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# THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

June 2000  
Vol. 53 No. 10



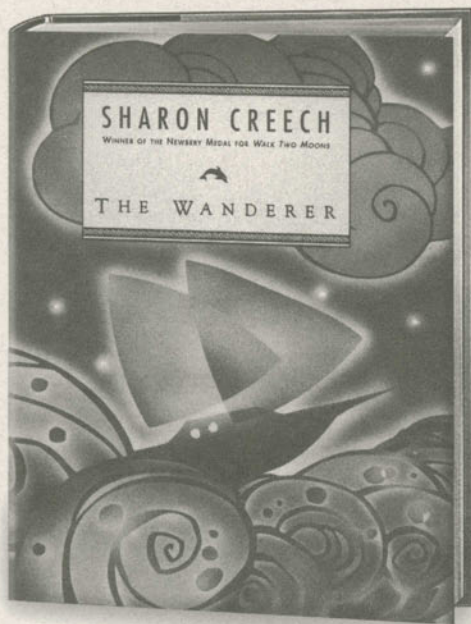
University of Illinois  
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University of Illinois Press

By the Newbery Medalist for *Walk Two Moons*  
Sharon Creech's *The Wanderer*



★ “Thirteen-year-old Sophie accompanies her adoptive mother’s three brothers and two nephews on a sailboat trip from Connecticut to England. Along the way, [they] endure close quarters, destructive storms, and the fear that they will not make it to shore. [Caldecott Medalist] David Diaz’ handsome chapter headings add pleasure to this memorable voyage of adventure.”  
—Starred review / *ALA Booklist*



Jacket art © 2000 by David Diaz

- ◆ “Telling the tale in alternating journal entries from Sophie and cousin Cody, Creech takes her often contentious crew past dolphins, deadly weather, and hard tests of courage. A profound tale of simultaneous inner and outer journeys.” —Pointer review / *Kirkus Reviews*
- ★ “Creech again captures the ebb and flow of a vulnerable teen’s emotional life, in this enticing blend of adventure and reflection.”  
—Starred review / *Publishers Weekly*
- ★ “Exciting, funny, and brimming with life.”  
—Starred review / *School Library Journal*
- ★ “Sophie is a quietly luminous heroine, and readers will rejoice in her voyage.” —Starred review / *The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*

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

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OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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**EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS**

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

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## *Tie Your Socks and Clap Your Feet*

by Lenny Hort; illustrated by Stephen Kroninger

Nonsense is a tricky poetic concept. Sometimes poets seem to view the nonsensical as an excuse to abandon all logic, leaving the verses spinning aimlessly in fantasyland with nothing to be funny about. More effective nonsensifiers use nonsense to be funny about sense, creating absurdity in the difference between the nonsensical object and its logical shadow, and leaving readers happily certain about their ability to detect deviations from reality and gladly embracing those deviations. Nonsense is, indeed, Wonderland, and its appeal for youngsters is undeniable.

It's also alive and gleefully kicking in these dozen and a half verses. Hort does an excellent job of keeping the requisite sense and playing off of it, whether it be in lullabies ("Sweet little baby's just seven feet tall/ Baby, don't eat Mommy's nice bowling ball/ Baby's cute mustache is starting to curl./ What an adorable, sweet baby girl!"—"Sweet Little Baby"), pastoral verse ("A pair of purple oranges— / ooh, what a treat!/ Peppery cool/ and lemony sweet . . ."—"A Pair of Purple Oranges"), or folklore ("The king of New York/ and her nephew, the queen,/ were painting their castle/ with iced gasoline . . ."—"Fairy Tale"). The verse has a vigor and simple gamesmanship that will appeal even to novice nonsensees (and that will also make the book gigglingly shareable with younger listeners); its tidy twists are reminiscent of traditional jingles of inversion such as "One bright day in the middle of the night/ Two dead boys got up to fight. . . ." The poems' various themes (pets, food, music, clothes) also help keep them on track, and the verses gleefully touch on reliably entertaining taboos such as toilets (Junior, in "Our New House," cooks on the toilet seat) and underwear (stolen by a strange beast in "The Beast"). Scansion isn't perfect but the rhythms are strong and varied, suitable for all kinds of creative performance ranging from reading aloud to rap.

The marriage of art and text is a blissful one: Kroninger's collages, created from cut paper and magazine photographs, take the nonsensical concepts to their literal apotheosis. "Grandbrother always wears five hats" because his head is actually a hand with headgear on each finger; the speaker in "A Pair of Purple Oranges," who "opened up my nose/ and drank" the fruit in question, is, logically, an elephant (and yes, elephants don't technically drink through their noses either, but natural history this isn't). Tropical hues provide a loud and friendly background for the concocted figures, who have a solidity and high-spirited pizzazz that differentiate them from Lane Smith's more sly and sinister conglomerates; the sophisticated look will attract older reluctant readers who will stay for the anarchy of the easily digestible poetry. The pictures are all the more bizarre for making so much, well, sense: it's hard to argue with eyes that are actual photographed eyes

and with noses and mouths initially sported by real people, even though they're borrowed and reshuffled and occasionally utilized by a dog or a red pepper, and what better than a piece of wool sweater to represent the body of a sheep?

Though it's inventive, this isn't for those searching for delicate nuance: both text and art are unapologetically, brassily, jubilantly unsubtle. The effect, though, is an inviting "I could do that" aura of accessibility; this book might well, in fact, inspire some enjoyable emulation in language-arts or art class assignments. It'll also be just plain fun for any number of other uses. If you're looking to put a little less sense in a kid's life, this is your book. (Imprint information appears on p. 358.)

*Deborah Stevenson, Associate Editor*



## NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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**AHLBERG, ALLAN** *The Bravest Ever Bear*; illus. by Paul Howard. Candlewick, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-7636-0783-5 \$15.99 R Gr. 2-4

Multiple narratives combine multiple viewpoints (bear, princess, wolf, troll, dragon) in an informed silliness that lends itself to readers' theater. The stories feature interplay between the narration and boldfaced meta-commentary on the action from various characters ("Once upon a time there was a bear. **That's me!** The End. **Huh? What's going on?**"). Each successive tale is a concrete manifestation of the notion that the outcome depends on who gets to tell the story: Bear makes himself a hero, the princess controls her own fate, and the troll refuses to stay under his bridge. Ahlberg's talent for the absurd suits the progressive nature of the text, and the appearance of "four and twenty black bears" adds to the sense of nursery tales gone bemusingly awry. Howard's watercolor and pencil illustrations become more complex as the episodic saga becomes more convoluted: the opening illustrations contain few words and few pictures against a relatively large amount of white space; the busier middle illustrations feature characters, scenery, and a soupçon of chaos; and the closing spread comes full circle, with simple text and pictures. This exercise in point of view is a creative writing teacher's dream, but beginning readers won't care about the curriculum connection; they'll be too busy laughing. JMD

**ARNOLD, MARSHA DIANE** *The Bravest of Us All*; illus. by Brad Sneed. Dial, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-8037-2409-8 \$15.99 R 4-8 yrs

Narrator Ruby Jane has always considered Velma Jean to be the most fearless of their siblings—equally indifferent to prickly sandburs, to biting catfish reputedly



swimming in the horse tank, and to the angry bull that bars the shortcut to the sandhill plum bushes. Ruby Jane prefers working alongside her mother in the kitchen and fetching eggs and vegetables from the cool root cellar, and she regards Velma Jean with awe and envy—until the day her older sister is tested by an approaching tornado and admits her secret fear: “If the tornado swallows me, it’ll be into the sky. . . . That storm cellar will swallow me into the ground. I’ll take my chances with the tornado.” Ruby Jane stubbornly leads Velma Jean to safety and calms the sharpest edges of her panic; more importantly, she wins her sister’s proud regard. Sneed’s watercolors do full justice to the swirling brown funnel that rages across the open prairie; his figures, however, are eerily misshapen, with heads too heavy for their spindly limbs, and a disconcerting tendency to change size from spread to spread. Still, this title offers a fresh twist on the twister tale, eschewing a trite wrap-up which would have Velma Jean overcome her fear and frankly acknowledging terror’s iron grip (Velma Jean retains her dread of the underground and refuses ever to venture below again). When the storm has blown past, readers are left with the message that bravery and cowardice are far less important than sisterly compassion and loyalty. EB

ASHBÉ, JEANNE *What’s Inside?*; written and illus. by Jeanne Ashbé. Kane/Miller, 2000 14p (Curious Nell Books)  
ISBN 0-916291-97-9 \$9.95 R 1-3 yrs

This simple lift-the-flap concept book is divided into three very short chapters about “what’s inside” various stuff. Chapter One lists three things “we can open up and look inside” (suitcase, present, watermelon); Chapter Two features three items that “it’s best not to look inside” (teddy bear, television, ball); and Chapter Three concentrates on “Mommy’s tummy when she’s going to have a baby.” Although “we can’t open [Mommy] up and look inside,” we can lift the flaps to show three stages of fetal development. The title has an overtly pedagogic intent, but Ashbé’s minimal text and comfortable watercolors (reminiscent of Elsa Beskow) carry the day. While the “what’s inside” categories may confuse, the chapters are logically connected; each chapter builds on the previous one, moving from everyday household items to the mysteries of Mommy’s growing rotundity. If you are seeking a very easy book for toddlers expecting a new sibling, this is it. JMD

AUCH, MARY JANE *The Road to Home*. Holt, 2000 [190p]  
ISBN 0-8050-4921-5 \$16.95  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-7

In the year following her mother’s death, the weight of family responsibility has rested heavily on thirteen-year-old Mem; she has fresh cause for optimism, though, because her father has finally resolved to abandon their failed farm and return with his children to his wife’s family in Connecticut. However, Papa’s dreams have always dominated his good sense. A brief stop in Rome, New York convinces him his fortune lies in helping dig the Erie Canal, and soon he has relinquished his children to the care of a boardinghouse keeper while he works the weeks and drinks the weekends away. Mem realizes Papa that will never change and that she simply cannot raise her younger siblings alone, so she sets off with the children on foot to the grandmother she so desperately misses. With this title, Auch completes her trilogy (*Journey to Nowhere*, BCCB 6/97; *Frozen Summer*, BCCB 1/99) with characters now so fully realized that any melodrama in plotting seems inconsequential.

