Jack). Issues of race and violence are appallingly oversimplified as Lorbiecki awkwardly hip-hops her way through this trendy urban fable. David Diaz combines infrared photographic images and original illustration into powerful but inconsistent compositions that bring the reader up close

and personal. The happily-ever-after conclusion—Sherms' brother Lee gets out of jail determined to stay out ("instead of shooting up he's wiring up in a business of his own") and wants to keep Jack and Sherms "straight as a church steeple and proud as a Masai"—is naïvely unrealistic, but then the overall tone is unrealistically and sentimentally hopeful. Although Lorbiecki's rhyming text gains a modicum of emotional authenticity when paired with Diaz' more successful illustrations, this well-intentioned story seems unconsciously patronizing and is ultimately unsuccessful. JMD

LOWERY, LINDA *Wilma Mankiller*; illus. by Janice Lee Porter. Carolrhoda, 1996 56p (On My Own Biographies)
Trade ed. ISBN 0-87614-880-1 \$13.13
Paper ed. ISBN 0-87614-853-0 \$5.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

This is an easy-reader biography of Wilma Mankiller, first woman chief of the Cherokee nation. The format demands a certain streamlined simplification of life events, but Lowery manages to include some emotional depth along with historical context in the book's first half. Opening with the Mankiller family's move from an Oklahoma reservation to San Francisco, Lowery identifies Mankiller as a child dislocated, separated from the culture and place that nourished her. As an adult, Mankiller returns to Oklahoma with her children and begins working for the Cherokee Nation. In the latter half of the book, Lowery concentrates on Mankiller's public life, giving little information about her life outside of her political office. The illustrations break up the text without adding much to it; the faces are unarticulated and the colors muddy. Aside from some sweeping fictionalizations ("We Cherokees never had a woman as deputy chief,' they said. 'It's a job for a man.' Wilma was shocked. . . . How could anyone say only men made good leaders? Had the Cherokees picked up this idea from white people? Wilma thought so"), this is an accessible introduction to Wilma Mankiller, the activist, although a little lean on Wilma Mankiller, the individual. An afterword with a color photograph of Mankiller and a list of important dates in Cherokee history and in Mankiller's chronology are included. There are no references or source notes. JMD

LYONS, MARY E. *Painting Dreams: Minnie Evans, Visionary Artist*. Houghton, 1996 48p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-395-72032-X \$14.95 R Gr. 3-6

In a volume similar to her titles in the African-American Artists and Artisans series (see *Stitching Stars*, BCCB 12/93 and *Deep Blues*, 12/94), Lyons examines the life and artistic work of self-taught artist Minnie Evans. Born at the end of the nineteenth century, Evans spent most of her life working at an old North Carolina estate; from childhood, however, she saw visions that led people to call her crazy and that eventually drove her into painting, until finally, toward the end of her life, she began to acquire recognition for her artistry. Her art reproduced here shows a strong interest in patterning as well as an exploration of the fantastical in deep and ruddy colors (the captions unfortunately tend to be confusing or irrelevant). This is a capably written biography that touches on the unquenchability of the artistic impulse and the vagaries of artistic fortune, while offering enough of the visual to make it clear what all the fuss is about. The author has included detailed endnotes that document her own interviews as well as research in secondary sources; an index is appended. DS

MCCULLY, EMILY ARNOLD *The Ballot Box Battle*; written and illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Knopf, 1996 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-679-97938-7 \$18.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-87938-2 \$17.00 Ad Gr. 3-5

Again McCully offers a fictionalized interpretation of an historic episode, in this case Elizabeth Stanton's crusade for women's suffrage. In 1880, dowager Stanton's young neighbor Cordelia comes over for riding lessons and, as tacit price for the privilege, politely listens to the old woman carry on "about some skirmish in her long battle for the vote." Cordelia is more interested in horses and in proving her equestrian abilities to her brother, but Mrs. Stanton regales her with tales of her own futile childhood efforts to please and impress her father and eventually takes Cordelia with her to their local poll in an equally futile attempt to cast a ballot. Compared with McCully's recent *The Bobbin Girl* (BCCB 3/96), which wisely allows the action of the Lowell workers' "turn out" to hammer home its own feminist point, this tale is relatively contrived and preachy, with Stanton something of a quaint old bore and Cordelia's sibling rivalry a weak shadow of Stanton's own heartache over her father's repeated rejections. Watercolor portrayals of the variously amazed and sneering gentlemen who turn away Stanton's ballot are particularly effective; an endnote fills in background about Stanton and her attempt to vote in Tenafly, New Jersey in the 1880 election and points out that Cordelia is a fictional character. EB

MCKELVEY, DOUGLAS KAINE *The Angel Knew Papa and the Dog*. Philomel, 1996 [96p]
ISBN 0-399-23042-4 \$13.95
Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 4-6

Young Evangeline relates the tale of the flood that sweeps her father downstream and strands her in the middle of a torrent. Poised on mule-back to leap into the raging current, she is stopped by the sound of celestial music and the appearance of a light-drenched angel. When the angel fades away, a woman in a rowboat miraculously appears and reunites the girl with her father. The hand of coincidence lies heavy on this slight tale: the woman in the rowboat is Mary, the same name as the mother who died giving birth to the narrator; Mary's dog is the same stray that saved Evangeline from a serpent, led Mary to the half-frozen battered father clinging to life in the river below her cabin, and drew Mary to the flood-surrounded house from which Evangeline sees the angel. The overwrought language and clichéd images ("The hands of the angel were firm and sure, the face was strong as any river, and the eyes seemed to blaze deeper than all eternity") have a calculated naïveté that never quite achieves the light simplicity that would do justice to the narrator's innocent faith. There is no apparent character development, the plot being driven by little more than the need to set up the angelic encounter. When the narrator finally gives her name in the last sentence, the question as to why she waited so long is more irritating than revelatory. JMD

McMANUS, PATRICK F. *Never Cry "Arp!" and Other Great Adventures*. Holt, 1996 133p
ISBN 0-8050-4662-3 \$15.95 R Gr. 4-6

Yarnspinner McManus adds to the ranks of Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill in this lively collection of tall tales about growing up long ago in the wilds of Idaho. The

author admits these have been “varnished, stretched, and embroidered” beyond recognition; but, he adds, “stories always have their own truth.” And so they do, and sometimes they’re pretty funny, too. Like the one about Strange, the skunk dog, who looked “as if he sold dirty postcards to support an opium habit.” Or take—please—Rancid Crabtree, a cantankerous mountain man who was allergic to work and who had few earthly needs except his liquid “medicine” bottled in crockery jars. While it’s true that some of the humor, such as the allusions to moonshine, is a tad adult, there’s plenty here that kids will howl over, especially the grosser stories, such as the one about the “scientific experiment” to see how long it would take to fill all of Mom’s canning jars with um, well, pee. McManus reverts to an old-fashioned ethos in the title story, where it’s okay for a boy to yell “Arp! Arp!” if it keeps him from crying, but that just goes with the territory here. There’s a bit of chronological confusion as the age of the narrator shifts from eight to fifteen and back to eight, but logic and continuity are not the main attractions anyway. It’s McManus’ deadpan humor and utter disregard for reason that make this entertaining. SSV

MCQUINN, ANNA, comp. *Farmyard Animals*; illus. by Paul Hess. De Agostini, 1996 18p

ISBN 0-1-899883-34-7 \$6.95

Safari Animals; comp. by Anna McQuinn and Ambreen Husain; illus. by Paul Hess. De Agostini, 1996 18p

ISBN 1-899833-35-5 \$6.95

Ad 3-5 yrs

Snippets of verse pair with illustrations of farm and African-plain dwellers to introduce eight animals in each book. The poems are unfortunately reduced to background noise: they vary substantially in sophistication level (from nursery rhymes to elaborate wordplay) as well as in quality, and the author credits and titles are found only on the copyright page. The draw here is the pictures: luminescent skies overlook a bulbous horse, a slightly smirking pig, or a baleful hyena, all rendered in rich and smoky watercolor. The books’ small trim-size enhances the careful design, which includes a peekaboo vignette offsetting the text that gives a larger glimpse of the featured animal’s milieu. It’s a pity more attention wasn’t paid to the words (and the category “Safari Animals” is pretty questionable), but this is a nice duo for point-and-gape zoology. DS

MAESTRO, BETSY *The Story of Religion*; illus. by Giulio Maestro. Clarion, 1996 [48p]

