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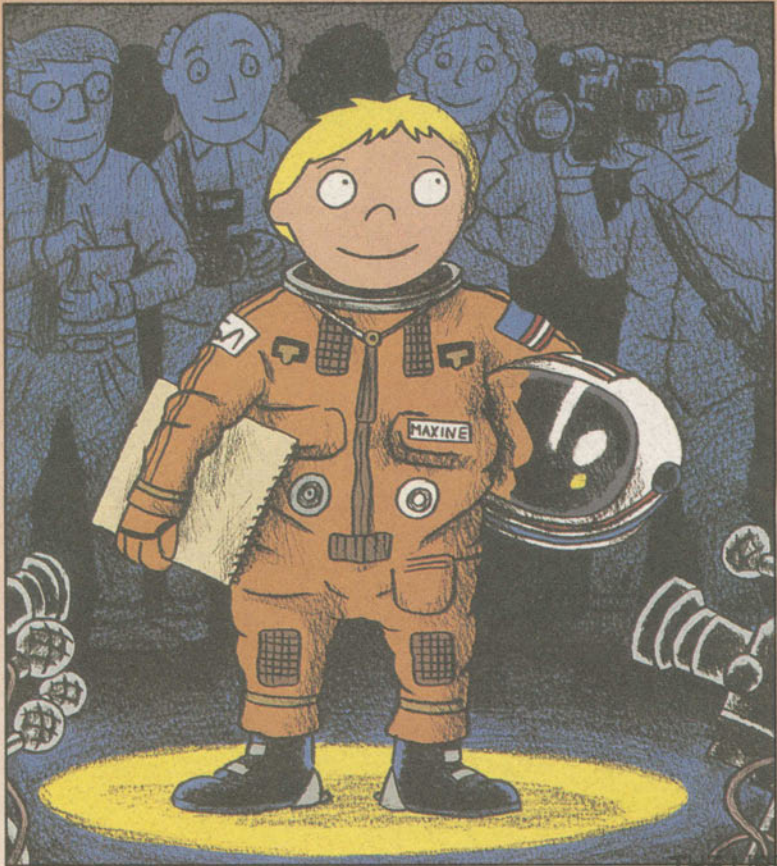
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THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

May 1997
Vol. 50 No. 9



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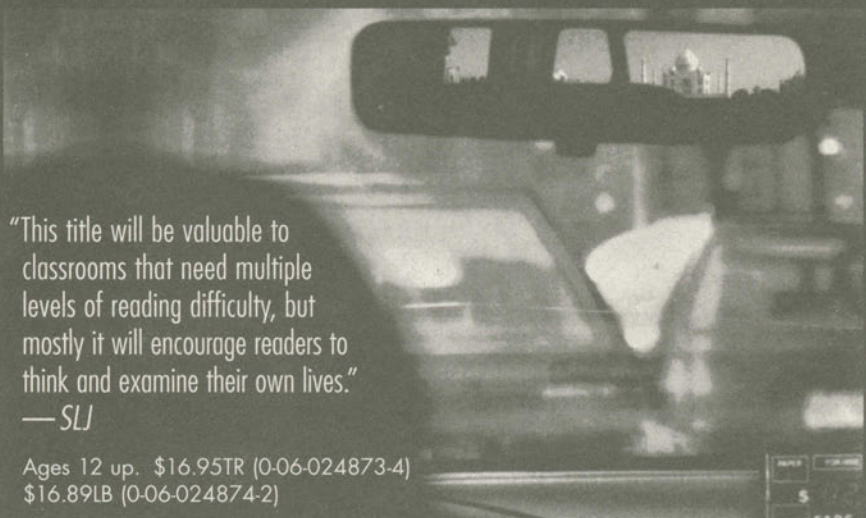
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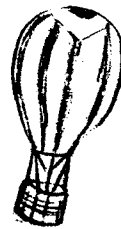
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T H E B U L L E T I N

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| | |
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| * | Asterisks denote books of special distinction. |
| R | Recommended. |
| Ad | Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area. |
| M | Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase. |
| NR | Not recommended. |
| SpC | Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections. |
| SpR | A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it. |

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THE BIG PICTURE

Floating Home

by David Getz; illustrated by Michael Rex

Maxine's homework assignment is to look at and draw her home in a "new way," and in this wish-fulfillment picture book she does just that. She suits up and takes a shuttle ride to view her home from a completely new perspective—outer space. The scene shifts from Maxine's neighborhood to the Kennedy Space Center, where Maxine is preparing to be the youngest astronaut ever to ride on the space shuttle. The book follows the intrepid eight-year-old as she takes her last shower for two weeks ("You don't shower in a space shuttle. Water does not fall from the nozzle. Nothing falls inside a shuttle in space"), breakfasts on cereal and milk, and is interviewed by the press ("Maxine, why are you doing it?" 'Art,' Maxine told them. 'I'm doing it for art'").

Getz (who interviewed NASA officials and astronauts for background on this book) does a fine job combining *Everykid's* space fantasy with the realities of astronaut life, including the concrete specifics that rivet young readers. Maxine suits up: the first layer is a huge diaper ("You gotta wear it," a woman from NASA told her. 'You could be sitting in your seat waiting to launch for hours. You can't raise your hand and ask to go'), followed by thermal underwear so she won't get too cold, and a cooling suit so she won't get too hot ("The cooling suit had little tubes of water sewn in the bottom and top. It looked like a Spider-Man costume"). Finally, "feeling like a hundred pound duck in a diaper, Maxine waddled over to the van that would take her to the launch pad. . . . And then she saw the shuttle. It was alive. Suspended above the pad, the vehicle was lit by dazzlingly bright xenon lights, as if it were an actor, stage center, ready for his big speech. And it was breathing. Exhaling steam from its top and bottom, it reminded Maxine of a dragon."

The text gives a blow-by-blow description of Maxine's physical responses to the space launch from the feeling of immense pressure as the shuttle blasts off that increases until it's hard to breathe and impossible to move to the weightlessness when she escapes the earth's atmosphere that makes her a little sick. And the view is spectacular: "There in her window was Earth. It was dazzling, sitting like a royal-blue gem on black velvet. At its curved edge, on the horizon, was a thin, bright fluorescent blue band. The atmosphere. She was looking down at the air she had breathed." Maxine is ready to draw her picture. "But where was her home? Where was her town, her city, her state? . . . Someone had forgotten to draw in the lines! Where were the lines that divided up the continents into countries? . . . There were no lines. It was just one Earth. It was her home."

Rex's acrylic paintings have a cartoony appeal as the bright-eyed Maxine cheerfully takes on NASA, the media, and outer space, all with the graceful aplomb of a very self-possessed grade schooler. The compositions are varied as full-page

illustrations alternate with three-quarter and half-page pictures, with the occasional vignette to break up large text blocks. The illustrations, like the text, contain those details that enrich and add depth to what could be a much less substantial story, from the planetary endpapers to all the items floating around the gravity-free shuttle cabin. The palette is heavy on the blues: blue sky, blue earth, blue water, all offset by Maxine in her orange suit floating in the white shuttle craft. Maxine's is the eye-catching, dominant figure in nearly every spread: stocky, purposeful, and cheerful as all get out. The final double-page illustration of Maxine floating in the cabin, drawing the Earth on her sketch pad as her colored pencils and globe pencil sharpener float around her, is remarkably satisfying.

More detailed and exact than Byron Barton's *I Want to Be an Astronaut* (BCCB 10/88) and with a fantasy element missing from Baird's *Space Camp* (6/92), this title serves those early readers who are too old for the former and too young for the latter. It's a you-are-there, kid's-eye view of a shuttle flight, told simply and directly in rich language young readers will relish. Getz moves easily between the different demands of fiction and nonfiction, resulting in an unusually involving story. The underlying message that there are no borders when you view earth from space is drawn gently and, within the context of Maxine's story, logically. And it doesn't hurt that the youngest astronaut in space is a girl. (Imprint information appears on p. 321.)

Janice M. Del Negro, Editor



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ADLER, DAVID A. *Easy Math Puzzles*; illus. by Cynthia Fisher. Holiday House, 1997 32p

ISBN 0-8234-1283-0 \$14.95

Ad Gr. 2-4

Easy Logic Puzzles might be a better title, because there are several types of conundrums to challenge young math aficionados and vex tunnel thinkers of all ages. Standard math word problems are included, as expected: "This board is three feet long. How many times would you have to cut this board to make 3 shelves each 1 foot long?" Others call for careful listening: "It takes 12 penny candies to make one dozen. How many nickel candies are in a dozen?" Still others involve trickery: "How can you divide this pizza into 8 equal slices using just 3 cuts?" (Hint: No one said you couldn't stack some pieces!) Many of the puzzles are old standbys, and the black-and-white cartoon illustrations make them seem even more shopworn. Still, they'll be new to the youngest readers, who will be kept on their toes by the variety of puzzle types, and even the most jaded math teachers can keep a few teasers nearby for class warm-ups and downtime fillers. EB

ADOFF, ARNOLD, comp. *I Am the Darker Brother: An Anthology of Modern Poems by African Americans*. Simon, 1997 208p

Trade ed. ISBN 0-689-81241-8 \$16.00

Paper ed. ISBN 0-689-80869-0 \$4.99

R Gr. 6-12

Librarians who have considered the earlier edition of this title—in 1968, one of the earliest young people's anthologies to celebrate African-American poets—to be a touchstone will find the new edition enriched beyond the original sixty-four selections to include twenty-one newer poems by stars such as Maya Angelou, Rita Dove, Audre Lorde, Ishmael Reed, and Etheridge Knight. Rudine Sims Bishop contributes an intelligent introductory overview ("Notes from a Darker Sister") and Nikki Giovanni a pithy foreword. The organization of the poems is effective (though the poem to Rosa Parks is out of sync in the sequence of poems to Satch, Mahalia, Bird, and Coltrane), but the notes could have been more helpfully expanded: for instance, why not explain that the title of Myron O'Higgins' poem "Vaticide" means the killing of a prophet (many student dictionaries don't include the word) in addition to telling who Gandhi was? However, browsers who don't plug into the more complex poems will find many others accessible, with a range from searing story to polemical indictment to delicate nuance. Owen Dodson's musical "Yardbird's Skull (for Charlie Parker)" and Ray Durem's sly "Award [A gold watch to the FBI man who has followed me for 25 years]" blow through the mind like a fresh wind. Notes on each poem, brief biographies of the poets, and indices of titles and first lines are included. BH

ALEXANDER, SALLY HOBART *On My Own: The Journey Continues*. Farrar, 1997 [176p]

ISBN 0-374-35641-6 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-12

In *Taking Hold* (BCCB 1/95) the author described the onset of her blindness, its effects on her life and relationships, and her completion of studies at the Pittsburgh Guild for the Blind; here she covers her teaching at the Guild, her struggle with increasing loss of sight and the diagnosis of a hearing deficit, and her social and vocational ups and downs. This is a lot more episodic than the previous book, and young readers may feel distanced by both the adult slant and the Vietnam-era details. The writing is also weak when it comes to conveying the emotional impact of many of Alexander's relationships, so that the romantic and interpersonal dramas tend to fall flat. Despite problems in the telling the story is still involving, with enlightening details and the appeal of peeking into an author's past (including her meeting her husband). Those who finished the first book wanting more will welcome the new addition. DS

APPELT, KATHI *I See the Moon*; illus. by Debra Reid Jenkins. Eerdmans, 1997 [24p]

ISBN 0-8028-5118-5 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 3-6 yrs

A little girl adrift on the sea in her tiny boat is helped back to safety by moonlight, starlight, providential wind, and a guiding dove. After contemplating the power that assists her ("Who told the wind to fill up my sail?"), she realizes that "it's God who's with me wherever I go." Kids will probably find the literal level of the story a bit confusing—what's a little kid doing alone on a boat anyway?—so adult assis-

tance will be required to explain the larger point. The tetrameter couplets are appropriately simple and make good use of the repeated questions, but the rhythm and phrasing are inclined to be awkward; readers-aloud tempted by the opening "I see the moon and the moon sees me" to maintain the jaunty tempo of the song will be forced to abandon ship quickly. The art is luminescent pastel highlighted with gold leaf, which is a little on the gift-wrappy side but nonetheless possesses a glittery charm. Despite the flaws, this would make a nice if sentimental theological bedtime read for kids accustomed to the metaphor. DS

AXELROD, AMY *Pigs in the Pantry: Fun with Math and Cooking*; illus. by Sharon McGinley-Nally. Simon, 1997 [34p]
ISBN 0-689-80665-5 \$13.00 M 5-8 yrs