Yes, the children have more than their share of good luck along the road, and fate at last drives them happily into the arms of a most unlikely guardian. Nonetheless, the family dynamic between father and children (he is just not cut out to raise children on his own) and among siblings (toddler Lily behaves only for her indulgent brother Joshua, never for her sterner sister, while Joshua has a naturally obstinate resistance to Mem's authority) is poignant and thoroughly convincing. Mem bitterly acknowledges her father's "new dream had no room for us at all," but it's clear she has the strength of will to create a family without him. EB

BATTEN, MARY *The Winking, Blinking Sea: All About Bioluminescence*. Millbrook, 2000 32p illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-7613-1550-0 \$20.90 R Gr. 3-5

While the "all" of the subtitle may be overly ambitious, Batten does cogently and engagingly explain what causes sea-creatures to glow. From flashlight fish to fire worms, the author provides an accessible overview of bioluminescent sea life, accompanied by color photographs that go a long way toward explaining her fascination with this phenomena. The design of the book adds to the clarity: pages of text alternate with color photographs to break up dense text blocks, and the use of different colored backgrounds and typefaces is easy on the eyes. The photo captions occasionally tend toward the slightly fulsome ("a comb jellyfish . . . seems to hold the universe in its watery self" and "if you let your imagination go, these bioluminescent jellyfish look like galaxies"), but the magical effects of this luminous sea life deserve it. No index or additional material is provided. JMD

BRAYBROOKS, ANN *Plenty of Pockets*; illus. by Scott Menchin. Harcourt, 2000 27p  
ISBN 0-15-202173-6 \$16.00 Ad 5-8 yrs

The Bunches (Henry and Henrietta, their son, Junior, and his hedgehog, Max) live in a house crammed full of stuff ("Every inch of space was filled with toys and games and pots and pans and hangers and clothes and newspapers and magazines"). When the disarray becomes too much, Henry fashions a solution, sewing capacious pockets on his overalls and on Henrietta's favorite dress, which provide places to put away all the clutter. Things seem a little barren, however, with the furniture and Junior and Max tucked away into pockets, so the Bunches unburden the contents into the yard and have a delightful yard sale of the extra stuff. The story is slight and unshaped (and the ending is unclear), but the poker-faced absurdity of the premise gives a lilt to the text. The visuals get the main emphasis here, with design-intensive pages rolling the text over hills and tilting the words to and fro; foldout spreads give Henry and Henrietta their fully pocketed due. Menchin's trim lines create humor with skewed perspectives and pared-down expressiveness (the somewhat doll-like characters have a gaily oblivious attitude), and the spreads are enhanced with collage details that make the crammed roomscape wonderfully thingy. Kids dealing with the battle of the irreplaceable collections vs. the demands for a clean room will appreciate this account of a creative solution. DS

BUNTING, EVE *Wanna Buy an Alien?*; illus. by Timothy Bush. Clarion, 2000 92p  
ISBN 0-395-69719-0 \$14.00 Ad Gr. 2-4

Ben receives a joke present (ordered from a magazine ad) from his friend Jason: a

photograph of Ben with alien being Iku, a cassette tape and a friendly note from same, and two warm rocks with pulsating veins. Schoolmate Paloma is in on the joke, and all three friends decide, just for a lark, to do what the note indicates: meet on the beach at 2 A.M. to guide the alien spaceship to earth. Friendly note notwithstanding, the alien turns out to be a bad guy looking for specimens, and only the interference of Ben's beloved dog Homer keeps the kids from being space-napped. While the characterizations are flat and the plot is illogically developed, the attractiveness of the alien hunt is undeniable. Ben tells the story directly to the reader, ending with a concluding warning about buying aliens that is certainly worth a giggle. Well-drafted black and white illustrations are generously scattered throughout, and the energetic renderings of the three friends have a sassy appeal that adds considerably to the atmosphere. This will work with reluctant or cautious beginning chapter-book readers, and it is sure to find fans among the extraterrestrially inclined. JMD

BURGESS, MELVIN *Kite*. Farrar, 2000 182p  
ISBN 0-374-34228-8 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 4-8

By 1964 there were only twenty-four red kites living in Great Britain, and they were legally protected as an endangered species. To a gamekeeper, however, all birds of prey are "vermin," along with the other animals (weasels, foxes, etc.) that threaten the lives of pheasants raised for the shooting pleasure of sport hunters; when a red kite shows up in Hale Magna, Taylor Mase's gamekeeper dad therefore naturally shoots it. Taylor himself collects eggs—including, eventually, the ones in the kite's nest—and he's caught between the worldview of the father he worships and the new perspective introduced by the conservationist uncle of the landowner who employs Taylor's dad. Taylor's ambivalence about whether he wants to collect or protect wildlife—and his guilt-driven desire to bring the kite head count back to twenty-four—eventually leads him and his friend Adam to raise a chick (they name her Teresa) from the last of the kite's eggs. With some assistance from a foreword and afterword, Burgess' novel (published in Britain in 1997) offers real insight into these very different relationships with nature and, incidentally, a rural class system in which the local landowner was "the boss." Shifting points of view (which encompass Teresa and a fox as well as Taylor and his dad) provide moments of drama, natural beauty, and humor, but they also unfortunately diffuse the focus and impede development of the characters. However, Burgess offers a compellingly detailed view of a way of life and ways of thinking that may attract young naturalists. FK

BYARS, BETSY *Me Tarzan*. HarperCollins, 2000 [96p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028707-1 \$14.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028706-3 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

Dorothy has disliked Dwayne ever since he told her she had legs like Barney the dinosaur, so when she gets the chance to finesse the Tarzan role in the class play right out from under him she does so with glee, by virtue of her unbeatable Tarzan yell. Dorothy's yell gets progressively louder (and more effective at drawing animals from far and near) each time she repeats it; when her teacher finally catches on, he changes her lines so the yell is eliminated. This obvious unfairness elicits words of support from Dwayne, and the two enter into a tentative friendship.

Alternating narrators Dorothy and Dwayne eventually make a good team, and their budding relationship is promising. Unfortunately, shallow peripheral and main characters lack defining details, and their generic personalities make them interchangeable with just about any other middle-grade light fiction characters. The premise is funny but undeveloped, and the humor flatly refuses to fizz. Still, the cover is loud and attention-getting, and Dorothy's talent for Tarzan yells is sure to inspire some bored third grader's penchant for mimicry. Byars' fans will briefly appreciate this quick read before moving on to the next one. JMD

DEMAS, CORINNE *If Ever I Return Again*. HarperCollins, 2000 [208p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028718-7 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028717-9 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

Acknowledging that few letters are likely to reach New Bedford, twelve-year-old Celia Snow faithfully chronicles her experiences aboard her father's whaler, *Jupiter*, for her homebound cousin Abigail. While Mother insists on Latin lessons and propriety, Father is more than willing to tutor Celia in navigation and allow her the run of the ship. Demas at first appears to embark on the identical voyage of Peter Roop's *Good-bye for Today* (BCCB 4/00)—tomboyish journal-writer, yearning for father's independence and bristling under mother's genteel strictures, braves the waves and proves her mettle at sea. Certainly details of seafaring life (storms and whale hunting, dancing on deck and stretches of boredom) are, of necessity, similar. Celia, however, is a more fully realized character with a believably stormy relationship with her mother, an aching crush on the third mate, a propensity to seasickness, and an experience of family tragedy that hastens her maturity. Likewise, Demas successfully intertwines several subplots and elements that keep reader interest afloat: a foiled mutiny, Mother's pregnancy and loss of the infant, and the hateful Jerusha, whose society is foisted upon Celia in the Sandwich Islands. Celia's quick mastery of navigation (she guides the *Jupiter* home upon her father's death) may defy belief, but her respect for the sea rings true: "You are safe only for the moment you are in; there's no promise of safety in the next." EB

DiCAMILLO, KATE *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Candlewick, 2000 182p

ISBN 0-7636-0776-2 \$15.99

R Gr. 4-6

"My name is India Opal Buloni, and last summer my daddy, the preacher, sent me to the store for a box of macaroni-and-cheese, some white rice, and two tomatoes and I came back with a dog." There you have it: main characters and conflict, all in the first sentence. But there's a lot more to this book. Opal has a singular voice with a simple, infallibly Southern inflection; her daddy is one of the nicest and quirkiest preachers to grace children's literature; and Winn-Dixie, named after the grocery store from which Opal rescued him, is an ugly dog with a smile that makes friends and also makes him sneeze, not to mention a pathological fear of thunderstorms. In addition, readers will meet an elderly librarian whose stories inject the small town Florida setting with a past; a "witchy" neighbor who has hung a tree with beer and whiskey bottles, each representing a mistake she's made in her life; a mentally challenged musician whose street-singing once led him to jail and who now plays for the residents of a pet store, including Gertrude the parrot, whose favorite word is "Dog!" The one person we don't meet is Opal's mother, who abandoned her family long ago. It is the pain of her absence that propels Opal into friendships with all the characters whom Winn-Dixie eventually brings together,

lessening the loneliness of each. By turns funny and moving, vivid from trailer park to pet store, this will propel readers into a satisfying circle of companionship. BH

DOWELL, FRANCES O'ROARK *Dovey Coe*. Atheneum, 2000 181p  
ISBN 0-689-83174-9 \$16.00 R Gr. 6-9

Dovey Coe is twelve, the youngest child in a North Carolina hill family in the 1920s. Though she's the outspoken one, there's nothing downtrodden about the other siblings either: her deaf brother, Amos, spends the day hunting in the hills with his dogs, and her beautiful sister, Caroline, is determined to go to teacher's college and see the world beyond their little slice of Appalachia. Caroline's beauty attracts a pernicious suitor in the form of Parnell Caraway, scion of a local well-to-do family, but Caroline finally rejects a humiliated Parnell. He makes an attempt at revenge by luring Dovey into town after one of Amos' dogs; after a scuffle, Dovey is knocked out and Parnell is dead, with Dovey accused of his murder. Dowell does a good job of balancing out the pre-crime and post-crime narrative, with Dovey's account of Caroline's dealings with Parnell absorbing in its own right rather than merely being windup for the drama of the trial. The book also keeps pretty clear of Appalachian stereotypes, making Dovey's family and acquaintances distinct individuals (Caroline, with her mixture of coquettishness and indomitable pride, is a particularly interesting character). Readers familiar with *To Kill a Mockingbird* will pick up the obvious overtones here in the rural location, the trial, and the real culprit, clues to whose identity are provided early on; even those that don't will find themselves absorbed in the Coe family drama. DS

FIENBERG, ANNA *Borrowed Light*. Delacorte, 2000 [240p]  
ISBN 0-385-32758-7 \$14.95  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-12