ISBN 0-395-62364-2 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 2-5

It’s no wonder that, at only forty-eight pages from title to index, this ambitious work hardly fulfills its promise. Following some obvious opening comments on the human condition (“Humans spend a good deal of time thinking. All people have ideas and beliefs, but they do not always share the same ideas and beliefs”), Maestro breezes over “early” or “primal” religions from Asia to the Americas. Remarks such as “All early religions were polytheistic” call for fine-tuning, while summaries of specific religious cultures are too broad to be informative (“Civilizations in the Americas, such as the ancient Maya, also believed in many gods and goddesses. The deities of sun and moon were greatly revered, and calendars and rituals were based on their activities”). Each of the “great world faiths” receives

slightly more detailed treatment, with a brief history, a cursory look at rituals, and an honest effort to set it within a chronological and philosophical framework of world beliefs. Mixed-media art offers a visual introduction to important religious landmarks and images, but too often the captions fail to point out their significance (e.g., "Athena," "a tripod jug and goblet," "a heavenly dragon disk"). The author's staunch defense of religious plurality ("The fact that in this world there are so many people following so many different paths to God shows that there is no one right way") is bound to raise hackles in some faith communities but will appeal to others. Undemanding readers looking for a few basic facts and a lot of browsable, if unconnected, art may find what they want here. EB

MITCHELL, BARBARA *Red Bird*; illus. by Todd L.W. Doney. Lothrop, 1996 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-10860-1 \$15.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-10859-8 \$16.00 Ad Gr. 2-4

Bring the trunk of regalia down from the attic. Load the station wagon with camping gear and Dad's feather headdress. September heralds the Nanticoke powwow, held in a bayside grove of pines in Delaware, far away from the noise-filled city where Katie lives with her family. For two days, Katie assumes her Nanticoke name and identity; "Red Bird, Nanticoke Daughter" reunites with relatives, dances to the drums with her scarlet shawl, eats fry bread with spicy beans, buys a beaded headband, and listens to Grandfather's stories around a campfire. All of the elements comprising a powwow are there, but the personal connection one expects from a fictional account is lacking: Who is Katie? What is she thinking and feeling? Is this the only time of the year she celebrates her Native heritage? In addition, flat writing ("On Monday, Mom puts on her uniform and goes to her work at the hospital. Dad returns to his office. Katie is off to school") interspersed with an idealized vision in quasi-mystical and self-conscious prose ("She will hear her people singing. She will hear the far-off drums. The heartbeat of the People stays with her all year long") makes this *A Book About Indians* without conveying much about Indians at all. It is Doney's illustrations that leave readers with an I-was-there feeling; his figures have a photographic quality that is softened by the texture of the oil paints against the canvas. Sunlight dapples dancers and regalia, implying vitality and movement. Readers hoping to learn more about powwow traditions and participants might pair this with George Ancona's photoessay *Powwow* (BCCB 5/93). AEB

MORRIS, ANN *Karate Boy*; illus. with photographs by David Katzenstein. Dutton, 1996 32p
ISBN 0-525-45337-7 \$15.99 R Gr. 1-3

David and his friend Georgie take karate lessons at a *s* near their home in New Jersey. Both boys, evidently in primary grades, are preparing to advance to green belt, and this photoessay observes them and their classmates as they punch, block, kick, spar, and meditate. Morris incorporates very brief background on karate's genesis as an Asian combat technique, but the focus here is clearly on its pacifistic values: "Karate teaches balance and body coordination and helps people keep fit and feel good about themselves." Readers who are already involved in the sport are unlikely to find anything here they didn't already know, but the uninitiated will enjoy viewing the crisp photos of other boys and girls working out in their white *gi*'s and protective gear, seriously intent on correct form, or clowning around on the sidelines as they wait their turn to spar. The text is simple and spare enough to

entice even those with shaky reading skills, and a glossary helps out with pronunciations. EB

PARTRIDGE, ELIZABETH *Clara and the Hoodoo Man*. Dutton, 1996 168p
ISBN 0-525-45403-9 \$14.99 Ad Gr. 4-6

Clara's in trouble when she breaks one of her mother's precious crocks; in order to earn the money to pay for it, she gathers ginseng in the Tennessee hills. This leads to more trouble when she and her little sister, Bessie, run into the hoodoo man, since Clara's mother fears and distrusts the local herbalist. Her mother's fears seem justified when Bessie falls ill, but Clara takes a chance that the hoodoo man may actually offer the help that Bessie needs. Partridge has based this portrait of a hardworking, turn-of-the-century African-American family on the autobiographical stories of an acquaintance; the details of rural life, including the isolation and the importance of neighborliness, are vivid and convincing, if a little rosily painted. The story itself is predictable, and readers may find the hoodoo of Bessie's recovery a little speedily worked despite its ostensible basis in reality. This is, however, a rich slice of American life that historical fiction rarely treats. DS

PHILIP, NEIL, comp. *American Fairy Tales: From Rip Van Winkle to the Rootabaga Stories*; illus. by Michael McCurdy. Hyperion, 1996 160p
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2171 \$22.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0207-3 \$22.95 R Gr. 6-10

See this month's Big Picture, p. 3, for review.

PRELUTSKY, JACK *A Pizza the Size of the Sun*; illus. by James Stevenson. Greenwillow, 1996 160p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13236-7 \$17.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13235-9 \$18.00 R* Gr. 3-6

The team of Prelutsky and Stevenson, famous for illustrated poetic triumphs such as *The New Kid on the Block* (BCCB 11/84), has most delightfully returned. The poems here show Prelutsky's characteristic adeptness; they vary in theme, verse form, and length, but they all demonstrate a contagious ebullience. Several of the most interesting poems turn into games: plays on words and reading, they offer a chance to look at the process differently, as in "Backwards Forwards Silly Rhyme" ("I thguoht d'I etirw ekil siht yadot . . ."), "I'm Ceiling Fad! A Money Boned" ("I'm ceiling fad! a money boned./ 'Alas!' a carrot pride . . ."), "Reverso Is Name My" ("Reverso is name my,/ way this talk often I . . ."), and "If" ("If a baseball breaks a window,/ does it cause the window pain?/ If it rains upon a lion, do the droplets water mane? . . ."). The majority, however, are straightforwardly yet cleverly funny with a Nashian flavor, such as "Penguins" ("Penguins cautiously reside/ on our planet's underside,/ where they're careful not to cough/ lest they trip and tumble off"). Stevenson's line-and-wash illustrations are breezily slapdash but expressive, with characters peering quizzically, staring dolefully, or beaming peacefully, all out of faces made of a couple of dots and a pair of lines; he's particularly inventive at illustrating creatures that never were, such as the Doddies or the part puppy, part kitten, part mouse. There are lots of chant-aloud possibilities in here as well as a plethora of reading delights; like P&S's other compilations, this will be a great source whenever you really want to put on the dog-gerel. DS

RICE, EVE *Swim!*; illus. by Marisabina Russo. Greenwillow, 1996 [24p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-14275-3 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-14274-5 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

M 3-5 yrs

A smiling young girl relates her trip to the pool with her smiling father to her smiling mother and smiling baby brother. After jumping ("I scramble out and do it again—at least a dozen times") and kicking ("We kick and kick and kick—until we are too tired to kick anymore"), they dry off and go home ("My dad wraps me in a big warm towel as I get out. And when we're dressed, we hurry home"). Gouache illustrations in dusty tones fail to enliven the lackluster story of blandly depicted characters stiffly engaging in various water activities. This may be useful to introduce children to the idea of community swimming pools, but it certainly won't entice them into the water. JMD

RIECKEN, NANCY *Today is the Day*; illus. by Catherine Stock. Houghton, 1996 32p

ISBN 0-395-73917-9 \$14.95

M 4-7 yrs

Away for six months working, Yesenia's father is coming home. The young girl waits for his bus, never doubting his return, but Yara, her older sister, has less faith: "Look around, Yese. Other men leave and don't come back. What makes Papa any different?" Yese waits all day. Late that night, Mama, the two sisters, and Juanito, the baby, walk to meet the last bus, but it doesn't stop. A car (big, with fins), radio blaring, careens up the road; Yara trips and falls, and her family mistakenly thinks the car has knocked her down. When the dust settles, Papa is there. Having missed the last bus, he hitched a ride with the driver of the big car. While he can't promise to never go away again, he has won Yara's faith: "I know one thing for sure, Papa," she said. "Yesenia trusted you, and she was right. You'll always come home again." Stock's watercolors present a dusty brown/green landscape, apparently rural Mexico, with the barefoot sisters in short dresses, braids, and big eyes. Putting stereotypical visual images aside, the text is emotionally manipulative, setting up Yese—and the reader—for several heart-tugging moments, climaxing with the soap-opera entrance of Papa. The text lacks the cultural and political context of Rachel Isadora's *At the Crossroads* (BCCB 5/91), and as a result it lacks that book's clarity and emotional honesty as well. JMD