Mrs. Pig's ailing, so Mr. Pig and his offspring decide to get her back on her feet by fixing her favorite "Firehouse Chili." Clearly not the math champs Axelrod would like her audience to become, the Pigs misread or ignore the recipe's measurements and steps (included in a two-page spread) and predictably produce an inedible, smoking mess. An appended chart of "Measurement Facts" is intended to help the audience analyze and "correct" the Pigs' mistakes. However, there is no hint of how actually to do the required math, and by the time a listener can perform the multiplication and/or division necessary for the conversions, it's doubtful he or she would care anything about a picture-book kitchen full of silly pigs. The recipe itself is imprecise, calling for "6 cups" of beans, but not explicitly stating they should be canned beans and offering no amounts for the optional ingredients. The recipe's caveat "Please ask an adult for help!" applies to this title's math problems as well; it's going to take a lot of adult intervention to get this meal on the table. EB

BAILLIE, ALLAN *Secrets of Walden Rising*. Viking, 1997 168p
ISBN 0-670-87351-9 \$13.99 Ad Gr. 7-10

Brendan misses England and he hates his new life in drought-ridden small-town Australia, which seems to hate him right back. Since his new schoolmates sneer at the interloper, he spends his time alone, and he's particularly fond of the old reservoir, Fedder Lake. As the drought takes its toll on the reservoir, he begins to see strange things in the water, things which eventually prove to be the drowned town of Walden. Rumors of old treasure in Walden result in Brendan's pairing up with his chief tormentor, Bago, for the search, until they encounter another treasure-seeker, whose desperation has made him very dangerous indeed. This isn't nearly as good as that other book about antipodean drowned villages, William Mayne's *Low Tide* (BCCB 3/93); it takes a long time to get started, and it's unnecessarily overlaid with a multitude of personal psychodramas. Baillie's excellent at depicting the possibly fantastical elements of Walden's resurrection, however, and at placing these events in a larger history. The fascination of Brendan's private (or so he thinks) world and an exciting climax will reward those readers who persevere. DS

BAIUL, OKSANA *Oksana: My Own Story*; as told to Heather Alexander. Random House, 1997 46p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-679-88382-7 \$16.99 Ad Gr. 3-5

As young skating aficionados know, Baiul won the gold at the last Winter Olympics, and the little Ukrainian orphan won a great deal of popular sentiment as well.

This is a brief first-person account of her life and the development of her skating skills, culminating in her gold medal. The book isn't up to the standard of *Jill Trenary* (BCCB 3/90), which used a tight focus to provide genuine insight into the experience of a top skater. Here a breathless narration skitters over the top of a life, resulting in a hardcover souvenir brochure (complete with flimsy pages and pink frou-frou in the design) rather than any real closeness to the glamorous world that readers will long to know more of. There are enough details about coaching and costumes and famous friends to lure young ice bunnies, however, and they'll probably relish flipping through the pages. DS

BARTOLETTI, SUSAN CAMPBELL *Dancing with Dziadziu*; illus. by Annika Nelson. Harcourt, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-15-200675-3 \$15.00 Ad 6-9 yrs

"I remember when my grandmother was round as a loaf of bread and my arms couldn't fit around her waist. Now Babci's fingers are cold, and the bones float inside her skin." The melancholy of these opening lines permeates this tale of a little girl's relationship with her dying grandmother, who reminisces about her girlhood in Poland to while away the days until she is reunited with her deceased husband, and can "see Dziadziu in his white shirt again." Many of the Old World details that comprise Babci's memories will intrigue listeners—chickens' feet were painted blue so the family could tell their stock from their neighbors'; Grandfather managed to steal "plenty of kisses," even though Babci's Papa watched them courting on the porch. Bartoletti threads reminders of Babci's imminent death throughout the narration, and listeners who might otherwise warm to these cozy vignettes may find the undertone of sadness oppressive. Even the bright Easter colors of the linocut illustrations fail to relieve their stiff formality. While this is clearly not the selection for Grandparents' Day at school, it may well touch a chord with children facing the loss of their own Babcis. EB

BATEMAN, TERESA *The Ring of Truth: An Original Irish Tale*; illus. by Omar Rayyan. Holiday House, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-8234-1255-5 \$15.95 R Gr. 3-6

The story of Patrick O'Kelley is a simple one. A peddler accustomed to making his living by bending, if not totally obliterating, the truth, he makes the mistake of saying "I can spout better blarney than the king of the leprechauns himself." Well, quicker than you can say kiss me, I'm Irish, Patrick finds himself in the hall of the leprechaun king, recipient of a lovely emerald and gold ring. It is the ring of truth, which, once on his pinky finger, assures that he will never embellish the truth again as long as he lives. But that doesn't stop him from winning the Donegal blarney contest, which he does by telling nothing but the plain unvarnished truth about his encounter with the little people. Bateman's "original Irish tale" is set in a once-upon-a-time Ireland that is visually represented with such a profusion of Celtic symbols and imagery that it positively boggles the eye. Celtic knots, Kell-like illuminated capital letters, ruddy-faced individuals with twinkling eyes, and hidden fairy folk roam across green and foggy landscapes in a manner that can only be described as, well, visual blarney. Rayyan's washed-out watercolors are an overwhelmingly crowded phantasmagoria of Celtic pride, but Bateman's text has a tellable resonance about it that makes it a worthy readaloud and storytelling choice. JMD

BELL, LILI *The Sea Maidens of Japan*; illus. by Erin McGonigle Brammer. Ideals, 1997 32p
ISBN 1-57102-095-0 \$14.95 R 5-9 yrs

Kiyomi wants, and indeed is expected, to become an *ama* like her mother, a sea diver who harvests fish without the aid of breathing apparatus. Fear of the water, though, leads her to consider the course her older sisters have taken—"the modern way of life" at fish canneries in the city. After several years of waiting and practice, during which Kiyomi becomes more intimately acquainted with the coastal waters and their denizens, she makes her first deep dive and is guided back to the surface by the sea turtle she herself had guided to the sea when it was a hatchling. Pale and trembling from her accomplishment, Kiyomi sits on the beach "among the brave *ama*, the sea maidens of Japan." Unusual and dangerous, the fishing technique itself should captivate a young audience, while Brammer's grainy oil wash paintings of chilly green waters and foggy beaches (to say nothing of the *amas'* faces, eerily greased with protective white cream) extend the shivers. A brief author's note offers more information on two forms of *ama* diving; a pronunciation guide is also included. For a perfect pairing, read this along with Jan Andrews' *Very Last First Time* (BCCB 9/86). EB

BORTON, LADY *Junk Pile!*; illus. by Kimberly Bulcken Root. Philomel, 1997 [32p]
ISBN 0-399-22728-8 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys R* 5-8 yrs

What a relief! Here are some illustrations based not on photographs of adorable children but on the creative imagining of dynamic characters. These include Papa, a mechanic with a distinctive philosophy—"Ain't nobody don't need a mechanic"—that translates into a rusty streak of self-confidence for his shy daughter Jamie, who helps stack old car parts around their trailer, pushes her brother's wheelchair from the school bus, and endures the taunts of a boy she finally converts with . . . car parts! Not to mention Wing, a dog whose ears justify his name so completely that no further comment is needed or given. Like Williams' *Galimoto* (BCCB 4/90), this is a story that celebrates invention inventively: Jamie deals with the bully not by overcoming him but by challenging him to create something ingenious and to join her on her own fantastical school bus. The setting is run-down Appalachia, the viewpoint is a child's world of pain and play, and the art is Kimberly Bulcken Root's unique translation of understated watercolors, varied perspective, and lively forms into subtly emotive illustration. BH

BRIGHTON, CATHERINE *My Napoleon*; written and illus. by Catherine Brighton. Millbrook, 1997 29p
ISBN 0-7613-0106-2 \$16.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

When Napoleon was exiled to St. Helena, he struck up a friendship with Betsy, the young daughter of his prison-keeper. This account, taken from Betsy's adult reminiscences, is couched in the form of entries from her diary; it tells of Bonaparte's arrival, their gambols about the island, and, finally, her return to England. The story of a special relationship between a child and an adult has its appeal, and Brighton does a good job of keeping the language simple without losing historical flavor. The episodic narrative doesn't have much shape, however, and it's doubtful that many youngsters in the U.S. will have enough knowledge of the little

corporal to understand the difference of this slant, or even the context. The water-color illustrations offer some attractive vistas of the island and its pleasures, but the absence of modeling in the figures makes them stiff and distant. This is probably too far from the beaten conceptual path for most kids, but the alternative approach to a major historical figure may intrigue some. A biographical timeline for Napoleon is included. DS

BUCKLEY, HELEN E. *Moonlight Kite*; illus. by Elise Primavera. Lothrop, 1997 32p
 Library ed. ISBN 0-688-10932-2 \$15.93
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-10931-4 \$16.00 Ad 5-8 yrs

In a monastery overlooking the sea, three forgotten monks lead solitary if spiritually fulfilling lives until the arrival of two children and their kite. When Anarilla and Nicholas lose their kite to a tree, the three monks (who have taken a vow of silence) leave the monastery, retrieve the kite, and go kite flying in the moonlight. When the children return the next day, they find their kite in "another, smaller tree"; the next day, there are two kites, one a newly made gift of the monks; and "so it came about when the wind was right, Nicholas and Anarilla flew the kites by day and the monks flew them by night." This is all nice enough but the story is about the grown-ups, and it never communicates or connects to a child's frame of reference. Primavera's watercolors are attractively whimsical, the deep blue palette adding richness to the starry night sky while the daylight sky is brought to breezy life by the colorful flying kites. The characters' body language and facial expressions have vigor and personality, and the final illustration of the moonlit monastery looming over the tiny figures of the monks as they fly kites over the sea makes a lovely visual conclusion to this comparatively flat story. JMD

BUNTING, EVE *I Am the Mummy Heb-Nefert*; illus. by David Christiana. Harcourt, 1997 32p
 ISBN 0-15-200497-3 \$15.00 R Gr. 3-6

An imaginary voice from the past speaks: "I am the mummy Heb-Nefert,/ black as night,/ stretched as tight/ as leather on a drum./ My arms are folded/ on my hollow chest/ where once my live heart beat." In this evocation of life in ancient Egypt, the mummy Heb-Nefert speaks of what it was like to be the beloved wife of the pharaoh's brother, how they sailed in barges on the Nile, and feasted in gardens while harpists played. And then death: "My golden cat, Nebut, I loved./ She loved me, too,/ and came with me/ into the silent twilight of the afterlife/ when day changed to eternity." Heb-Nefert describes the mummification process, her internment, and her final destination: a glass coffin "under lights in quiet rooms," as people pass by and say "This was a person?" She muses, "How foolish that they do not see/ how all things change and so will they." Bunting's text is deliberately restrained, with a formality that suits the speaker as she comments with longing and wisdom on her life, her own passing, and the passage of time. While the impressionistic tone of Christiana's watercolors is sometimes a little vague, and the compositions vary in effectiveness, for the most part the paintings are as evocative and understated as the text as they reflect the golden days of love on a royal barge, the darkness of the tomb, and the starkness of the mummy wrapped in ancient linens under museum lights. A clearer sense of chronology would be useful, but this will intrigue those kids fascinated by Ancient Egypt and even those who aren't. JMD

CHERRY, LYNNE *Flute's Journey: The Life of a Wood Thrush*; written and illus. by Lynne Cherry. Gulliver Green/Harcourt, 1997 [34p]

ISBN 0-15-292853-7 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 2-5

The life of the ordinary wood thrush is no picnic, what with natural dangers such as hawks, cats, and raccoons, and when man-made hazards are added, the odds of extinction increase. That's the message of Cherry, the director of the Center for Children's Environmental Literature, who walks the reader through Flute's birth, first migration, and mating season. The didactic story relentlessly drives home the environmental devastation of suburban sprawl—clear-cut forests, paved over wetlands, pesticides on lawns. The illustrations are a bird-lover's delight (although the token humans remain flat), with detailed watercolors of dozens of species. Cherry's maps and endpapers help us to locate the various species in North and Central America and follow their migrations. The author includes a note urging young ornithologists to help the cause during spring and fall migrations by keeping cats indoors, urging parents not to use pesticides, planting berry bushes and trees for feeding and nesting, and working to protect mature forests. SSV

CHIN-LEE, CYNTHIA *A Is for Asia*; illus. by Yumi Heo. Kroupa/Orchard, 1997 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-33011-7 \$16.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30011-0 \$15.95