Callisto, named after one of Jupiter's moons (she's the granddaughter of an astronomer), divides people up into stars and moons ("If you're a moon like me, you won't make your own light. You'll borrow it. You'll go in for a lot of appeasement gestures, like smiling too much and wagging your tail"). She accurately notes that that characteristic is what got her into trouble in the first place, "trouble" ranging from being distant from her unhappy mother and the prime caretaker for her little brother, Jeremy, but mainly consisting of the fact that, at sixteen, she's now pregnant. Saying "I wanted a second chance. I was only sixteen," Callisto decides on her own to have an abortion, but her isolation makes even the achievement of that task difficult (she ends up having to bring Jeremy to the clinic); when Jeremy disappears, the truth, not just about Callisto's abortion but about her mother's own troubled history, comes out. Australian author Fienberg provides an intense and poignant picture of Callisto through her first-person narration; the teen's voice is never unbelievably poetic and the astronomical conceits are deftly employed. The sadness that permeates Callisto's family is palpable, and there's a wistful acknowledgment of the shortfalls of even the finest people (when Callisto's beloved grandmother, who first introduced her to the skies, offers support but not comfort, Callisto wonders, "Why are people so much better when you make them up?") and the complications and fear that surround all human connections. Callisto is a distinctive, touching, and sympathetic heroine, and readers will empathize with her quest for her own light. DS

FINE, ANNE *Bad Dreams*. Delacorte, 2000 [144p]

ISBN 0-385-32757-9 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

Melanie is a happy antisocial camper, spending her time with her nose in a book rather than with her classmates (“You know as well as I do that being a bookworm in school is like having a protective shield. It sends a message: ‘Please leave me out of things unless I ask. Act as if I’m not here. It’s not that I’m lonely. It’s just that I’m happy on my own’”), until Imogen arrives at her school. To Mel’s dismay, her teacher orders her to buddy up with the new girl; Mel finds herself intrigued in spite of herself, however, as she learns more about Imogen’s strange precognitive powers that make her life miserable and keep everyone at a distance from her. Soon Mel determines to free Imogen from her curse by disposing of the talismanic necklace that, unbeknownst to Imogen, sentences her to a lifetime of dread. This is a lovely concise piece of scaled-down horror that has some pleasingly imaginative supernatural motifs (mere physical contact with a book sends Imogen reeling into the emotions suffered by the characters) balanced with some penetrating observations of human dynamics (Imogen’s determinedly fey mother finds vicarious satisfaction in her daughter’s magical abilities and ignores her daughter’s suffering). Fine creates a bold and successful character in the solitary Melanie, who shatters myths about the bookworm’s inherent shyness and solves Imogen’s dilemma (at a substantial cost to herself) more out of bossy interference than from any moral or empathetic motives. It’s a generous touch that this is a book driven by people’s relationships with books, yet it’s written colloquially enough that unsophisticated readers will also find it accessible. DS

FOX, MEM *Harriet, You’ll Drive Me Wild!*; illus. by Marla Frazee. Harcourt, 2000 32p

ISBN 0-15-201977-4 \$16.00

R 3-6 yrs

Harriet’s mother doesn’t like to yell, and most of the time, she doesn’t. But after a full day of cleaning up the sorts of messes that “just happen” in the vicinity of preschoolers like Harriet while their caretakers try to pay the bills or water the lawn, Harriet’s mom does—after a “terrible silence”—let it all out. Both parents and children will relate to the series of events that lead up to this cathartic moment, and to the (somewhat anticlimactic) reconciliation that follows, in which Harriet explains that she’s “really, really sorry” and her mom says she that she’s sorry too: “I shouldn’t have yelled, and I wish I hadn’t. But sometimes it happens, just like that.” The colored pencil and transparent drawing ink illustrations for this cumulative tale are set in an expanse of negative space, capturing in their lightness and isolation both the pleasant warmth and the growing intensity of the parent-child relationship. Their shifting perspectives increase the appeal of the book for both its audiences: children who are not entirely under control and parents who occasionally lose theirs. Each will find something to laugh at or learn from in this domestic tragicomedy. FK

GLENN, MEL *Split Image: A Story in Poems*. HarperCollins, 2000 [160p]

ISBN 0-688-16249-5 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-12

This series of poems from multiple perspectives creates a composite portrait of troubled teenager Laura Li. By the melodramatic end of the novel, Laura is dead,

in many ways a victim of other people's perceptions of an emotionally isolated young woman one friend calls a "‘too’ girl . . . / Too smart, too pretty, / Too popular, too perfect" but others see—due to their own limitations—as simply a "China doll," or as "too American." Laura's poems do not give the reader a detailed picture of the domestic routine that stifles her but focus instead on her emotional response to her traditional Chinese mother, her workaholic father, and the disabled older brother for whom she's responsible. Poems from many other perspectives offer a refracted glimpse of Laura while more clearly illuminating the angst of their speakers, who encompass Laura's family and a pointedly diverse group of Tower High students and staff, including a sympathetic school librarian who wishes Laura had "received enough light and warmth" to grow strong. The poetic images are far from original, but the voices often ring true and the interpolated public address announcements provide a more sophisticated ironic frame for this sometimes predictable plot. Though nobody except the clueless principal seems to be having a nice day at Tower High, young adults will recognize the emotional undercurrents present in even the quietest school library. FK

HALE, BRUCE *The Chameleon Wore Chartreuse: From the Tattered Casebook of Chet Gecko, Private Eye*; written and illus. by Bruce Hale. Harcourt, 2000 97p ISBN 0-15-202281-3 \$14.00 R Gr. 3-5

Chet Gecko is a fourth-grade lizard and would-be hard-boiled gumshoe, and he's been presented with a puzzling case: his classmate Shirley Chameleon's first-grader brother, Billy, has disappeared. Aided by his clever friend, mockingbird Natalie Attired, Chet follows the clues to sixth-grade Gila monster Herman, who seeks revenge for being kicked off of the football team; it turns out Herman's plan to disrupt the football game (by stealing the school mascot and releasing vermin onto the field) depends on Billy's eager yet clandestine participation. The mystery is slight and its construction is haphazard, getting submerged under the trappings of the story; the trappings, however, are zesty and entertaining. The combination of school details, animal classmates, and homage to Raymond Chandler is glib but broadly and sustainably humorous; Hale capably plays the elements against one another to increase the amusement value (Chet gets out of a sticky situation by dropping his tail), and the deadpan monosyllabic style is wittily effective. Black-and-white illustrations are drolly drafted, particularly in their characters' dramatically expressive eyes. Young readers looking to move up from Eth Clifford's Flatfoot Fox or fond of Mary Pope Osborne's Spider Kane mysteries will want to scuttle along with this schoolyard sleuth. DS

HANSEN, JOYCE *"Bury Me Not in a Land of Slaves": African-Americans in the Time of Reconstruction*. Watts, 2000 160p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-531-11539-9 \$25.00 R Gr. 6-10

Hansen takes a close look at the lives of African Americans after the Civil War. With clarity and focus, the author details the circumstances leading to manumission, the task of the Freedmen's Bureau, the role of Congress in the shaping of the Reconstruction South, Southern resistance to that reshaping, and the efforts of both white and black Americans to improve the economic and educational lot of the Freedmen. Each chapter opens with a quote from a historical figure (Phillis Wheatley, Abraham Lincoln, Booker T. Washington, etc.), and additional quotes in the body of the text itself give an urgent sense of the prevailing sentiments of the day. Brief biographies of influential African Americans (Frederick Douglass, W.

E. B. Du Bois, Charlotte Forten Grimke, etc.) are included in the relevant chapters. The layout avoids crowding by arranging the text in two columns in the biographies and alleviating the density of the remaining text blocks with numerous photographs, engravings, charts, facsimiles, and quotations. Notes for each chapter are appended, as is a bibliography of primary and secondary sources and an index. Although the prose occasionally leans toward the mawkish, the book is for the most part engrossingly written. Hansen provides a contextual frame for her research, ensuring an in-depth picture of a complex time in American history. JMD

HORT, LENNY *Tie Your Socks and Clap Your Feet*; illus. by Stephen Kroninger. Schwartz/Atheneum, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-689-83195-1 \$16.00 R\* Gr. 2-6

See this month's Big Picture, p. 349, for review.

HUGHES, TED *The Mermaid's Purse*; illus. by Flora McDonnell. Knopf, 2000 64p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-375-90569-3 \$17.99  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-80569-9 \$15.95 R\* Gr. 5-12

Britain's late poet laureate takes a posthumous bow in this collection of twenty-eight marine-flavored verses. The poems are brief (three stanzas or verse paragraphs is the upper limit, and the line lengths run quite short), providing precise encapsulations of ocean and shore dwellers such as the sea anemone ("... Many a friend, many a stranger,/ Many an enemy / Melts in my embrace./ I am anemone"), a wrecked ship ("The sailors prayed to come to land/ And their good ship's wreck soon made it,/ And sat on the rocks like a one-man band,/ While the stormy sea still played it . . ."), and the starfish ("A starfish stares/ At stars that pour/ Through depths of space/ without a shore . . ."). Hughes is, quite simply, a writer of such skill that his work makes other poets' creations wilt in comparison. The gloriously sonorous verse revels in dramatically orchestrated sound patterns that turn each poem into a siren inducement for a readaloud. The occasional unfamiliar word and unaccustomed density of imagery makes this more challenge for more gain than, say, Douglas Florian's similarly themed *In the Swim* (BCCB 5/97), but the soaring rhythm and generous helping of pithy conceits will draw even an inexperienced audience right in. McDonnell's black-and-white art splashes across the compact pages; thick textures of line and solid sprays of white foam counterbalance sweeps of gray sea, giving a determined (and sometimes slightly sly) concreteness to the fishes, birds, and bare-breasted mermaids that frolic in the deeps. Catch this poetic wave. DS

HULME, JOY N. *Through the Open Door*. HarperCollins, 2000 [176p]  
ISBN 0-380-97870-9 \$14.95  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-6

Nine-year-old Dora Cookson has never been able to speak clearly, and her disability has led many to believe she suffers from a mental defect. On the eve of her family's wagon journey from Utah to New Mexico, Dora visits a doctor for the first time in her life and learns that a simple but somewhat painful operation to release her tongue from the floor of her mouth should correct her condition. Now, facing a new life in a new territory with the long-coveted opportunity to enter



school, Dora spends her time in the wagon train not only taking in the sights, but also fending off the jibes of bullies as she laboriously teaches herself to speak. Hulme bases her novel (first published in 1991) on the life of an acquaintance who made the journey herself in the early twentieth century. Details unusual in fictional accounts of Western migration spice the narrative—the supportive network of Latter-Day Saint communities that helped their brethren along the route, the settlers' cautious relationship with the Navajo, the farmer's desperate search for a well site that could make or break the success of his enterprise. Though Dora's personal struggle is both convincing and involving, conversations are often less successfully presented. Mr. Cookson, in particular, engages more in travelogue than dialogue: "This is a bustling coal center. . . . There are lots of miner and railroad people who aren't members of our church, as well as many who are." Historical fiction buffs who sign on with every passing wagon train won't mind much, though, as they focus on the adventure. EB