RIGGS, BOB *My Best Defense*. Ward Hill Press, 1996 203p

Paper ed. ISBN 1-886747-01-6 \$5.95

Ad Gr. 5-8

Jack Winslow is an angry thirteen-year-old who mourns his deceased mother, scorns his sister, and misses his workaholic father. He needs a friend, and he gets an unlikely one in a twenty-nine-year-old woman, Maki, who comes from Okinawa to keep house for his family. The author lived in Okinawa while in the Marine Corps and seems determined to share the experience; he uses Maki as a mouthpiece and we learn, in asides which tend to stall the story, about Okinawan history, language, and culture. There's a love angle, too, when the hard-boiled widower dad falls for—ta dah!—Maki. Jack is constantly quipping, but his humor is glib and adult (wisecracks abound about Barry Manilow, William Buckley, Ted Bundy, Esther Williams, Aretha Franklin). Poor characterization is a recurring problem, the women suffering especially from one-note personalities based on superficial attributes and character traits (Maki, for example, is stereotypical in her difficulties

with English, using “preeze” for “please” and “sank” for “thank,” and in her martial-arts abilities, which is ironic in light of the book’s plea for cross-cultural understanding). While there’s some appealing humor here and the genuine tearjerker ending is surprisingly affecting, the book is overcrowded and predictable. SSV

ROCHE, DENIS *Loo-Loo, Boo, and Art You Can Do*; written and illus. by Denis Roche. Houghton, 1996 [32p]

ISBN 0-395-75921-8 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 4-6 yrs

Eleven tried-and-true art projects are repackaged here with some bold and jazzy cartoon illustrations, along with directions delivered by bespectacled Loo-Loo and her pet pooch Boo. With the possible exception of Stinky Clay (a hoot to make, and, when fresh, it lives up to its name), these projects will be familiar to almost anyone who hangs with the preschool set—Roche doesn’t offer any new spins on body tracing, cardboard hats, potato prints, and papier-mâché. Measurements range from exact tablespoons and cups to imprecise estimates: “Put some sand into each of your cans or jars. . . . Add a big squirt of glue to each jar.” Perhaps a more serious problem, common to elementary craft books, is the tendency to omit some of the steps which are most difficult for young crafters—constructing a sculpture armature (“Sometimes the shape of your cans and cartons will give you ideas”) or cutting circles into a cardboard mask (“Hold the piece of cardboard in your hands and use scissors to make eye holes”). Still, beginners looking for some simple, sloppy entertainment are bound to get some ideas here. EB

ROGASKY, BARBARA *The Golem*; illus. by Trina Schart Hyman. Holiday House, 1996 96p

ISBN 0-8234-0964-3 \$18.95

R Gr. 4-8

WISNIEWSKI, DAVID *Golem*; written and illus. by David Wisniewski. Clarion, 1996 [32p]

ISBN 0-395-72618-2 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 7-10 yrs

Heir of mythical monsters and predecessor of literary monsters, the Golem (a Hebrew word for something not fully formed, such as an embryo—or Adam, before God gave him a soul) is a legendary creature born of Jewish mysticism and Jewish persecution. Although a number of golems were mentioned in medieval Jewish lore, the Golem in these two books is created by Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel in the late sixteenth century to protect the Jews of Prague from violence resulting from false reports of ritual blood sacrifice. Rogasky’s book, illustrated with Hyman’s darkly graceful evocations of a haunting ghetto setting and a Frankensteinian giant, features thirteen chapters narrating episodes from the Golem’s creation to his destruction. The monster who serves his rabbinical master and saves his people with robotic strength is always in danger of acquiring a will of his own or getting out of control because his master forgets to give him specific orders. Ultimately the Golem escalates violence rather than curbing it, and the Rabbi must turn him back to clay. The text in this version features short, easy-to-read sentences which nevertheless reflect a cadence of Yiddish phraseology. By contrast, Wisniewski’s version, although it is a picture book, has a text in many ways more complex and heavily descriptive—definitely for a readaloud audience on the sophisticated side. His dramatic paper cuttings, similar in effect to *The*

Warrior and the Wise Man (BCCB 7/89) with its demonic forces and fiery battles, seem to involve fewer traditional graphic motifs than the Tlingit or Mayan tales he has illustrated. Nevertheless, this art has a theatrical formality that does capture the massive stiffness of the Golem and conveys the force of monumental conflict. Each book, Rogasky's and Wisniewski's, features an extensive background note and serves a different audience. BH

ROSSELSON, LEON *Rosa and Her Singing Grandfather*; illus. by Marcia Sewall. Philomel, 1996 85p
ISBN 0-399-22733-4 \$12.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

When Rosa's Grandad was a little lad, his many-sibbling family didn't take much notice of him. That is, until one day, amidst familial chaos in the kitchen, he declared from his bath that he could sing a song: "You should hold a kipper in one hand not two/ And wave it while you're talking like the big shots do." And he's been singing (and garnering attention) ever since. Grandad chases away Rosa's fear of the dark with a "Higgledy piggledy fee fie and fang/ Flibberty gibberty—BANG"; attempts to teach the "Toreador's Song" from *Carmen* to a zoo-parrot who would rather sing "Sam, Sam, dirty old man"; and embarrasses Rosa's mother no end with his propensity toward song in public places ("He ought to know better at his age"). Rosa, who is perhaps six or seven years old, is also eager for a little attention and reassurance from her busy working mother; Grandad's musical reminiscing inspires her to strike out on her own (well, okay, run away) and to bring about a warm-fuzzy family reunion with a quavering reprise of the kipper song. Rather than being authentic to Rosa's point of view, the story (originally published in Britain as two separate titles) is unfortunately adult-oriented: Grandad confuses Rosa with puns and musical allusions, and Rosa's mother interprets her daughter for readers as alternately wide-eyed and innocent or bothersome. Nevertheless, Sewall's sketchy line drawings emphasize the very real and warm relationship between Rosa and Grandad, with Rosa's dimples showing her excitement at being with her droll, smiling-eyebrowed grandfather; the musical storytelling here is sharp, even if point of view is a little flat. AEB

SABUDA, ROBERT, illus. *The Twelve Days of Christmas: A Pop-Up Celebration*; illus. by Robert Sabuda. Little Simon, 1996 6p
ISBN 0-689-80865-8 \$19.95 R* All ages

If you thought all the pleasure of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" had drowned in a sea of parodies and confusion about which birds come when, think again. Robert Sabuda follows up his stellar *A Christmas Alphabet* (BCCB 10/94) with a three-dimensional tour de force, bold and extravagant where the last book was snowflake-quiet and subtle. Each spread opens up to display one day's gifts (a partridge soaring among ripening fruit) and a flap on the recto folds out to display the next (a pair of turtledoves too engrossed in their billing and cooing to take advantage of their open cage door). Some expand entertainingly on the original concept (the "five golden rings" are held proudly aloft by the antlers of a noble reindeer, and the "ten pipers piping" are an angelic paper chain encircling the very scissors that made them); some depend not only on their third dimension but also on movement for effect, most notably the four calling birds who joyfully pop out of their cuckoo-clock perches. The pop-ups, really paper sculpture, are largely snowy-white anti-silhouettes against backgrounds of changing colors, but touches

like the silver mirror behind the pirouetting eleven ladies (who dance on a music box complete with key) and the shining golden rings add a seasonal richness without cluttering the purity of the design. The quintessential pop-up problem of sturdiness is surprisingly well handled, considering the work's intricacy, but the book will indeed last and retain its vigor longer if folded carefully, so a readaloud approach may be best for younger children. It's still worth the trouble; this does things you will not have expected a book could do, while capitalizing on the essential magic of its ability to tuck neatly back into itself and sit on a shelf in inconspicuous anticipation, like a gift waiting to be opened. DS

SIEGELSON, KIM *The Terrible, Wonderful Tellin' at Hog Hammock*; illus. by Eric Velasquez. HarperCollins, 1996 89p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024878-5 \$13.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024877-7 \$13.95 Ad Gr. 3-5