Ad 5-8 yrs

Using the alphabet as a frame, Chin-Lee gives little factoids about various aspects of Asian life. Each letter is represented by an object or aspect of Asian culture ("A is for Asia, one third of the earth"; or "D is for dragonboats, sweeping the water"; or "R is for rice, fried, steamed or curried") and is then followed by a brief explanation of the object/aspect's place in its specific culture. Granted, individual cultures cannot be covered with any depth whatsoever in these brief bits, but Chin-Lee's cultural snippets have some child appeal, from elephants to kites, from sweets to yurts, from origami to pandas, even if they occasionally smack of a touristy Asia-as-exotica approach. Yumi Heo's watercolors are appealingly whimsical and the varying compositions are energetic as they reflect Siberian sled races, children eating rice from lacquered bowls, and dancers leaping and spinning to the gamelan. While this title misleadingly gives the impression of a monolithic Asia, it may still have its uses in the collection and the curriculum. JMD

COLLARD, SNEED B., III *Animal Dads*; illus. by Steve Jenkins. Houghton, 1997 32p

ISBN 0-395-83621-2 \$15.95

R 5-8 yrs

"Dads do many things" begins this special offering about animal dads of all kinds. Sticklebacks (architect dads), poison-arrow frogs (a protective policeman-like dad), and pipefish (dads who give birth) are just three of twenty species represented here in this animal spin on fatherhood. Simple lead-in phrases ("Sometimes dads play") accompany short paragraphs chock-full of fun facts, as in the case of dwarf mongoose dads: "Mom rarely plays with her youngsters, but Dad often joins in a playful romp in the dirt." (Is Mom perhaps doing the mongoose laundry?) Cut-paper collages done in full color enrich the text with plenty of textural interest, providing dads like the western meadowlark, the gorilla, and the cichlid fish (who protects his young from enemies by hiding them in his mouth) with the appropri-

ate feathers, fins, or fur. There are no deadbeat dads here. Even the honor of lion dads is defended: "Lion dads might seem like lazy dads, but that's not always true. . . . Father lions guard the females and cubs and defend the pride's territory from other lions. All of this can be a lot of work." For Father's Day or any day, this dishes up enough stuff to keep the "my daddy's bigger than your daddy" wars at bay for awhile. PM

COOPER, ILENE *The Dead Sea Scrolls*; illus. by John Thompson. Morrow, 1997 64p
ISBN 0-688-14300-8 \$15.00 R Gr. 4-6

This riveting account of the history, discovery, acquisition, and restoration of the Dead Sea Scrolls reads like an Indiana Jones adventure because that's what it was like. Cooper has woven this stranger-than-fiction tale together in seven highly readable chapters. From the initial discovery of the first seven scrolls by Bedouin shepherds to the scrolls' computer-generated re-creation in 1991, the book gives readers a compelling look at the providential (or coincidental, depending on your outlook) anecdotes which surround these artifacts: e.g., the day in November 1947 that the United Nations voted to create the Jewish state of Israel was the same day that a Jewish archaeologist from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem acquired three of the scrolls from an antiquities dealer in Bethlehem. Even the environment of Judea played a part: "The desert helped 'mummify' the scrolls, and its inhospitable terrain kept people away." Black-and-white illustrations are unexciting, but the amount of information given more than makes up for it. An author's note, a map (unfortunately overly localized), a timeline, glossary, works consulted, and an index complete this useful and stimulating account for young scholars. PM

COOPER, SUSAN *The Boggart and the Monster*. McElderry, 1997 [192p]
ISBN 0-689-81330-9 \$15.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-7

The Loch Ness Monster is kin to the Boggart (see *The Boggart*, BCCB 3/93). But Nessie has forgotten the shape-changing shenanigans peculiar to boggarts and lies asleep and depressed, in the shape of an immense monster, at the bottom of Loch Ness. Little do Emily and Jessup realize when they befriend a scientist trailing the Loch Ness Monster that they will soon be rescuing the Boggart's more famous cousin from the very same scientist and his computerized gadgetry. Sequels can be tricky propositions, and unfortunately this sequel is more of a proposal than it is a thoroughly developed story. Whereas the Boggart's mischief and the misdiagnosis of Emily's extrasensory abilities were skillfully woven together in the earlier title, this book tends to be disjointed and unconvincing. Many characters (such as friend Tommy's reporter father) and relationships (especially Tommy and Emily's "romance") seem merely stereotypes and plot-fillers, and few are fully realized. While the prose is characteristically Cooper—graceful, vivid, playful—plot contrivances interrupt the flow, including a letter "explaining" the Boggart to the new owner of Castle Keep, the Boggart's sudden propensity toward speech and family ties, and the thrice-squeezed cockleshell aiding Nessie's escape. Nonetheless, the high-speed chase across Loch Ness, suggestive of cops-and-robbers television, deftly illustrates the tension between modern technology and the Boggart's Old Magic. There is also an easy camaraderie between the children, the lawyer Mr. Maconochie, and the Boggart that may satisfy readers enamored of boggartry. AEB

CUTLER, JANE *Spaceman*. Dutton, 1997 138p
ISBN 0-525-45636-8 \$14.99

R Gr. 4-6

Fifth-grader Gary has a learning disability that's making his life miserable: his classmates torment him, his fast-talking teacher keeps admonishing him to "stay with us, now, Gary," and his hard-body father (divorced from his soft-body mother) doesn't see any reason why Gary shouldn't be promoted even if he can't read. A physical confrontation with his chief tormentor results in Gary's transfer to a special education class and his meeting with his savior, teacher Ms. Block. Gary's "specialness" is the crux of his problem and the engine of the plot, but Cutler has injected what could have been a highly didactic text with compassion and humanity. This is more than a bibliotherapeutic approach to dyslexia—Gary is a kid misunderstood and misplaced, and his dilemma is one with which many children can identify. JMD

DARLING, KATHY *Chameleons on Location*; illus. with photographs by Tara Darling. Lothrop, 1997 40p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12538-7 \$15.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12537-9 \$16.00

R Gr. 3-6

Table of contents offerings such as "It's Not Easy Being Green," "Reptiles from Hell" (Hell being the Madagascar location where the Darlings did their chameleon research), and "Read My Lipstick" provide an enticing intro to this appealing entry. This book is fraught with goodies that will keep chameleon experts or trivialists in business for a long time ("If cornered, a three-pound pardalis will attack a human. One of the males we studied not only attacked us, he challenged airplanes every time they flew over his territory"). Brilliantly colored photographs appearing on every double-page spread are well-captioned, fascinating, funny, eerie, and sure to evoke a response of "Cool." The lively text never gets bogged down in the details but instead revels in them. There is such a preponderance of neat stuff here that just when you think you've read the most amazing thing yet you read something even more amazing. Types of chameleons, color changes and their significance (see the chart "How To Read Chameleon"), habitat, environmental issues, mating habits, dietary habits, and more are all presented in a way that produced in an approving test audience cries of "More," "Wow," and "Can I have that book?" "Chameleon Facts" and an index are included. PM

DARLING, KATHY *Komodo Dragon on Location*; illus. with photographs by Tara Darling. Lothrop, 1997 40p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13777-6 \$15.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13776-8 \$16.00

R Gr. 3-6

Komodo dragons, also known as monitor lizards, "are not dinosaurs. They are not descendants of dinosaurs either. . . . The ancestors of modern monitor lizards walked the prehistoric land long before dinosaurs ever set foot on it." And they're still walking the land on the small Indonesian island of Komodo. Darling and Darling have taken themselves to this less-than-hospitable island to observe and photograph the rare lizards in their natural environment. In six brief chapters, the book covers the habitat of the dragons, their physiology, eating and hunting habits, mating and hatching, and their place in evolutionary history. The conversational, accessible text is accompanied by some fine color photographs of the dragons engaged in their natural activities (eating, fighting, mating, etc.) in their natural

setting. A short list of Dragon Facts (babies are called hatchlings or pups; lizards can be up to ten feet long and can tip the scales at 400 pounds after a good meal) is followed by a brief index. The acknowledgments thank a variety of experts on the dragons for their assistance with the manuscript. JMD

ERLBRUCH, WOLF *Mrs. Meyer the Bird*; written and illus. by Wolf Erlbruch. Orchard, 1997 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-33017-6 \$15.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30017-X \$14.95 M 5-7 yrs

You haven't seen worry until you've seen Mrs. Meyer worry: "She worried about whether the sun would rise the next day. . . . It would be so cold! She wondered if she'd have enough gloves and sweaters. . . ." Her husband's assurances that "the world will keep on turning" play to deaf ears. When an abandoned baby bird provides her with some real grist for her worry mill, Mrs. Meyer springs into action, naming it Lindberg and caring for it in her husband's hat. When the time comes for Lindberg to fly, Mrs. Meyer carries her maternal obligations to the extreme, going out on the limb and even taking off in flight to demonstrate the proper aerial moves ("Together Mrs. Meyer and Lindberg flew down over the meadow, across to the forest, and up to the sky. Later they returned home for a cup of tea"). Erlbruch's mixed-media scenes are quite glorious, turning the titular matron's dark imaginings into literal black clouds and aqua shadows that hover around her, while her husband calmly pursues his Japanese brush painting and plays his harmonica in bed. It's deft brushwork indeed that can lend the all-too-substantial Mrs. Meyer a certain airborne grace as she wings her bulky frame over an ink and collage cityscape. But the textual fantasy is late in coming, and Erlbruch squanders entirely too much time observing the connubial mismates to capture the picture-book crowd. While this could garner some chuckles at a marriage-encounter weekend, as a kids' book it never gets off the ground. EB

FARLEY, CAROL *Mr. Pak Buys a Story*; illus. by Benrei Huang. Whitman, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-8075-5178-3 \$15.95 R Gr. 2-5

In this Korean folktale, Mr. and Mrs. Kim, a wealthy but bored couple, send their faithful servant to buy a story to enliven their quiet evenings. The well-meaning but remarkably innocent servant, Mr. Pak, goes to the city with a hundred gold coins and is immediately taken advantage of by a cunning thief who gulls him out of the gold with a description of a bird in a field: "He steps carefully. . . . He comes closer. . . ." Mystified but sure his employer will be able to explain, Mr. Pak takes the strange story home. While Mr. Kim is retelling the story for the umpteenth time, the thief comes to rob the house, but is stopped cold by the voice of Mr. Kim: "He steps carefully. . . . He comes closer. . . ." The words of the tale mirror the thief's movements, and he flees, convinced there is a "terrible magic present." Huang's acrylic and colored pencil illustrations have a comical tone, and the characters' faces, while simply drawn, are emotionally expressive. Changing perspective adds variety to the single and double-page compositions while the rich palette results in warmly colored textiles and verdant fields. Mr. Kim wonders if they have paid too much for a story they don't understand, but Mrs. Kim replies: "No. . . . The more I hear the tale, the more I wonder, and wonder is a very valuable thing." It certainly is. A detailed author's note is included. JMD

FLORIAN, DOUGLAS *In the Swim*; written and illus. by Douglas Florian. Harcourt, 1997 48p
ISBN 0-15-201307-5 \$15.00 R Gr. 3-6

First there was *beast feast* (BCCB 7/94), then *On the Wing* (4/96), and now Florian turns his attention to the denizens of the deep (and the shallows). His gallery comprises a score of subjects, ranging from the catfish to the sea horse to the manatee. The format is the same as in the previous volumes, with a watercolor portrait facing a spare but imaginative verse in a double spread dominated by glossy white space. The poetry here isn't quite up to the previous standard—there are several forced rhymes, and the concepts don't always fit their fish as well as one might like. There is still a creelful of inventive poems, however, and there are some creative arrangements (the salmon poem appropriately climbs up a ladder) and a refreshing variety of verse patterns and rhyme schemes. The watercolor art is fittingly liquid, with sea creatures floating through billows of sunlit or shady hues. You could pair this with *beast feast* for a surf 'n' turf poetry event—maybe the kids will want to guess at what kind of beings the *next* volume could feature. DS

FOREMAN, MICHAEL *Seal Surfer*; written and illus. by Michael Foreman. Harcourt, 1997 30p
ISBN 0-15-201399-7 \$16.00 Ad 5-8 yrs

