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THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

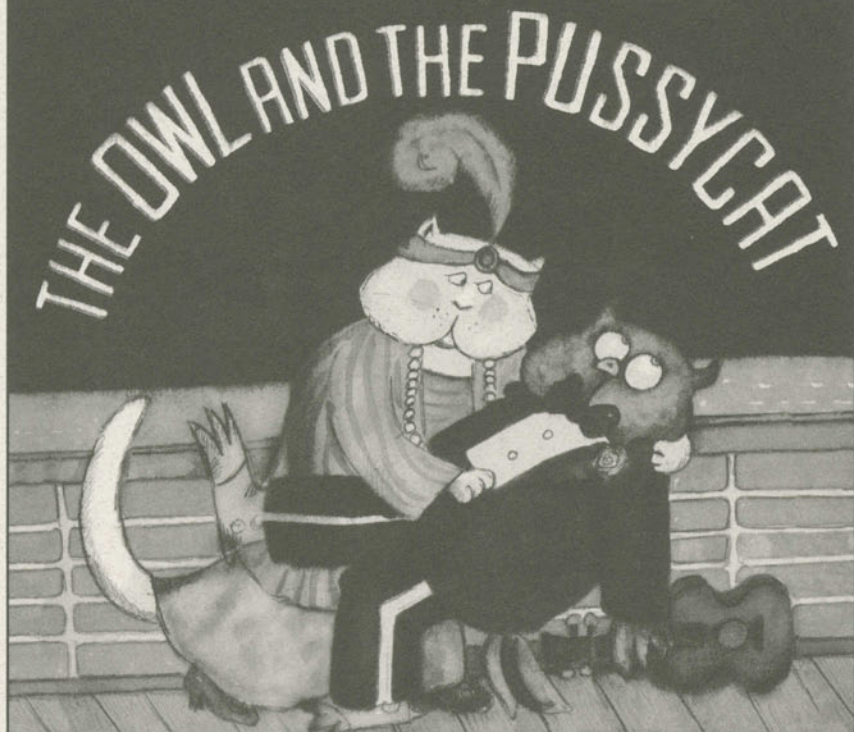
June 1999
Vol. 52 No. 10



University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

University of Illinois Press

A School Library Journal Best Book of 1998



by Edward Lear • Full-color pictures by James Marshall

- ★ "None of the previous versions [of Lear's ballad] achieves such a perfect match to the lighthearted nonsense as Marshall's captivating, droll artwork. This nonsense verse has delighted generations . . . Marshall has improved on perfection."
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- ★ "Lear's pea-green boat sails again, this time with the inimitable James Marshall at the helm [as] the famous poem receives an irreverent, gently playful rendition."
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- ★ "In true Marshall fashion, the artist lifts Lear's quirky duo to new heights. It would be difficult to imagine a better couple to set sail with than Marshall's Owl and Pussycat."
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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

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

Tea with Milk

written and illus. by Allen Say

Writing a family history in a manner that interests anyone but blood relations is surprisingly difficult; putting a family story into a picture-book format is even more difficult, as picture books require an economy of form and style that is not necessarily family-story friendly. Allen Say writes family stories for youth, treading the path of his family's past with a sure step, never slipping into the chasms of nostalgia that yawn at his feet. A matter-of-fact tone and a certain severity of style serve to discipline his unsentimental look at his family history, resulting in emotionally resonant stories that are crisp and clean, yet not antiseptic.

Tea with Milk is a love story, and it is a love story in more ways than one. It is the story of a young Japanese-American woman's love for her country; it is the story of her parents' love for their country of origin; it is the story of how Say's own parents met and fell in love; and it is the story of the love between a mother and child in this son's tribute to his mother's life. The opening sepia-toned, snapshot-like illustration shows a little girl dressed in her best clothes; behind the girl is the door to her house where, peeking out from a small window, is the half-hidden face of an observing adult. The accompanying text states: "From the window of her room, the girl could see the city of San Francisco. She imagined that it was a city of many palaces. And one day her father would take her there, he had promised, riding on a paddle steamer across the shining bay." But the girl Masako's parents are homesick, and, after she graduates from high school, they return to Japan. Masako had planned to go to college and get her own apartment. In Japan, however, she goes back to high school to learn to speak Japanese, and she takes lessons in flower arranging and calligraphy in order to become "a proper Japanese lady." When her parents hire a matchmaker to find her a husband and arrange a marriage, Masako realizes that, despite her Japanese parents, she is an "American daughter." She cannot adjust to the life her parents wish her to live so she moves to Osaka, where, thanks to her excellent English, she gets a job guiding foreign businessmen around an exclusive department store. On one such tour, she meets Joseph, the man who becomes her husband and the author's father.

From the title page illustration of the young Masako standing next to a baby carriage with a blonde ringleted doll, Say renders his mother's struggle to maintain her balance on the line between her two cultures with compassionate insight. The loneliness of the uprooted Masako, her conflicting desires to please her family and be true to herself, her courage in leavetaking, all are communicated in a telling combination of words and pictures. The full-page watercolor illustrations are thinly outlined in black with wide white borders, and the spare compositions are elegantly balanced within their frames. The face of the main character

articulates her changing emotions as her solitary figure stands isolated and apart in several of the spreads. The faces in the crowds are integral to the action of the scene; every now and then a character will look out from the pages, seemingly directly at the viewer, further drawing the reader into Masako's environment. The illustrations have a translucent, light-infused quality, illuminating both setting and characters with unremitting honesty. The backgrounds, whether busy street-scenes or the palatial store interior, serve as uncluttered settings for the story's characters.

There have been several generations of family stories in picture book format over the last several years; their apparent aim has been to contribute to a sense of personal and family history, to give young readers and listeners a sense of where they come from so as to provide them with a sense of where they might go. Unfortunately, many such books are nostalgic pieces for adults, memory anecdotes that require the reader to bring a certain amount of regret or longing for days gone by to the story in order to appreciate the experience. Say has a gift for descriptive prose that effectively communicates the emotional nuances of his family stories; that gift lifts his stories above nostalgia and invites young listeners and readers to an understanding of the passage of time, the impact of distance. Opening with a snapshot-like illustration of Masako and closing with a photorealistic portrait of his parents, Say's respectful tribute comes full circle, ending with a gratifying sense of something well-considered and finally understood. (Imprint information appears on p. 364.)

Janice M. Del Negro, Editor



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ADLER, DAVID A. *The Babe & I*; illus. by Terry Widener. Gulliver/Harcourt, 1999 [32p]

ISBN 0-15-201378-4 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

With so promising a title, one might expect a reprise of Adler's *Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man* (BCCB 4/97), focusing now on Lou Gehrig's stellar teammate, Babe Ruth. But the Sultan of Swat remains pretty much in the literary dugout in this earnest but rambling tale of a Depression Era newsie who capitalizes on the Babe's exploits to keep sales moving briskly. Ruth makes a cameo appearance, flipping the boy a five-dollar bill for a two-cent paper, thus enabling his young fan to buy a ticket to a Yankees game and see the hero in action. Baseball action is secondary to the family story here, as the boy tells of how he discovered his father selling apples on a street corner and subsequently guarded his guilty secret. Widener's retro-styled acrylic paintings, strongly reminiscent of his work in *Lou Gehrig*, cover the same setting and era but highlight street corners and loading docks and domestic interiors. Atmospheric street scenes evoke hardscrabble economic times, particu-

larly Widener's views of Yankee Stadium, which rises like an enticing apparition, barricaded by the steel piers of the elevated trains. It's a vivid picture of the era, but if the audience wants a lot more period baseball and a lot less period sentiment, hand them a copy of Robert Burleigh's book on Ruth, *Home Run* (BCCB 9/98). EB

AVI *Abigail Takes the Wheel*; illus. by Don Bolognese. HarperCollins, 1999 64p (I Can Read Chapter Books)
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027663-0 \$14.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027662-2 \$14.95 R Gr. 2-4

Abigail is an old hand on her father's freight boat, the *Neptune*, which plies the waters between the family's New Jersey home and the New York harbor. On an ordinary boat-trip to school, the *Neptune* assists a wounded three-master by giving her a tow, which requires Abigail's father to handle the towed boat while his first mate handles the *Neptune*. First Mate Mr. Oliver falls ill, however, and it suddenly becomes Abigail's job to take the *Neptune* into the busy port without harming her or the vessel she tows. The text is easy and adventurous, with an appealing capable heroine and nautical twist. An author's note states that he based the book on a story from an 1881 *St. Nicholas*, and it has an old-fashioned flair appropriate to that old classic; Avi has also managed to keep the events in their original period without cluttering them up with self-consciousness about that era's since becoming history. Bolognese's line-and-watercolor art is a bit blandly overtly, especially in the human figures, but his line-festooned ships and sharp bows slicing through the green waves convey the milieu effectively. Readers who wish they were ready for *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* will find this a pleasing stand-in. DS

BARTOLETTI, SUSAN *No Man's Land: A Young Soldier's Story*. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 1999 [176p]
ISBN 0-590-38371-X \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

Thrasher Magee, who seems destined to be a continual disappointment to his father, freezes in fear when an alligator rears up in the Georgia swamp, and he leaves his father to battle it and sustain all the injuries in their defense. Pushed by his own depression and pulled by the temptation of battle glory, Thrasher lies his way into the Confederate army and, with a handful of local men and boys, joins the Okefinokee Rifles as they push their way into Virginia to reinforce Stonewall Jackson's troops. A temporary truce between Yank and Reb foot soldiers allows Thrasher to discover an uncomfortable sense of kinship with the enemy during an impromptu baseball game, and he is more frightened than ever that putting a "face" on his foe will seal his cowardice in battle. But after two months of foraging, marching, road building, and burial duty, the Rifles are called into action and Thrasher charges into the bloodshed at Gaines Mill near Richmond, losing his cowardice, several comrades, and an arm in battle. There's nothing particularly new about the boy-tests-his-courage plot line, but Bartoletti's scenes of camp life—the long stretches of mundane duties and childish skylarking, with altogether too much time in which to worry about one's adequacy—bring Thrasher's fears vividly to life. Notes on the Shenandoah Valley campaign and a bibliography of sources are included. Pair this with Paulsen's *Soldier's Heart* (BCCB 9/98) to view the war from both sides of the line. EB

BAUER, JOAN *Backwater*. Putnam, 1999 [224p]

ISBN 0-399-23141-2 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

At sixteen, Ivy is keenly aware that her father expects her to join the Breedlove tradition of lawyering and equally keenly aware that she doesn't want to—she's much more interested in history, especially family history. To find it, she searches for her black-sheep aunt, Josephine, who disappeared into the Adirondacks years ago; with the help of an eccentric mountain guide Ivy finds Jo, now living in happy wilderness seclusion amid clouds of birds, and attempts to convince her to contribute to Ivy's gathering of family history. This doesn't have the snappy originality of Bauer's other literary conceptions (*Rules of the Road*, BCCB 2/98, etc.), and the wilderness-rescue climax (Ivy drags her injured aunt to safety on a sled) tips into cliché, but Bauer's crisp dialogue and engaging characterization still makes the enterprise a satisfying read. There's a particular pleasure in the female-slanted overtones of Gary Paulsen here as Ivy accustoms herself to life on the mountain and tries to find her own role in the family continuum. Readers looking for wilderness stories with a wisecracking edge will, along with fans of the author's other works, appreciate Ivy's travails. DS

BECHARD, MARGARET *If It Doesn't Kill You*. Viking, 1999 [176p]

ISBN 0-670-88547-9 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

Ben's an up-and-coming jock, ready to follow in his father's varsity football footsteps; the upperclassmen are already starting to include him in hallway goofing-around and locker-room gossip/lies. Underneath it all, however, Ben's afraid: his sports-hero father came out six months ago and is living with a boyfriend across town, and Ben worries what people will think if they find out and what it all means to him. His identity crisis is complicated by Chynna, a new neighbor who's also struggling to define herself and who sees Ben as an inside track to the star quarterback she's pinned her hopes on attracting. Bechard has a good ear for the rhythms of high-school dialogue, and her understated style suits her story well. There's also a realistic absence of cheap binaries here: the girl next door isn't a prospective girlfriend but she's not a pal, either; the star quarterback is kind of a jerk but not as much as you think he's going to be; Ben's father is a good enough guy but he has also weaseled out of telling his own mother the truth about his marriage. Ben's gradual reconciliation to the change in his family isn't unexpected, but it's also not forced, and there's an effective imaginative twist in its realization (a rescue from a difficult situation is performed not by Dad but by Dad's boyfriend, Keith, who promises not to tell either of Ben's parents). No mere problem novel, this displays an understanding of high-school pressures and yearnings that will draw young teens surviving their own particular obstacles. DS