ISADORA, RACHEL *123 Pop!*; written and illus. by Rachel Isadora. Viking, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-670-88859-1 \$15.99 R Gr. 1-3

Those familiar with Isadora's *ABC Pop!* (BCCB 6/99) will recognize the technique here: pop-art illustrations in the style of various artists (Warhol, Lichtenstein, Haring, among others) provide visuals to go with the enumerated concepts. The emphasis on artistry means that entertaining ideas are offered instead of easy countability: some counted objects only appear in part, some spreads offer red herrings in the shape of background dots or other secondarily countable collections, and some examples offer modestly piquant questions about how to describe what's being counted (18, for instance, counts animal noises); Isadora also follows the currently fashionable practice of expanding by large increments after twenty, wandering from 100 to 500 to 1,000 and 1,000,000 (the latter two untested for accuracy). The book is true to pop concepts as well as style (number 1 sets you on the "this is not your father's counting book" road with a pop-sized image of the famous Armstrong-on-the-moon picture), and the variation of styles and effects is impressive; a few spreads even go beyond their pop-connection merits to visual significance in their own right, such as the double-spread of the red car speeding along a darkened and empty highway as eleven lights glow overhead. Unfortunately, there's no information about Pop Art or the artists Isadora's emulating, which limits the artistic point, just as the complex approach limits the counting-book feature. Still, this will make for a lively introduction to one of the most kid-friendly schools of art. DS

JANECZKO, PAUL B., comp. *Stone Bench in an Empty Park*; illus. with photographs by Henri Silberman. Orchard, 2000 40p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-33259-4 \$16.99  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30259-8 \$15.95 R Gr. 3-7

This collection of haiku takes a different tack, with nearly three dozen poems treating not the natural world but the urban landscape. Poets included range from well-known contemporary writers for young people (Jane Yolen, Nikki Grimes, Janeczko himself) to adult authors writing in English (Cor van den Heuvel, Margaret Chula) and in Japanese (Issa, Buson). Some verses are merely serviceable while others are stellar, but all of them are effective in opening up the possibilities of haiku for young readers. The distinctive effect here comes from the pairing of

art and text: Silberman's photographs (printed in duotone, which gives them a modulated black-and-white reminiscent of early *Life* magazine) were taken in response to the selected haikus, and they offer visuals that are sometimes elucidation, sometimes illustration, and sometimes counterpoint. The combination often takes on nearly a third dimension of its own, with arresting images of the bustling city, ranging from night scenes of city lights to leg-and-shadow views of jump-ropers, adding their own touch of "nature" to the companion haiku. This will make an inviting introduction to the pairing of art and poetry as well as to haiku with a different flavor. DS

JAY, ALISON *Picture This . . .*; written and illus. by Alison Jay. Dutton, 2000 [34p]

ISBN 0-525-46380-1 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

Each page or spread here has a deceptively simple single-word text identifying a major component in the accompanying illustration ("clock"; "dog"; "hill", etc.), giving the book the look of an object-identification concept book. What's going on in the art, however, is considerably more elaborate than that: each illustration has some kind of connection to or overlap with its predecessor, and the sequence, which was foreshadowed by the four panels on the clock in the first illustration, proceeds through the seasons. The look isn't as sophisticated as Banyai's *Zoom* (BCCB 2/95), but the relationships are often more conceptually challenging, since the connections vary: all you can be sure of is that something in the picture you're looking at will have appeared in the previous illustration in some form (the clock has a picture of the dog; the dog's illustration has the hill in the background; the next page sees the hill through a window that has teddy bears on its curtain; the teddy bear sits on the table in the next illustration). The text words are essentially superfluous to the enterprise (though incipient readers may find them a helpful nudge), and they'll function as red herrings for more than a few viewers, since what's identified in the text is only occasionally the connecting point with the previous spread (which means that this book might be most effectively used going backwards). The world depicted is a cozy one, however, with craquelure giving texture to the scenes and the consequent yellowing suggesting evening's slanting light illuminating the pastoral views; plump and busy animals add animation to the visuals (the white rabbit driving the car and stopping in frustration for the tortoise is a particularly winning entry), and the dramas within each illustration often have their own impact (or near-impact, fortunately, in the spread where a snail looks up in horror at a descending boot). The absence of logic in the seek-and-find keeps this from being as effective as it might be, but kids who like visual puzzles may enjoy poring over the pictures. DS

KACER, KATHY *The Secret of Gabi's Dresser*. Second Story, 2000 128p

Paper ed. ISBN 1-896764-15-0 \$4.95

Ad Gr. 3-5

Gabi relates to her two grandchildren the story of her youth and survival as a young Jewish girl in World War II Czechoslovakia. The war had already been going on for some time when people in her small village began to hear stories about new restrictions on Jewish people and about the disappearance of neighboring Jews. As the Jewish and Christian communities separated, first by fear and then by law, Gabi watched her Christian friends turn their backs and her Jewish friends flee.

She and her mother were reluctant to leave the farm where Gabi's father recently died, but eventually Gabi's mother became determined to send her daughter away to hide. Gabi refused to leave her mother, insisting that she can hide in the family dresser; when Nazi soldiers arrived, they miraculously overlooked the dresser while searching every other nook and cranny of the house. Based on true events, the story is slow to build up to the scene of the Nazi raid, burdened in part by many pauses for Gabi's internal reflections. However, this tale is much gentler than many other stories of Jewish survival of the Holocaust, since Gabi and her mother avoided concentration camp life and went into hiding relatively late in the war. Although the slow pace and methodical plotting may not offer enough tension to sustain reader interest, younger readers curious about Holocaust survivors could start here. KM

KARAS, G. BRIAN *Bebe's Bad Dream*; written and illus. by G. Brian Karas. Greenwillow, 2000 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-16183-9 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16182-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

"When Bebe got ready for bed," the book begins, "she put on her pajamas and her armor." This is not your usual bedtime ritual, but then Bebe's plagued by unusual nighttime demons: she's convinced that aliens are going to come after her in her sleep. Teasing from her brother, Walter, and bad dreams increase her anxiety until she's on the lookout during the day as well ("You should do something about your alien problem," says her friend Alise). Finally she deceives the aliens into taking Walter instead, and her phobia is cured when she realizes that Walter's continued presence means that the aliens were, in fact, just a dream. This rambles on longer than it needs to, and the plot turns are more convenient than inherently credible. Karas has a spirited style and a good ear for kid interaction, however, that makes the alien- (and brother-) fighting saga enjoyable. Acrylic swaths add texture to the backgrounds, giving some oomph to the gouache-tinted pencil scrawls that are Bebe and supporting players; special effects ranging from a shift to lavender-tinged near-monochrome for night scenes to strong-lined vigor for the dreamed alien-encounter scenes add depth to the visual narrative. An unusual take on the conquering of nighttime fears, this might make a successful bedtime story for fearless sleepers with a taste for the offbeat. DS

KETCHUM, LIZA *Orphan Journey Home*; illus. by C. B. Mordan. Avon Camelot, 2000 162p

ISBN 0-380-97811-3 \$15.00

Ad Gr. 3-6

The Damrons have been unable to make a success of their farm in the young state of Illinois; too discouraged to pursue their dream further west, they head back toward their old home in Kentucky. After only a few days on the road both parents are mortally stricken with "milk sickness," and Jesse and her siblings must make their way to their grandmother on their own. Ketchum originally released the Damrons' tale in serial form through the Newspapers in Education program, so her potboiler format with its cliffhanger chapter conclusions comes as no surprise. The children are carried briskly from one threatening episode to the next, escaping shady boatmen, a crooked innkeeper, a childless couple who attempt to claim the youngest siblings, and the constant but elusive threat of being kidnapped

and “bound out” as indentured servants. True to the serial adventure genre, the children reach Grandma, who perks right up from her sickbed to welcome the waifs (and, of course, the stray dog that found them along the way). Plotting doesn’t get much hokier than this, but the what-comes-next device is undeniably effective. Readers just emerging from chapter books will be surprised at how quickly they can make the pages turn, and teachers in search of an entertaining readaloud may find this is the just the ticket for five-minute breaks in the day. EB

**KOSCIELNIAK, BRUCE** *The Story of the Incredible Orchestra: An Introduction to Musical Instruments and the Symphony Orchestra*; written and illus. by Bruce Koscielniak. Houghton, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-395-96052-5 \$15.00

Ad Gr. 3-6

Since even those of us familiar with the idea of the orchestra might not be aware of its evolution, Koscielniak’s historical overview of the ensemble and instruments therein will have some genuinely new information to offer to many readers. He starts with the pre-orchestra groups of winds and strings, examines the birth of the orchestra under Gabrieli in the sixteenth century, then traces the changes through the baroque, classical, romantic, and modern ages. Each spread provides a text overview of the focus era or type of instrument, with specific instruments getting more explanation in annotated or labeled illustrations. It’s interesting to see what came when (and what’s disappeared), and the constant changing of the orchestral composition is instructively explained. Koscielniak starts off on a sour note, however, by making the debatable statement that “we’ve all seen and heard orchestras perform, whether on television or in a live concert,” and the habit of problematic assumption continues throughout the book. Definitions are often made in terms understandable only to those already possessed of the knowledge in question (how do frets “serve to shorten the strings and change the notes”? What are “harmonies above the bass line”? What’s the difference between the action of the synthesizer that can “modify and combine sounds” and the computerized sound modules that “turn musical notes from a computer disk into a wide range of sounds”?). Artistic compositions are sometimes unfocused, with the muted colors and scratchy line tipping the crowded visuals into the drab. There’s still some relevant and hard-to-find information here that, when teamed with a knowledgeable adult who can sort through the hiccups, will give young musicians a better sense of the art’s history. DS

**KOSS, AMY GOLDMAN** *The Girls*. Dial, 2000 [128p]  
ISBN 0-8037-2494-2 \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Maya has reveled in her inclusion in the popular crowd, headed by the charismatic Candace, until she’s not just dropped but actively spurned and despised by her former friends. As the story unfolds in roughly chronological order, the narration shifts between various current and former members of the clique: in addition to Maya, we hear from her formerly closest friend, Renée; Darcy, Candace’s most loyal henchgirl; Brianna, who’s uneasy about Maya’s ejection; Candace herself, who wields her power as a struggle against boredom and fear; and finally Nicole, Candace’s new choice for in-group friend. The result is an intriguing picture of middle-school dynamics at their most cruelly arbitrary, with Candace’s certainty about all things credibly appealing to her more tentative followers. It’s also quite convincing how distant these girls are from their parents—Goldman doesn’t take

the easy way out and provide dysfunctional home lives that would make poor relationships inevitable, instead giving the girls everyday families of varying degrees of niceness. The final defection of Brianna and Renée to Maya's side is satisfying if a bit optimistic, and readers will begin to wonder what will happen to Candace once she's played with and subsequently discarded all the girls in her class. An absorbing read, this will also make a good discussion-starter on the question of what price social glory. DS