In spring, young Ben and his grandfather find a seal with her newborn pup, and they follow the pup's growth and progress through the seasons. They fear that she was lost in the strong storms of winter, but she turns up again in summer, surfing with Ben on the waves and saving him when a big one takes him under. Then the next year, after Ben's grandfather dies, the boy is cheered by the return of his seal friend with her own pup. It's a pretty story but a rather sentimental one, and the individual episodes are rarely particularly compelling; the seal rescue is dramatic, but its anthropomorphism jars against the gentle realism of the rest of the book. Ben's dependence on crutches is a matter-of-fact part of the book, and the seasonal motif is lullingly rhythmic. The watercolor art in this oversized picture book varies from full-page to three-quarter-spread images, and it's vividly aquatic though sometimes too reliant on candy-bright colors. Kids fond of selkie stories may want to catch this wave. DS

FRANKLIN, KRISTINE L. *Lone Wolf*. Candlewick, 1997 220p
ISBN 1-56402-935-2 \$16.99 R Gr. 4-6

Perry and his father left for the Minnesota northwoods after a family tragedy: when Perry's little sister was killed in a car accident, Perry's parents were torn apart by grief, guilt, and blame, and his mother left. Now Perry's a home-schooled fifth-grader, refusing to read any of his mother's weekly letters and spending his time alone in the woods or with his taciturn father, whom he wishes to emulate. All this changes when the lively Pestalozzi family moves in next door and Perry is, half against his will, drawn first into a friendship with Willow Pestalozzi and then into a closeness with the entire ebullient family. Soon, however, the warmth and openness Perry experiences with his neighbors revives in him the grief and anger that he and his father have both long denied. Franklin's characterizations are strong, true, and fair: there are no villains here, as Perry's father begins to realize how hard he has made things, and he genuinely loves his son; Perry's conflicting desires to stay

what he considers strong and to join the world in feeling are convincingly depicted. The northern setting and outdoor details, including a thematically appropriate and well-handled subplot about a wolf in the area, add a vivid sense of place. Readers who appreciated the thoughtfulness and smooth writing of the author's *Eclipse* (BCCB 3/95) will enjoy Perry's story. DS

FREEDMAN, RUSSELL *Out of Darkness: The Story of Louis Braille*; illus. by Kate Kiesler. Clarion, 1997 81p
ISBN 0-395-77516-7 \$15.95 R Gr. 3-6

Louis Braille is a significant historical figure and one of the classic subjects of juvenile biography; this new entry is nicely gauged for a middle-grades audience. Freedman traces Braille's life from his childhood and early blindness to his attendance at the Royal Institute for Blind Youth, his development of Braille, his struggle to get it accepted, and to his teaching years, physical decline, and death. The text is simple and accessible, but it has an old-fashioned flavor, especially in bits of fictionalized dialogue and in phraseology ("He lived in darkness, but he seemed to have a sunny disposition"); it's also surprising that reliable historian Freedman has provided neither notes nor bibliography for his sources. Still, this competently conveys Braille's pioneering spirit, and kids will be particularly interested in Braille's youth at the time of his invention and his battle against the establishment for its acceptance. Occasional full-page soft pencil drawings combine with wide leading and brevity to reassure easily daunted readers. An index is included. DS

GETZ, DAVID *Floating Home*; illus. by Michael Rex. Holt, 1997 33p
ISBN 0-8050-4497-3 \$15.95 R 5-8 yrs

See this month's Big Picture, p. 309, for review.

GRACE, CATHERINE O'NEILL *I Want to Be an Astronaut*, ISBN 0-15-201300-8; *I Want to Be a Veterinarian*; ISBN 0-15-201296-6. Each book: Maze/Harcourt, 1997 48p illus. with photographs \$16.00 Ad Gr. 3-6

This splashy new series offers kids a peek into the worlds of a variety of professions. Each book begins with a "Where to Start" section and ends with a "You Can Be a . . ." spread and a list of other sources of information, in between describing various aspects of the job, its history, and famous individuals in the profession. There are a lot of appealingly presented images of folks at work in their chosen métier, and *Astronaut* provides some good information about training programs while *Veterinarian* offers useful facts about different kinds of veterinary work. Unfortunately, the organization in both is poor, with the focus sometimes diffuse (details about current astronaut's jobs under the "Where to Start" heading) and no particular shape to the arrangement of chapters. Much of the *Veterinarian* book depicts biologists, conservationists, and other non-vets working with animals, making pages seem like filler rather than relevant information; the organization lists in back have useful tidbits about programs and brochures, but mistakenly include two separate and very different associations as part of the Humane Society of the United States. There are better books on each of these topics (such as Anne Baird's *Space Camp*, BCCB 6/92, Henry Horenstein's *My Mom's a Vet*, 3/94), but these do provide a starting place, if a rather carelessly assembled one. DS

GRAVETT, CHRISTOPHER *The Knight's Handbook: How to Become a Champion in Shining Armor*. Cobblehill, 1997 29p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-525-65241-8 \$13.99 R Gr. 3-5

Following on the heels of *The Pirate's Handbook* (BCCB 10/95) and *The Cowboy's Handbook* (3/96), the series now turns to the heroes of the age of chivalry. As usual, the format is appealingly bitty, with craft projects ("Making a Knightly Sword"), sidebars (the "Are You a Chivalrous Knight?" quiz), and period art livening up the informative text. The subject matter ranges from armor to heraldry to the crusades, providing brief introductions to all those crucial aspects of knighthood without ever losing the quick pace. The crafts aren't as manageable as those in the previous books, however, and the writing isn't as snappy or clear. The approach and the visual allure nonetheless makes it an enticing introduction to the elaborate world of knighthood; pair it with Marcia Williams' *King Arthur* (BCCB 3/96) or *Robin Hood* (5/95) for an offbeat introduction to the days of olde. DS

GREENBERG, JUDITH E. *Getting into the Game: Women in Sports*. Watts, 1997 [160p] illus. with photographs (Women Then—Women Now)
ISBN 0-531-11329-9 \$22.70

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-10

This latest entry in the *Women Then—Women Now* series is a history of American women in sports from colonial times to the present. The history is presented chronologically, with a rather numbing parade of names and dates, but it's all essential and welcome material for report writers. The serviceable prose relates some real howlers from the past: in 1919 the first woman to shed her hose, while still wearing the traditionally modest bathing garb of the times, was given a summons for swimming "nude"; in the nineteenth century there was enormous concern that bicycling would lead to prostitution. Greenberg discusses the role of industrial teams before the Depression, the athletic opportunities offered to women during wartime, the age-old charge of unfemininity leveled at accomplished female athletes. The crucial role of Title IX in funding women's sports programs is explained, as well as how to go about getting a college athletic scholarship. With revenues from the sports industry now at about \$60 billion a year (exceeding automobile, oil, lumber, and transportation), and its growth continuing unabated, careers in sports are more and more attractive to young women, and Greenberg outlines what these jobs are and how to go about landing one. This is a useful, if unexciting, addition to your sports section. End notes are appended, as are suggestions for further reading and an index. SSV

HANEL, WOLFRAM *The Gold at the End of the Rainbow*; tr. by Anthea Bell; illus. by Loek Koopmans. North-South, 1997 26p
Library ed. ISBN 1-55858-693-8 \$15.88
Trade ed. ISBN 1-55858-692-X \$15.95

Ad 5-8 yrs

Young Brendan lives with his grandfather on an unnamed coast. Wishing for bacon and eggs one rainy morning as they eat their potatoes, Grandpa laughingly says, "We might as well wish for the gold at the end of the rainbow." In the morning, a rainbow arches from the coast to a small island, and Brendan insists on rowing over to dig for the gold. No gold is found, and the two dejectedly head for the boat, but Grandpa catches and releases a leprechaun, who rewards them not with gold but with a calf, a pig, some chickens, and a bottle of elderberry juice

that, no matter how much you drink, is never emptied. Hänel's gentle narrative is engaging but bland, though the young Brendan's innocent belief in gold and leprechauns is easy to accept. While the figures and faces of Brendan and his grandpa are awkwardly drawn, Koopmans' watercolors of the windswept cabin, the rolling sea, and the ever-changing sky (reminiscent of a kinder, gentler Stephen Gammell) are satisfyingly idyllic. JMD

HANSON, REGINA *The Face at the Window*; illus. by Linda Saport. Clarion, 1997 [32p]

ISBN 0-395-78625-8 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 6-9 yrs

Set in contemporary Jamaica, this compelling picture book explores stereotypical misunderstandings and fears about mental disabilities. Young Dora and her friends are trying to drop mangoes from Miss Nella's tree but Dora misfires her stone and hits Miss Nella's door instead, bringing the frightening and erratic Miss Nella to the window. "I hope you didn't look upon her face," Dora's friend says. "Any time Miss Nella show her face at the window, something terrible goin' to happen." Dora's terror is confirmed shortly when a torrential rainstorm commences ("De rain never goin' to end," she said. "And is all my fault"). Dora's Mammy and Pappy help allay her fears ("Miss Nella not bad at all. I don't understand her sickness, but it is inside her head"), and in a simple, forthright act of restitution Dora learns that kindness isn't a cure but it helps. Pastels in a blend of brilliant jewel tones and black outlines exude the tropical heat and the brooding intensity of this short, well-paced drama. Though somewhat lengthy for a readaloud, this could give rise to some thoughtful discussion on a serious subject that isn't often broached in picture books. PM

HASKINS, JIM *Spike Lee: By Any Means Necessary*. Walker, 1997 [144p] illus. with photographs

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8496-8 \$16.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8494-1 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

This compact biography takes a sympathetic yet objective look at controversial filmmaker Spike Lee. Without glossing over Lee's reputedly thin skin or front-burner politics, Haskins paints a portrait of a talented, driven, enormously shrewd writer/director who has affected the course of contemporary American cinema. Lee is a son of the black middle class, raised in an Italian neighborhood in Brooklyn. Both of his parents were college graduates, his mother a teacher and father a jazz player, yet Spike Lee's films frequently depict the racial rage of poor African Americans. Haskins describes Lee's creative process from the idea for a film to the writing of the script, casting, shooting, post-production, and promotion. Lee's style has been compared to that of confirmed fellow New Yorker Woody Allen, in that Lee uses an ensemble of actors and crew members in film after film. Each of Lee's films is critiqued, both by Lee himself (via secondary sources) and by others, with special attention given to Lee's most successful film to date—*Malcolm X* (hence the title). The personal isn't excluded either—readers will find intriguing details about Spike Lee himself, such as the fact that he chose a New York film school over one in California because he can't drive. This is a valuable reference to any young person interested in film and popular culture. SSV

HINES, ANNA GROSSNICKLE *Miss Emma's Wild Garden*; written and illus. by Anna Grossnickle Hines. Greenwillow, 1997 24p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-14693-7 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-14692-9 \$15.00

Ad 3-6 yrs

In this intergenerational story, Chloe, a barefooted child, and Miss Emma take a wander through the older woman's summertime garden. "What's in your garden, Miss Emma?" Chloe asks, and the little girl's persistent "What else?" refrain continues throughout the book as their encounters with garden wildlife spring from nearly every double-page spread. Deer, rabbits, woodchucks, cardinals, a skink (not a misspelled skunk but a lizard), a squirrel, a nuthatch, a toad, butterflies, and bees make cameo appearances at just the right moment, all seeming safer than the titular "wild" would suggest. Acrylic renderings of Miss Emma's Eden show it flourishing in lush green tones with delicately drawn blooms in a summer bouquet palette, but Chloe and her friend have unnaturally peachy fleshtones, are stiffly drawn, and often seem awkwardly plopped into the foliage. For kids who like languid garden strolls more than a wild jungle tour this could be the ticket, but for real bouts of spring fever try a Burpee's catalog or Perkins' *Home Lovely* (BCCB 9/95). PM

HO, MINFONG *Brother Rabbit: A Cambodian Tale*; by Minfong Ho and Saphan Ros; illus. by Jennifer Hewitson. Lothrop, 1997 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12553-0 \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12552-2 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R* 5-8 yrs

Trickster rabbits have a certain perennial appeal and this one is no exception, but it is the toothy villain here that steals the show. Crocodile, as dumb as he is fierce, agrees to ferry Brother Rabbit across the river to some toothsome rice fields if Brother Rabbit will cure him of his rough, ugly skin. Of course, Brother Rabbit doesn't have a cure but does have the last laugh at Crocodile's attempts to get revenge. Even after eating his fill, fooling around, pushing his luck too far, and finally getting swallowed, Brother Rabbit uses his wits to get back across the river: "I've always wanted to eat crocodile guts. Now that I'm in his belly, I can eat all his insides!" At this point we are treated to a look at a major abdominal cavity in which even Crocodile's ribs look like fangs, yet a discerning viewer may begin to realize that Brother Rabbit's markings look pretty toothy themselves. In fact, it's the linear reflections that make these ink-and-watercolor illustrations an outstanding projection of the narrative patterns. The rice field, for instance, is shaped just like the crocodile; the rice plants—although green—are pointedly *sharp*; Croc and Rab's eyes are both demonically orangish (matching the border motifs). These compositions are alive with innovative motion, mischievous echoes of color, and quirky perspectives. There's a fine cultural background note but no sources are indicated. BH