BLACKLOCK, DYAN *Pankration: The Ultimate Game*. Whitman, 1999 192p

ISBN 0-8075-6323-4 \$15.95

R Gr. 5-8

As fifth-century-B.C. Athens succumbs to a virulent plague, Nic is abruptly packed off with a family slave to the distant home of a distant relative. The first day on board ship the boy is befriended by Gellius, the ship's captain and an Olympic hopeful training to compete in the pankration (a brutal bare-fisted, no-holds barred, one-on-one event), but Nic never sees the second day of his voyage. Pirates raid

the ship, mauling Gellius and leaving him for dead, and selling Nic into slavery somewhere on the Italian peninsula. Goat herding on the rugged mountain slopes toughens the once-privileged boy, who eventually seizes the opportunity to escape and makes his way back to Greece in time for the Games, where he is certain he will find Gellius alive and poised for victory. Kid-pleasing adventure-story staples abound—pirates and thieves, treacherous fellow slaves and wild beasts—repackaged here in Grecian trappings. But Blacklock manages to raise the tale beyond simple costume drama by ably incorporating details of lifestyle, terrain, and of course the Olympic Games themselves without a hint of the history-is-good-for-you didacticism that too often encumbers historical fiction. Good guys are victorious, villains are punished, an Olympic scandal is resolved, a whiff of love is in the air for Gellius, and the final scene is set for a reunion at the next Games (and a possible sequel?). And that's about as satisfying as it gets. EB

BODETT, TOM *Williwaw!* Knopf, 1999 192p

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-99030-5 \$17.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-89030-0 \$16.00

R Gr. 5-8

September and her younger brother, Ivan, live out in the Alaskan bush, and they're on their own for days at a time when their father works crew on a fishing boat. This time there's trouble, however, when videogame-mad Ivan connects to the radios to power his obsessive playing and thereby shorts out their only means of contact with the outside world. The kids pile further sins upon the original, disobeying direct parental orders and taking their skiff fourteen miles across the bay into town to get the equipment fixed before their father tries to call them on radios that no longer work. Unfortunately, on the trip to pick up the radios, the unaccustomed pleasures of town social life distract September and Ivan from weather-watching, and they dash to get home before a storm catches them on the water—and they miscalculate. There are some stock components here—the tragic figure of the kids' dead mother, the mean neighbor who eventually proves kindly, the jolly old salt of a mailboat captain—but Bodett's attention to Alaskan detail and the story's effectively suspenseful undertone keep the book fresh nonetheless. Particularly memorable is the inexorable portrayal of September and Ivan as they, in their attempt merely to avoid staying with a disliked aunt, get themselves farther and farther in over their heads; the climactic storm sequence, though dramatically dangerous, is merely the culmination of the siblings' unknowing downhill slide. The depiction of a life alien to most young readers and the address of the problems of wilderness hubris make this a pleasing variant on the survival story that will gratify young Paulsen fans and outdoor dreamers. DS

BORDEN, LOUISE *Good Luck, Mrs. K.!*; illus. by Adam Gustavson. McElderry, 1999 32p

ISBN 0-689-82147-6 \$15.00

R Gr. 2-4

Mrs. Kempczinski (who mercifully offers her third-graders the alternative of "Mrs. K.") is a charismatic teacher, adored by her students ("When Mrs. K. let me take Olga, the class guinea pig, out of her cage and hold her in my hands, I figured third grade was going to be my best grade yet"). Her emphasis on imagination and exploration invigorates the class, which watches in awe as Mrs. K. produces worm earrings ("It's the third grade way," said Mrs. K.) and homework dances. Then a substitute appears and the class receives the bad news: Mrs. K. is in the hospital

with cancer and Mrs. Dodd will be teaching the rest of the year. While the narrow topic doesn't really lend itself to pleasure reading or extrapolation to other situations, Borden's brisk specificity lifts the situation above pat bibliotherapy and provides a believable portrait of an inspiring teacher. Gustavson's watercolors are as solid as acrylic, giving the figures a hearty angularity (though the faces tend to resemble one another) that conveys high-level classroom energy. Readers will be as happy as the narrator when, at the end of the year, Mrs. K. makes a special appearance to the classroom chants of "Mrs. K.'s back!" DS

BRAUN, TRUDI *My Goose Betsy*; illus. by John Bendall-Brunello. Candlewick, 1999 32p

ISBN 0-7636-0449-6 \$16.99

R 4-7 yrs

Through spare but lyrical text and friendly, playful art, we are introduced to Betsy, the young narrator's beloved pet. Braun begins the story with Betsy's physical description ("My goose Betsy has smooth soft feathers to keep her warm and dry, wide webby feet to swim with, and a long strong beak for tearing at grass or pecking up corn") and moves on to how she walks ("a stately waddle") and talks ("with a squawk, or a honk, or a hiss"). Betsy also becomes a mother goose, readying a nest, laying her eggs, and keeping them warm ("Day after day, she sits very still in the quiet dark goose house"). Bendall-Brunello's colored pencil and watercolor art, with its muted yellows, greens, and browns shaded with gentle crosshatching, complements the cozy text while a plethora of motion lines and the expressive mama and goslings enhance the narrative. Emerging readers will appreciate the "goose facts" and accessible index that follow the story. However, the book will be equally appealing for boisterous storytimes filled with plenty of squawking and honking. EAB

CLEMENTS, ANDREW *The Landry News*; illus. by Salvatore Murdocca. Simon, 1999 [128p]

ISBN 0-689-81817-3 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-6

New girl Cara Landry yearns to be a journalist, and she takes her opportunity in a little number she calls *The Landry News*, in which her editorial accurately points out that fifth-grade teacher Mr. Larson's "open classroom" is really just a cover for teacher burnout that leaves him reading the newspaper while students do as they please. Initially angry, Mr. Larson concedes the justice of Cara's opinion and backs Cara's paper, encouraging future issues and the expansion of the periodical. Soon, however, the school principal, suspicious of the project and eager for a reason to dispose of the insufficiently doctrinaire Mr. Larson, demands the closure of *The Landry News*, and the classroom finds itself involved in a free-speech controversy. The book starts out with a rather different slant on the old school-newspaper plot, with Cara having a history of vindictive journalism and Mr. Larson sympathetic in his ambivalence between disaffection and dedication. The story turns fairly predictable, however, when it becomes students vs. the Establishment and all the class bands together to support their teacher in a school-meeting showdown; the ostensible cause of the flap is too obviously lame, and Mr. Larson's complete conversion to inspiring teacher is more convenient than credible. It's nonetheless a particularly accessible approach to a challenging issue, and young Ben Bradlees will get swept up in the drama. DS

CONFORD, ELLEN *Diary of a Monster's Son*; illus. by Tom Newsom. Little, 1999 76p
ISBN 0-316-15245-5 \$14.95 R Gr. 3-5

Bradley's dad is a monster (the kind with fangs, claws, and hair, lots and lots of hair), and young Bradley is very, very fond of him. Conford's premise is silly but her execution is just dandy as she depicts a loving (if furry) single father raising his only son. Mr. Fentriss does all the usual parental jobs like taking Bradley shopping for school clothes, going to school on parent-teacher night, and attempting to fix a huge hole in the ceiling (he gives up and they go spend the night in a motel), but there is a slight edge added with the knowledge that Mr. Fentriss is a hairy monster with a tendency to pop his shirt buttons that makes this funnier than average family fare. Amidst the jocularity there are moments of real tenderness, allowing readers a glimpse of the loss both Bradley and his father feel at the absence of Bradley's mother. Bradley, who narrates in diary form, is a realistic wise-acre of a kid, and Conford unerringly captures the tone of a mischievous grade-schooler who idolizes his dad, unaware that his unusual father is cause for any consternation. Newsom's black-and-white drawings depict a cheerfully rambunctious cast of characters, only hinting at Bradley's largely unseen dad with glimpses of a hairy arm here and clawed fingers there. Bradley has a matter-of-fact, natural way of narrating the unnatural that is sure to keep readers giggling along with the outrageous and consistent silliness. JMD

CRIST-EVANS, CRAIG *Moon over Tennessee: A Boy's Civil War Journal*; illus. by Bonnie Christensen. Houghton, 1999 [64p]
ISBN 0-395-91208-3 \$15.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

While other literary boy heroes lie, cheat, and connive their way into the Reb or Yank ranks, the narrator of this free-verse poem stoically follows his father from their Tennessee farm into the heat of Lee's campaign in order to tend the horses and make camp. At Gettysburg the father takes a fatal shot in full view of his son: "This morning, while the soldiers fought their last retreat,/ I saw him stand up in the meadow down by the bloody creek./ He stood and spun as if someone had punched him in the face./ When I got to him, he couldn't say my name." The boy must then make the wearying trip back to Tennessee, to break the news to his mother and try to rebuild their lives. The narrator's undeniably poignant observations lose some of their impact through the unvarying tone of the verses: grooming a horse, reminiscing about friendships, chatting about home with a young soldier, and waiting for a beloved father to emerge from a bloody battle pass at the same measured pace. Still, Crist-Evans offers potent imagery that quietly rivals the other novelists' more graphically detailed scenes: "I've never heard/ that kind of wailing, like the dead, the way the preacher/ says they're screaming down in hell." Full-page wood engravings punctuate the text, and a map and concluding note on the Confederate campaign are included. EB

DALY, NIKI *Jamela's Dress*; written and illus. by Niki Daly. Farrar, 1999 [32p]
ISBN 0-374-33667-9 \$16.00
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

Jamela loves the material Mama has picked out to make herself a dress for a wedding, so much so that after Mama washes it and hangs it on the line to dry, Jamela

wraps herself in its soft folds. Down the street she goes in her mother's red high heels, the beautiful material trailing behind her like a train while the neighborhood children sing "Kwela Jamela African Queen!" Archie the photographer dashes out of his studio to take a photo of the queenly Jamela and her entourage, and all is right with the world, until Mama sees what Jamela has done with her new dress material: "Everyone felt sorry for Mama and cross with Jamela. Even Jamela was cross with Jamela." Archie shows Jamela his prize-winning photo of Kwela Jamela African Queen on the front page of the paper; when Jamela tells him about the ruined material he replaces it with his prize money, and both Jamela and her mama go to the wedding in style. Daly's tale is set in a South African town, but the story of a little girl getting carried away by her make-believe games is a universal one. The watercolors are a happy combination of color and movement that bring to life the sights and scenes of the busy streets of Jamela's town. The characters are lively and emotive, their faces alight with the good cheer engendered by Jamela's masquerade-parade down the street. Nguni words and phrases, spoken within the text, are artfully explained in context. Daly's delivery plays out the suspense, and even as listeners delight in Jamela's make-believe, they will know that the "uh-oh!" moment is coming. With its rising pace and strong narrative, Jamela's story is a joyful evocation of community and family that will be a storytime hit—just make sure you have enough material for your own parade. JMD

DANIELS, TERI *The Feet in the Gym*; illus. by Travis Foster. Winslow, 1999 [32p]

ISBN 1-890817-12-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 4-7 yrs

Any child who has watched the school maintenance staff go through their paces will sympathize with the plight of Handy Bob, the custodian with the unenviable task of keeping the gym floor gleaming: "At Lakeside School I work each day/ to wipe each dab of dirt away./ I search for bits of grit and grime./ specks of mud and drops of slime." You can be sure he finds plenty of it—a Brownie troop trails cookie crumbs across the floor, the soccer team tracks in dirt and grass, the art class drips paint, and a horde of second graders swirls the debris into a janitor's worst nightmare. Along comes the Lakeside marching band to save the day: "Joy of joys! My lucky day!/ The children marched the mess away!/ No need to mop the gym at all./ The floor is clean from wall to wall." Except, that is, for the footprints left across the final spread by Handy Bob himself. The rhyming text rapidly reaches the maximum limit for sing-song rhythms, and the cartoony illustrations (featuring smiling, pop-eyed children marching in Stepford order across the pages) gets a little repetitious. Young listeners probably won't be troubled by these details, though, and will recognize in Foster's square-chinned, broad-shouldered, proudly smiling Handy Bob the very figure of their own school's Prince of the Physical Plant. EB