On a Georgia island, near a little village called Hog Hammock, Jonas lives with his mother, sister, aunt, and grandmother. The menfolk live and work on the mainland and visit when they can. Life on the island hasn't changed in generations; many residents still live in simple cabins without running water, indoor plumbing, or electricity. The older folks speak "old time talk," Gullah, and pass on their oral traditions through annual "tellin's," where one member of each family spins a story for the village. Grandpa, recently deceased, had always represented Jonas' family; celebrated for his "gift fe lie," he told stories both terrible (about slave transports) and wonderful (West African folktales). The family thinks Jonas has inherited the talent (though Jonas isn't so sure), and his grandmother decides he's ready: "Tomorrow, the sun de red fe down, you gon stand up and do you grandpa proud-proud." Although Siegelson's prose is nondescript, she throws in just the right touch of the supernatural to give readers an occasional chill. Characterization is uneven—the kid sister, Rikki, is suitably obnoxious but Nana Myrna is a stock majestic matriarch. The story is predictable—the triumphant outcome is never in doubt—but we still root for Jonas because Siegelson makes him a likeable, sympathetic character. There is a brief author's note on Gullah. SSV

SIEGEN-SMITH, NIKKI, comp. *Songs for Survival: Songs and Chants from Tribal Peoples around the World*; illus. by Bernard Lodge. Dutton, 1996 80p
ISBN 0-525-45564-7 \$18.99 Ad 6-10 yrs

"Long ago our ancestors sang all kinds of songs to commemorate special events in their lives," and *Songs for Survival* presents more than fifty such songs about creation, animals, and natural phenomena. Siegen-Smith attributes each song to a particular tribe and continent and provides the source from which she acquired it. Many songs contain potent images ("... the Great Hunter/ who hunts the clouds like a herd/ of frightened elephants") while some give insight into a tribe's beliefs or reactions to nature (how do the Inuit respond to Arctic winters? "There is fear in/ feeling the cold/ Come to the great world. . ."). Brief notes accompanying some songs explain unfamiliar words or describe relevant rituals or beliefs; unfortunately, the notes are erratic, too often neglecting terms or failing to tell how particular songs fit into tribal life. A number of entries—especially those that contain more recent elements such as the Ottoman Empire or the destruction of tribal land—would benefit from a historical context more specific than the sketchy discussion Siegen-Smith offers. Lino-cut illustrations use bright colors, bold out-

lines, and flat figures to convey an overall impression of indigenous art rather than representing any one tribe's style. Introductory comments and notes are sometimes overbearing (how often must we be reminded that we should respect the earth as tribal people do?) or cloudy ("tribal people are not as likely to be lonely"). Although Survival International, the group receiving proceeds from sales of the book, may intend that this collection celebrate the traditions of tribal people, the presentation tends to make these cultural groups seem interchangeable and threatens to lessen the songs' true significance by using them as a goad to drive citizens of the industrialized world into the environmental fold. LM

SILBAUGH, ELIZABETH *Let's Play Cards!*; illus. by Jef Kaminsky. Simon, 1996 48p (Ready-to-Read)

Trade ed. ISBN 0-689-80802-X \$14.00

Paper ed. ISBN 0-689-80801-1 \$3.99

R Gr. 2-4

For readers ready to move beyond Fifty-Two Pick Up, Silbaugh offers directions for War, Concentration, Go Fish, Crazy Eights, and Clock Solitaire, all packaged in an easy reader format suitable for beginning independent readers. Card jargon and three methods of deck shuffling (which thoughtfully allow for differing degrees of dexterity) are introduced, as well as some gaming-table etiquette to keep Crazy Eights sane and War from becoming one. Directions for War, based on a fifty-two-card deck, include the misleading statement "in this game, Jokers are the highest," and there are no contingency instructions for how to proceed in Clock Solitaire if a number on the "dial" has been turned face up before play is complete; neither gaffe should, however, be too baffling for determined players. Line-and-watercolor cartoons clarify points along the way, and the recurrent Cool Carl the Card Shark interjects playing tips and corny puns. EB

SINGER, MARILYN *All We Needed to Say: Poems about School from Tanya and Sophie*; illus. with photographs by Lorna Clark. Atheneum, 1996 [32p]

ISBN 0-689-80667-1 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-8

The author of *Turtle in July* (BCCB 9/89) here takes on a different kind of animal—the human child subjected to a day's school routine. Tanya and Sophie are definitely the same species, but they have polar personalities that are distinctively voiced in alternating points of view. Tanya races to school with urgent intellectual curiosity; Sophie dawdles creatively to observe the world around her. Mostly Tanya gets kudos and Sophie gets into trouble, but they are drawn to each other—despite mutual envy—in this series of narrative poems, especially through an incident where Tanya subversively supports Sophie when a teacher catches her in a name-calling bout with a boy ("scumsucker, pigmucker, kitty litter baby sitter"). Predominantly free verse, these eighteen poems echo with internal rhyme and thrive on funny institutional images: "Today the meat loaf/ bright red in slices shaped like hearts/ says aren't you glad you brought those valentines—/ and a brown bag lunch from home?" There's also a healthy quota of wordplay: "Maybe I'm still seeing/ . . . poodle-perfect Tanya saying 'Aardvark'/ to that turkey Mr. Byrd." Like the deceptively plain language, the spare black-and-white photographs are careful neither to romanticize nor denigrate the setting but to observe with honest perception. It's the generous format and cream-colored paper that soften these sharp-edged visual still lifes and verbal portraits. A book with pressingly relevant appeal for independent readers, this could also provide plenty of aural pleasure

shared out loud and should serve as a model for classroom anthologies where students write about and photograph their own school habitats. BH

SLATE, JOSEPH *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*; illus. by Ashley Wolff. Dutton, 1996 40p
ISBN 0-525-45446-2 \$14.99 Ad 4-6 yrs

The newest class of kindergartners are rising and shining for their first day of school, but their teacher has a jump on them. Up at six o'clock, Miss Bindergarten packs her hatchback with crates of classroom necessities, and while "Brenda Heath brushes her teeth" and "Danny Hess rushes to dress," the teacher sets up the play kitchen and hangs the growth chart. At nine o'clock "Wanda Chin marches in," "Zach Blair finds his chair," and "oh, oh, oh!—the fun's begun!" But there's more going on here than just getting ready for school—too much, in fact. Each student appears alphabetically by name, so some ABC study is obviously in order. Moreover, each character is an animal whose given initial repeats its species initial (Quentin is a quokka, as we learn from an appended chart); Miss Bindergarten herself appears to be a border collie, but since Danny the Dog is just a dog and Teacher isn't coded on the chart, youngsters may not see how she fits into the pattern. Line-and-watercolor animals are rendered as generically colored cartoons, making all but the most familiar creatures difficult to relate to their real-life counterparts. Parents prepping wary tykes for their first day in the "big school" will be better served by the gentle humor of Stoek's *Minerva Louise at School*, reviewed below. EB

SOTO, GARY *The Old Man and His Door*; illus. by Joe Cepeda. Putnam, 1996 32p
ISBN 0-399-22700-8 \$15.95 R 4-6 yrs

An old man (*el viejo*), "who was good at working in his garden but terrible at listening to his wife," brings *la puerta* (the door) instead of *el puerco* (the pig) to a barbecue. Carrying the door on his back, the old man has a series of encounters in which the door is most useful—he plays peekaboo with a bored baby, hides from angry bees, rests a weary goose, saves a boy from drowning, and helps a young man move a piano. With each encounter he gains something, so when he finally arrives and realizes his mistake, "the old man had to laugh. 'But look what else I brought. . . . An egg, and some honey, a fish, and these watermelons! And even this,' he said, and gave his wife the kiss from the baby." Based on a Mexican song ("*La puerta. El puerco. There's no difference to el viejo*"), this cumulative tale has readaloud rhythm, and Soto's inclusion of the occasional Spanish word adds to the general bounciness of the text. Cepeda's acrylics reflect a colorful neighborhood of pink houses, yellow fences, and purple sky inhabited by animated, engaging characters both human and animal. The format is a little small for large groups, but the text lends itself so nicely to storytelling and reading aloud that that's a minor quibble. JMD

ST. GEORGE, JUDITH *To See With the Heart: The Life of Sitting Bull*. Putnam, 1996 182p
ISBN 0-399-22930-2 \$17.95 R Gr. 5-9

In this companion piece to *Crazy Horse* (BCCB 12/94), St. George examines the life of the Hunkpapa leader. She explains how Sitting Bull's commitment to pre-

serve traditional hunting grounds against ineluctable white encroachment not only won him honor as a war chief, but led to his temporary emigration, a tenuous rapprochement with U.S. authorities, and finally, violent death at the hands of his former followers. As in her previous work, the author examines the territorial struggles from the Sioux perspective, mindful of the holy visions which guided Sitting Bull's combat strategies and augured his defeat, as well as the simple reality that the Sioux were outgunned and outmanned. The intratribal dissension and personal treacheries which played no small part in Sitting Bull's defeat and death are considered seriously as well. The stilted cover art won't draw readers, but students who pick this up to construct the perennial "American Indian report" should be pleasantly surprised to find it's also an exciting read. EB