HOBERMAN, MARY ANN *The Seven Silly Eaters*; illus. by Marla Frazee. Browndeer/Harcourt, 1997 40p

ISBN 0-15-200096-8 \$15.00

R 5-8 yrs

Poor Mrs. Peters—her brood's dietary demands are wearing her out. First there's Peter, who will only drink milk that's warmed to the proper temperature; next comes Lucy, who insists on homemade pink lemonade; then there's Jack, who

would eat only applesauce; and so on through another boy, another girl, and a set of twins, all with their own culinary idiosyncrasies. Just when Mrs. Peters is driven to the edge of distraction, the seven little Peters, in making her a birthday breakfast, discover that all their favorites together make a wonderful pink cake that everybody likes and that makes future family repasts a breeze. Maternal readers-aloud may wonder why Mrs. P. puts up with it all, but both they and the audience will recognize the roll call of dining requirements. The lively tetrameter couplets keep things cooking, and youngsters will appreciate the glorious kitchen mess. The illustrations, colored drawing inks in subdued earth tones and energetic humorous lines, are reminiscent of a more restrained David Catrow. This would be a terrific time-passer while Junior is waiting for the cookies to come out of the oven. DS

JENNINGS, DANA ANDREW *Me, Dad, & Number 6*; illus. by Goro Sasaki. Gulliver/Harcourt, 1997 [32p]
ISBN 0-15-200085-2 \$15.00
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

The author's memories of his childhood in rural New Hampshire are the basis of this picture-book offering. Through the eyes of six-year-old Andy, we watch the unfolding affection and pride of the boy's dad and his friends toward a 1937 Pontiac coupe which they lovingly restore ("That car was as black and shiny as a raven's wing and fresh-splashed on its door in bright red paint was the number 6—my age"). The story works surprisingly well, with its rich, illustrative text celebrating the hard work ("After working on the car, Dad and I'd trudge toward the house all greasy and grimy, looking like grubby monsters that lived in a tailpipe"), the excitement of a car race ("Loved how the cars spit fire and whooshed wind as they jabbed, jostled, and jammed around the track"), and the tense conclusion ("Number 6 squirmed on the bottom of that steely stack, smushed and twisted and flattened") where Dad survives with only some bruised ribs. Whew. Tinted watercolors provide a washed-out, time-past feel emphasized with purple accents, and they lend visual importance to that black car which "sat mangled in the dooryard, looking like some wicked knot in your shoelace that you couldn't untie in a million years." This is a nostalgic excursion that compels its audience to come along for the ride. PM

JOHNSON, ANGELA *The Rolling Store*; illus. by Peter Catalanotto. Jackson/Orchard, 1997 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-33015-X \$16.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30015-3 \$15.95 Ad 5-8 yrs

A young African-American girl tells her white friend a family story of her grandfather's, about the Rolling Store, a general store on wheels that used to serve the rural community he lived in "when he was little and the world was young." A gathering place for the community, the Rolling Store "had it all" from pies and cakes to "the mystery of unseen things in barrels . . . and the colors. So many boxes and baskets of color." The grandfather's memory as reflected in the illustrations is braided together with the contemporary story of the granddaughter, as she and her friend string bead necklaces, bake cookies, and make lemonade. Personal history comes full circle when Grandfather comes home to a heartfelt hug, and the three—the two girls and the grandfather—walk down the street gathering the community

around their own rolling store, a little red wagon. Johnson's gentle family story has a certain nostalgic appeal, and that nostalgia is reflected in Catalanotto's soft, sentimental watercolors. Everything takes place in an undifferentiated warm, fuzzy glow, and the generic visuals lack the attention to detail kids find so appealing about family stories. A clumsily realized regeneration of the Rolling Store is achieved with the placement of the title page at the book's textual end, with images that bring the story to its visual conclusion. JMD

KRULL, KATHLEEN *Wish You Were Here: Emily's Guide to the 50 States*; illus. by Amy Schwartz. Doubleday, 1997 118p
ISBN 0-385-31146-X \$19.95 M Gr. 2-5

Trekking across the USA with her grandmother over summer vacation, fictional child Emily comments on the sights in double-page spreads cluttered with cartoon renderings of landmarks, activities, and state maps. Given the prodigious number of facts offered, some minor discrepancies aren't surprising: the text indicates that North and South Dakota came into the union simultaneously, while an appended chart shows ND entering first; a studious Emily is pictured in the reading room of the Library of Congress, which only serves patrons over the age of eighteen. More troublesome, however, are the myriad glitches likely to confuse or mislead readers. Children familiar with the "authors" Keene and Dixon will wonder about New Jersey's "Edward Stratemeyer, who created series of books about Tom Swift, the Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew." Author Richard Wright is mentioned in connection with Arkansas, but his portrait appears without explanation in the Mississippi spread. The statement "[Barbed wire] changed the history of the entire Great Plains. It allowed ranchers to keep their cattle *in* and danger *out*" seems to miss the whole point of cowboy/homesteader hostilities. Emily's comments are unvaryingly breezy, even as she describes picnicking on the site of an Indian massacre. An index and charts of state facts may lure report writers to this title, but the information is easily available elsewhere. EB

KURTZ, JANE *Trouble*; illus. by Durga Bernhard. Gulliver/Harcourt, 1997 [34p]
ISBN 0-15-200219-7 \$15.00
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

Tekleh is always in trouble, so his father makes him a game, a *gebeta* board, to keep him occupied while he watches the goats. This merely adds new possibilities for adventure in a sequence of swaps—the board for a knife, the knife for a *masinko* (stringed instrument), the *masinko* for a drum, etc.—until Tekleh comes home with the goats and a new *gebeta* board, his father none the wiser. It is young listeners, of course, who will be all the wiser: curiosity leads to lots of fun and a full stomach. The author, who heard the story as a child in Ethiopia, has set her version in Eritrea, in deference to a variant of the story collected there by Harold Courlander and cited in her source note. Kurtz' text is nicely styled ("The red smell of spices curled in the air") but rambles a bit, just managing to keep the folkloric pattern intact (a green lizard that Tekleh stops to play with is irrelevant to an already extended series of events). Bernhard's earth-toned, organically rounded compositions are openfaced and often funny in details such as the goats' unobtrusive but constant snatching of forbidden mouthfuls, a head-on camel-sneer, and

Tekleh's reaching slyly into a pot of food belonging to a wedding party. Time and place will prove no barrier to kids' identification with an inadvertent mischief-maker. BH

LEVINE, GAIL CARSON *Ella Enchanted*. HarperCollins, 1997 [240p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027511-1 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027510-3 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

In this novel-length Cinderella, the complete tale of everyone's favorite rags-to-riches maiden comes vividly to life. Levine adopts neither the effusive detail of McKinley's *Beauty* (BCCB 12/78) nor the haunting somberness of Napoli's *Zel* (7/96), but renders Ella as a sensible adolescent who refuses to roll with life's every punch and can even appreciate the more comic aspects of her dilemma. The gift of obedience bestowed upon Ella by a well-meaning fairy has been a perpetual burden. An offhand remark by a stranger can send her into purposeless activity for hours and, needless to say, the malicious commands of her selfish stepsisters wreak even more havoc. But her fairy godmother, the family cook, assures her that she will someday break the spell, given the right incentive, and even though the threat of losing her own life proves insufficient to lift the curse, readers can anticipate that true love for her Prince Charmont is. Levine leaves the familiar motifs intact—wicked stepmother, glass slipper, midnight curfew at the ball—but by establishing an easy, playful friendship between Ella and the prince which blossoms gradually into love, she offers readers with feminist sensibilities the assurance that life with Charmont (the prince you want to bring home to mother) will in fact be happy, ever after. EB

LING, MARY *The Snake Book*; by Mary Ling and Mary Atkinson; illus. with photographs by Frank Greenaway and Dave King. DK, 1997 28p

ISBN 0-7894-1526-7 \$12.95

R* Gr. 3-7

Snakes aren't that hard to describe, but the sheer wonder of snakesness, the lithe reptilian allure, is hard to convey in book form. Bianca Lavies managed it in *A Gathering of Garter Snakes* (BCCB 2/94), and here's another resounding success. Eleven substantially oversized double-spreads and one surprise four-page fold-out offer astonishing portraits of individual snakes. The shots appear to be from above, with the snakes confined in a glossy and lidless white box. The result is snake art: reptiles line the box's perimeter with geometric fidelity, pretzel themselves comfortably, or peer into the air echoed by dramatic shadows; the subjects are buffed and gleaming to the point of iridescence, with intricate patterns and glowing colors fascinating from the aesthetic as well as the zoological point of view. The text is brief, staying out of the way of the snakes both conceptually and visually (it's cleverly designed to snake around and constrict from large to small type); a page of "Snake Statistics" offers the photos in miniature with info about each snake's distribution, diet, hunting method (with explicit mention of those dangerous to humans), and length. Kids will also get a kick out of identifying the snakes in the front and back covers, though the snake in the introduction, who doesn't appear in the rest of the book, may stump them—or lead them to more research. Even herpetophobes may find themselves cautiously slithering towards this one; you won't even have to booktalk it, just open up the foldout and wait for the gasps. DS

LITTLE, JEAN *Gruntle Piggle Takes Off*; illus. by Johnny Wales. Viking, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-670-86340-8 \$13.99 Ad Gr. 2-4

Pining for piggy puns? Take your pick; just don't expect a porker of a plot. In this post-Orwellian world (where *Animal Farm* was apparently a success), young Gruntle Piggle runs away from her parent's posh city apartment in the Pigs' Digs to see what life is like down on the farm with Grandpa Streaky Bacon. Her city sensibilities set up some earthy situations that will make kids grin: "Seeing so many nude animals, all at once, left Gruntle weak in the knees," and when she prissily proposes experiencing the activities that make country life appealing, such as sniffing manure and rolling in mud, a sheep jeers, "La di da and poop poop to you." Wales' watercolors keep the spoof from becoming caricature; the Piggles' city has a 1940s feel with 1990s details and lots of visual puns to extend the text (note the Pig Latin textbook, the kiddy bank, and Orwell Road). Underneath the humor, however, contrivances abound. Gruntle has never met her grandhog because of a family falling-out over reading. The impetus for Gruntle's visit lies, peculiarly, in a pair of Rollerblades that the back-to-nature grandhog sends her. Gruntle's huffing and puffing over Grandpa Bacon's rudeness about reading disappears when she realizes that he probably can't read, hence his opposition. The story wallows to an end as Gruntle imagines herself saving Grandpa from illiteracy. Heavy hoof aside, it's a playful pig tale, and one that pun-wise kids will root for. AEB

LOCKER, THOMAS *Water Dance*; written and illus. by Thomas Locker. Harcourt, 1997 [32p]
ISBN 0-15-201284-2 \$16.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad 6-9 yrs

Thirteen lushly romantic oil paintings, accompanied by spare, poetic text, offer viewers a sensuous introduction to the water cycle. The ever-changing atmosphere is fairly palpable in Locker's more successful spreads: "Drawn upward by warm sunlight, in white-silver veils I rise into the air. I disappear. I am the mist." Whitecaps break along a rock-strewn shore, as the evaporating fog shimmers in diffused sunlight. The dank green-grays of the storm front "carried by winds from distant seas" are eerily threatening and oppressive. Locker's rainbow, though, is rigid and opaque, piercing the hillside rather than streaking the sky, and in the final spread an overly-crimson sunset blazes like technicolor hellfire as the text sentimentally warbles, "I am one thing. I am many things. I am water. This is my dance through our world." In an appended section of notes on the water cycle, the gallery is reproduced in miniature with paragraphs explaining each phase of the cycle in more detail. Older viewers intrigued by the emotive qualities of stream and storm may want to move on to Nathaniel Tripp's *Thunderstorm!* (BCCB 4/94). EB

MCGUIGAN, MARY ANN *Where You Belong*. Atheneum, 1997 171p
ISBN 0-689-81250-7 \$16.00 R Gr. 6-9