DEMI *Kites: Magic Wishes That Fly Up to the Sky*; written and illus. by Demi. Crown, 1999 36p

Library ed. ISBN 0-517-80050-0 \$18.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-80049-7 \$17.00

R 5-8 yrs

In brilliant colors and on spacious double-page spreads Demi depicts the origin of the Chinese holiday Ch'ing Yang or The Double Ninth Festival, a festival of kites

that takes place on September 9, the ninth day of the ninth month. Long ago in China religious devotees would go to a painter of holy pictures in order to “buy his pictures and offer them in the temple to their gods. . . . If someone wanted peace, he would offer a picture of the peaceful Buddha. If somebody had bad eyesight and wanted good eyesight, he would offer a picture of himself without his glasses on.” One day a woman requested a picture of a dragon, “a symbol of wealth, wisdom, power and nobility,” but instead of an ordinary holy picture she requested the painting on a kite, in order to “fly it right up to the sky [so] the gods in heaven will see it immediately.” Soon everyone wanted kites for their wishes and prayers, and, finally, Ch’ing Yang was born and is celebrated to this day. The kites are what are important here, and Demi fills the pages with airily desirable kites in the shapes of birds, insects, reptiles, fish, animals, flowers, gods, and symbols captioned with their attributes (pandas symbolize happiness, magpies bring joy, etc.). There are some minor glitches—no dates are included so the time frame is fuzzy, there are cases where the kites do not literally look like the creatures they are supposed to represent (the mouse looks like a bat, the bumblebee looks like an elaborate butterfly), and some kites are uncaptioned—but overall this is a celebratory sort of book that is going to inspire some serious kite-making/kite-flying activities. Four concluding pages with twelve step-by-step cartoon panels give instructions on how to make a kite. JMD

DEPAOLA, TOMIE *26 Fairmount Avenue*; written and illus. by Tomie dePaola Putnam, 1999 [64p]

ISBN 0-399-23246-X \$13.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-5

Departing from picture books, dePaola here offers an autobiography of his life as a young boy in Meriden, Connecticut. In nine short chapters, the author talks about his family, his neighbors, and the excitement of building the new family house at 26 Fairmount Avenue, where he spent his youth. The book brings events and people to easy life, and the writing has an understated, unassuming rhythm. An occasional tendency to fall into tonal sameness undercuts the pace, but the black and white drawings break up the text and provide a glimpse into an affectionate household full of jolly personalities. Illustrations show comfortably familiar family members and friends amidst period hints like Mae West and Shirley Temple movies, no-dial phones, and old-model cars. Readers who have enjoyed dePaola’s family stories in picture-book format will happily snuggle up for this longer visit. JMD

DUNBAR, JOYCE *The Bowl of Fruit*; illus. by Helen Craig. Candlewick, 1999 24p

ISBN 0-7636-0706-1 \$9.99

R 3-6 yrs

Panda’s New Toy; illus. by Helen Craig. Candlewick, 1999 24p

ISBN 0-7636-0724-X \$9.99

R 3-6 yrs

The Secret Friend; illus. by Helen Craig. Candlewick, 1999 24p

ISBN 0-7636-0720-7 \$9.99

R 3-6 yrs

These three tales of friendship under pressure feature Panda—slightly greedy and a bit devious—and his chum Gander—patient, and resilient to Panda’s childish efforts at duplicity. *Fruit* centers on Panda’s attempt to get more than his fair

portion of their snack of mixed fruit. As Gander patiently slices a pomegranate and culls the sweet seeds, his friend wolfs down the rest of the fruit, save a few cherries; Panda is then nonplused to learn that Gander is unwilling to go halvesies on the hard-won pile of seeds. In *New Toy*, Panda is equally unwilling to share his cup/string/ball toy and concocts every excuse imaginable why he should "just have one last turn." *Secret Friend* turns the tables on Panda, as Gander teases him with a mysterious, ornately decorated letter to an unknown addressee, who of course turns out to be Panda himself. Dunbar has the sounds of preschool conflict down pat, and listeners may well recall a time when similarly petty diatribes ("See if I care"; "What about me?" "You've had lots of last turns") poured from their own lips. (Readalone possibilities, eased by large typeface, make these books doubly useful.) Printer's stock, subtly grained to resemble construction paper, provides an apt backdrop against which these obviously inseparable cartoon friends wrangle for juvenile justice. No need to append a moral here—children will know the rules and be more than happy to inform Panda of them along the way. EB

EARLE, SYLVIA A. *Dive!: My Adventures in the Deep Frontier*. National Geographic, 1999 [64p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-7922-7144-0 \$18.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-6

Marine biologist Earle takes readers on an unusual journey through the last unexplored earth frontier, the oceans of the world. From scuba to deep sea diving, from operating special submersibles and maneuvering inside 1,000-pound dive suits, she gives an underwater view of the ocean and its occupants. The scientist explains her work as explorer and observer of oceans and ocean life in a style that communicates her great love for the sea. Her writing has an enthusiastic quality that will draw in readers as she describes living for two weeks in an underwater ocean laboratory and discusses her dives into the darkest regions of the deepest sea. The author gives her points of view regarding preservation of the oceans and ocean life, what individuals can do to help preserve the oceans, and what she plans on doing next. Arrangements of full-page and smaller photographs are a technicolor invitation to browsing, and the lively combination of subjects (people, marine life, equipment) is immediately intriguing. This is an insightful look at a scientist who obviously has enormous passion for her work—use this title next time you're looking for an unusual biography that will appeal to sea-lovers and landlubbers alike. An index, glossary, timeline of ocean exploration, and a list of resource agencies are included. JMD

EARLE, SYLVIA A. *Hello, Fish!: Visiting the Coral Reef*; illus. with photographs by Wolcott Henry. National Geographic, 1999 32p
ISBN 0-7922-7103-3 \$15.95 R 4-7 yrs

Young readers are invited into an undersea world of fish and other marine life in this photographic introduction to the coral reefs. Set in boxes against pale yellow backgrounds dotted with violet fishy silhouettes, Earle's text is simply and succinctly informative: "You might think that a red fish would be easy to find in a blue ocean. But against colorful sponges and corals, this scorpionfish blends right in. His spiny fins are a good defense, but if you don't hurt him, he won't hurt you." While the enlargements give some of the images a grainy texture, Henry's superb color photographs of morays, brown gobys, sharks, damselfish, and others

are composed like portraits, providing a remarkably up-close look at a remarkable variety of marine life. Both format and layout make this a strong nonfiction choice for both reading aloud to groups and individual beginning readers; a map showing the location of the world's coral reefs is included. JMD

EHRlich, AMY, ed. *When I Was Your Age, Volume Two: Original Stories about Growing Up*. Candlewick, 1999 187p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-7636-0407-0 \$16.99 R Gr. 5-9

In this followup to volume one (BCCB 4/96), ten more authors tell stories about childhood, moments where their movement towards adulthood and a different kind of awareness was palpable. Judging by the authors' notes, there seems to be a higher ratio of autobiography to fiction in this volume, whether it be in Jane Yolen's story of her grandfather's death or Joseph Bruchac's tale of catching—and eventually releasing—a snapping turtle, and there's an effective variation in story tone. Rita Williams-Garcia's "Food from the Outside" is a hilarious account of young Rita's realization that, when untainted by her mother's cooking, food could be genuinely tasty, and E. L. Konigsburg's "How I Lost My Station in Life" is a funny and sympathetic account of her displacement as family baby. Karen Hesse's "Waiting for Midnight," however, offers the harrowing image of her youthful exposure to the abuse of the children next door ("I heard every cry they uttered, every rise of panic, every whimper. Sleepless, I listened in my room, my bed pressed against the common wall between our two houses"), and Kyoko Mori's "Learning to Swim" is a compelling story of strength taught by a mother whose own weakness was soon to become too much. Ultimately, this is an even stronger collection than the first one; these stories will make prime browsing material, especially for readers pursuing the work of their favorite writers, and they may also serve as a source of vivid readalouds. DS

GEISERT, BONNIE *River Town*; illus. by Arthur Geisert. Lorraine/Houghton, 1999 [32p]
ISBN 0-395-90891-4 \$16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

The Geiserts, chroniclers of various aspects of midwestern existence, take their close scrutiny to a small river town. They start the cycle in fall, noting the traffic of barges and trains as they take the local products to the world beyond. Winter brings a slowing of activity, but spring results in an upswing and a threatened flood as the water rises; flood averted, summer means river-centered work and play. Clarity and specificity are the main benefits here: the text is deceptively simple but it explains many aspects of town planning and town life that are often familiar without really being understood. Arthur Geisert's illustrations move from distant panoramic views to closer examinations, and they evince an Anno-esque taste for minutiae that makes them well worth close inspection: a note at the end points out several of the dramas played out from spread to spread, such as a barn's burning and subsequent reconstruction and an old house's decay and restoration. These small storylines keep the study lively and personal, emphasizing the collection of individual experiences that ultimately creates the town. This will certainly keep a geography unit from going dry, but the appeal of the detailed miniature landscapes will also pull in kids who just want to go for a pleasure cruise. DS

GRAVES, KEITH *Frank Was a Monster Who Wanted to Dance*; written and illus. by Keith Graves. Chronicle, 1999 28p
ISBN 0-8118-2169-2 \$12.95 R 4-9 yrs

When Frank (as in Frankenstein) goes dancing, his lively movements make him fall to pieces, whereupon his previously appreciative audience runs screaming from the theater. A humorous rhyming text immediately engages readers: "Frank was a monster who wanted to dance./ 'I know I could boogie if they gave me a chance./' So he put on his hat and his shoes made in France/ and opened a jar and put ants in his pants." In acrylic and colored pencil, Graves' cartoon-like illustrations, stylistically reminiscent of Lane Smith, extend the text with such details as Frank's mouse slippers (complete with teeth), a bottle of "Le Smell," and a box of "Le Shooz." The mixture of single and double-page spreads all prominently feature Frank, except for the climactic scene when only his brain is seen as it falls from his tragically unzipped head. Graves' palette (purple-grape, electric blue, and lime-green with cherty-red highlights) makes the details pop without overwhelming the eye. Young listeners will respond to the comedy, the catchy rhythm, and especially the yuck factor induced by Frank's dancy disintegration. Use the dance-step diagrams on the endpapers for a rowdy storytime (but hold on to your head!). JNH

GRETZ, SUSANNA *Rabbit Food*; written and illus. by Susanna Gretz. Candlewick, 1999 26p
ISBN 0-7636-0731-2 \$15.99 Ad 4-6 yrs

Little John the bunny refuses to eat rabbit food, especially mushrooms, so Dad calls Uncle Bunny for help. On his arrival, the parental units leave for the weekend, and Uncle Bunny is in charge: "No problem," he says—but the audience will laugh as Uncle Bunny gives away his own food prejudices by stealthily hiding his carrots when no one is looking, first under his napkin and then in a nearby flowerpot. With a day of soccer, high jump, tug-of-war, and mountain climbing, Uncle Bunny makes Little John so hungry he gobbles up baked potato rabbits complete with pea eyes, mushroom noses, tomato mouths, celery whiskers, and carrot ears. But soon an observant John guesses Uncle Bunny's secret: "You don't like carrots, do you, Uncle?" The kids then pin Uncle Bunny to the floor, echoing their elders by urging him to take just one bite ("They're good for you! Just try a little! Just one teeny tiny bite . . . and you'll grow BIG and STRONG like US!"), resulting finally in an Uncle Bunny with a mouth so stuffed full of carrots he can't even speak. Expressive watercolor paintings rendered in warm earth tones contrasted with vivid garden hues capture the playfulness of the text, but the bunny faces are unevenly articulated, sometimes evincing a certain stiffness. It's also not clear what the moral is here—if you are hungry enough even carrots taste good? Uncles are human—er, rabbit—too? Kids will nonetheless appreciate the joke of Uncle Bunny's solving an eating problem, however, and picky eaters will revel in Little John's dinner table creations and Uncle Bunny's resistance to root vegetables. EAB

HAHN, MARY DOWNING *Anna All Year Round*; illus. by Diane de Groat. Clarion, 1999 [144p]
ISBN 0-395-86975-7 \$15.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-6