LACOME, JULIE *Ruthie's Big Old Coat*; written and illus. by Julie Lacomé. Candlewick, 2000 26p  
ISBN 0-7636-0969-2 \$13.99 R 4-6 yrs

Ruthie's mother tells her she'll grow into her cousin Frances' "big old coat," but although "Ruthie tried to grow . . . nothing happened." She marches grumpily outside to complain to friend Fiona, who giggles and says, "It is big. . . . It's big enough for me, too!" She scoots inside with Fiona and zips it up. The two pals (in the one coat) dance ("the tango, the twist, and the four-legged turkey trot") and play until "they got a big case of the Big Old Coat Giggles." When Ruthie needs to go to the bathroom, they discover the zipper on the coat is stuck, and the two friends race to the house ("I won't make it"; "Yes, you will"); Fiona promises not to look and Ruthie gets there just in time. Ruthie's mom unsticks the zipper and observes that the coat is indeed too big, but Fiona says "Zoinks! It's perfect!" and off the girls go for another round of the "Big Old Coat Giggles." Lacomé's ingratiating text rollicks along, accompanied by acrylic and gouache illustrations of anthropomorphized rabbits reminiscent of Pilkey's *Dumb Bunnies*. The colors are coolly crisp, and the characters in their red coat provide an ebullient counterpoint. Dialogue balloons house pithy asides worthy of a laugh or two, and the scene on the potty is going to cause some Big Old Book Giggles when this is read aloud, individually or to groups. JMD

LASKY, KATHRYN *Marie Antoinette, Princess of Versailles*. Scholastic, 2000 236p illus. with photographs (The Royal Diaries)  
ISBN 0-439-07666-8 \$10.95 R Gr. 6-9

MEYER, CAROLYN *Isabel, Jewel of Castilla*. Scholastic, 2000 [240p] illus. with photographs (The Royal Diaries)  
ISBN 0-439-07805-9 \$10.95  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-9

The Royal Diaries series continues its tour of classic queens with these new entries. Lasky follows Marie Antoinette through her betrothal and final time in Austria to her early days in France as the bride of the Dauphin, depicting the young princess' struggle with stultifying French etiquette (particularly the relations between her and the king's courtesan, Mme. DuBarry) and hints of the unpopularity that was to become lethal to her a quarter of a century later. Meyer focuses on Isabel's political balancing between her warring brothers while she yearns for marriage to bring her a prince charming and not just an alliance of national utility. The titles are pretty much what fans of the series and queenly histories will expect: they've got some fluffy details of clothing and anachronistic contemporary priorities creep into the teenagers' reflections, but there is also some compelling historical insight and context provided. Marie's is the more successful story: her relationship with her mother and tentative friendship with her husband give an interesting shape to

her journal, and the superficial aspects of the account suit her character. Both, however, will suit readers looking for an enjoyable regal outing. Each book includes historical notes, a selection of pictures, and a family tree. DS

LEHR, NORMA *Haunting at Black Water Cove*. Rising Moon, 2000 119p  
Paper ed. ISBN 0-87358-750-2 \$6.95 Ad Gr. 4-6

Kathy Wicklow arrives in Blue Lakes, California with her mother for a December vacation, only to stumble onto an old mystery involving her great-uncle Duncan and the disappearance of a girl named Ruby Faye. Local thirteen-year-old Drew brings Kathy into contact with fellow percipient and near-centenarian Miss Maryetta, sister of Ruby Faye. When it appears Ruby Faye's ghost is trying to communicate with Kathy, Kathy leaps at the chance to clear her uncle's name and find out what really happened the fateful day after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Only after unknowingly reenacting the almost century-old tragedy do Kathy, her dog Snuggles, and Drew uncover the truth, though Kathy saves the ghostly details to share with Miss Maryetta. Lehr's plot provides sufficient momentum for even the most reluctant of readers. The suspense is predictably built by baiting chapters with just enough eerie devices to keep kids turning the pages, but unexplained phenomena such as the elusive dog-eating lake monster Zaurus, dire warnings from local American Indian Fred, brushes with ghostly hands ("Her fingers, guided by an unseen force, made the pencil draw heavy black lines") and paranormal communications through e-mail will provide the audience with requisite chills. EAB

LITHGOW, JOHN *The Remarkable Farkle McBride*; illus. by C. F. Payne. Simon, 2000 [44p]  
ISBN 0-689-83340-7 \$16.00  
Reviewed from galleys R 6-9 yrs

Actor John Lithgow makes his literary debut with this offbeat book about a boy whose rapid mastery and abandonment of a series of musical instruments is driving his parents crazy. Farkle McBride goes through instruments like wildfire, starting with the violin at the age of three, but "no matter what instrument poor Farkle tried/ His musical passions were unsatisfied." Finally, the boy finds his calling after the conductor falls ill one day and Farkle conducts all the musicians as they play the instruments that he previously abandoned, one by one. Written in rhyming verse, the book reads like a song, with verses of action interspersed with musical nonsense choruses ("Reedle-ee/ Deedle-ee/ Deedle-ee") that work well when read aloud. Payne creates softly surreal backgrounds for Farkle and his family, who are shown with enlarged heads that highlight facial expressions to excellent comic effect, showing the grimaces of Farkle's frustration and the surprise and dismay on the faces of his bewildered parents (alert youngsters may notice, however, that some of the musical instruments are problematically positioned for play). Children whose likes and dislikes change daily will find Farkle's musical searching familiar, and when Farkle McBride is finally satisfied, they will be too. KM

LUNN, JANET *The Hollow Tree*. Viking, 2000 208p  
ISBN 0-670-88949-0 \$15.99 Ad Gr. 5-8

Phoebe Olcott's family has been divided by the Revolutionary War, and her fierce loyalty to blood relations supersedes political allegiance. Although she privately

admires the cause for which her Patriot father died, she's equally willing to carry out a mission that her Loyalist cousin Gideon was unable to complete before his Patriot neighbors hanged him. Fleeing from the home of her nearest relatives, she foolhardily heads from her Vermont village across the Appalachians with nothing more than the clothes on her back and a kitchen knife, bent on delivering secret information to the British general said to be stationed at Fort Ticonderoga. This has the makings of solid historical fiction, but Lunn interjects hokey quotes ("Heart and mind I stand with Patrick Henry, when he said, 'Give me liberty or give me death!'"), one-dimensional characters (Phoebe's overdramatic cousin Anne), and cute pets and woodland creatures that strain credibility. Although Phoebe and her immediate family express themselves in standard English, their villainous neighbors cackle in a dialect that seems to proceed more from their role within the novel than the town of origin: "Starve if you must . . . that ain't no never mind of ourn." Still, Lunn supplies enough wilderness adventure to draw an audience, and readers who wonder what became of Loyalists after the war will find some answers here. EB

MASSON, JEFFREY MOUSSAIEFF *Dogs Have the Strangest Friends & Other True Stories of Animal Feelings*; illus. by Shirley Felts. Dutton, 2000 116p  
ISBN 0-525-45745-3 \$19.99 Ad Gr. 4-8

Masson, author of popular adult books about animal emotions, takes the opportunity here to relate to kids the kind of anecdotes he considers support for his thesis. His stories treat subjects ranging from an elephant's attempts to assist a baby rhino to a cat's heroic efforts to rescue her kittens from a fire to, in the title chapter, interspecies friendships between a dog and a lion, a dog and a donkey, and a dog and a rabbit. Masson is a compelling storyteller, and he offers a wide and appealing array of animal encounters that animal-loving kids will appreciate. Ultimately, however, this is more a *Chicken-Soup-ish* collection of heartwarming tales than a balanced assessment: Masson's analyses are far from rigorous, and he seems largely unaware of his own anthropocentric bias (he consistently links merit in animals with similarity to humans); his citations also tend to be sketchy, with his adult books, rather than the primary reference, given as sources for some stories. This is still an absorbing series of accounts, however, in the good old-fashioned natural history tradition of Ernest Thompson Seton's *Wild Animals I Have Known* and Joy Adamson's *Born Free*, and the short chapters provide browsability and read-aloud opportunity. Full-page and double-spread watercolors, particularly good at evoking the sun-drenched and shade-dappled settings of the African animals, provide portraits of the subject critters. DS

MATTHEWS, KEZI *John Riley's Daughter*. Front Street/Cricket, 2000 [128p]  
ISBN 0-8126-2775-X \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-6

Thirteen-year-old Memphis Riley has lived uneasily with her grandmother, Naomi, since Memphis' mother's death and her father's departure. Naomi has enough on her hands taking care of her grown daughter, Clover, who is mentally handicapped, and Memphis doesn't improve the situation. When Clover disappears after smashing Memphis' mother's guitar, Memphis convinces herself for over a day that her aunt is only hiding out of spite, until Aunt Birdie (a family friend with an honorary aunthood) convinces her that something serious may have happened. The plot

is hampered by awkward side stories about Memphis's first romance, which includes a trip to the woods to visit a flatly stereotyped African-American voodoo-woman (who speaks in dialect), and about a threatening tramp. The uniqueness of this story comes at the end, after Clover is found alive but injured; Memphis then realizes that she will not be forgiven for fighting with Clover, her grandmother's anger will not abate, and she is no longer welcome in her grandmother's house (fortunately, Aunt Birdie provides a home for Memphis). Despite shortcomings of characterization and plotting, Matthews deals candidly with family distress and makes a brave choice in her conclusion, leaving Memphis safe but permanently changed by her grandmother's rejection and showing that blood is sometimes thinner than water. KM

MCCAUGHREAN, GERALDINE *The Stones Are Hatching*. HarperCollins, 2000 231p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028766-7 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06028765-9 \$15.95