When her family is evicted from their apartment, Fiona runs away rather than stay with her grudgingly helpful aunt. Wandering the Bronx streets of 1963, she finds herself in an African-American neighborhood where she meets Yolanda, a friend from her old school. With no questions asked, Yolanda gives Fiona temporary shelter. The rising civil rights movement is the counterpoint to the story of these

two girls whose friendship is considered unlikely if not forbidden by the adults around them. Fiona's parents make their racism plain in their language and actions; Yolanda's family looks askance at the two girls, but are generous in their hospitality; local characters—the patron in the candy shop, the shop proprietor, the racially enlightened Mrs. Carson—all have preconceptions they project onto the two girls. The urban setting is nearly a character in itself, affecting the lives and actions of Yolanda, Fiona, and others through the clear delineation of safe havens and hidden dangers. While the plot deals with issues, it is not driven by them. McGuigan's characters are fully realized and emotionally complex, and they do not lend themselves easily to stereotyping or standard bearing. Any social commentary is given from the perspective of a young adolescent who has already received too many hard knocks from an unkind world, and who is seriously questioning where her loyalties really lie. JMD

MAHY, MARGARET *The Five Sisters*; illus. by Patricia MacCarthy. Viking, 1997 80p

ISBN 0-670-87042-0 \$14.99

R Gr. 3-5

A string of five paper-doll sisters, all holding hands, are created on a hot summer day by a little girl's grandmother. The first sister is given name, face, and voice by the little girl; then the dolls are lifted by a mischievous wind and sent adventuring. The paper sisters are found and lost and found again, and each time a paper sister is given face, name, and voice by a different person. Captured between the pages of a book for many long years (they make a perfect bookmark), they are discovered by the first little girl, now grown with a daughter of her own. The tale comes full circle as the daughter draws the last face gently, gently on the fragile paper. Set to sail in a paper boat, the dolls are lifted by the same errant wind, and at last come to their longed-for island of story and adventure. This is a winsome conceit, and there is enough forward momentum to keep the story moving along. While the plot isn't riveting, the tale of the five paper-doll sisters—their birth and the evolution of their characters, so to speak—will appeal to younger children. Mahy's text is divided into readaloud-length chapters (the longest are six pages) that will make restfully absorbing bedtime fare. Black-and-white illustrations help bring the paper siblings to life, and they are sure to have listeners asking if their grown-ups can make paper-doll strings, too. Get out your scissors and start folding. JMD

MAITLAND, BARBARA *The Bear Who Didn't Like Honey*; illus. by Odilon Moraes. Orchard, 1997 [26p]

ISBN 0-531-09546-0 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 3-6 yrs

Little Bear is not a scaredy cat but rather a "Scaredy Bear! Scaredy Bear!" as his siblings repeatedly remind him. Our chubby young protagonist is too scared of the dark to fall asleep, too scared of the water to catch fish, and too scared of bees to gather honey. Obviously this is a problem for a bear, but in this predictable story Little Bear overcomes his cowardly status by rescuing a cub in distress. The cub's grateful mother affirms Little Bear's newfound courage ("That was a very brave thing to do." "It was?" asked Little Bear. "But I was scared!"). Exactly, aren't most heroes? Of course Little Bear goes on to conquer his bee phobia, discovering that his hard-won honey "was better than any other honey because he'd got it all by himself." Hazy watercolor greens and blues provide the backdrop for most of the forest action, which ends in the shadowy browns of the bear cave where the

"new" Little Bear joins the family in a well-earned snooze. Plump little bee-bodies with W. C. Fields noses buzz on the cover and endpapers, and the cuddly brown bears with teddy-type mugs as well as an engaging if message-driven text give this tale an amusing quality. Young listeners will enjoy this readaloud offering at bedtime even if they don't like honey (or bedtime). PM

MARRIN, ALBERT *Empires Lost and Won: The Spanish Heritage in the Southwest*. Atheneum, 1997 [224p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-689-80414-8 \$19.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-10

Marrin breathes new life into the litany of explorers, conquistadores, and soldier-statesmen that comprise the textbook history of the Old Southwest. In his opening chapters he forges beyond simplistic accounts of a facile European rout of the natives, portraying complex men driven by gold fever, religious zeal, nationalistic fervor, and an adventurousness born of peacetime boredom who meet their match in the sometimes fierce, sometimes cunning resistance of indigenous cultures. In discussing political and military developments after Mexican independence (which, curiously, receives little attention here), however, Marrin loses some of his objectivity; his sarcastic take on Santa Anna, for example, sounds like a personal vendetta: "Preferring not to ride, he went about in a carriage fit for Napoleon himself. Heaven forbid that His Excellency, El Presidente, should raise saddle sores on his tender behind!" Still, the stirring battles scenes for which Marrin is noted (*Unconditional Surrender*, BCCB 3/94, *Virginia's General*, 1/94) are much in evidence here, and history students will find this to be a rich and thought-provoking account. Period illustrations, extensive endnotes and bibliography, and an index are included. EB

MARZOLLO, JEAN *Home Sweet Home*; illus. by Ashley Wolff. HarperCollins, 1997 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027353-4 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027562-6 \$14.95

R 2-5 yrs

This rhyming prayer requesting blessings on the earth and its inhabitants is accompanied by large, vibrant paintings mirroring the verdant natural world evoked by the text: "Bless each bee/ Each flower and tree/ Each cloud in the sky/ Each stalk of rye. . . . Bless each ant/ Each cactus plant/ Each dolphin and whale/ Each little snail. . . ." Marzollo's simple words are given a stately setting by Wolff's full and double-page illustrations, as a majestic whale swims alongside a dolphin, an affectionate giraffe nuzzles her young, and the moon rises over an idyllic countryside. While the text is somewhat repetitive and the compositions are sometimes cluttered, this is a picture book guaranteed to fill a niche in library collections looking for simple devotional fare for young children and their caregivers. JMD

MATAS, CAROL *The Garden*. Simon, 1997 [112p]

ISBN 0-689-80349-4 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

Sixteen-year-old Ruth is a concentration-camp survivor who has made her way from Poland to Palestine (a journey detailed in *After the War*, BCCB 4/96) and has settled, along with her boyfriend Zvi, on a kibbutz that is in danger both from the British and the Arabs during the political maneuvers leading to Israel's founding in

1948. While Ruth is active in the Haganah, a Jewish defense organization, her brother Simon fights with a terrorist operation called Irgun. Like the previous book, this has a representative sense about it, with one Arab friend torn by the conflict, one villainous Arab leader blamed heavily ("His friends in Germany killed eighty-eight members of my family"), callous British officials with the exception of a sympathetic soldier, and a range of Jewish refugees determined to settle their ancient new land. As a Palmach leader, Ruth takes a heroic role in several fighting scenes, which maintain suspenseful action throughout this mini-*Exodus*. The first-person narrative is sometimes self-conscious, imposing a reportorial or even superficial tone on the events, but the two books together do give a kind of fictional overview for young readers without the background to enjoy more individualized, in-depth novels such as Gila Almagor's *Under the Domim Tree* (6/95). BH

MICUCCI, CHARLES *The Life and Times of the Peanut*; written and illus. by Charles Micucci. Houghton, 1997 [32p]

ISBN 0-395-72289-6 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

The familiar peanut is revealed to be much more than one might suspect in this affectionate portrait of America's old standby. The author explains that peanuts aren't even nuts at all but legumes (as are peas, beans, clover, alfalfa) that grow in pods underground. The reader is served lots of mental munchies such as unusual uses for peanut parts—cat litter, paper, even explosives. We learn the ancient history of peanut cultivation, how peanuts were introduced around the world from their native South America, who invented peanut butter and why, how peanuts came to replace cotton as an American crop, and even a Civil War song about goobers. The role played in the propagation of the peanut by African slaves is included, as well as the standard info on George Washington Carver. If the adulatory tone sounds a tad commercial, it's offset by the sheer number of handy factoids. The illustrations are cornball and cartoony yet do the trick, so spread this one around. Suggestions for further reading are included. SSV

NEITZEL, SHIRLEY *We're Making Breakfast for Mother*; illus. by Nancy Winslow Parker. Greenwillow, 1997 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-14576-0 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-14575-2 \$15.00

R Gr. K-2

The kids make Mom breakfast and wind up at the local diner in this cumulative rebus. Toast jelly side down, spilled cereal, and not-so-hot tea inspire mother to save the day: "You made me breakfast? I'm impressed! Let's share this feast and then get dressed. We'll put on our jackets and go for a hike. Since I don't want to see what the kitchen looks like." Parker's innocuous, cartoony characters are serviceably depicted in watercolor, pencil, and ink with lots of reds, pinks, and greens, and the rebus pictures are clearly defined. The repetitive "House That Jack Built" accumulation works well, and giving the written word first and then subsequently replacing it with a rebus picture allows kid readers an opportunity to practice, show off, and play with the words and pictures as well as giving them a chance to "get it" the second or third time if they missed it the first time around. Pedestrian illustrations aside, this title is fun and easily mastered, with a number of possible uses and a wide potential audience. JMD

O'CONNOR, BARBARA *Beethoven in Paradise*. Foster/Farrar, 1997 [160p]

ISBN 0-374-30666-4 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

The Paradise Trailer Park in South Carolina can hardly be considered a cultural hub, but there junior-high-schooler Martin Pittman and his pudgy, middle-aged neighbor Wylene share a devotion to music—pop to classical—that amounts to a kind of secret, double life. Wylene encourages Martin to branch out beyond his harmonica playing, but he's simply too cowed by his boorish, bullying father's scorn for his musical passion to take a stand for his art. Wylene procures a violin for Martin to practice on and Mr. Pittman forces a showdown on the issue, shattering the fiddle but, thankfully, not his son's musical aspirations. O'Connor's first venture into fiction sparkles with richly drawn characters—emotionally guarded and tart-tongued, but deeply humane. The fiery confrontation between father and son is more inevitable than predictable, and the wellspring of neighborly encouragement and practical support that hauls Martin up onto his own two feet is a glowing tribute to community strength. EB

PASTUCHIV, OLGA *Minas and the Fish*; written and illus. by Olga Pastuchiv. Lorraine/Houghton, 1997 [32p]

ISBN 0-395-79756-X \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

M 3-6 yrs

Littlest brother in a family of fishermen, Minas is left home from expeditions because he cannot swim. His siblings haul back an amazing catch, a huge and unidentifiable green fish, which talks privately with Minas and grants him his dearest wishes—to be bigger and able to swim. As they explore the depths, Minas becomes lonely and asks to return home; once there, he's driven off by his brothers, who no longer recognize him, so he needs help again ("Fish, fish! . . . Make me little again! Please make me little! And the fish did"). Pastuchiv's parable about the danger of getting your heart's desire crosses the border between gentleness and somnolence, with Minas' transformations far too facile to evoke empathetic shudders. His undersea tour is, however, rendered in a series of watercolor spreads which become increasingly mysterious and intense with his descent, culminating in an encounter with a truly threatening octopus. Listeners may not clamor, "Read it again," but many will insist, "Let's see it again." EB

PEARSON, KIT *Awake and Dreaming*. Viking, 1997 228p

ISBN 0-670-86954-6 \$13.99

Ad Gr. 5-7

Theo finds life with her flighty and self-centered young mother hard to bear: between occasional physical abuse, panhandling for money, and constant loneliness when her mother is off with men, there's little enjoyment. En route to being dumped at her aunt's house, Theo meets up with the family of her fantasies, the Kaldors, and somehow magically becomes part of it, attending school and playing games with her four new brothers and sisters. She's devastated when she awakes to her old life, but confused when, while trying to fit in with her aunt's quiet life, she becomes friends with the Kaldors in reality, a reality far less idyllic than her magical interlude with them. There's too much going on here and it's hard to get a hold of any of it as a result: the ghostly intervention that caused the realization of Theo's fantasy is overexplained and the living out of the fantasy is, in fact, rather

dull, as endless amity is wont to be. More effectively depicted is Theo's unhappiness with her mother and her longing for a more nurturing life. This doesn't have the flow of Pearson's *Guests of War* trilogy, but readers will be rooting for Theo's shot at a better life. DS

POMERANTZ, CHARLOTTE *Mangaboom*; illus. by Anita Lobel. Greenwillow, 1997 [40p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12957-9 \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12956-0 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