Anna is in third grade in early twentieth-century Baltimore, and she's starting to move beyond the restrictions of early childhood. She saves her aunt's bulldog from

a dogfight and gets a ride in a limousine as a reward, plays spin the bottle and gets a kiss from her special friend, Charlie, takes the trolley downtown to meet her father for lunch, and embarks on various other modest adventures. High drama is not the point here, though; the charm, in these episodes based on Hahn's mother's reminiscences of her youth, comes from Hahn's unfussy and natural evocation of everyday life in a world gone by. The book doesn't make Anna into a quaint relic or a contemporary heroine with period trappings, however: she's a realistic little girl unto herself, who relishes her Christmas gift of an Erector set and takes a daring (and injurious) trip down a hill on rollerskates (mostly because she can share these things with best buddy Charlie). Her exploration of a bigger world beyond her block has details evocative of the pre-World-War-I era but also emotional resonance for every child whose limits are expanding. Homey and decorous, this story has American Girls-style appeal with more depth; its episodic nature makes it eminently suited for reading aloud, but its accessibility, aided by de Groat's sturdy pencil drawings of a tidy but unprissy Anna, will make it a useful step up from Molly, Samantha, and friends. DS

HAN, SUZANNE CROWDER, ad. *The Rabbit's Tail: A Story from Korea*; illus. by Richard Wehrman. Holt, 1999 32p
ISBN 0-8050-4580-5 \$15.95

Ad 4-8 yrs

A case of mistaken identity results in some escalating buffoonery in this tale of a tiger, a thief, and that terrible monster, a dried persimmon. When a roaming tiger hears a mother comforting her crying baby, he confuses the dried persimmon she uses for a pacifier with a dreadful monster and goes into an ox's stall to calm his nerves; in the dark a thief thinks the tiger an ox and steals him. Discovering his error, the thief is too terrified to let the tiger go lest the beast eat him, and the tiger is convinced he is captive of the terrible dried persimmon. A rabbit traps the thief in a hollow tree by blocking the entrance with his derriere. When the thief grabs ahold of the rabbit's tail, the rabbit yanks free, leaving his tail, "and that is why to this day the rabbit has a stumpy tail." The one-joke premise gets stale toward the end of the lengthy text, the pace lags, and the conclusion is somewhat anticlimactic. Wehrman's acrylics have an animated-cartoon intensity that displays the showily-striped tiger and his imaginary nemesis persimmon to garish perfection; the faces of the humans (mother, baby, thief) are not rendered with nearly the same success. Patricia Lampton adapted a more cogent, faster-paced version of this tale with *The Terrible EEK* (BCCB 1/92), but the inherent humor of the story still makes this retelling promising for storytimes and reading aloud. JMD

HOBBS, VALERIE *Carolina Crow Girl*. Foster/Farrar, 1999 138p
ISBN 0-374-31153-6 \$16.00

R Gr. 4-7

Eleven-year-old Carolina takes care of a lot of things, including her mother and baby sister, so when she finds a baby crow fallen from its nest, it's only natural she should take care of it, too. Carolina, mother Melanie, and baby sister Trinity live on a refurbished school bus, following Trinity's father, Red, wherever he wanders. Parked in a field at the edge of a private estate while they wait for Red to find them, Carolina meets the disabled son of the estate family, Stefan Crouch, a would-be naturalist. Stefan and Carolina bond over baby Crow, and Carolina gains entree into the Crouch mansion and a world of privilege she barely knew existed. Stefan introduces Carolina to his mother, who sees in the young girl the daughter she lost

to a riding accident; when Mrs. Crouch offers Carolina a permanent home, Carolina considers it, believing her mother would have it easier without her. Characterization of the peripheral players is a little sketchy, but Hobbs depicts the precociously responsible Carolina and her relationships with unerring clarity. Carolina's attachment to her mother and sister, her love for Crow, and her growing friendship with Stefan have an emotional center that carries the loosely limned plot. Unresolved plot bumps are leveled somewhat by Hobbs' smooth writing style, and by the characterization of Carolina, who is a likable, sympathetic heroine involved in a compelling situation. Her realization that the Crouches cannot give her what she already has with her mother is subtle but stirring, and the denouement, in which Carolina sets Crow free and goes home, is satisfying and believable. JMD

ISADORA, RACHEL *ABC Pop!*; written and illus. by Rachel Isadora. Viking, 1999 32p
ISBN 0-670-88329-8 \$15.99 R Gr. 1-3

Isadora moves her art in a new direction here, illustrating the alphabet with a comic-book-esque palette and coarse-screen dots that offer up a homage to Roy Lichtenstein and his cohorts. Narrative panels and spelled-out sound effects similarly enhance the Pop Art connection: the Airplane *zooms, biz bizzes, and vooms* through four panels of clouded sky, the Frog watches a fly enter the panel and then peers out with a slight smile when the bug has disappeared, presumably into the mouth of the frog (and the quartet of identical Pigs in different hues make sure Warhol gets included in the homage as well). Many of the visuals lack that narrative interest, however, and they sometimes fall short on impact (though the spread of King Kong climbing up a building is compelling with its encompassing indigo sky and palely lit moon and skyscraper). Since many illustrations prominently feature items and words that begin with different letters (the baby is a lot bigger than its Rattle, for instance), and the alphabetic connections are by no means obvious, this is really an early art book rather than an ABC primer. The bold images and clever borrowings keep things lively, though, making this a useful intro to a particularly child-appealing school of art; consider using it alongside Lou Ann Walker's *Roy Lichtenstein: The Artist at Work* (BCCB 2/94) for a discussion of the principles in action. DS

JOHNSON, DINAH *Sunday Week*; illus. by Tyrone Geter. Holt, 1999 32p
ISBN 0-8050-4911-8 \$15.95 Ad 5-8 yrs

Johnson leads readers through the days of the week in this nostalgic tone-poem to childhood memories. From "true-blue Mondays" when children don't want to go to school, to Tuesdays when the double Dutch champs "keep on keeping on/ stepping quick,/ stepping high/ as the rest of the world/ passes by," to Fridays, when "the fishman/ cooks for everybody/ on the block," and there's "happiness in the hellos,/ music in the air," the story builds to the culmination of the week. "Come Sunday/ come sunrise,/ the church bells/ make it sound like/ heaven is right here," and the family has breakfast, attends church services, and goes on a Sunday drive, until "Come Sunday/ come sunset, / it's about time to get/ on the way back home,/ waving God be with you/ until we meet again.// Come Sunday." The days of the week format gives structure to the lengthy text, and while the arc of the tale is slow and predictable, Johnson uses concrete imagery that adds both

color and context. The pastel illustrations capture the yearning for times past in their burnished orange and gold tones, but the drafting of the human figures is sometimes disproportionate, the faces unarticulated. Sunday school classes will make good use of a title that recalls times gone by, when Sunday was indeed a day of rest and renewal for friends and family. JMD

JOLLEY, MIKE *Grunter: A Pig with an Attitude!*; illus. by Deborah Allwright. Millbrook, 1999 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-7613-1308-7 \$18.90

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7613-0449-5 \$14.95

R 4-7 yrs

Grunter the pig is a lovely little farm's "large pink problem": not only is he (à la Byron) mad, bad, and dangerous to know, he's "overfed and overweight," with "a bad attitude and even worse gas!" After Grunter goes on a particularly vexing rampage of farmer-flattening, dog-dunking, and mice-mashing, the other animals decide Something Must Be Done. All alone on his forgotten birthday, Grunter is surprised to find a special present—not, as jaded youngsters might fear, something that touches Grunter's lonely heart and allows him a fresh start with his barnyardmates, but a stick of dynamite that fires Grunter into orbit, leaving the other animals in blissful and unrepentant peace. The text is pithy and flavorful, containing energetic rhythms and deliciously libelous adjectives (emphatic font sizes add to the performative allure). Grunter is clearly awful, both when he looms evilly in the foreground, towering over quivering lambs, and when he appears in sequences of spot art that comically enumerate his crimes and allow his livid orange-red to stand out like an angry sore against the white background. The final explosion, a pop-up BOOM! that sends Grunter flying off the page and literally into space, is worthy of the paper-engineering twist (and it contrasts entertainingly with the wide-eyed innocent animals on the next spread). Caring and sharing are all well and good, but young listeners will understand that shooting an enemy off into space is *real* closure. DS

JONES, CHARLOTTE FOLTZ *Yukon Gold: The Story of the Klondike Gold Rush*. Holiday House, 1999 99p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-8234-1403-5 \$18.95

Ad Gr. 4-6

Nearly fifty years after the 49ers' rush to California, a second outbreak of gold fever struck the west coast, luring prospective miners ("stampedeers") to the frigid Yukon region, only to find that all promising claims had been taken, food and other necessities were in short supply, and employment was nonexistent. Several opening chapters supply little information and considerable confusion concerning the genesis of this rush; then the text picks up a head of steam as the stampedeers battle their tortuous way north, hauling requisite tons of gear and supplies along perilously narrow mountain paths, often under the watchful eye of mounted police and customs takers. An impressive gallery of period photos speaks powerfully of the stampedeers' travails and the miners' backbreaking labor—more powerfully, all too often, than the choppy, awkward text ("The worst tragedy of the White Pass trail was the animals"; "Almost everyone on this trail suffered some kind of physical suffering"). Reports writers, assisted by an appended index, will probably find all the information they need, but readers panning for literary gold might want to wade further downstream in this issue—to Schanzer's *Gold Fever!* EB

JORDAN, SHERRYL *The Raging Quiet*. Simon, 1999 [272p]

ISBN 0-689-82140-9 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

After two hellish days of marriage (or, more to the point, two hellish nights), sixteen-year-old Marnie Isherwood returns from market to find she is a widow—her husband has fallen through the roof he was thatching on their seaside cottage. Rather than return to her family, Marnie decides to savor her new independence and privacy by remaining at the cottage, and she quickly finds a consuming new interest, teaching the wild, handsome, deaf village “raver” how to communicate through hand signs. However, clever, kind-hearted Marnie is in peril on two fronts—from superstitious villagers who accuse her of witchcraft for “taming” the young man they consider to be a lunatic, and from her greedy brother-in-law, who is out to evict her. Jordan sets her novel, whose hoary plot (and cover) could leap off the paperback rack of any drugstore (feisty, sexually disappointed beauty tames gorgeous wild man, to their mutual satisfaction) in an unspecified Long Ago and Far Away with a distinct Irish flavor. She has the laws of the steamy potboiler mastered to a nicety, though, and sustains tension adroitly enough to keep the inevitable happy ending at arm’s length. Young adult readers who like their fairy-tale romances dished up with an extra dash of spice won’t be disappointed. EB

KOLAR, BOB *Do You Want to Play?: A Book about Being Friends*; written and illus. by Bob Kolar. Dutton, 1999 32p

ISBN 0-525-45938-3 \$16.99

M 5-8 yrs

A pair of friends go off to play in Friendship Park, where they meet other friends and watch a show that teaches them about friendship; the park also offers “Good Friend Instructions,” “The Friendship Park Adventure Trail” (framed as a board game), a book with a thematically appropriate short story, and other testaments to amity. The messages may be laudable, but they’re sometimes confusing and often stunningly platitudinous (“Just be yourself”; “All people are worth knowing”); touches of humor are lost in the heavy didacticism, which offers more generalized preaching than concrete and useful advice. The artwork invests the premise with some imagination: mixed-media collage, with a found-object look reminiscent of Lane Smith’s art, pulls scraps of paper together into spiky-edged beings and places them side-by-side with doodled critters of all kinds; this peanut gallery emits running comments in a variety of fonts and languages while the toylike main characters wander through the pages in support of the main text. The design adds browsability, but the lessons are pitched at the level of kids too young to read the book to themselves, and the format renders reading aloud an impossibility. Youngsters may be lured by the layout to page through, but if you really want to teach them about friendship, send them after George and Martha or Frog and Toad. DS

KOSS, AMY GOLDMAN *The Ashwater Experiment*. Dial, 1999 [160p]