R Gr. 7-10

It is England in 1919, after the Great War. Phelim lives with his abusive, miserly older sister, Prudence, and his life is unutterably wretched. The appearance of his house's supernatural protector, the domovoy, starts the unwilling Phelim on a quest to keep the Stoor Worm from waking and releasing the hatchlings—hags, dracs, Black Dog, Noonday Twister, merrows—mythological beings that threaten the land. Joining Phelim on his quest are Mad Sweeney, a shell-shocked soldier, acting as fool; Alexia, a young witch, acting as maiden; and Obby Orse, a joyful ancient, acting as horse. The three companions recognize Phelim as “Jack o’ Green,” the only one who can save England, the world, from the coming terrors, and they coax, threaten, cajole, and bully the boy into becoming a hero. This is a classic mythic journey wherein a young untried hero finds the strength to defeat his own self-doubt as well as more concrete foes. McCaughrean knows her folkloric stuff, and her novel is propelled by encounters with the supernatural creatures of the dark. The pace is swift, the characterizations strong, and the hatchlings nightmarish. Reluctant Phelim grows into his heroism, and readers will cheer when he faces down his repellent sister and locates his long-lost father. A folklore dictionary might be handy, but even without, this is a whopping good read. JMD

McKAY, HILARY *Pirates Ahoy!*; illus. by Alex Ayliffe. McElderry, 2000 32p

ISBN 0-689-83114-5 \$16.00

Ad 5-7 yrs

Three-year-old Simon (from *Where's Bear*, BCCB 1/99) and six-year-old Peter are cousins on a joint visit to their grandmother's. Peter is initially disdainful (“I don’t play with baby things”), but Simon’s imagined jungle lures him into action (“When the lions attacked, Peter turned into a monkey, too”); the duo, accompanied by Simon’s bear, Snowtop, then proceed to a pirate ship, a battle with dinosaurs, and the vampire castle, until bedtime brings an end to cousinly adventures. The secondary plot point about Simon’s guessing at Peter’s favorite thing is perfunctorily interwoven and somewhat confusingly resolved (the text says “then at last” Simon guesses that it’s Peter’s floppy bunny, when in fact that had been Simon’s very first guess back on the second page), but McKay’s easygoing style and ear for specific detail make the cousins’ fantasy world amiable and authentic. With its round faces and crayony colors, Ayliffe’s cut-paper art is blander than the text, but details such as Simon’s pirate hat (his purple striped sweater tied on his head) and scary dinosaur-shaped bushes add some spirit. This slips between real and pretend with



the same facility as youngsters themselves, and viewers will find a kindred spirit in Simon. DS

MEYER, CAROLYN *Isabel, Jewel of Castilla*. Scholastic, 2000 [240p] illus. with photographs (The Royal Diaries)

See review under Lasky, p. 363.

MIERAU, CHRISTINA *Accept No Substitutes!: The History of American Advertising*. Lerner, 2000 96p illus. with photographs (People's History) ISBN 0-8225-1742-6 \$22.60 R Gr. 4-8

In this engaging introduction to the many ways and wiles used to part Americans from their earnings, Mierau examines advertisements from their colonial appearance as flowery emigration broadsides, through their print metamorphosis at the hands of hype experts such as P. T. Barnum, and on to their refinement in broadcast media. Along the way, readers learn about various branches of the advertising industry, from the early typesetters who manipulated page design to achieve maximum appeal, to the agents who made fortunes as middlemen matching vendors with potential buyers, to the word- and image-smiths who raised advertising to what some have styled an "art." Mierau's coverage is neither copiously detailed nor exhaustive; celebrity endorsement is only discussed in relation to the advent of television, no mention is made of the Internet's capacity to expand ads from a national to an international market, and the intriguing topic of grassroots backlash against advertising is tantalizing but underdeveloped. Nonetheless, readers can scarcely resist reexamining the daily bombardment of ads in light of their long-standing American tradition and forming their own opinions as to whether advertising shapes or reflects American values. Black-and-white illustrations, an index, and a bibliography are included. EB

MUNSCH, ROBERT *Mmm, Cookies!*; illus. by Michael Martchenko. Cartwheel/Scholastic, 2000 32p ISBN 0-590-89603-2 \$11.95 R 4-6 yrs

Christopher discovers a pile of play clay in the basement, and, being a mischievous sort, "he got himself a piece of red play clay and whapped it in his hands—WHAP, WHAP, WHAP, WHAP, WHAP"—and made fake cookies covered with icing, sugar and raisins. After fooling his mother and father into tasting his pseudo-cookies, the little trickster happily goes off to school, unaware that his mother has telephoned his teacher to warn her about his clay cookie prank. The teacher knows what to do, and when Christopher arrives at school he finds a beautiful cookie (clay) on his seat. Readers-aloud are going to have a grand old time with Munsch's sound effects ("SCRRUUUNNNCH!" and "Yuck!" and "BURBLE BURBLE SPLAT SPLICHT BWAHHH"), and listeners are going to roll on the floor laughing, first at Christopher's successful prank, and then at his comeuppance. Although the production values have that mass-produced, supermarket feel, Martchenko's watercolors reflect a comic *joie de vivre* that suits the tale. The story is slight and the pictures obvious; still, the slapstick depiction of the characters' reactions to the ingesting of clay cookies are sure to tickle kids' funny bones, and the opportunity for (gross) sound effects will trigger enthusiastic audience participation. Better warn the parents to hide the play clay or be prepared for a culinary surprise. JMD

NARAHASHI, KEIKO *Two Girls Can!*; written and illus. by Keiko Narahashi. McElderry, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-689-82618-4 \$16.00 Ad 4-7 yrs

Narahashi celebrates girlhood friendships with the repeated refrain of the title, "Two girls can." Using different pairs of multiethnic girls, she introduces various activities two girls can do together, such as holding hands, flying a kite, pretending to be twins, and climbing a wall. The text is upbeat but bland ("Two girls can hide,/ spy,/ and surprise!"; "Two girls can/ pretend they're twins/ or be real twins/ or a big and little sister"), and Narahashi's ending, though celebratory, seems tacked on and anticlimactic ("Two girls can/ dance!/ but so can three—/ and four,/ and five./ Come on, everybody/ let's dance!"). The strength here lies in the expressive watercolors of friends having fun together, learning from each other, and helping each other; there is enough energy in the apple-cheeked kids to keep the predominantly pastel palette from being too sweet. Use this book with younger audiences to generate discussions about friendship. EAB

O'MALLEY, KEVIN *Bud*; written and illus. by Kevin O'Malley. Walker, 2000 [32p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8719-3 \$16.85  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8718-5 \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

A "very proper, very sensible" rhinoceros couple, the Sweet-Williams, are startled by the unconventional behavior of their son, Bud. He "liked dirt. Not just a little bit, either. He'd jump in it, roll in it, and . . . plant things in it." Bud's parents consider nature "disorderly," and his father hopes he'll grow out of his fixation, "but if anything, he grew into it," eventually nurturing a gorgeous (if untidy) garden. A visit from extremely orderly Grandfather Sweet-William causes Bud's parents to attempt to hide the evidence, but the secret of Bud's riotous garden is revealed after a storm damages his flora. O'Malley's flair for depicting expressive characters is in evidence here: the anthropomorphized rhinos are a picture of sartorial splendor and intellectual hauteur. Grandfather Sweet-William peers over his glasses with a jaundiced eye that would cause feelings of inadequacy in the heart of the most self-assured individual. Dialogue balloons reveal the personalities of the players (Bud's parents use proverbs such as "cleanliness is next to godliness," and Grandfather Sweet-William declares, "I have a special gift for finding dirt") and enhance O'Malley's sly humor. While tidying the garden as a family activity seems a bit off after this tribute to horticultural license, the cheery ambience tempers the contrary conclusion. Forget those treacly titles on the joys of gardening; read this one aloud and show listeners what getting down and dirty is really all about. JMD

OVEREND, JENNI *Welcome with Love*; illus. by Julie Vivas. Kane/Miller, 2000 [32p] (Cranky Nell Books)  
ISBN 0-916291-96-0 \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys R 5-9 yrs

Unlike Ashbé's minimalist *What's Inside* (reviewed above), which gives very introductory facts about pregnancy, this explicit title aims for the demystification of homebirth. Young Jack tells the story of his mother's labor and delivery of his new baby brother, a delivery attended by father, midwife, aunt, and Jack and his two

sisters. The Jack's-eye-view of the proceedings reveals a curious, slightly apprehensive narrator who has been appropriately prepared for a momentous event. Jack observes carefully, his voice matter-of-fact and sincere ("The baby slips into Anna's [the midwife's] hands, and she lifts the cord from around the baby's neck, and I can see it's a boy! And then I hear a little sound, like a kitten meowing. 'Hello, baby,' I say quietly. 'Hello'"). Overend avoids didacticism by making Jack a credible participant describing specific personal events instead of a distanced narrator who exists only to provide a step-by-step guide to at-home births. Vivas' illustrations depict a family in assorted stages of anticipation and participation, in compositions that enhance the intimacy and emotionality of the event. Varying perspectives, expressive faces, and a palette dominated by a subtle but soothing violet all contribute to a sense of family unity and satisfaction. JMD

PARK, LINDA SUE *The Kite Fighters*; illus. by Eung Won Park. Clarion, 2000 136p  
ISBN 0-395-94041-9 \$15.00 Ad Gr. 4-6

Young-sup and Kee-sup are brothers, but Young-sup is the younger and is—in fifteenth-century Korea—expected to treat his eldest sibling with strict courtesy and respect since he is the one who bears the burden of bringing increased honor to his prosperous family. These expectations create conflict when Young-sup's talent for kite flying attracts the attention and, eventually, the awkward friendship of the Boy King (a character based on a historical figure). This leads to the king asking the brothers for a kite that flies as well as theirs, which patient and painstaking Kee-sup manages to deliver. However, the king then asks Young-sup, the best flier, to fly his kite for him during the competition at the New Year celebration. Young-sup's displeased father reminds his younger son that "always the eldest son represents the family," but Young-sup does eventually find a way out of this dilemma consistent with his duties as a brother and a friend as well as a son and a loyal subject. The rest of the book focuses on the boys' preparations for the contest and the specific question of whether or not to coat their kite string with crushed pottery, an innovation that makes it easier for Young-sup to saw through the strings of his opponents. The mix of history and fiction in this story about family hierarchies, individual talents, and kites is sorted out in a brief but lucid endnote. An introduction to the domestic side of Korean culture and history, the novel allows the characters more room to maneuver within their constraints than their historical counterparts probably had, but Park does carefully describe those parameters and offer readers an accessible way to think about what it would be like to live in a world where birth order is destiny. FK

PATRICK, JEAN L. S. *The Girl Who Struck Out Babe Ruth*; illus. by Jeni Reeves. Carolrhoda, 2000 48p (On My Own History)  
Library ed. ISBN 1-57505-397-7 \$21.27  
Paper ed. ISBN 1-57505-455-8 \$5.95 R Gr. 2-4