Mangaboom is a nineteen-foot giantess with curly red hair, a poofy dress with a flowered, ruffled hem, and pink satin slippers with yellow bows. She lives at the top of a tree filled with "hundreds and hundreds of golden mangoes," and she is friend to Daniel (regular-sized boy, about eight years old). Her auntie, Tía Pepita, wants *Mangaboom* to behave like a ladylike giant and not scare off all the eligible gentleman giants, but *Mangaboom* is not interested and her aunt's matchmaking always goes awry. A love letter left in her satin slipper announces the intentions of Grizwaldo (a gentleman giant who bears a remarkable resemblance to Daniel) who turns out to love *Mangaboom* just as she is. This picture-book fantasy is oddly successful. Pomerantz' text is wordy in the extreme, but *Mangaboom* and Daniel's friendship is a center that holds, and the rest of the details—gentleman giants with odd names and speech patterns, the occasional Spanish phrase, the Spanish duenna-like costume of Tía Pepita, *Mangaboom*'s avowed penchant for skinny-dipping—are dropped in like eccentric footnotes. Lobel's gouache paintings, while compositionally uneven, are a remarkable combination of teal greens, sky blues, rose pinks, and daffodil yellows, suitable to the apparently warm and tropical setting. The lengthy text may limit the audience, but *Mangaboom*, barely contained within the page, is a wonder from her red corkscrew curls to her painted pink toenails. JMD

PRINGLE, LAURENCE *An Extraordinary Life: The Story of a Monarch Butterfly*; illus. by Bob Marstall. Kroupa/Orchard, 1997 [64p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-33002-8 \$19.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30002-1 \$18.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Pringle recounts the life of a monarch butterfly in this scrupulously researched and lavishly illustrated book. This seemingly fragile female weighs about one-fiftieth of an ounce, has a four-inch wingspan, can fly over eighty miles a day, migrates several thousand miles, and lays hundreds of eggs in her short life. Pringle's passion for his subject enlivens what might have been just another dry science tome, and his prose is sprinkled with enticing infobits: monarchs have been in North America for about two million years; their migration began about 10,000 years ago after the earth warmed and milkweed spread northward; each year naturalists capture, band, and track countless monarchs. The reader is also encouraged to plant a butterfly garden, campaign against commercial development of land along the migration route and in the winter refuge, and raise monarchs at home. Marstall's paintings are restrained and detailed (where appropriate in the progression of the chrysalis) but are not above bursting into technicolor decadence in the double-page spreads (monarchs filling a meadow). In addition to helpful sidebars, there

are maps showing the migratory paths of the monarch and the location of their winter colonies in Mexico. The book includes challenging suggestions for further reading and an index. Combine with Kathryn Lasky's photoessay *Monarchs* (BCCB 11/93) for an in-depth look at lepidoptera. SSV

ROBB, LAURA, comp. *Music and Drum: Voices of War and Peace, Hope and Dreams*; illus. by Debra Lill. Philomel, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-399-22024-0 \$16.95 Ad Gr. 5-8

Robb divides her selections into three groups loosely built around the themes of war, peace, and hope. These twenty-two poems are remarkably evocative, with works by Carl Sandburg, Langston Hughes, and Eve Merriam interspersed with the poetry of children of war: a sixteen-year-old girl in Belfast wishing for her lost childhood, a young Israeli grieving for his dead father, a young Arab with a vision of the angel of peace. This well-intentioned collection is undermined by the extreme sentimentality of the gauzy, greeting-card-style photography that accompanies it. The poems and the pictures are tonally dissonant, and the pastel colored, digitally manipulated photos juxtapose oddly with the tragedy and hope played out in the poetry. The text size is small, and the words tend to be overwhelmed by the indistinct, oddly nostalgic nature of the photography. Robb's selection of poems, however, is a strong one, and this may lend itself to curriculum use or as a springboard to more extensive collections. JMD

RUSSO, MARISABINA *Under the Table*; written and illus. by Marisabina Russo. Greenwillow, 1997 [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-14603-1 \$14.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-14602-3 \$15.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad 3-5 yrs

Hannah is the smallest person in her family, so there's just enough room for her and all of her accoutrements (dolls, blanket, books, family dog) underneath the table. Whether she's happy or sad, table-bathing in summer or tent-making in winter, "under the table is a good place to be." This is a cozy tale of a child's secret hideaway, until the day she picks up her crayons and decorates the underside of the table with rainbows and smiley faces. When Mama and Daddy discover Hannah's mural, the story becomes a rather pointed lesson in not drawing on the furniture. While the episode provides the story with a needed conflict, the parents' dramatic gasps and Hannah's teary, repeated promises to "never do it again" further emphasize the story's didacticism. Russo's figures are flat and paper-doll-like, but Hannah's crayon drawings are kid-authentic. The art is bright and honey, with patterned shirts and wallpaper and family photos on the wall providing homey details. Mama and Daddy's solution to the problem—that Hannah draw on paper instead—is fair, and it encourages Hannah (and other like-minded readers) to keep crawling back under that table. AEB

SCHNUR, STEVEN *The Koufax Dilemma*; illus. by Meryl Treatner. Morrow, 1997 [192p]
ISBN 0-688-14221-4 \$15.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-5

The baseball season opener against arch-rival Ryewood has been scheduled for the first night of Passover, and eleven-year-old Danny, "the greatest Jewish southpaw

since Sandy Koufax" (at least according to a family friend), is angry. His mom insists that Seder dinner is more important than pitching, and she has the story of baseball legend Koufax, who refused to play on Yom Kippur, to back her up. But for Danny, baseball takes precedence over religion, and he is afraid that he will lose his coach's respect if he misses the game. While the baseball writing is smooth and well-paced, the story has more strikes than runs. Danny's interactions with family and friends are stiff and unnatural, and overly expository dialogue denies the characters emotional depth. The moral dilemma suggested by the title is reduced to adult lectures on the importance of religion, Danny's self-sacrificing defiance and grudging obedience, as well as a super-condensed Seder dinner. Yet readers may relate to Danny's frustrations, compounded as they are by his parents' recent divorce, and recognize the conflicts that arise when cultural and personal commitments clash. AEB

SONENKLAR, CAROL *Bug Boy*; illus. by Betsy Lewin. Holt, 1997 [112p]
ISBN 0-8050-4794-8 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 3-5

Eeks! First in a recent infestation of arthropodic novels came Mary James's *Shoebag Returns* (BCCB 2/97), followed closely by Ralph Fletcher's *Spider Boy* (4/97), and now *Bug Boy*. This iteration of the boy/beast transformation plot features third-grader Charlie Kaplan, whose mania for insects and arachnids flies right out of control when a fellow enthusiast gives him a Bug-a-View, which allows Charlie to trade places with whatever critter crawls into range of its lens. As Charlie, Bug Boy regales the audience with predictable data ("It's important not to catch and keep praying mantises because they help the environment by eating bugs like fruit flies, which destroy crops"), and as a bug he encounters predictable threats from insensitive humans out to squash him. Just when the plot promises to cast Charlie as a delightfully noxious insect—a bombardier beetle (they spray enemies with "hot chemicals that explode from their rear ends, with a *pop*")—he's merely transmuted into a spider, who dodges some shoes and wraps the bombardier into a web in the sink. Overworked bug puns abound, and readers will probably find Lewin's scribbled black-and-white pictures a heck of a lot funnier than the text. EB

STERLING, SHIRLEY *My Name Is Seepeetza*. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1997 126p

Trade ed. ISBN 0-88899-290-4 \$14.95

R Gr. 5-8

First published in Canada, this is an autobiographical novel about a young girl's experience when she is sent away from her family ranch to the Indian residential school in 1959. Seepeetza, called Martha by the nuns, is miserable there: "In class I get into trouble for daydreaming. In the rec. Edna wants to beat me up because I have green eyes. White people don't like us because our clothes are old. Sister clobbers me for making dancing mistakes. The worst is that I get scared to go to the bathroom in the dark." In diary form she tells of the ups and downs of the year, with most of the first occasioned by her trips home while school amply provides the second. The diary entries are resoundingly authentic, with the institutional racism and general corruptness evinced in a thousand quotidian details (the girls' hair is cut short, unless it happens to be curly, to make them look less Indian) rather than described. Unfortunately, this authenticity extends to the voice, which relates incidents without differentiating their degree of importance, and which

describes the year piecemeal without bringing any particular rhythm or form to the overall narrative. As a result young readers, especially those lacking a sense of the historical context, may not acquire enough readerly momentum to carry them through the book. It's still an intimate and vivid account of an experience poorly conveyed in American children's literature; use it with other diary-form narratives to tune kids to the approach, and it may open many eyes. DS

TANAKA, SHELLEY *Discovering the Iceman*; illus. by Laurie McGaw and with photographs. Hyperion/Madison Press, 1997 (I Was There Books)
ISBN 0-7868-0284-7 \$16.95 Ad Gr. 3-6

After 5,000 years of mummification, Ötzi the iceman, found buried in the Alps in 1991, has emerged with more fame than he ever achieved in life. Following the format of the previous volume in the series, *On Board the Titanic* (BCCB 9/96), the book intersperses factual information (Ötzi's discovery, the forces that buried him, the scientific analysis of his body) with a fictional account of how he might have lived and died. The cornucopia of facts, combined with the gruesome appeal of Ötzi's decomposing visage, makes this an enticing dip into history. The book covers much the same ground as Don Lessem's *The Iceman* (BCCB 9/94), however, and the fictional interlude is flatly written and overly speculative; the art for the fiction is adequate but uninspired in a style reminiscent of old Time-Life series. This doesn't offer much new on the subject, but it's nonetheless a nice collection of the available information for hungry Ötzi fans. DS

VANDE VELDE, VIVIAN *Curses, Inc. and Other Stories*. Yolen/Harcourt, 1997 226p
ISBN 0-15-201452-7 \$16.00 R Gr. 6-10

This collection of ten witchy tales has something to appeal to everyone. There's a tongue-in-cheek saga of a boy who tries to buy misfortune via an on-line service for a girl who embarrassed him in "Curses, Inc.," a would-be sorcerer searching for just the right spell in "Boy Witch," and a prince who needs a case of amnesia to teach him compassion in "Remember Me." Several of the most chilling stories—"Lost Soul," "Cypress Swamp Granny," "Past Sunset"—have been published in previous collections. The tone of the collection varies from funny to haunting, from rueful to gothic, as Vande Velde roams from the familiar environs of fairy tales to the swamps of the plantation south. Give this one to readers who are ready for some sophisticated tales of the supernatural. JMD

WADSWORTH, GINGER *John Burroughs, the Sage of Slabslides*. Clarion, 1997 95p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-395-77830-1 \$16.95 Ad Gr. 4-7

Naturalist John Burroughs was a pioneer of nature writing and an instrumental figure in the early environmental movement. Wadsworth chronicles his life from his upbringing in upstate New York to his bank work, his family life, and finally his devotion to bringing the world of nature to people through his writing. Mention of the famous people (Walt Whitman, Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir) who knew Burroughs helps convey his impact; quotes from Burroughs' writing give an idea of his style. The book never really makes its subject come alive, skirting emotional depths and leaving questions such as how Burroughs felt about his apparently tempestuous marriage unanswered. (It's also overly optimistic of the au-

thor to assume that John Muir needs no introduction.) It's still a careful and detailed account of an important but lesser-sung figure, however, and young readers with an interest in the green movement will find it informative. A bibliography and an index are included; period photographs appear throughout. DS

WEATHERBY, MARK ALAN *My Dinosaur*; written and illus. by Mark Alan Weatherby. Scholastic, 1997 [32p]
ISBN 0-590-97203-0 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 3-6 yrs

On moonlit nights, a little girl waits at her bedroom window for her dinosaur to appear. Subtle visual clues herald his silent arrival: the shadowy shape of his head against the house, rows of dinosaurs patterning the wallpaper, a glimpse of a tail through the window. The friendship between the girl and the dinosaur is both familiar and fearless, if sentimentally depicted. They play hide-and-seek in the shadows and swim in the river, and when the girl races through the forest on the gentle dinosaur's back, none of the nocturnal animals is afraid. The girl's narration is self-conscious, though, and the illustrations glamorize her, with her light-bathed blonde and pink figure jarring against the dark and mottled landscape of her fantasy (effectively created with acrylics and metallic paint). The dinosaur is the too-large-for-the-page stuff of dreams; we catch only glimpses of skin that is smooth and lichen-patterned green-gold, a head reminiscent of a friendly inflatable toy, and a ridged back that is nearly indistinguishable from a distant mountain range. This is a dinosaur to be believed in, especially when the girl comes to breakfast with leaves in her hair. "I played with my dinosaur last night," the girl informs her mother. "That's nice," her mother replies. If only she knew. AEB

WERSBA, BARBARA *Whistle Me Home*. Holt, 1997. 108p
ISBN 0-8050-4850-2 \$14.95 R Gr. 7-12