ISBN 0-8037-2391-1 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 4-7

Hillary’s family specializes in being on the move, traveling the country in their old camper and living off of the sale of “gizmos,” knickknacks sold at flea markets and county fairs. Hillary is therefore horrified to discover that the family’s going to settle, for nine whole months, in Ashwater, California, where they’re housesitting

for an all-American family (Hillary sleeps in the frilly room of one of the most popular girls in school). She decides, in a typically seventh-grade brush with epistemology, that it doesn't matter because it's all an experiment, wherein people called "the Watchers" have set everything up to test her and to see her reactions to these other people who have no inherent reality of their own. This view provides Hillary with some comfort when she's puzzled by the ways of the natives; friendly with the popular Serena and her satellites, Hillary is also drawn to the thoughtful outcast Cass, but the Watchers are apparently testing her with pressure to slot herself into one category or another. What's refreshing is the book's refusal to slip into predictability or cliché: Hillary isn't forced to choose between two loyalties, nor do her friends become one happy group; Serena isn't just a popular ditz with only power as allure; and despite Hillary's eventual abandonment of the experiment idea and her desire to stay in Ashwater, her parents don't find a reason to stay and settle down, so she must leave her first real friendships behind. As she did in *The Trouble with Zinny Weston* (BCCB 9/98), Koss enlivens the middle-school social drama with a creative twist, and her sensitive and imaginative depictions of her characters may encourage readers to emulate Hillary in seeing classmates more deeply than seventh-grade sometimes allows. DS

KRULL, KATHLEEN *They Saw the Future: Oracles, Psychics, Scientists, Great Thinkers, and Pretty Good Guessers*; illus. by Kyrsten Brooker. Schwartz/Atheneum, 1999 [112p]

ISBN 0-689-81295-7 \$19.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-8

A shared gift of prescience makes strange bedfellows, as Krull demonstrates in a dozen chapters spanning the range of subtitled seers from the Oracle at Delphi to Marshall McLuhan. There are flashes of the intimate, acerbic gossipiness that make Krull's *Lives of* series (*Lives of the Presidents*, BCCB 9/98, etc.) so popular, but the tone is a trifle more sober in this offering and the accounts less rich. Hildegard von Bingen remains here hazily transcendent and largely abstruse; Nicholas Black Elk seems too noble to admit any jocularity; the Maya are presented as a cultural group, with no personality on which to hang an anecdote. Although prophets of many stripes are represented, other favorites are conspicuous by their absence. (How, for instance, can anyone throw a party for futurists and fail to invite John of Patmos and his Revelations? If the Mayan calendar is fair game, why not the Chinese zodiac?) Still, juxtaposing Leonardo Da Vinci and Edgar Cayce, the Roman sibyls and Jeane Dixon is necessarily thought-provoking, and Brooker's portraits and vignettes—arresting in their shadowy angularity—handily evoke a Mysterious Beyond. A bibliography for further reading is included. EB

KVASNOSKY, LAURA MCGEE *Zelda and Ivy and the Boy Next Door*; written and illus. by Laura McGee Kvasnosky. Candlewick, 1999 [40p]

ISBN 0-7636-0672-3 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 1-3

The balance of power between fox sisters Zelda and Ivy is undergoing a slight shift thanks to the arrival of the new boy next door, Eugene. In this three-chapter installment in the sisterly saga, the addition of a third party has some serious impact: Eugene falls hard for Zelda but rebounds to Ivy; he is first mate to Zelda's pirate queen until the shut-out Ivy tells them where the treasure is buried; and

from his window he observes the two sisters wishing on falling stars when camping outside in the backyard ("Sisters only," says Zelda). The author definitely has a flair for capturing the group dynamic of these youngsters—the dialogue is pithy and funny, and Kvasnosky's sense of timing and sense of humor carry over faultlessly from the first *Zelda and Ivy* (BCCB 4/98). There is a plucky charm in the visual depiction of the sisters and their violet-hued environs. The illustrations depict a verdant outdoor paradise of sandbox, lemonade stand, treehouse, and garden that will give young readers (and listeners) something to wish for on a falling star the next time *they're* camping out in the backyard. JMD

LIVELY, PENELOPE *One Two Three Jump!*; illus. by Jan Ormerod. McElderry, 1999 26p

ISBN 0-689-82201-4 \$16.00

R 3-5 yrs

A young green frog jumps into a garden full of danger when he abandons the relative safety of his between-rocks home. Lucky for the young frog, "dragonfly had eyes that could see front, back and sideways," and she gives the frog good advice about jumping out of harm's way. Frog avoids being stepped on, caught by a cat, eaten by a crow, and captured by a gardener, finally ending up "with a splash! in the most wonderful place he could ever have imagined"—a pond. Lively's refrain ("One, two, three . . . jump!") invites participation, and while the text doesn't quite have the momentum of Robert Kalan's *Jump, Frog, Jump!*, it does have the advantage of Ormerod's sunny garden graphics. Yellow tulips, white daisies, rainbow dragonfly, green frog, and orange cat are set against a sky-blue background dotted with fluffy white clouds in spreads that will be a boon to viewing groups, while the expressive poses of the participating characters deliver all the emotion and personality necessary to enhance this brief but ribbeting adventure. JMD

MCKAY, HILARY *Dolphin Luck*. McElderry, 1999 153p

ISBN 0-689-82376-2 \$16.00

R Gr. 4-7

Those familiar with *Dog Friday* (BCCB 10/95) and *The Amber Cat* (11/97) will remember the Brogans (Robin and his mother) and their neighbors the Robinsons (Mr. and Mrs., twins Perry and Ant, the eccentric Sun Dance, and placid Beany), and they will not be surprised that their collective tendency towards chaos continues unabated. It's Christmastime, but not a cheery one: Mrs. Robinson has pneumonia, the Robinsons' aged pooch Old Blanket has finally passed on, there's a developing rift between the newly self-conscious Perry and the often-embarrassing Sun Dance, and the weather is horrendous. Mrs. Brogan tries to keep the youngsters distracted by telling them a story of a wonderful Viking sword with a dolphin-shaped hilt; Beany seizes on this as an attainable prize and finds what she's sure must be the magic weapon in the attic. Meanwhile, the Robinson parents having left for vacation in warmer climes, Perry and Ant have been shipped off to their great-aunt who proves even more eccentric than anticipated, and Sun Dance is feverishly laying burglar traps in the Robinson's empty house while Mrs. Brogan valiantly attempts to keep all her charges whole. The past story amid present goings-on frame works better here than in *The Amber Cat*; the Robinsons' pell-mell charm sweeps the sword theme along with it, and the weapon proves instrumental in resolving Perry's estrangement from Sun Dance and granting wishes ranging from burglars to replacement canines to paternal memorabilia. It's the

pellucid logic with which McKay underscores the looniness that makes it so funny and irresistible, and kids will wish their own hijinks were similarly imbued with merriment rather than just plain trouble. DS

NASH, GARY B. *Forbidden Love: The Secret History of Mixed-Race America*. Holt, 1999 [256p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-8050-4953-3 \$21.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 9-12

The history of American race relations, racial identity, and miscegenation is intertwined with profiles of bi- and multi-racial individuals in this informative discussion of racial categorization. Nash, author of *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America*, organizes the information under chapter titles such as "The America That Might Have Been" and "Interracial Renegades"; further divisions within the chapters include narrower topics like "Race and Power" or "Racialism in the Era of Reform." Though information about African Americans is preponderant, the discussion by no means limits itself, containing comparisons between race relations in North and South American colonies and descriptions of a variety of interracial relations, including the little-known alliance between Punjabi and Hispanic Americans. Anecdotes, excerpts from primary sources, and a clear authorial stance contribute to an engaging style. While the text itself maintains interest, transitions are sometimes clumsy, as in the leap from Pocahontas to Sam Houston to a definition of race. Nash presents early history with authority, but his analyses of recent racial attitudes seem simplistic: "The ultimate seal of approval was conferred on interracial sex in 1985 when Playboy magazine . . . featured Grace Jones . . . with her Swedish boyfriend." In the same vein, he says that "America's resistance to its real mixed-race character has given way to an open and massive rush toward interracial relationships and marriage." The book's syntax, vocabulary, and undefined historical concepts will challenge less advanced readers; students wrestling with identity issues, however, will find the discussion relevant and may conclude, with Nash, that there is no race but the human race. Clearly captioned illustrations and informative endnotes extend the text, and an index will be included in the bound volume. JNH

NAYLOR, PHYLLIS REYNOLDS *Alice on the Outside*. Karl/Atheneum, 1999 [176p]
ISBN 0-689-80359-1 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

Life—as it tends to—is bringing Alice more thorny challenges as she matures. Those familiar with earlier episodes of her saga (*Achingly Alice*, BCCB 4/98, etc.) will know that she's still with her steady, Patrick, and that she's beginning to explore the physical side of romance. In this volume, Alice still has questions about the latter topic (her grown cousin Carol does a magnificent job of giving Alice the "what's it really like" information that she needs to know, shattering Alice's movie-instilled conceptions of sex). She's also running into other issues, however: her school's Consciousness-Raising Week involves an experiment in prejudice that opens many students' eyes, but perhaps not wide enough to see the bigotry in their own treatment of a lesbian classmate. Naylor has perfected a winning formula in the Alice books, with just the right blend of predictability and originality, humor and seriousness. While Alice is a bit too grandly heroic in defense of her lesbian

friend here (she is in general becoming less representative and more role-modelish), she's otherwise still the credibly anxious heroine, experimentally testing right and wrong as best as she can with the help of her loving family and friends. Whether it's helping big brother Lester fend off an ex-girlfriend by hinting to her that he's gay, raging at her father for deliberately interrupting an awkward front-porch kiss, or being moved to tears by the birthday gift of her late mother's locket, Alice remains a lively original who nonetheless mirrors the growing pains of every adolescent girl. DS

NOLEN, JERDINE *In My Momma's Kitchen*; illus. by Colin Bootman. Lothrop, 1999 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12761-4 \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12760-6 \$16.00

R Gr. 2-4

A little girl describes all the good things that happen in her momma's kitchen: her sister announces a music scholarship, her elderly aunt plays a practical joke, Momma chats with her sisters while they cook together, and her father makes sweet corn pudding. Eight titled anecdotes makes this a sort of picture book-chapter book; these family anecdotes are told in intimate and inviting language, and they're rendered in visuals that provide a window into the narrator's cozy world. Nolen's storytelling is simple and direct, the emotions—security, happiness, playfulness—uncomplicated and loving. This is a child's-eye view of home and family life, without the high gloss of nostalgia for times past that usually accompanies family stories. Nolen's language is vibrant and even occasionally lyrical as she talks about Momma and her aunts singing in the kitchen ("The air is full of humming. Their hands are flying. I think they cook like hummingbirds") and describes the feeling engendered by their activity ("All day the kitchen is busy and full and cozy. Even the African violets are blooming, just like my aunts"). Bootman's full-page realistic oil paintings depict an African-American family in tableaux of happy occupations and obvious affection. In closing, the young narrator says, "everything good that happens in my house happens in my momma's kitchen." Readers and listeners will surely agree. JMD

O'MALLEY, KEVIN *Leo Cockroach . . . Toy Tester*; written and illus. by Kevin O'Malley. Walker, 1999 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8690-1 \$16.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8689-8 \$15.95

R 6-9 yrs

Leo Cockroach lives and works at Waddatoy Toys, testing toys and leaving the really good ones on the CEO's desk. While CEO Mildred Splatt is perfectly happy to accept the anonymous toy recommendations that have made her company financially successful, she has no appreciation at all for Leo and spends a lot of her time chasing him with a shoe and a can of bug spray. Leo decides to offer his services to Magnus Worm, CEO of Notsogouda Toys across the street, sure that his life couldn't get any worse. But Worm is a worm, and he cages Leo so as to have his toy expertise on demand. The ever-inventive Leo convinces Worm to let him test drive a rocket, and, aiming himself at Splatt's window, he arrives home bumped but undaunted. Taking the advice of his friend Bernard the cat, Leo writes Mildred a note explaining his role in her company's success—and she makes him Employee of the Year. O'Malley has a comic gift that cannot be underestimated. The forthright writing style makes the visual (and other) silliness of the

story acceptable, even believable, as under the watchful eye of the benign Bernard the bespectacled Leo tests airplanes, dart guns, and remote control cars. The involving layout varies throughout from free-standing art to cartoon panels to framed full-page to unframed double-page illustrations. O'Malley's characters, from cockroach to cat to CEO, have faces that react to the situation at hand, with exaggerated comic demeanors that inform and shape the visual narrative. This is a can't-miss readaloud, but make sure to leave it where the kids can reach it, because the illustrations are another story all by themselves. JMD

PINKWATER, DANIEL *Ice Cream Larry*; illus. by Jill Pinkwater. Cavendish, 1999 32p