STANLEY, DIANE *Leonardo da Vinci*; written and illus. by Diane Stanley. Morrow, 1996 [48p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-10438-X \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-10437-1 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 3-6

Stanley, sometimes aided by her husband Peter Vennema, has capably biographized historical figures ranging from Cleopatra (BCCB 10/94) to Peter the Great (BCCB 10/86); here she turns to one of the greatest minds and most celebrated painters of the millennium. She not only explores Leonardo's life and achievements but also the Florentine culture that both offered Leonardo opportunities and circumscribed them. Her descriptions of various artistic processes (the casting of sculptures, the elaborate preparations for an oil painting) are clear and concise, and they gain interest from their relevance to Leonardo's character (the artist several times failed to carry a work through to completion, suggesting a greater interest in planning than finishing) and to real-life exigencies (Leonardo's patron used his bronze supply for cannon rather than to mold Leonardo's planned statue of a horse). Though she keeps speculation to a minimum, Stanley conveys a sense of Leonardo as a man—audacious, arrogant, brilliant, and thoughtful—by judicious inclusion of his own writings and the words of those responding to him and to his work. (She doesn't, however, address the question of Leonardo's sexual orientation, though she does refer to his close relationships with several young male artists.) Stanley's mixed-media art uses muted colors and her usual flat and distanced style; it's doubtful that Renaissance Italy was as tidy as it looks here, but the art conveys a different world and also offers a dramatic contrast to the genuine da Vinci art that is not only reproduced in vignettes but also included appropriately within the narrative scenes. Without being overstuffed, oversimplified, or over the heads of the audience, this makes it elegantly clear what Leonardo accomplished and why his fame endures. A historical postscript and a bibliography are included. DS

STOEKE, JANET MORGAN *Minerva Louise at School*; written and illus. by Janet Morgan Stoeke. Dutton, 1996 [24p]

ISBN 0-525-45494-2 \$13.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 3-6 yrs

In this, the third installment of the exploits of this inquisitive hen, Minerva Louise ventures early one autumn morning into a mysteriously empty "barn" whose halls are lined with "coops" which, as she rightly supposes, some pretty strange chickens call home. Minerva Louise is intrigued by the furnishings ("nesting box" storage

cubes and tiny “milking stools” near the chalkboard) and somewhat concerned for the safety of an abandoned egg (a baseball cradled in a mitt), but she definitely admires the occupants’ sense of interior design. In fact, when she returns home she tastefully lines her own coop with shoelaces, pencil shards, and cast-off clothing, and “she knew she’d go back to the fancy barn some day . . . because it was such a wonderful place to get new ideas.” As Stoeke’s feathered heroine pokes her beak into places no hen has gone before, listeners are treated to the heady rush that comes from being in the know; yet while the laugh may be on Minerva Louise, it’s never mean-spirited, for children will recognize that her observations make perfect sense—for a chicken. Bright, streamlined pictures will show to advantage in a group, and the classroom details are cozy and familiar. This is good for a giggle anytime, but keep it in mind as autumn and the pre-school jitters approach. EB

SUPRANER, ROBYN *Sam Sunday and the Mystery at the Ocean Beach Hotel*; illus. by Will Hillenbrand. Viking, 1996 32p
ISBN 0-670-84797-6 \$14.99 R 5-8 yrs

Detective Sam Sunday (a bear) is depressed because none of his friends have remembered his birthday, so he takes on a puzzling case: items are disappearing from the Ocean Beach Hotel. Everybody he questions is behaving awfully suspiciously—Hester Primm (the pig) is carrying a basket of refreshments, Dan Digger (the mole) is lugging around a record player, and Donald the Grand Duke of Denmark (a goat) and Colonel Gooldens (frog) are caught discussing secret plans. All the secrecy, of course, is due to the suspects’ being Sam’s friends in disguise planning his surprise party, and the mystery resolves in a happy cascade of cake and celebration. There are a few holes in the plot (if Sam can’t recognize his friends in disguise, why did they need an outsider to hire him?), and some of the hard-boiled parody will go right over kids’ heads. The patter is funny, however (“Friends are like steamrollers, thought Sam. Sometimes they leave you flat”), and youngsters may get a kick out of solving the “mystery” before Sam does. Hillenbrand’s illustrations depict Sam as ursinely rawboned and rueful; his bright yellow slicker and the festive palette of the secret celebrants’ outfits are luminous against the pale near-noir of the rainy day. A cheerful and amusing mystery, this might make for an offbeat birthday readaloud. DS

SUTCLIFF, ROSEMARY *The Wanderings of Odysseus: The Story of The Odyssey*; illus. by Alan Lee. Delacorte, 1996 120p
ISBN 0-385-32205-4 \$22.50 R Gr. 5-9

Like its companion volume *Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of The Iliad* (BCCB 1/94), this is a dignified volume with text that reflects epic rhythms and art that honors haunting classical images. Sutcliff organizes the episodes of Odysseus’ twenty-year journey home from Troy into chapters, including encounters with the Cyclops, Aeolus, Circe, the Harpies, Calypso, and Penelope’s suitors who have betrayed him back in Ithaca. The action, originally paced to hold the attention of a listening audience, is nonstop, though the style itself is stately. Here’s cultural literacy ready-made for sequential reading aloud to a high school class as well as handing over to younger students for independent reading or research. Dominated by eerie blue and golden-brown hues, the illustrations will hook browsers with their literal yet evocative depictions of monumental deeds. A map of fabled sites and a key to pronouncing unfamiliar names will help guide first-timers through this seminal adventure. BH

TANAKA, SHELLEY *On Board the Titanic*; illus. by Ken Marschall. Hyperion/Madison Press, 1996 48p (I Was There Books)
ISBN 0-7868-0283-9 \$16.95 R Gr. 3-6

We all know the story: ship + iceberg = tragedy. This fictionalized narrative of the *Titanic* fills in that equation by enlivening it with photographs, cross-sections, maps, diagrams, and informational tidbits. The account itself is couched in pedestrian, Reader's-Digest-y prose, and many of the smaller illustrations are in a similar vein (or are poorly reproduced); it's also a pity there are no footnotes or bibliography for the information in the text, leading readers to wonder what aspects of it were invented. The sheer drama and detail, however, steam right through these drawbacks. More than most accounts, the book conveys the slow but terrible realization that this unthinkable tragedy was, in fact, occurring, and that provisions were insufficient and help too distant to save all. Details of heroism (an anonymous young woman voluntarily leaving an overfilled lifeboat for certain death) and suggestions of, at the very least, inequalities (the proportion of first-class passengers saved compared to the proportion of third-class passengers) give further depth to the account, as does hearing the fate of those individuals we "met" in the story version. The plethora of visuals makes the book a browser's treat; Ken Marschall's full-page art of the ship gives the tragedy an eerie majesty as the glimmering lights sink into a cobalt sea. Kids whose appetites were whetted rather than dampened by Daisy Corning Stone Spedden's *Polar, the Titanic Bear* (BCCB 12/94) will appreciate a closer look at this sensational historic moment. DS

TESTA, MARIA *Nine Candles*; illus. by Amanda Schaffer. Carolrhoda, 1996 32p
ISBN 0-87614-940-9 \$14.21 R Gr. 2-4

It is Raymond's seventh birthday, and he and his father are going to visit his mother in prison. Serving time for larceny (she stole money from the restaurant where she worked), Raymond's mother has arranged for a birthday cake for Raymond and the other visitors. Raymond protests when visiting time is over: "I want you to come home," I cry. "When can you come home?" and Mama promises, "I will be home when there are nine candles on your birthday cake." Raymond goes home with his father to dream of his mother's release from prison. Schaffer's expressionist acrylics have an unexpected liveliness—the main characters are consistently in the foreground, making the individual and not the environment the compositional focus. An author's note cites statistics on the number of children in the U.S. who have a mother incarcerated (1.5 million), making the point that less than 10% of them are cared for by their fathers, most being in foster care or in the care of grandparents. The pedagogic intent of the text is a given, but Testa still manages to communicate familial feeling and closeness, making the separation of mother and child, and not the nature of that separation, the heart of the story. JMD

TUNNELL, MICHAEL O. *The Children of Topaz: The Story of a Japanese-American Internment Camp: Based on a Classroom Diary*; by Michael O. Tunnell and George W. Chilcoat. Holiday House, 1996 74p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-8234-1239-3 \$16.95 Ad Gr. 4-7

While detained in the Topaz, Utah relocation camp, third-grade teacher Anne Yamauchi recorded her students' daily reflections on camp life in a journal, which the children themselves illustrated; entries from this 1943 diary provide a starting point for Tunnell and Chilcoat's examination of Japanese-American internment.