Noli Brown is unhappy and combative, taking swigs from a vodka bottle to get her through the school day, when she meets TJ at the start of junior year. TJ is handsome and sensitive, immediately sought after by all the girls, but he chooses Noli. She is transformed by the relationship, but she hungers increasingly for a physical component their relationship doesn't have. A failed seduction attempt makes it clear to her that TJ is gay, and her anger and hurt cause her first to erupt at him and then to withdraw from everybody, descending into a morass of booze and bitterness until she finally comes to terms with her problems with herself as well as with TJ. This is an unusual but compelling story, and Wersba tells it well: her present-tense narration is tender and immediate, and Noli's longing and frustration are depicted with grace and sympathy. Succinct but intense, this is a resonant story about the hidden agendas of love. DS

WINTHROP, ELIZABETH, ad. *The Little Humpbacked Horse: A Russian Tale*; illus. by Alexander Koshkin. Clarion, 1997 27p
ISBN 0-395-65361-4 \$14.95 R 5-9 yrs

In this traditional Russian rags-to-riches tale simple Ivan, with the help of his magical humpbacked horse, exposes his elder brothers' dishonesty, becomes the Tsar's Master of Stables, and completes seemingly impossible tasks for the greedy Tsar, including bringing him the woman he hopes to marry, the beautiful and willful Tsarevna. But the Tsar's greed backfires when the Tsarevna falls in love

with Ivan and tricks the elderly Tsar into a folkloric death (he leaps into a cauldron of boiling milk because she tells him that will make him young again). Winthrop's retelling brings out the humor in this dreamy tale in which Ivan, who "loved nothing better than to sleep away the days as well as the nights" is galloped to his destiny by his humpbacked mount. Koshkin's highly patterned illustrations, in a rich palette of golds, greens, and reds, are densely and pleasingly detailed without being overcrowded. Although Koshkin's figures are sometimes stiff, there is movement in the lines of his compositions, and his animals are well drawn and animated, with the droll little horse always in the center of the action. Attractively organized into short chapters broken up by full page illustrations and half page miniatures, this book is a good choice for an episodic bedtime readaloud or even an undemanding readalone. PMc

WOLF, BERNARD *HIV Positive*; written and illus. with photographs by Bernard Wolf. Dutton, 1997 48p
ISBN 0-525-45459-4 \$16.99 R Gr. 3-6

Sara is a young woman with AIDS, and this photoessay explores its effect on her life and her loved ones, especially her two school-age children, Jennifer and Anthony. The book describes her recent near-fatal bout with pneumonia, her comprehensive physical checkups, her problems with employment and insurance, and her fears for her children. It then focuses closely on the children, especially Jennifer, examining her worries about her mother, her isolation from her schoolmates, her struggling with her anger, and her work with a therapist. The text is straightforward and accessible, with the medical information succinct and secondary to the human story. This family focus is a rare one in children's books about people with AIDS (Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe's *Daddy and Me*, BCCB 2/94, is an earlier example) and it's the book's best aspect: it's abundantly clear that this is an ongoing struggle for Jennifer as well as for Sara. The multitude of photographs are clear and informative but still personalizing, showing a stressed but loving family with members sometimes cheerful and sometimes shadowed by the strains of daily life. There are a few pulled punches (the text is evasive about the fatality of AIDS and about Sara's acceptance of unsafe sex), but kids dealing with any serious parental illness will recognize the authenticity; other youngsters will get a better idea of both the ordinariness and the burden of some of their schoolmates' lives. DS

WOOD, FRANCES M. *Becoming Rosemary*. Delacorte, 1997 248p
ISBN 0-385-32248-8 \$14.95 R Gr. 5-8

A first novel that refreshes old themes, this story traces twelve-year-old Rosemary's maturation from a peaceful childview of the North Carolina backwoods in 1790 to a complex perception of the dynamics that transform her community into a dangerous place. Like other characters in recent fiction about herb-women with supernatural powers (Napoli's *Magic Circle*, BCCB 4/93, Furlong's *Wise Child*, 2/88 etc.), Rosemary learns that her potential—here inherited from her mother—could draw the charge of witchcraft. A webbed plot tightens inevitably around Rosemary's friend, an Italian "Papist" newcomer and her husband, whom the farm villagers eventually drive away, but the real tension emanates from characterization as much as action. We see this protagonist developing against the background profiles of her oldest sister, whose powers have already made her "strange," and her other sister, a down-to-earth girl who takes after their father and whose main inter-

est in life is to marry and live a normal life (her romances offer a welcome lightness of tone). The writing has a silvery quality that stops short of shiny, and young readers captured by the suspense will find depth here as well. BH

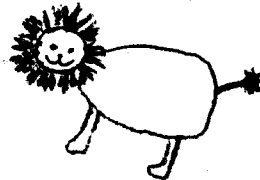
YEP, LAURENCE *The Case of the Goblin Pearls: Chinatown Mystery #1*. HarperCollins, 1997 179p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024446-1 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024444-5 \$14.95

M Gr. 4-7

Heists by the Powell Street Boys are escalating in San Francisco's Chinatown, and there has even been talk among politicians of canceling the Chinese New Year parade. The influential Wong family is determined to flaunt the safety of their community by allowing daughter Tiffany to wear the priceless "Goblin Pearls" necklace on Mr. Soo's Lion Salve parade float. When the pearls are swiped right off Tiffany's neck during the festivities, "Tiger Lil" Leung, erstwhile screen star and current promoter for Lion Salve, steps in to investigate, with the bungling assistance of her great-niece (and our narrator), Lily Lew. There's precious little mystery here; even novice crime-crackers won't have much trouble fingering the culprits, and Officer Quan's shoddy investigative technique will appall whodunnit diehards. Yep does scratch beneath Chinatown's gaudy veneer to reveal prejudices within San Francisco's Chinese community, where children of immigrants who have moved "up the hill" look down literally and figuratively on the J.O.J.'s (Just Off the Jet), many of whom struggle for low wages in deplorable sweatshops. But the social commentary, however apt, cannot rescue the floundering plot, and mystery fans won't consider this much of a gem. EB



PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

Egoff, Sheila et al., eds. *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature*. Third edition. Oxford University Press, 1996. Paper ed. ISBN 0-19-541024-6. \$19.95. 416p.

No mere cosmetic overhaul here—this edition of Egoff's classic anthology is almost entirely new, with nearly all the entries penned since the 1980 edition. Sections deal with a multitude of genres as well as the more general topics of books and children and recent trends. Authors are strongly represented (Margaret Mahy, Tim Wynne-Jones, Katherine Paterson, William Sleator, Myra Cohn Livingston, Uri Shulevitz) but critics aren't shorted either (Peter Hunt, Perry Nodelman, Jack Zipes). The selections are intelligent, the sources international, and the compilation highly readable. Contributor biographies, a selected bibliography, and an index are included. DS

Gerhardt, Lillian N., ed. *School Library Journal's Best: A Reader for Children's, Young Adult & School Librarians*; comp. by Marilyn L. Miller and Thomas W. Downen. Neal-Schuman, 1997. Paper ed. ISBN 1-55570-203-1. \$39.95. 474p.

This collection of SLJ articles and columns spans the Gerhardt years from 1971 to the present. The seven thematic sections each include a panorama of contributors—there's Ursula Nordstrom on creative talent, Margaret McElderry on Anne Carroll Moore, Zena Sutherland on book reviews, June Jordan on black English, and a spectacular multitude more. Each section is chronologically arranged, with the date of its original appearance right up front, which makes for some interesting perspectives. While everyone undoubtedly has his or her own suggestions for what *should* have been included (where's that editorial threatening to hit Ethel Heins with a chair?), this will give a useful overview of professional writing of the last quarter-century and save a lot of time spent on back-issue hunts. DS

Helbig, Alethea and Agnes Perkins. *The Phoenix Award of the Children's Literature Association 1990-1994*. Scarecrow, 1996. ISBN 0-8108-3191-0. \$45.00. 282p.

The Phoenix Award does have the benefit of hindsight, but the prize, given by the Children's Literature Association to the author of a book that has been deemed worthy of special recognition twenty years after the original date of publication, does provide an entirely different kind of literary award and numbers among its honorees some deservedly estimable works. This collection includes acceptance speeches from the winners and authors of honor books, biographical sketches and bibliographies, and original critical essays about the author's work. The result is sort of a rediscovery handbook, which can alert people to the merits of works they

may have overlooked or give them more fodder for their championing of favorites.
DS

Horning, Kathleen T. *Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books*. HarperCollins, 1997. Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024519-0; \$24.95; Paper ed. ISBN 0-06-446167-X; \$12.95. [160p] Reviewed from galleys.

This is a succinct, highly readable, and eminently useful overview of the fine points of evaluating and critiquing children's books. Horning's organized, sensible approach begins with an overview of how children's books are published in the United States, the physical parts of a book, and categories of children's books. The next six chapters are devoted to the definition and scope of those categories: non-fiction or information books; traditional literature (folktales, myths, legends, etc.); poetry, verse, rhymes, and songs; picture books; easy readers and transitional books; and fiction. Each chapter offers a concrete methodology for evaluating a children's book based on the total sum of its parts, from the organization of information for non-fiction to the narrative style in traditional literature to the partnership of text and pictures in picture books. Horning's final chapter concentrates on the process of review writing, from opening sentence to copy editing. Throughout, Horning augments her approach with many examples from children's literature, with a constant emphasis on the need for extensive reading in the field in order to make a qualified evaluation. Extensive source notes and bibliography are included. JMD

McGillis, Roderick. *The Nimble Reader: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*. Twayne, 1996. ISBN 0-8057-9033-0. \$26.95. 230p.

Children's literature professionals and students venturing into academic literary criticism of children's works haven't had much useful assistance at the introductory level, and this book ably fills that gap. After an introductory section describing the history and possibilities of literary theory, McGillis gets to the meat: seven chapters each addressing a school of literary theory. Using keystone texts (*Charlotte's Web*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*) for cogent specificity, he discusses each approach's advantages and drawbacks, incorporating significant critical examples and analyzing them. The balance of theory and specifics is excellent, resulting in a useful and understandable entree to criticism. Bibliographies of children's books and critical texts are included, as is an index. DS

BLOWING OUR OWN HORN DEPARTMENT:

Beckett, Sandra, L. ed. *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature Since 1945*. Greenwood Press, 1997. ISBN 0-313-30145-X. \$55.00. 203p. Includes Deborah Stevenson's "Ramona the Underestimated: The Everyday-Life Story in Children's Literature." 23-31.

Hearne, Betsy. "Disney Revisited, Or, Jiminy Cricket! It's Musty Down Here!" *The Horn Book Magazine*. March/April 1997: 137-146.

Stevenson, Deborah. "Sentiment and Significance: or, The Drowning of the Water Babies." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 21.1 (January 1997): 112-130.

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.

- ADVENTURE STORIES: Baillie
 Africa-folklore: Kurtz
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 Haskins
 African Americans-poetry: Adoff
 Agriculture: Micucci
 AIDS: Wolf
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- Mothers and daughters—stories:
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- Mothers and sons—fiction: Cutler
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- Religious education:** Cooper, I.
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Komodo
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- Sports: Baiul; Greenberg
- Storytelling:** Bateman; Farley; Ho;
Winthrop
- Storytime:** Bunting; Farley; Ho;
Hoberman; Maitland
- TRICKSTER TALES:** Ho
- Vocational guidance:** Grace
- War—fiction: Matas
- War—poetry: Robb
- Water: Locker
- Witches—fiction: Vande Velde; Wood
- Women's studies:** Greenberg



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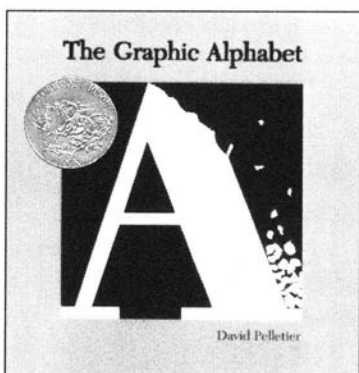
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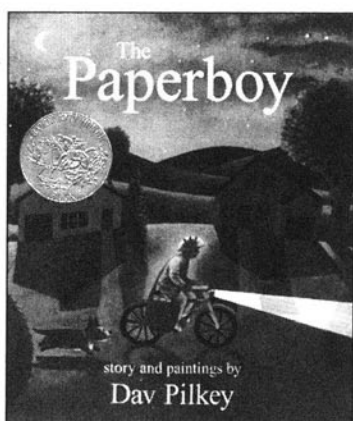


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