ISBN 0-7614-5043-2 \$15.95

R Gr. 2-4

As fans of previous books (*Young Larry* and *At the Hotel Larry*, BCCB 9/97) will know, Larry is a large polar bear who, after saving the proprietor's life, was given a home at the Hotel Larry in New York and became firm friends with the proprietor's young daughter, Mildred. Larry has just had a slight contretemps with a local ice cream vendor, who let Larry sleep in the ice-cream freezer and is now out 1/8 of a ton of ice cream. The publicity surrounding this incident attracts Mr. I. Berg, owner of the Iceberg Ice-Cream Company, who invites Larry down to his Maryland factory and continues to meet with the lactose-tolerant bruin. All this coziness results in the production of Larry Bars, ice-cream bars "in many flavors: vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, blueberry and arctic almond, bearberry, polar pineapple, and codfish" and with the new motto "I do not feel sick!" (taken from Larry's postprandial comment on his original ice-cream consumption); in addition to being a spokesbear, Larry gets a new walk-in freezer and fifty Larry Bars a day. Larry is an endearing hero in these loopy little sagas; his calm self-possession bespeaks polar cool on all levels, and his edible exploits here are sure to cause youngsters to lick their lips in envy. Jill Pinkwater's cheerful rainbow illustrations make snowy Larry, singled out with sharp black linework, the focus of every scene he's in. Kids yearning to be the best friend of a polar bear with a lifetime supply of ice-cream bars will accept that hearing about him is the next best thing. DS

QUATTLEBAUM, MARY *Aunt CeeCee, Aunt Belle, and Mama's Surprise*; illus. by Michael Chesworth. Doubleday, 1999 [32p]

ISBN 0-385-32275-5 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

Mama and her two sisters "are forever trading clothes, visits, secrets, dishes. And you should hear them swap stories! The same long-ago tales get told in three different ways." It is the daughter and niece of the above mentioned sisters who recounts the story of the surprise party that almost wasn't. Aunt CeeCee and Aunt Belle are not nearly as organized about throwing Mama's birthday bash as they could be, and between Belle, who will "nitpick at the tiniest things" and CeeCee, who "slapdashes at the very last minute," it looks like the fête is doomed. But never fear, the narrator is here, and as she says herself, "It's a good thing—a very good thing—that I'm a take-charge kind of girl." The surprise is successfully carried off, and another voice is added to the family storytelling circle. Quattlebaum's clever text is complemented by Chesworth's festive line and watercolor illustrations. Setting the scene in the Roaring Twenties, the artist provides an assortment of flapper fashions, model Ts, and straw toppers that would make Scott and Zelda

proud. Chatty dialogue balloons, a gracefully rendered party-scene silhouette, and sisters with personality and pizzazz combine into a lighthearted tribute to the women of a family and a book that will be a real gift to library collections. JMD

QUINTANA, ANTON *The Baboon King*; tr. by John Nieuwenhuizen. Walker, 1999 183p
ISBN 0-8027-8711-8 \$16.95 R Gr. 7-10

With the fierce pride and love of hunting of his Masai father and the more sociable instincts of his Kikuyu mother, Morengaru cannot fit comfortably into either society and so chooses to live on the outskirts of both. He somewhat scornfully accedes to the Kikuyu villagers' plea for aid in tracking and killing a leopard that has attacked their goats, and thus he reestablishes a tenuous connection with his mother's people. But when Morengaru accidentally slays a village youth, he is stripped of his possessions, banished from the community, and forced to wander within a circumscribed area of the savanna, subsisting like the animals with whom he must now vie for food and territory. Just when he has nearly abandoned all hope and even desire to return to tribal life, he is challenged and nearly killed by the leader of a troop of baboons, but he recovers to find that his survival has launched him into a position of prominence among the apes. As Morengaru learns to negotiate the social order of this band on which he now depends, he also begins to understand and appreciate his own unique heritage—part Masai and part Kikuyu—and to admit to himself that he needs the companionship of a human community. Quintana handily balances Morengaru's introspective quest with a genuine adventure tale of survival in an unforgiving but austere beautiful environment. Readers who fashion their image of African adventure around the obviously defined heroes and villains of Eric Campbell's *Papa Tembo* (BCCB 9/98) might want to follow Morengaru on his lonely odyssey of self-discovery. EB

RANDLE, KRISTEN D. *Breaking Rank*. Morrow, 1999 [160p]
ISBN 0-688-16243-6 \$16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-10

It isn't that the black-clad young men in the Clan are lawbreakers, or even troublemakers; Clan members have simply withdrawn from the normal social interaction of their small northeastern town and are consequently mistrusted by their neighbors. Discovering that Clan member Thomas Fairbairn, or Baby as he is called, has the potential to be a top scholar, the Feynman High School principal tempts him with a guaranteed college scholarship if he will part company with his friends just enough to join the senior honors class and accept requisite tutoring from a girl he barely knows, Casey Willardson. Baby reluctantly agrees to her help, and his life is immediately and precariously suspended between two social worlds—the Clan, which demands total loyalty but promises camaraderie, employment, and most importantly his older brother's love—and Casey, to whom he is romantically attracted, but whose friends threaten him with harm for infiltrating the milieu of "normal" teens. Randle is deft at probing the tensions between the two sets and the internal battles within their ranks, and she spins a tender and convincing love story into the bargain. The concluding rumble between the Clan and the jocks, though, is pat and predictable, with a too-soft measure of local justice, considering the gunplay and injuries involved. Baby's story is sufficiently absorbing that readers will excuse a bit of contrivance and be thankful that Fairbairn retains his dignity and quirky values as he carves out a new place in the world. EB

ROSEN, MICHAEL *Rover*; illus. by Neal Layton. Doubleday, 1999 [32p]
ISBN 0-385-32677-7 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

Rover is a little girl, the "pet human" of the canine narrator; the unnamed narrator is forgiving of her human frailty ("Her coat only covers her head. . . . Rover doesn't eat her food properly. She pokes at it with metal things"). On a trip to the beach one day, Rover wanders off ("I was sad to see her getting smaller and smaller until she disappeared"), sending her parents into a panic; they urge the faithful narrator after her in true bloodhound form, but he, uncomprehending of the human world, ambles after her for his own reasons and is oblivious to the fuss when he finds the errant child. The text adheres firmly to the doggy view of events, employing simple and unassuming phraseology and leaving the joke to the audience's understanding, which keeps the concept from becoming cutesy. The art uses the oversized pages to make the most of its childishly scrawled lines; pigment tossed helter-skelter at the figures and speech balloons revealing the humans' side of the story result in a breezy slapdash look, but the full-bleed sun and sky hues give warmth to the world of the bug-eyed inhabitants. The joke goes on a little longer than it needs to, but it's neatly turned and well aimed at its young audience, who may want to try their hand at writing their own pets' stories. DS

ROUNDS, GLEN *Beaver*; written and illus. by Glen Rounds. Holiday House, 1999 32p

ISBN 0-8234-1440-X \$15.95

R 4-8 yrs

With its clean design, sans-serif typeface, and full-page illustrations, this is an easy introduction to the natural sciences that lends itself to reading aloud or beginning reading alone. Rounds uses simple declarative sentences to succinctly explain the lifestyle and habits of the beaver, from dam building to treebark chewing. While the illustrations are sometimes clumsily drafted, the overall design is attractive: a full-page color illustration on the verso is accompanied by large type and black-and-white spot art on the recto; the illustrations are sizable enough to be seen by a group, and the clear typeface will cause just beginning readers to breathe a sigh of relief. Rounds has delivered an accessible natural science title with a wide range of possible uses that is even fun to read. A double-page spread with additional information on the beaver's life cycle called "Beaver: Fact or Fiction?" concludes the volume. JMD

SAVAGE, DEBORAH *Summer Hawk*. Houghton, 1999 298p
ISBN 0-395-91163-X \$16.00

Ad Gr. 7-10

Her sculptor father has moved fifteen-year-old Taylor and her successful psychologist mother to Hunter's Gap, a small, rural community in Pennsylvania. Taylor's mother spends most of her time in her Philadelphia office, but the very bright Taylor is going crazy in the confines of a one-room freshman class and her grades are suffering. With the help of Rail Bogart, class loner, Taylor rescues a baby red-tailed hawk from a lightning-struck tree and becomes involved with a university-sponsored raptor-rehabilitation project. The project is headed by Rhiannon Jeffries, a woman who apparently fascinates all who meet her, including Rail, Taylor, and Taylor's father. Against the backdrop of a community that resents both the raptors and the university presence, a saga of soapy proportions plays out: Taylor is hired by Rhiannon to do some public relations about the rehab center; she figures

out how she feels about the too-good-to-be-true Rail; she takes a stand against her domineering, perfectionist mother; and she discovers her father's and Rhiannon's affair. Throw in some child abuse, a shell-shocked Vietnam veteran, and the tragic death of a child years ago and you have a densely imagined package indeed. Savage manages to control most of this melodrama by staying tightly focused on the confused and agitated Taylor, and by leaning toward the lyrical image in her prose. The ending is unfortunately pat, with an unlikely reconciliation between Rhiannon and Taylor the big bow that ties it all up. Still, there are some intensely involving moments, especially in those telling instants when Taylor's mask of bias falls from her eyes and she sees the residents of Hunter's Gap, her parents, and even herself, through clear eyes. JMD

SAY, ALLEN *Tea with Milk*; written and illus. by Allen Say. Lorraine/Houghton, 1999 32p
ISBN 0-395-90495-1 \$17.00 R 6-9 yrs

See this month's Big Picture, p. 341, for review.

SCHANZER, ROSALYN, comp. *Gold Fever!: Tales from the California Gold Rush*; comp. and illus. by Rosalyn Schanzer. National Geographic Society, 1999 44p
ISBN 0-7922-7303-6 \$17.95 R Gr. 3-6

Employing the same approach used to illuminate the Lewis and Clark Expedition in *How We Crossed the West* (BCCB 11/97), Schanzer culls primary sources for brief observations by a broad spectrum of participants in the Gold Rush and arranges them in admirable order to recreate a cogent account of the raucous event. James Marshall, who made the fateful discovery at Sutter's Mills, ruefully remarks, "In a very short time we discovered that the whole country was but one bed of gold—a discovery that hasn't been of much benefit to me." The race to the West Coast is on, and the pilgrims of prosperity make their way by ocean via Cape Horn, across the Isthmus of Panama and Nicaragua, over from China ("Wages are generous. There is no slavery. All is nice"), or overland from the East ("There may be fun in camping, but we haven't discovered any"). Claims are staked, and the panners and sluicers contend with fleas, dirt, and scurvy; lying, cheating, and scamming; lawlessness, bigotry, and failure ("Funds beautifully reduced. We resolved—out of respect for the pocket—to commence the art of living without eating"). But lucky strikes are made as well, boom towns give way to permanent settlements, and a brisk mercantile trade lines pockets that never held gold dust. The riot of detail in the slightly cartoonish (and occasionally questionably goofy about serious matters) paintings commands nearly as much attention as the lively textual vignettes. Independent readers who enjoyed Stephen Krensky's *Striking It Rich* (BCCB 11/96) will want to hear the tale again, "straight from the horse's mouth." EB

SCHERTLE, ALICE *A Lucky Thing*; illus. by Wendell Minor. Browndeer/Harcourt, 1999 32p
ISBN 0-15-200541-2 \$17.00 R* Gr. 3-6

"Right here/ on this/ clean/ white page/ I'll scatter some words,/ watch them grow," says the first poem in this elegantly economical collection, and the theme of intertwined, interrelated poetry and pastoral existence reappears periodically as verses celebrate "The Barn," the weathervane ("Showing the Wind"), sheep ("From a

Distance . . .”), and other creatures and facets of country life. Schertle’s lyrics (previously appearing in *How Now Brown Cow*, BCCB 12/94, and other volumes) have a delicate and imaginative precision reminiscent of Nancy Larrick. Her unmannered lyricism brings a freshness to oft-elegized subjects (her rabbit poem is “a pink-eyed poem/ that watches/ from the/ edges/ of the page,/ that nibbles/ at the /corners/ of my mind”) and her creative viewpoints and verse forms will reel in youngsters who may have thought they didn’t like poetry (“A Traditional Frog’s Curse” finishes with the dire wish that “every fly/ stay just beyond/ your tongue”). Minor’s double-spreads and full-page portraiture have a solid particularity that suits the poetry well, with watercolor brushstrokes so focused in their hatchings that they at times suggest colored pencil; he plays out the blending themes of poetry and poetic subject by including in every illustration a concrete reference to the poem *qua* poem, whether it be the paper it’s written on or the pencil it’s written with, leaving the impression that the verses are traveling through the pages just as the readers do. This joins Marilyn Singer’s *Turtle in July* (BCCB 9/89) in the gallery of excellent collections of nature poetry; since these poems would also make effective readalouds, you might want to take this along on a woodsy or farmish field trip and read it in between the frog hunts and the cow-pat collecting. DS