Following an introductory chapter on anti-Japanese sentiment after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and consequent U.S. government restrictions on Nikkei residents, a selection of diary pages are reproduced and analyzed in detail. When, for example, the children note, "On Sunday evening at 7:30 o'clock, an old man, Mr. James H. Wasaka passed away," the authors fill in the rest of the story—Wasaka was shot to death by a perimeter guard under suspicious and highly debatable circumstances. Likewise, children's pastimes and education, camp organization, and the Topaz environs are discussed. Unfortunately, line-by-line examination of the journal entries results in haphazard organization and an odd assortment of vital and ephemeral topics, while crowded design and broad lines of type make the volume appear unnecessarily daunting. Much of the material here is covered in Jerry Stanley's more attractively packaged *I Am an American* (BCCB 11/94), but the ingenuous testimony left by Yamauchi's third-graders may make the Topaz story accessible to an audience slightly younger than Stanley's. Period photos, a reading list that includes children's works, and an index are included. EB

WARNER, SALLY *Some Friend*. Knopf, 1996 156p
ISBN 0-679-87620-0 \$15.00

Ad Gr. 4-6

Twelve-year-old Case Hill (whom readers may remember from *Dog Years*, BCCB 5/95) has a working mother, a father in jail for armed robbery, a somewhat maladjusted little sister, a landlord in a wheelchair, and a best friend headed for foster care. In other words, he's just your average, everyday kid. It is to Warner's credit that she manages to make these characters oddly believable, even amiable, in this incongruously cheerful story about Case's plan to keep Ned from being returned to his troubled mother when his caregiver grandmother has to go into a nursing home. Each chapter is introduced by a message on the Hill family answering machine, a cute device echoed by small thematic thumbnail sketches on the bottom of each page. The one effective underlying theme is the powerlessness of children. Though the story is unrealistically optimistic, aware readers will sigh with relief when Ned returns to his happy foster home, because they know it could be a lot worse. JMD

WARREN, ANDREA *Orphan Train Rider: One Boy's True Story*. Houghton, 1996 80p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-395-69822-7 \$15.95

R Gr. 4-7

Literarily speaking, the orphan trains have been rolling in force lately, with both fiction (Joan Lowery Nixon's *Orphan Train Quartet*) and nonfiction (Annette Fry's *The Orphan Trains*, BCCB 7/94) treatments. Warren takes a more personal approach than Fry, alternating chapters on the general history of the trains with chapters documenting the experience of Lee Nailling, born Alton Lou Clement, who rode an orphan train west in 1926. Nailling's experience was eventually positive, but he had several heartbreaking rejections and separations along the way, and the book is open about the misery as well as the joy that many of the children found. Young readers who had thought of the orphan trains as a long ago and far away drama will find Nailling's emotional biography an eyeopener. There are unfortunately no source notes for any of the many quotes (it seems clear that Nailling's comments are from interviews, but much research is left unsourced); a bibliography and an index are included; black-and-white photos appear throughout. DS

WAWROSE, SUSAN C. *Griswold v. Connecticut: Contraception and the Right of Privacy*. Watts, 1996 [144p] illus. with photographs (Historic Supreme Court Cases)

ISBN 0-531-11249-7 \$22.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

The 1965 Supreme Court decision not only struck down an unusually restrictive state law forbidding provision of contraception, it also defined for the first time a constitutional "right to privacy." Wawrose explains the setting for this particular case, then goes back to examine the history of contraception and the law in the U.S., touching on such figures as Margaret Sanger and Anthony Comstock. She describes earlier efforts to get the Connecticut law struck down, the Supreme Court case that finally overturned it, and the impact that case has had on law and culture since its resolution. The account is more derailed than animated, unfortunately, and the information tends to sink under its own weight; there's little involvement with the drama of the situation, and the brief biographical sketches don't really allow readers to connect with any of the major players. Nonetheless, the author (herself an attorney) writes with clarity about thorny legal questions of precedent and interpretation and capably puts the Griswold case in context in this serviceable history. Endnotes, a paragraph describing useful additional reading, and an index are included; black-and-white photographs (some more relevant than others and at least one misleadingly captioned) appear throughout. DS

WELLS, ROSEMARY *The Language of Doves*; illus. by Greg Shed. Dial, 1996 32p Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1472-6 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1471-8 \$14.99

Ad 6-10 yrs

On a Brooklyn rooftop, an Italian grandfather gives his granddaughter Julietta a birthday dove, then tells her about growing up in an orphanage in Italy and being drafted into the army at age nine to care for the doves used to carry messages during World War I. When her grandfather dies, his doves are sold "to a pigeon breeder in Providence, Rhode Island." (Wells is somewhat poetically cavalier about the difference between doves and pigeons.) But the grief-stricken Julietta receives a dove-carried message from her grandfather: "Do not listen to a word they tell you. Having learned the language of doves, I have learned also to fly. Watch for me." The magical realism element of Julietta's bird returning with the message is credible enough, foreshadowed as it is by the grandfather's spiritual belief in the language of doves. The story teeters on the thin line between sentimentality and sentiment, but Shed's syrupy gouache illustrations (framed, full-page paintings for each double-paged spread), washed in golden light and soft around the edges, sometimes tip the balance. Although the framing device is cumbersome, the child's relationship with a beloved grandfather and the "when I was a boy in the war" aspect of the grandfather's tale may well make this story successful with older children. JMD

WILSON, BUDGE *Mothers and Other Strangers*. Harcourt, 1996 194p

ISBN 0-15-200312-6 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 9-12

Mothers actually don't figure nearly as much in this collection, ironically, as they did in Wilson's *The Leaving* (BCCB 6/92), nor are these short stories as focused for an adolescent audience. The youngest protagonists, featured in the first two stories, are out of school and on the job: one looks back on the intricate dynamics

among her university friends, including a romance later satirized in her roommate's first novel; another finds romance at a campsite where he rushes to get the best view after work one day. The other selections (all previously published, some in adult anthologies) involve middle-aged or elderly characters grappling with loneliness, the difficulties of marriage, or memories of long-ago family problems that have in some way shaped their later lives. Wilson's signature ability to develop characters in quick-study situations is certainly not lost here; her plots are a little more uneven, however, and much of the action is internal, with repeated themes of psychologically abusive fathers and husbands or of the scars left by parents' preferring other siblings. Sophisticated young readers who have started exploring adult fiction will get past openers such as the first sentence of "The House on High Street": "When Virginia was in her midforties, she started thinking about the past—her own past." After two pages they'll plunge into a vivid recollection of the protagonist's epiphany at the house of relatives, where as a ten-year-old she learns of a longstanding love affair between her uncle and his sister-in-law, "old, deaf, and very interesting." Many teenage readers may not make it to the interesting part. BH

WINTERS, KAY *Did You See What I Saw?: Poems about School*; illus. by Martha Weston. Viking, 1996 32p
ISBN 0-670-87118-4 \$13.99

Ad 4-7 yrs

Winters' experience as a teacher shows in her ability to choose subjects schoolchildren take to heart: getting squirted in the nose at a water fountain intended for older—and taller—schoolmates; wondering why the teacher calls on precisely those students who don't know the answer; celebrating the snow day that means no math test. Unfortunately, the poems, with their lack of surprising images, creative word choice, or inventive rhymes, do little to refresh such topics. An occasional humorous rhyme, as in "Lots of Spots" ("There's nothing shy about chicken pox./ Once they are here/they appear in flocks"), can't make up for the labored playfulness of poems like "Behind Closed Doors" ("do you suppose . . . / . . . the computer tutors?/ the numbers slumber?/ the books cook?/ the chairs pair?/ the fish wish?"). The black-outlined figures in Weston's softly colored illustrations are livelier than the poems and adequately—if somewhat generically—express the emotions of children mourning a dead class turtle or reveling in having tricked their teacher on April Fool's Day. Although preschoolers may not mind the extreme simplicity of some of the lines ("It's my day./ A "hi!" day./ A run day./ A fun day"), Winters' references to math tests and passing notes in class seem better suited to an older crowd—who just may demand more verve in their verse. LM

WISLER, G. CLIFTON *Caleb's Choice*. Lodestar, 1996 154p
ISBN 0-525-67526-4 \$14.99

Ad Gr. 4-6

Long-simmering animosities explode when thirteen-year-old Caleb Dulaney, suddenly impoverished, is sent to live with rich maternal relatives in Houston, and for the sake of family peace he is then promptly packed off to his paternal grandmother's boarding house north of Dallas. When Caleb arrives, the area is infested with bounty hunters setting their traps for runaway slaves, or even for freemen without identification, and Caleb and his new-found friend, Granny's hired boy Micah, become reluctantly embroiled in the relatives' Underground Railroad activities. While Caleb's inevitable decision to assist in an illegal conspiracy provides the

moral backbone to the tale, Wisler takes his time getting to it, and the bulk of the novel is devoted to Caleb journeying north by coach, hanging around with the superstitious Micah, and being harassed by slave hunters. Caleb is a congenial, if not entirely credible, narrator, and although his story wraps up too easily with Granny Dulaney's wise words and apple pie, at least the telling is intimate and engaging. However, readers after a more serious look at the perils of the Fugitive Slave Laws might want to consider Guccione's *Come Morning* (BCCB 1/96). EB

WISNIEWSKI, DAVID *Golem*.