Pitcher Jackie Mitchell made now-overlooked history when in 1931, at the age of seventeen, she signed a contract with the men's minor league Chattanooga Lookouts and promptly faced off against two of the Yankees' greatest hitters in exhibition play. According to this account, Babe Ruth met her with reluctance ("Jackie shook his hand. But Babe Ruth looked away") and Lou Gehrig behaved graciously ("He took off his cap. He bowed slightly and shook her hand. His grip

was as strong as iron"); once these social obeisances were discharged, Mitchell struck both men out. Patrick focuses narrowly on Mitchell's moment in the lime-light, saving discussion of controversy over possible payoffs and/or publicity stunts for a helpful concluding note. Fiery play action and the august presence of Ruth and Gehrig should keep boys' interest blazing, but girls will especially relish vivid descriptions of Mitchell's devilish pitching ability. Clipped sentences seem right at home on this field, sounding more like an announcer's play-by-play than simplified syntax for beginning chapter-book readers. Plenty of colored-pencil illustrations draw readers onto the diamond and reinforce the text. This should be a sure winner when biography report time rolls around. EB

PENNEBAKER, RUTH *Both Sides Now*. Holt, 2000 [160p]  
ISBN 0-8050-6105-3 \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

Liza is a go-getter and a positive thinker, like her father; she's the advice columnist for the school paper, the diplomatic intermediary between her wild friend Rory and her disapproving friends Beverly and Emma, and the rock upon whom her father depends in family upheaval. The current upheaval is the return of her mother's breast cancer, which Liza and her doctor father are determined is merely a temporary setback. Liza's mother, however, realizes that things aren't that simple, and she incurs the wrath of her family by refusing aggressive treatment and facing the greater possibility of death as a result. Pennebaker deftly allows Liza's narration to convey her character, especially with Liza's constant self-assessments ("I always sound calm and I almost always feel calm. That's one of the best things about me, I think") and increasing dismay at the difference between her self-identification and the person she's becoming in the face of her family stress. Though the occasional interpolation of Liza's mother's thoughts is superfluous (and those interludes are less convincingly written than Liza's account), the book achieves the difficult feat of portraying a family dominated by a particular emotional convention, which is critically failing them; there are harbingers of this problem in Liza's father's unwillingness to see his own father's deterioration, and reflections in Liza's dismissive attitude towards her emotional younger sister and her anxiety-ridden relationship with a new boy in school. Though the shadow of loss darkens the novel, its focus is less the probability of tragedy than the way in which this family operates; it's a penetrating and believable examination of an aspect of family life often transparent to its participants. DS

PEVSNER, STELLA *Is Everyone Moonburned but Me?* Clarion, 2000 202p  
ISBN 0-395-95770-2 \$15.00

Ad Gr. 5-8

Thirteen-year-old Hannah is the dependable sibling, stuck between her willful older sister, Melanie, and her willfully babyish younger sister, Paige; she's similarly taken for granted at school by her flaky friend Cheyenne and her headstrong friend Kelsey. The progress of her divorced parents' independent love lives, her participation (with her father's girlfriend's son) on the debating team, and her beloved grandmother's stroke help her put her assets in perspective. There's a loose-jointedness to the plotting here that keeps the book from effective cohesion, and the situation seems less resolved than buried under new events (Grandma's final platitude to Hannah, "But now you need to be there for yourself," comes pretty much out of the blue). Hannah's sturdy and unassuming narration is well-tuned

to her character, however, and the portraits of her sisters, especially wannabe babydoll Paige, are sharp and authentic. Hannah's position (she really *is* put upon) will elicit sympathy from readers who feel unappreciated themselves, and they'll be happy when she gets the credit she's due. DS

PHILBRICK, RODMAN *REM World*. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 2000 192p  
ISBN 0-439-08362-1 \$16.95 Ad Gr. 4-6

Determined to lose weight the easy way, pudgy Arthur sends away for the "Lose Weight While You Sleep!" REM Sleep Device. The device is actually a helmet, and its soothing sounds open a door to a parallel world. Somewhat precipitously, Arthur removes the helmet and steps through into an alternate reality. Arthur's oversight (leaving the helmet behind him) has let the darkness into the universe, and while he endeavors to prevent the dark from taking over Arthur grows into himself (and loses weight, just like the ad said). Purposive as this may be, Philbrick's parallel world is a lively one, with some quirkily drawn characters. REM is a dream world with consequences, and Arthur pushes himself beyond himself to undo what he has inadvertently done. The book's style is declamatory and facile, and humor is never far away, even in the most dire circumstances. The characters are more functional than developed personalities, but the fast plot saves this title from being more thematically obvious than it is. The conclusion (in which Arthur rejects his nickname, "Biscuit Butt," and embraces "a name he earned himself, Arthur Courage") is just a bit too much like being hit with a well-intentioned brick, but this little piece of wish-fulfillment should find an audience just the same. JMD

POLACCO, PATRICIA *The Butterfly*; written and illus. by Patricia Polacco. Philomel, 2000 48p  
ISBN 0-399-23170-6 \$16.99 Ad Gr. 2-4

Monique awakens in the middle of the night to the sight of a "ghost child" sitting on the end of her bed, who runs away before Monique can speak to her. When she tells her mother what she has seen, her mother firmly tells her that it was only a dream. Living just outside of Paris during World War II, Monique and her friends are beginning to see frightening changes in their neighborhood, as Nazis dominate the streets and some Jewish neighbors are taken away. Unbeknownst to Monique, her mother has been helping the French Resistance; eventually the "ghost child" is revealed as a Jewish girl named Sevrine who is living, with her family, in a secret part of Monique's cellar. Watercolor illustrations show figures in muted colors suffused with deep gray shadows that contrast starkly with blank white backgrounds, conveying the bleak harshness of the Nazi occupation. The faces of the two girls are expressively awkward in the spreads depicting their second nighttime meeting, where they sort out what they are both doing in the house ("Where do you live?" Monique insisted. "Here!" Sevrine finally said. "Here?" Monique said with such surprise and so loudly that it might have awakened the whole neighborhood! "But I live here!"). Unfortunately, the view of the Holocaust is somewhat sanitized (a note explains that some of the people upon whom the story was based suffered grim fates unmentioned in the story proper), and the plotting is wordy and illogical. Despite the sentimentality and convolutions, however, this is a sometimes moving and dramatic story of a child's perspective on the Holocaust and the French Resistance that retains the immediacy of Monique's understanding. KM

RUBALCABA, JILL *The Wadjet Eye*. Clarion, 2000 156p  
ISBN 0-395-68942-2 \$15.00

R Gr. 6-9

Damon is grieving the loss of his mother, who has died after a long illness. His loyal friend Artemas convinces Damon to take the news to his father, a soldier fighting for Julius Caesar and Rome. The two young men undertake the journey from Alexandria to Spain, encountering seagoing rogues, deadly whirlpools, man-eating sharks, and Pharaoh herself, Cleopatra. Damon and Artemas reach Caesar's army where would-be soldier Artemas risks life and limb to bring injured soldiers in from the battlefield and Damon uses his medical training to treat their wounds. Artemas is rewarded with a commission in Caesar's army; Damon with a reunion with his father. Rubalcaba's characterizations of Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, and Cicero (who appears briefly) have a human dimension often lacking in depictions of bigger-than-life historical figures. Damon and Artemas' friendship is the glue that holds the plot together, and Damon's obvious love for his mother and anger at his absent father add yet another layer of emotion to the tightly woven plot. This is a short, action-packed, and accessible adventure that will find a comfortable spot on the historical fiction shelf. A glossary, extensive historical note, and bibliography are included. JMD

RUNNINGWOLF, MICHAEL B., ad. *On the Trail of Elder Brother: Glous'gap Stories of the Micmac Indians*; ad. by Michael B. RunningWolf and Patricia Clark Smith; illus. by Michael B. Running Wolf. Braziller/Persea, 2000 144p  
ISBN 0-89255-248-4 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-9

Two members of the Micmac tribe tell sixteen stories related to the supernatural being, Glous'gap, who is a "spiritual teacher, the ultimate warrior, medicine-person, and occasional trickster" of Native American coastal New England and the Canadian Maritime Provinces. Creation is new, not everything has taken its form yet, and Glous'gap must fight forces of evil and help human and animal life get established properly. Water figures prominently: there is a flood story ("Porcupine and Fisher") and a drought story ("Glous'gap and the Water Monster") that has a glorious tall-tale aspect. "How Glous'gap Saved Pine Marten and Mrs. Bear" is a five-part odyssey, while "Glous'gap and Wa'sis" is a brief, funny anecdote about how the great leader could not get a baby to do what he wanted, with an explanation of why babies say "Goo." As the introduction notes, "these traditional Micmac stories do not have distinct beginnings, middles, and ends that leave the characters tidily accounted for." Nevertheless, they are strongly shaped and full of rhythmic incantations that both readers and storytellers will enjoy: "Ho-ho! Ho-ho! All the waters are mine! All the waters are mine! Go away! Go away! Or I'll kill you today," shouts a giant water monster that becomes the first bullfrog. Several will be familiar in theme if not structure, as in "Glous'gap and the Three Wishes," a jovial beware-of-what-you-wish-for tale in which one young man lives to regret his boon of being able to belch and fart copiously in an effort to make people laugh. In addition to introducing the stories with a section on cultural background, the authors have included a glossary/pronunciation guide of Micmac words, a map of Micmac territory, and a list of resources for further reading and viewing. Sources for the stories are not specifically cited outside of a comment that "Michael learned most of these tales as a child" from various family members. The beginning of each tale is illustrated with a stylized pen-and-ink drawing incorporating traditional graphic motifs. BH

SALTZBERG, BARNEY *The Soccer Mom from Outer Space*; written and illus. by Barney Saltzberg. Crown, 2000 [40p]

Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-80063-2 \$15.95

Library ed. ISBN 0-517-80064-0 \$17.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

On the eve of Lena's first soccer game her father tells her a bedtime story about young Ruben Drinkwater, whose very average mother turned into an escalating embarrassment for her son on the Atomic Pickles soccer team. Her enthusiasm morphed from "a little 'WOO!' here and a little 'WOO!' there," to sporting a goofy pickle hat, to outrageous cheerleading in a full-body dill costume, until Ruben begged her to stop. By then the damage was done—other team parents were so inspired by her antics that they hired a green blimp to descend upon the field while they brandished pompoms in their own pickle suits, to the team's great delight. Lena responds to her father's tale with a skeptical "But I don't think anyone's parents would act so weird just because of a soccer game." The next day she stares in disbelief as her own parents arrive at her match, clad like Fruit of the Loom logos, cheering, "Go Galactic Grapes!!!" Unbridled parental zeal is so common a source of childhood anguish that many listeners will groan with recognition at Ruben's trial. Cartoonish line-and-watercolor pictures neatly capture the Jekyll/Hyde transformation of mild, slightly dumpy Mrs. Drinkwater (complete with fuzzy house slippers and half-spectacles) into the shrieking, flipping fanatic that no self-respecting child would publicly claim as a mother—at least not until the other kids approve her as "cool." EB