SCHROEDER, ALAN, ad. *The Tale of Willie Monroe*; illus. by Andrew Glass. Clarion, 1999 32p
ISBN 0-395-69852-9 \$15.00 R Gr. 3-5

Schroeder has taken a thirteenth-century Japanese folktale (the best-known retelling of which is probably Claus Stamm’s *Three Strong Women*) and reset it in the American South. Willie Monroe has “arms as big as stovepipes and a chest as broad as a barn door,” and when he says he “can whip ye with both hands tied behin’ my back,” people believe him. He sets out to win “an arm-wrestlin’, log-stackin’, cow-milkin’, field-plowin’, barn-raisin’ contest” but on the way is delayed by a young woman who proves to be more than his match. Delilah and her grandmother take pity on Willie and decide to strengthen him up (“Why mister,” Granny says, “yer weak as water!”) and, thanks to their training regimen, he wins the contest, the land, the money—and Delilah, of course. Glass’ oil and pencil illustrations bring an irreverent slyness to Schroeder’s retelling as the red-haired, muscle-bound hero gets his comeuppance from the beruffled but powerful duo of Granny and Delilah. The bucolic landscapes have a tilted perspective that increases the visual humor of the varied compositions, and the solid lines of the main characters add to their considerable vigor. Schroeder has a talent for slapstick humor, and this retelling (which is a bit more succinct than Stamm’s) takes full advantage. Use the detailed source note for background and then tell both versions back to back for a comparison of the snortingly and subtly funny. JMD

SEWALL, MARCIA, ad. *The Green Mist*; ad. and illus. by Marcia Sewall. Houghton, 1999 32p
ISBN 0-395-90013-1 \$15.00 R Gr. 3-6

Long ago the people of Lincolnshire participated in traditions and rituals they hoped would propitiate the bogles and other mischievous beings that lived in the mool (soil) and bogs of the countryside. Families sang the earth to sleep in winter, and, with the coming of spring, “the Green Mist to awaken the sleeping land,” they offered the earth bread and salt in order to keep away the “mischancy beings”

that might do them harm. One winter the young daughter of a family fell ill and sat "white and shaky by the fire," although "when the sun shone she danced like a will-o'-the-wisp and stretched her arms as if she lived only in the brightness of the sun." She believes the Green Mist of spring can cure her, and, finally, it comes: "It came from the mools and wrapped itself around everything. It was green as grass in summer sunshine and sweet smelling as the herbs of spring." The girl welcomes the spring with bread and salt, and from that day onward, she is well. This is a strange, moody tale full of hidden mystery and magic. Sewall's watercolors play against the possible darkness of her retelling as she depicts the land through the seasons that shape it, from the sleepy, snow-covered countryside to the waiting spring earth to the haycock-dotted summer fields, in a palette that leans heavily toward the pale yellow-greens of early spring. The sturdy-looking, stoic yeomen that inhabit this place are just as surely shaped by the forces of nature as the stories they make up to explain those forces. A note gives the origin of the tale and places it within the context of an age and society that, unknowing, attempted to affect nature with magic. This unusual, oddly beautiful tale may be hard to place in collections that require audience specificity, but Sewall's retelling results in an effective, intriguing story that treats both natural and unknown forces with respect. JMD

SIERRA, JUDY, ad. *Tasty Baby Belly Buttons*; illus. by Meilo So. Knopf, 1999 40p
Library ed. ISBN 0-679-99369-X \$18.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-89369-5 \$17.00 R* 4-7 yrs

Uriko-hime is a force to be reckoned with almost from the moment her proud parents discover her inside a melon: "Uriko grew more quickly than other children, and by the time she was five years old she was cooking millet dumplings with her mother and learning sword fighting from her father." When the wicked oni (huge ogre-like creatures) raid the town and steal all the babies they can find because they *love* tasty baby belly-buttons, Uriko grabs a sword and a sack of millet dumplings and sets off on a rescue mission. With the help of her dog, a pheasant, and a monkey, she trounces the oni soundly ("Uriko had to give each of the oni a millet dumpling, too, so they would stop crying") and retrieves the babies, along with an assortment of stolen treasures. Sierra punctuates this frothy adventure with a can't-lose refrain ("Belly buttons,/ Belly buttons,/ Tasty Baby Belly Buttons!") that is bound to have storytimers chanting along. So's light-bright watercolors never leave the positive outcome of Uriko's quest in doubt. The little heroine's forceful demeanor is evident from her winglike eyebrows to her aggressive (but graceful) body-language as she tosses millet dumplings to pheasant and monkey, races between the legs of a giant oni with her sword drawn, or points an accusatory finger as she demands the babies' return. Round-bellied oni look too much like the chubby-cheeked, laughing babies to be really scary, and the scene of their self-assisted vanquishing is a riotous slapstick of bad aim and mistaken mayhem. A detailed note provides both sources and context. JMD

SKINNER, DAVID *Thundershine: Tales of Metakids*; illus. by Kevin Skinner. Simon, 1999 [128p]
ISBN 0-689-80556-X \$14.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

This quartet of short stories focuses on extraordinary abilities of contemporary and

future adolescents. In "As True as She Wants It," amateur cartographer Jenny discovers her ability to "dismap" any site on the Earth (or in the solar system, for that matter) at will by merely sketching it so. The lovestruck narrator of "Walk This Way" is fascinated by Mae's reluctance to "bop," or teletransport, when she could walk instead. Meredith, who mentally communicates with the planet Pluto, insinuates her thoughts into the artistry of Dexter Rigato, mindpainter, in "Poof Poof Ya Does Me a Favor." Nina, the older sister of Jake's best friend Henry in "Meta Human," can summon superhuman powers at will, and like an amoral fairy godmother, she bestows peculiar and dangerous "gifts" upon her brother, Jake, and Jake's girlfriend. Gimmickry far outweighs plot in the tales, and their conclusions are quick and perfunctory; except in his longest and strongest story, "Meta Human," Skinner merely describes rather than explores each bizarre ability, and he leaves the characters' communities (and worlds) mildly annoyed rather than transformed by the unleashing of these considerable powers. Nonetheless, young readers may find the notion of youthful superpowers sufficient to sustain their interest. EB

STOLZ, MARY *Casebook of a Private (Cat's) Eye*; illus. by Pamela R. Levy. Front Street/Cricket, 1999 [128p]
ISBN 0-8126-2650-8 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-6

"So far as I know," says our heroine, "I am the only female, feline private detective in Boston," but Eileen O'Kelly is nonetheless soon involved in a variety of cases: a tiger tom baseball player has lost his lucky ball, a herb-farm owner fears employees are walking off with catnip, distraught parents search for their missing young kitten, and, most seriously, a gifted chef has been murdered and her recipe book is missing. The book lavishly creates its humanless period world, with atmospheric details of 1912 Boston clothes ("It is rose velvet, with a tight bodice, a modest bustle, a skirt that just tips the tops of my white skates, and delicate white lace at neck and hem"), ethnic groups (there's the obligatory Irish police sergeant and some Italian-American clients), and even baseball (Eileen's ball-playing client spring trains in Cuba and looks forward to the season at Furway Park). The plot gets somewhat lost amid all the setting, however, and as a detective Eileen is disappointing, more often concentrating on her personal life, ruminating about clients, or running into a lucky break than performing any actual detecting; nor is the languid pacing sufficient to carry momentum from chapter to chapter. Those in search of animal detectives should probably stick to Freddy the Pig, but readers tickled by the notion of a Bostonian kitty in shirtwaists may wish to delve into Eileen's exploits. DS

STRETE, CRAIG KEE *The Lost Boy and the Monster*; illus. by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher. Putnam, 1999 [32p]
ISBN 0-399-22922-1 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 4-7 yrs

The nameless lost boy doesn't realize as he wanders in the wild that a foot-eating monster has laid a trap for passers-by. Befriending a rattlesnake and a scorpion, both of which are surprised and grateful when the child doesn't strike them with a stick as other humans do, the lost boy later relies on their aid to free him from the monster's cooking pot. Strete's original tale borrows from American Indian folk-

loric motifs; the image of a lone child, constantly imperiled but instinctively in harmony with nature, is at once eerie and appealing. The story itself is slight, and the monster's gastronomical peccadillo is never described in enough detail to evoke shivers. Strongly influenced by Southwest petroglyphs and other American Indian art, Johnson and Fancher's moody illustrations clearly steal the show with their complex composition, rock painting styled upper borders, and effective contrast between luminous golds and shadowy earth tones. When the agenda calls for a light and gentle ecological message, consider this in its unusual monster-story packaging. EB

THOMAS, ROB *Green Thumb*. Simon, 1999 [192p]

ISBN 0-689-81780-0 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

Thomas takes a break from teenage angst and throws himself into an unlikely but action-packed plot. Thirteen-year-old Grady Jacobs is the winner of two National Science Fairs for his work on plant life. The boy genius figures his plump physique and pasty skin are hereditary, but while his nerdiness may make him a social outcast, it doesn't make him a wimp: though he may not be able to beat the bullies who pick on him, he never gives them the satisfaction of admitting defeat. Grady is selected to work with famous botanist Philip Carter on a secret project to restore the Amazon rainforest; upon discovering that Grady's not a college student but a high-school freshman, Carter almost sends him home. Making himself useful as general all-around chief-cook-and-bottle-washer, Grady stays, and he discovers that Carter is killing off the rainforest ecosystem with his super (but toxic) trees. Fleeing crazy Carter's camp, Grady takes refuge with the Urah-wau Indians, and the pace (and implausibility of the plot) increases: hunting expeditions, trips up river, skirmishes with the Kel-Ha-Natika (enemies of the Urah-Wau), and a final bloody confrontation with Carter ensue. Action and violence have a salutary effect on Grady—he gets a tan, loses weight, and buffs up for his return to the States, where he flattens the bullies who previously tormented him and becomes a babe in the eyes of upperclass (high-school sophomore) women. Wish-fulfillment? Lightweight? Illogically plotted? Sure it is—and reluctant and other readers are going to greatly enjoy the trip. JMD

TRIPP, WALLACE, comp. *Rose's Are Red, Violet's Are Blue and Other Silly Poems*;

illus. by Wallace Tripp. Little, Brown, 1999 32p

ISBN 0-316-85440-9 \$15.95

Ad Gr. 4-6

This collection of a dozen poems mixes the readily found ("Jabberwocky," a pair of Edward Lear limericks) with the formerly ubiquitous (Longfellow's "Excelsior") and some verses from hither and yon, including an Oliver Herford entry ("Some Geese"), an offering from German nonsense writer Christian Morgenstern (despite the fact that the CIP information identifies contributors as "American and English writers"), and a piece from Tripp himself. Textually, the anthology isn't particularly well balanced, with some of the poetry (Lyly's "Cupid and Campaspe," for instance) more hard than silly going. Tripp's humorous illustrations, however, sometimes don't just provide comical interpretations but add layers of additional jokes: Lear's Moppsikon Floppsikon bear leads Flopsy, Mopsy, and the other two bunnies, and the bruin carries on his motorized bicycle a "bear bodkin" and a parcel addressed to "Fardel's Bear"; the pigs acquiring spots (in "Rose's Are Red")

are, of course, reading *Hamlet* in addition to the *New Yorker*; the opening "Jabberwocky" spread is a veritable "Where's Waldo" of comic touches, ranging from the Lion and the Unicorn sinking in a boat named "Liddell Women" to a polite sign requesting "No gimbling in the wabing pool." Though some of these jokes will be out of reach of the book's audience, readers will still enjoy the hunt and the introduction to a few unfamiliar poems. DS

WARD, HELEN, ad. *The Hare and the Tortoise: A Fable from Aesop*; ad. and illus. by Helen Ward. Millbrook, 1999 40p
Library ed. ISBN 0-7613-1318-4 \$23.90
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7613-0988-8 \$15.95 R* 4-8 yrs