See Rogasky, p. 27, for review.

WUNDERLI, STEPHEN *The Heartbeat of Halftime*. Holt, 1996 178p
ISBN 0-8050-4713-1 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 6-8

"It was the year of the holy transformation . . . the year the hands of the great football god gathered together an unwitting band of heathens and turned them into football disciples." And so a motley assortment of football players with an unlikely assortment of nicknames come together as a team to win the championship. Thirteen-year-old Wing is losing his father to cancer, he has lost his mother to her preoccupation with her dying husband, he has lost his dignity to the cafeteria bully, and he is angrily determined not to lose anything else. Emotionally estranged from their parents, Wing and his buddies Taco Bell, Spray Can, and Heat all have something to prove, and they prove it on the football field. The games are related in graphic, involving language, the action always stemming from the immediate emotions of the players, the occasionally overwrought prose highlighting moments of glory amid the sweat and gore. The scene where Wing's father watches from his wheelchair on the sidelines as his injured son wins the final game is a deliberate tearjerker but works in context. Wunderli wavers on the line between showing and telling, occasionally explaining just a little too much, but he has a nice touch with humor and a *Stand by Me* feel for adolescent male dialogue. The cover shows a conservative brick school and clean-cut boys in clean football jerseys, but don't let that stop you—this is an easy booktalk, with a number of "bait" scenes that will reel in potential readers, even if the booktalker's not a football fan. JMD

YACCARINO, DAN *If I Had a Robot*; written and illus. by Dan Yaccarino. Viking, 1996 32p
ISBN 0-670-86936-8 \$14.99 R 5-8 yrs

Vibrant colors in geometric shapes spill across the pages in young Phil's fantasy of life with a remote-controlled robot. Predictably, the robot does all those unpleasant tasks Phil hates, from eating his vegetables ("Boy! I hate vegetables! I wish someone else would eat them for me!") to protecting him from bullies ("And those kids wouldn't dare pick on me if I had a robot"). Witty illustrations experiment with proportion and point of view (we always look *up* to the robot) while playfully distorting shapes in a mirrors-in-the-funhouse way. The robot morphs from shape to shape, color to color, depending upon the task undertaken (at school, it has a light bulb for a brain). Yaccarino keeps the visual suspense going by switching from cartoony panels to double-page spreads, but the unoriginal text weakens the overall production. It comes as no surprise when Mom bribes Phil with chocolate

cake for finishing his vegetables; ditto when he caves in and scarfs 'em down ("Like I always say, if you want something done right, you've got to do it yourself?"). Still and all, the younger set is bound to be captivated by the robotic conceit and the graphically bold art. SSV

YERXA, LEO *A Fish Tale Or, The Little One That Got Away*; written and illus. by Leo Yerxa. Douglas & McIntyre/Groundwood, 1996 32p
ISBN 0-88899-247-5 \$17.95 M Gr. 3-6

Our piscine narrator struggles with his fishy adolescence: he's just flunked out of dart school, and he's contemplating great questions of the universe ("And if God did make all fish equal, why were some long and others short, some big and others small? Did it begin with one big splash? And what of God? Was he a cod, or was he a she and really a bass?"). A passing pike named Jack lures the narrator into danger with flashy talk of wondrous bait; the small fry survives by virtue of being tossed back in when the fisherman pronounces "You're too small to fry." Now an elder statesfish, our hero teaches darting himself and has authored a book of his adventure, while Jack is "wanted by the authorities in several ponds for his involvement in getting other fish hooked." There are some amusing jokes here, but the book is ultimately problematic. Whether taken as a serious parable or as a poker-faced parody (signals are mixed), the tale's message is confusing and the tonal inconsistencies unsettling. The humor shifts between various levels of sophistication, so that much of it will be over the heads of the young audience, and the story is too slight to carry the book without it. Visually, it's a beautiful book, with oversized pages alternating between spreads washed with underwater shades and fields of pristine white, both dotted with bug-eyed fish glimmering against their backgrounds (it's too bad that two of the most dramatic spreads are hampered by the gutter). Kids who enjoy a good meaningful fish story should turn to Lionni's *Swimmy* (BCCB 3/64); they'll enjoy the artwork here, but they'll probably find both the humor and the concepts puzzling. DS



Note: The bound book of Robie Harris' *Happy Birth Day!*, published by Candlewick Press, will not contain the fill-in-the-blanks birth record mentioned in the *Bulletin's* July review.

PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

Annual '96: Fiction; Paper ed. ISBN 1-55858-594-X; 213p. *Annual '96: Non Fiction*; Paper ed. ISBN 1-558580-595-8; 150p. Each book: Neugebauer/North-South, 1996. \$45.00. illus. with photographs.

1996 was the thirtieth anniversary of the Bologna Illustrators' Exhibition, and the art displayed there seems to be as diverse as ever. As usual, for U.S. readers, this is a chance to see the new, not to review the familiar (few U.S. artists are included), and to revel in seeing an array of impressive artwork on oversized glossy pages. The nonfiction includes an enticing array of sturdy realism, delicate detail, and dramatic history, while the fiction artwork demonstrates a range of artistic visions from subtle intricacy to dark surrealism to edgy modernism. The fiction volume opens with a special piece on its cover artist, John Rowe. Both volumes include comments from the selection committee in English and Italian, and, in a new feature, both volumes finish with a matte-page section offering a photo and brief biographical information on each artist. DS

Herz, Sarah K. *From Hinton to Hamlet: Building Bridges between Young Adult Literature and the Classics*; by Sarah K. Herz with Donald R. Gallo. Greenwood, 1996. 127p. ISBN 0-313-28636-1. \$29.95.

Herz is a long-term teacher of junior-high and high-school students who was converted, despite her initial opposition, to the use of young-adult literature in literature curricula. She writes here of its value for her and her students, the ways she has used the genre, and other subjects for which YA literature has instructional relevance. Topics covered range from a summary of Louise Rosenblatt's reader-response theories to possible specific textual pairings. The details aren't the book's best aspect: the plot summaries tend to be perfunctory and conceptually straitened, and some of the pairings seem a bit contrived (though that doesn't preclude useful discussion). The author's strengths are her palpable enthusiasm and conviction and her accessible tone, as well as her encouragement to seek fresh resources outside the canon of traditional curricular texts. A particularly useful chapter details places to go for more information, ranging from journals to catalogs to students themselves—though unfortunately no on-line resources are mentioned. Educators looking for some advice on this kind of curriculum and librarians looking to assist and encourage them will find this a useful volume. A bibliography and an index are included. DS



SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

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

- ACTIVITY BOOKS:** Irvine;
 Roche
Adoption: Warren
African Americans: Awmiller;
 Lyons
African Americans—fiction:
 Partridge; Siegelson
African Americans—stories: Hest;
 Johnston
ALPHABET BOOKS: Slate
American Indians: Lowery; St.
 George
American Indians—fiction:
 Mitchell
Angels—fiction: McKelvey
Animals—poetry: McQuinn
Animals—stories: Slate; Supraner
Archaeology—fiction: Hill
Art: Carlson; Croll; Harrison;
 Lyons; Roche
Art and artists—stories: Hest
Asian Americans: Tunnell
Aunts—fiction: Harding
BIOGRAPHIES: Croll;
 Fleischman; Harrison; Keller;
 Kuklin; Lowery; Lyons; St.
 George; Stanley
Birds—stories: Wells
Birthdays—stories: Hest; Supraner
Botany: Croll
Brothers and sisters—stories:
 Gibbons
Brothers—fiction: Ewing
California—fiction: Cushman
Cats—fiction: Hurwitz
Chickens—stories: Stoeke
China—poetry: Ho
Christmas: Sabuda
Civics: Wawrose
Commerce: Lewin
Creative writing: Fleischman
Crime and criminals: Jones, R.
Crime and criminals—fiction:
 Ewing; Testa
Current events: Kuklin; Lorbiecki
Death—poetry: Duffy
Dogs—fiction: McKelvey
Dogs—stories: Brown
Doors—stories: Soto
Emotions—stories: Blumenthal
Ethics and values: Kuklin;
 Lorbiecki
FABLES: Yerxa
Fairies—stories: Buehner
FANTASY: Evans; Gerstein
Farm life—stories: Buehner
Fathers and daughters—fiction:
 Hill; McKelvey
Fathers and daughters—stories:
 Rice; Riecken
Fathers and sons—fiction: Riggs
Fish—stories: Yerxa
Floods—fiction: McKelvey
FOLKTALES AND
FAIRYTALES: Hooks; Philip;
 Rogasky; Wisniewski
Food and eating—stories:
 Blumenthal
Foster care—fiction: Warner

- Friends—fiction: Hurwitz; Larson;
 Lorbiecki; Warner; Wunderli
 Friends—poetry: Singer
FUNNY STORIES: McManus
 Games: Silbaugh
 Gangs—fiction: Ewing
 Gold Rush—fiction: Cushman
 Grandfathers—fiction: Rosselson
 Grandfathers—stories: Wells
 Guns—fiction: Lorbiecki
Health: Wawrose
HISTORICAL FICTION:
 Cushman; Hill; McCully;
 Partridge; Wisler
History: Tanaka
History, Renaissance: Stanley
History, U.S.: Johnston; Jones, R.;
 McCully; St. George; Tunnell;
 Warren; Wawrose
History, world: Maestro
Holidays: Irvine
 Horses—fiction: Farley
 India—stories: Bannerman
 Inventions: Jones, C.
 Islands—fiction: Siegelson
 Japanese Americans: Tunnell
 Judaism: Rogasky; Wisniewski
 Latinos—Carlson
 Latinos—stories: Riecken
 Learning disabilities—fiction:
 Dwyer
Literature, American: Philip
Literature, children's: Fleischman
Marine biology: Guiberson
 Markets: Lewin
 Mother and daughters—stories:
 Blumenthal
 Mothers and daughters—fiction:
 Cushman
 Mothers and sons—fiction:
 Harding; Testa
 Movies—fiction: Farley
Music: Awmiller; Carlson
 Music—fiction: Rosselson
MYSTERIES: Cadnum; Supraner
MYTHOLOGY, CLASSICAL:
 Craft; Sutcliff
Nature study: Guiberson; London
 Orphans: Warren
 Photography: Keller
Physical education: Morris
POETRY: Carlson; Duffy; McQuinn;
 Prelutsky; Singer
POP-UP BOOKS: Sabuda
 Presidents: Jones, R.
 Rabbits—stories: London
Reading aloud: Duffy; Herman; Ho;
 Prelutsky; Sutcliff
Reading, beginning: Gerstein
Religious education: Maestro; Rogasky;
 Wisniewski
 Robots—stories: Yaccarino
Rural life: Partridge
 School—fiction: Evans; Larson
 School—poetry: Singer; Winters
 School—stories: Slate; Stoeke
 Scotland—stories: Brown
 Ships: Tanaka
SHORT STORIES: McManus; Philip;
 Wilson
 Siblings—fiction: Cadnum; Herman
 Slavery—fiction: Wisler
 Slavery—stories: Johnston
Social studies: Carlson
SPORTS STORIES: Wunderli
 Stepparents—stories: Gibbons
 Storytelling—fiction: Siegelson
Storytime: Bannerman; Blumenthal;
 McQuinn; Soto; Stoeke; Winters;
 Yaccarino
 Swimming—stories: Rice
TALL TALES: McManus
 Tigers—stories: Bannerman
 Toys—fiction: Gerstein
Transportation: Tanaka
 Turtles: Guiberson
 Voyages and travel: Tanaka
 Weddings—fiction: Herman
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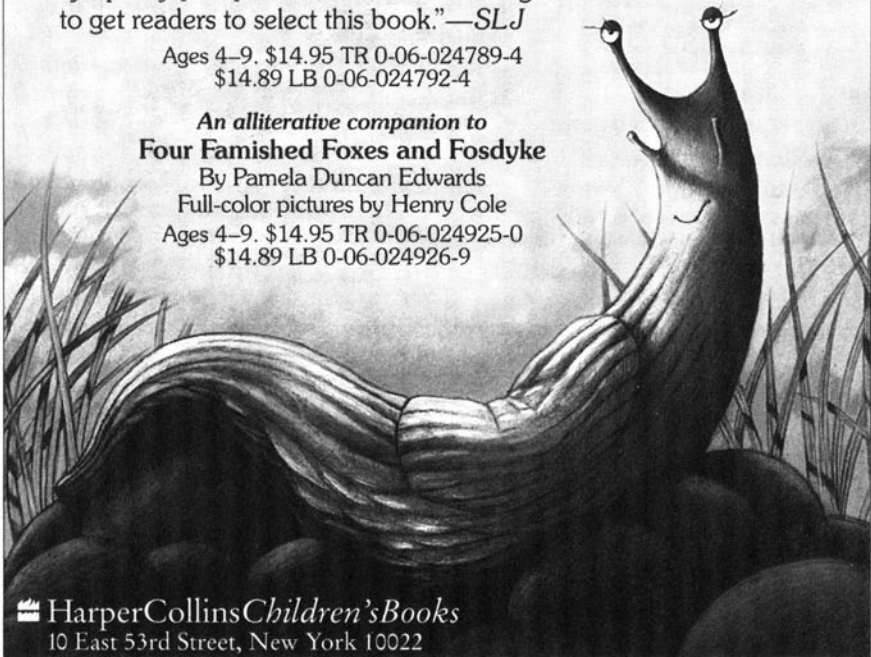
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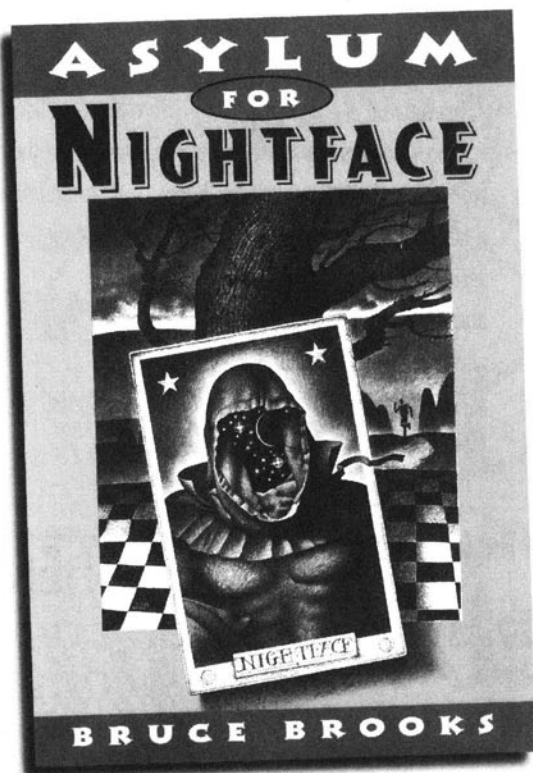
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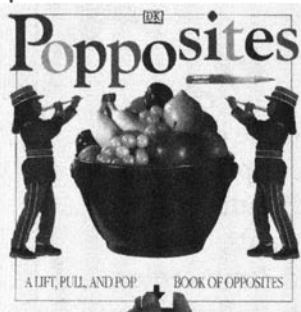
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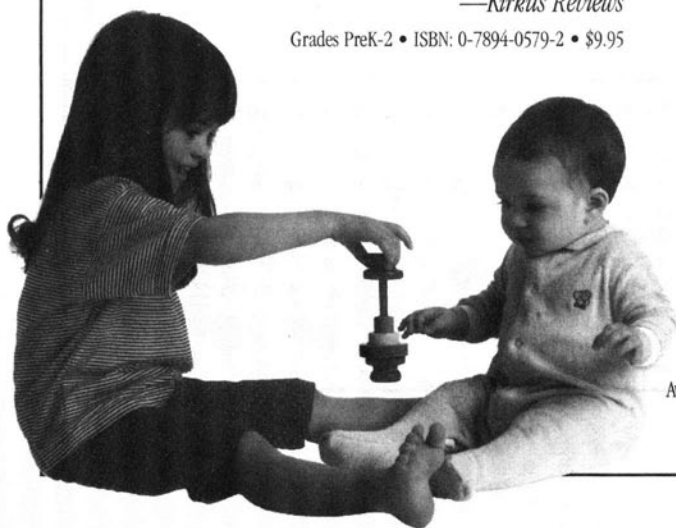
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