Ward (*The King of the Birds*, BCCB 4/97) renders Aesop's well-known fable in energetic language and equally robust illustrations. From the opening lines ("There once was a very fast hare. . . and a very slow tortoise"), Ward tells the story of the age-old contest in a vigorous style that, coupled with detailed yet uncrowded compositions, makes this version a book-sharer's dream. Watercolor and ink illustrations depict elegantly rendered beasties racing across clean white spreads, tumbling into thorny bushes, and rowing across a blue river; the limpid eyes of the hare, deer, and other mammals are startlingly vivid. The minimally anthropomorphized animal characters are the antithesis of cutesiness, resembling zoological illustrations. Ward includes a "Key to the Animals" section that identifies all the included fauna, along with tidbits of information about their habits and habitats. Think you've already got enough Aesop? Not if you don't have this one. JMD

WINTON, TIM *Lockie Leonard, Scumbuster*. McElderry, 1999 [144p]
ISBN 0-689-82247-2 \$16.00 R Gr. 5-7
Reviewed from galleys

Lockie Leonard, Aussie surfer-boy and all around good dude, has returned after being roundly dumped by the love of his life, Vicki. Perhaps pain facilitates growth, because Lockie crosses the yawning social gulf and makes friends with Egg, an all-black-wearing, zitfaced metalhead who can't even swim, let alone surf ("I mean, the golden-haired surfrat walking along all matey with the black-shirted grunt-monkey . . . Well, to hell with his rep, but it was still major culture clash"). He and Egg discover that manufacturing sludge, supposedly subject to recent restrictions, is still being pumped into the local bay, and they determine to stop it; Lockie, however, is distracted by falling slam-bang in love again, this time with a girl who, embarrassingly enough, not only outsurfs him but is only eleven, a full two years younger than he is. Winton's exuberant style catches the magnificent peaks and valleys of adolescence as Lockie charges full bore at each new obsession; Lockie's trials and tribulations sound rather like those of Bingo Brown but with a rowdier antipodean edge. The book never bogs down in the environmental theme, keeping that a backdrop to casually effective family scenes, Lockie's romantic passion, and the laconic friendship between Lockie and Egg. Winton doesn't tie things up overneatly, either, since Lockie's surfer girl ends up disappointing him and Egg has to move out of town (though at least the polluting manufacturers have presumably seen the error of their ways). Understanding youthful intensity without being overawed by it, Lockie's story will provide young readers with some humorous insight into a painful process. DS

WRIGHT-FRIERSON, VIRGINIA *A North American Rain Forest Scrapbook*; written and illus. by Virginia Wright-Frierson. Walker, 1999 [34p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8680-4 \$16.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8679-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-6

Wright-Frierson continues her exploration of ecosystems (*A Desert Scrapbook; An Island Scrapbook*) in this look at the temperate rainforest in North America. Located in Washington State on the Olympic Peninsula, the rainforest is home to primeval forest, banana slugs, and a wide variety of flora and fauna. As the title suggests, the author-illustrator conveys both the environment of the rainforest and her reaction to it in a scrapbook approach—double-page spreads alternate with thumbnail drawings, watercolor vignettes, and photo-like depictions of the wide range of natural sites and sights she encountered. The chatty text is essentially a journal describing the author's trip and giving background information on her illustrations of plant and animal life. While the human beings sometimes suffer from awkward drafting, the plants and animals and their habitats are carefully rendered. The sometimes cluttered compositions and occasional postcard panoramas interfere with what is essentially an invitation to a vicarious experience; still, Wright-Frierson's love for the natural world is obvious. The author provides a sense of continuity through references to the age and history of the rainforest and the current efforts to preserve it, as well as in her concluding lines: "I stand alone under the trees that were here hundreds of years before Columbus sailed to America, listening to the eternal waves and watching the same stars appear." Both text and illustrations provide a gentle introduction to this endangered biosphere. JMD

YORINKS, ARTHUR *Harry and Lulu*; illus. by Martin Matje. Hyperion, 1999 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2276-7 \$16.49

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0335-5 \$15.99

R 5-8 yrs

Lulu is a temperamental tyke who yearns for a dog; Harry is a stuffed red toy poodle proffered as a (to Lulu, unsatisfactory) solution. Lulu is stunned when Harry proves to be alive and English-speaking, but she insists he's still no dog. He takes her to France, but she's still not won over—until he saves her from being hit by a speeding car, and she realizes that, toy or not, he is her dog. Yorinks' whimsy occasionally dips into archness or takes off in odd directions leaving the story behind, but the book's eccentricity has genuine style and the unappreciated-pet story will rouse listeners' sympathies. Matje's line-and-watercolor art is bracingly dry, with looming verticals (adult figures extend past the tops of the pages) contrasting with the compact figures of sharp-featured Lulu and fluffy little Harry to create a Eurocartoonish world for both home and Paris. DS



PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

Hart-Hewins, Linda. *Better Books! Better Readers!: How to Choose, Use and Level Books for Children in the Primary Grades*; written by Linda Hart-Hewins and Jan Wells. Stenhouse/Pembroke, 1999. Paper ed. ISBN 1-5711-305-8; \$17.95. 151p.

It's easy enough to say that children should learn to read from real books, but it can be rather a more complicated effort to arrange a classroom for doing so. Teachers so inclined and librarians who wish to support them will find this usefully integrated approach a boon indeed. It's filled with specific examples of books, of readers, and of kids' beginning writing work, and it offers concrete suggestions every step of the way for reading plans, methods of evaluation, physical arrangements, activities, and everything else you'll want to know when before you unleash the primary-graders and the paperbacks on each other. The refreshingly pragmatic approach links every activity to a larger reading goal, and the book shines with the thoughtfulness and experience of its authors in such statements as "Learning how to abandon a book is one of the skills we want to foster" (so they tell you how to bail out on a bad readaloud midway). A healthy blend of enthusiasm, demystification, and tools, this will bolster professionals hungry to use more real books. An extensive bibliography (the Canadian authors have referred to a few titles that might be less available in the U.S., but most will be readily attainable), divided by reading stages described in the text, is provided, as are series recommendations and a list of scholarly references. DS

Jobe, Ron. *Reluctant Readers: Connecting Students and Books for Successful Reading Experiences*; by Ron Jobe and Mary Dayton-Sakari. Pembroke, 1999. Paper ed. ISBN 1-55138-106-0; \$14.95. 160p.

In a cogent and accessible presentation, Jobe and Dayton-Sakari recommend strategies for moving reluctant readers in grades 3-6 toward successful completion of the reading process and an enjoyment of reading. Aimed at classroom teachers with a nod toward parents, this title contains both a philosophy of teaching and how-to ideas that can be successfully utilized in a school or public library. Chapters discuss the why and why not of children's reading, identify types and characteristics of reluctant readers, and look at how reluctant readers feel about their own abilities and how the confidence of the adults around them, especially their teachers, affects their motivation to succeed. Also included are annotations for books and other materials that have proven to be successful with the target group (i.e., websites, videos, audiobooks, etc.) and a list of popular-interest topics suggested by reluctant readers. Summaries of recent studies on teaching reading and insightful thoughts about working with reluctant readers add friendly but authoritative background information. Goals here are concrete and attainable, and the information is critical to librarians' understanding of how to reach their patrons and readers, reluctant or not. There is no index, but there is a detailed table of contents, and a lengthy bibliography is included. JMD

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.

- Africa-fiction: Quintana
 Africa-stories: Daly
 African Americans-fiction: Nolen
 African Americans-stories:
 Johnson
 ALPHABET BOOKS: Isadora
 Animals: Rounds
 Animals-stories: Dunbar; Han;
 Jolley; Ward
 Apes-fiction: Quintana
Art appreciation: Isadora
 Aunts-fiction: Bauer; Nolen
 Aunts-stories: Quattlebaum
 Australia-fiction: Winton
 Baseball-fiction: Adler
 Bears-fiction: Pinkwater
BIOGRAPHIES: dePaola; Earle
 Dive!; Krull
 Birds-stories: Braun
 Birthdays-stories: Quattlebaum
 Botany-fiction: Thomas
 Brothers and sisters: Bodett
 Brothers and sisters-fiction: Lively
 Cats-fiction: Stolz
 China: Demi
 Civil War-fiction: Bartoletti
 Civil War-poetry: Crist-Evans
 Cockroaches-stories: O'Malley
 Crime and criminals-fiction:
 Thomas
 Dancing-stories: Graves
 Depression, the-fiction: Adler
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 Families-fiction: Lively; Naylor;
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FANTASY: Conford; Skinner;
 Stolz
 Fathers and daughters-fiction:
 Avi; Bauer; Nolen; Savage
 Fathers and sons-fiction: Adler;
 Bartoletti; Bechard; Conford
 Fathers and sons-poetry: Crist-
 Evans
FOLKTALES AND
 FAIRYTALES: Han;
 Schroeder; Sewall; Sierra
 Food and eating-fiction:
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 Food and eating-stories: Gretz;
 Strete
 Friendship-fiction: Dunbar;
 Hahn; Hobbs; Koss; Kvasnosky;
 Winton
 Friendship: Kolar
 Frogs-stories: Lively
FUNNY STORIES: Graves;
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 Gold Rush: Jones; Schanzer
 Grandmothers-fiction: Schroeder
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 Schanzer
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 Homosexuality-fiction: Bechard;
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 Illness-fiction: Borden
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 Japan-stories: Say
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Korea-folklore: Han
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 Reading, easy: Avi; dePaola
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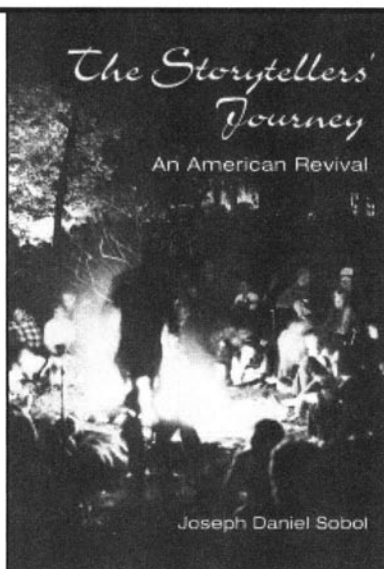
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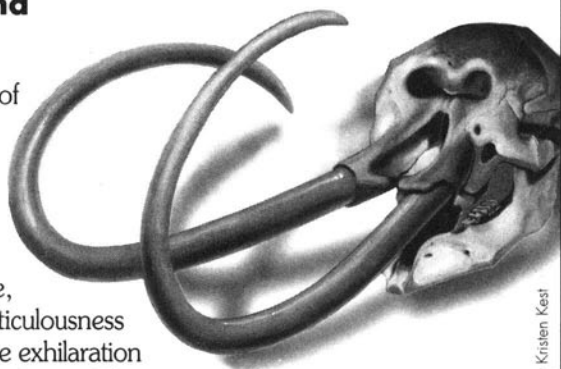
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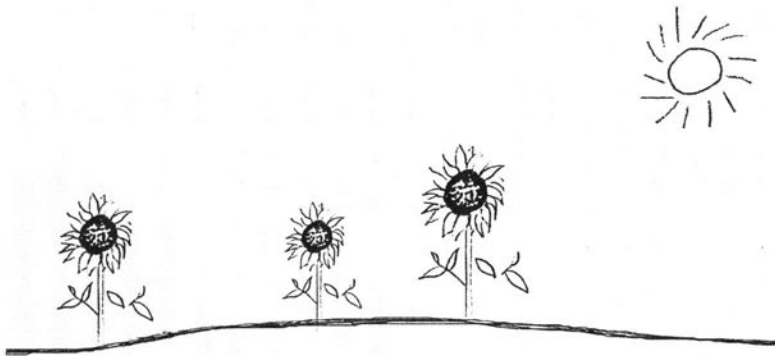
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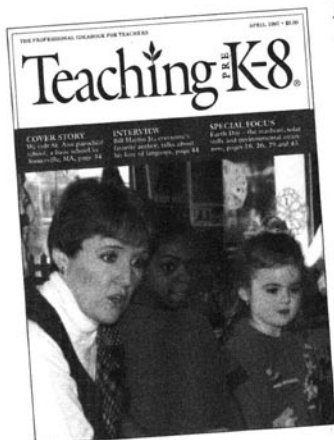


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