SCHNUR, STEVEN *Night Lights*; illus. by Stacey Schuett. Foster/Farrar, 2000 32p

ISBN 0-374-35522-3 \$16.00

Ad 4-6 yrs

In this nighttime counting book, Melinda "counts the lights" before she goes to bed. She's going to be up for awhile: she counts not only one (a nightlight in the nursery) through twenty (twenty airplanes flying overhead), but then moves on to fifty, one hundred, a thousand, and a million. The text's outdistancing of the initial Melinda's-counting concept causes some strain; the illustrations also confuse things by making the counting units inconsistent (sometimes the counted items possess more than one light and aren't lights themselves) and sometimes unclear (what exactly is a "lightning bar"?). The nocturnal scenes are inviting, however, with the points of luminescence punctuating landscapes of glimmering blues and greens. Emphasize the night rather than the counting, and this will make an effective bedtime book; if a simple readaloud doesn't induce drowsiness, you can always set youngsters to counting the "one million twinkling stars." DS

SCRUGGS, AFI *Jump Rope Magic*; illus. by David Diaz. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 2000 34p

ISBN 0-590-69327-1 \$16.95

R 5-10 yrs

Shameka is a champion double-dutch jumper, and she and her friends are jumping rope so hard that "the jump rope beat soared on the breeze,/ scattering magic through the trees." Mean Miss Minnie comes out to chase the girls home, but Shameka stands her ground, refusing to be scared away. She enthusiastically chants some jump-rope rhymes, and Mean Miss Minnie is caught up in the joyful rhythms in spite of herself. Twirling the jump rope, Miss Minnie chants: "I'm going to

heaven,/ and I won't come down./ I'll be sitting on the moon/ where I can't see the ground." Off into the blue sky she goes, leaving Shameka her jump rope and a new jump-rope chant. The girls reconvene, and Shameka shares her new rhyme until "Out, out, out!/ Shameka/ jumped/ out!" The plot may be as out there as Miss Minnie, but Shameka epitomizes the joy of jumping rope, and her enthusiasm is irresistible. Diaz' buoyant illustrations are suffused with a golden glow that makes the setting appear bathed in sunlight; the houses resemble an askew Oz, complete with fanciful trees and flowers. The marionette-jointed characters are expressively rendered, their faces reflecting a wholesome enjoyment of their play. While the text isn't quite as pithy as playground rhymes, Scruggs has caught the pounding rhythms of call-and-response jump rope chants, so much so that readers and listeners alike are going to itch to give those ropes a whirl. JMD

SÍS, PETER *Dinosaur!*; written and illus. by Peter Sís. Greenwillow, 2000 26p  
ISBN 0-688-17049-8 \$14.95 R 2-4 yrs

A little boy's nighttime bath starts out innocuously enough as he and his toy dinosaur soak, but soon he's joined by a live dinosaur emerging from the bath's depths. Next, other dinos scamper by as the startled boy looks on, and they grow in size until a foldout spread shows the herd galloping past our bathing hero. Sís initially employs the childlike, streamlined style of *Trucks Trucks Trucks* (BCCB 5/99), wherein thick black lines float across white space touched with occasional patches of color, then moves to his more dimensional, subtly colored and richly textured style in the foldout explosion of dinosaur fantasy, which adds just the right touch of dreamy culmination. This is a neat little wordless reverie for young dinophiles seeking to make bathtime more exciting; let's hope it's waterproof. DS

SPEED, TOBY *Brave Potatoes*; illus. by Barry Root. Putnam, 2000 [32p]  
ISBN 0-399-23158-7 \$15.99

Reviewed from galaxies

R\* 6-9 yrs

If you've ever thought that there just aren't enough picture books about vegetable liberty (and even if you haven't), you'll be glad to see this saga of tuberous autonomy. The titular potatoes' adventure starts at the County Fair, where they sneak out in the night to revel in the midway and ride the Zip. Their highlit hijinks attract the attention of the Chowder Lounge's Chef Hackemup, who's prepping vegetables for the cauldron ("He's got green and yellow peppers!/ Even royal rutabagas!/ EVEN RUBY RED TOMATOES!/ But he hasn't got potatoes./ No, he hasn't got potatoes"). Though the chef manages to entice the partying spuds into his bag, the indomitable potatoes stage a kitchen uprising, toppling the chef into his own stockpot and leading all the produce to freedom. It's refreshing to see something genuinely new sprouting under the sun, and the text treats its deliciously bizarre premise with an energetic, blithely rhythmic form that starts stealthily with prose and turns into witty, chantable rhyme, springy and flexible, that'll make your mouth water to read it aloud. In the gouache and watercolor illustrations, Root's roots have an understandable debt to Mr. Potatohead, but their freckled exuberance is all their own (and there's something weirdly endearing about their spindly little limbs and wide-mouthed grins). The chef's gleaming copper kitchen is a sci-fi-esque vegetable abattoir, where conveyer belts haul apprehensive turnips and beets through clouds of steam towards the waiting shining knife (villainous as the chef may seem, young audiences may still be relieved that



he survives his soup-dunk little the worse for wear). If you're inclined towards underground humor, serve this one up with potato chips—they'll both go down well. DS

SPINELLI, EILEEN *Night Shift Daddy*; illus. by Melissa Iwai. Hyperion, 2000 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2424-7 \$15.49

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0495-5 \$14.99

R 3-6 yrs

This is two bedtime stories in one. After Daddy puts his daughter to bed, he leaves for work; while she dreams, he sweeps. When he returns home, his daughter repeats the bedtime ritual in reverse, reading to her father and tucking him in before going out to play. The story's repetitions and rhythmic couplets will appeal to young listeners and, along with the large, distinct type, may be useful to emergent readers. Though the figure of the daughter is improbably round-faced and button-nosed, the muted, opaque colors that fill the double-page spreads suit the sleepy characters, and shadows soften the edges of the wintry urban milieu while spot art highlights contrasting details like Daddy's work boots and his daughter's bright blue bunny slippers. Both sleepy parents and imaginative children will enjoy the gentle realism and playtime possibilities of this plausible role reversal. FK

STANLEY, DIANE *Roughing It on the Oregon Trail*; illus. by Holly Berry. Cotler/HarperCollins, 2000 42p

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027065-9 \$15.95

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027066-7 \$15.89

R 6-9 yrs

Twins Lenny and Liz have been dropped with Grandma for two weeks, and she proposes a trip back in time to visit with an ancestor of their choice. Lizzy picks out a portrait of a young girl who shares her name, and Grandma whisks them (via magic hat) to Independence, Missouri, 1843, to join great-great-great-great-grandmother Elizabeth on the wagon trail to Oregon. Stanley does for history what Joanna Cole and her Magic School Bus do for science—she creates a field trip in which sizable chunks of solid information are laced with gentle wisecracks and plenty of dialogue-bubble asides. Within this format, modern-day characters can freely express reactions to the journey and its hardships that the audience probably shares yet may not blurt out in class: "Buffalo chips? Is that what I think it is? Are we really supposed to pick it up?"; "Yow! This [wagon] needs shock absorbers!" Berry's cartoon cast is a jolly, unsophisticated lot that bounds across the colored-pencil continent with chipper resilience to every obstacle Nature throws across their path. None of the star players can claim the sharply developed look and personality of Bruce Degen's Ms. Frizzle, but then, happily, they don't need to trek through the MSB's visual clutter. Stanley's wit and authority are very much in evidence, and the gallery of relatives on Grandma's wall suggests that other Time-Traveling Twins trips are in the offing. EB

STONE, BJ *Ola's Wake*; illus. by Susan Havice. Holt, 2000 [96p]

ISBN 0-8050-6157-6 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

Josie and her mother drive most of the way across Texas to go to the funeral of Josie's great-grandmother, Ola. When they arrive there, Josie meets a neighbor

girl named Sara, whose grief infers an intimacy with Ola that makes Josie jealous, since Josie hadn't seen her great-grandmother in years. Neighborly mourners stop by the house and recount stories about Ola, which Josie soaks up like a sponge. When Josie catches a cold (just like Ola, Josie's mother remarks) that turns into a fever, she finds herself going on a walk with Ola, sharing the same berry picking and digs in the garden that Sara has described in her remembrances. Despite Josie's enthusiasm, a real picture of Ola's personality never emerges, and repeated references to similarities between Josie and Ola seem forced. The pace of the fevered dream sequence drags, and Josie's insistence that the walk was "real" suggests a naïveté that doesn't mesh with Stone's earlier characterization of her heroine. However, Stone does effectively illustrate Josie's desperation to be connected with Ola, and Josie and Sara reconcile their jealousy when Sara tells Josie that she is "as stubborn as Miss Ola." This is an unusual story of grief for an unknown dead relative, and children who have experienced this kind of event may be interested to see how Josie comes to understand the great-grandmother she never knew. KM

TALBERT, MARC *Small Change*. Jackson/DK Ink, 2000 170p  
ISBN 0-7894-2531-9 \$16.95

M Gr. 5-8

Self-absorbed ugly-American-in-training Tom finds no pleasure in the family vacation in Mexico. He considers Spanish "gibberish," can't understand why his parents like "this place," and resents the cocky self-assuredness of the Mexican youths he watches from afar. At the Felicidad Market, Tom and his younger sister Philippa are caught in a dangerous altercation between soldiers and merchants and are saved from the gunfire by Ignacio Guerrero, a Mexican boy, and his father. The four flee the violence in Señor Guerrero's old truck, and before Tom can protest, he is at the family ranch. Tom gets an eye-opening and character-shaping education at the Guerrero ranch as he adjusts to life without the conveniences he thought so necessary and realizes how rich he is in comparison to Ignacio's family. The plot is purposively designed to get Tom to a place where he can "go native" and learn to appreciate his hosts, even though they are uneducated and poor. While Tom, Philippa, and Ignacio are solidly characterized, some major plot points are left dangling: when is this story taking place? Is the violence in Felicidad a reflection of real history? How do Tom and Philippa find their parents? Isn't anyone looking for these two kids? Well-meaning but sketchily developed, Tom's transformation and the circumstances leading to it are barely credible. JMD

THOMPSON, KATE *Wild Blood*. Hyperion, 2000 [272p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2497-2 \$16.49  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0572-2 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

Tess is staying with her uncle and aunt and their three children on a remote farm in Ireland. With only a few days left before turning fifteen and losing her power to switch (shape-shift into any other living creature), she must decide what form she will take for the rest of her life—her human form, or another. Confused and nervous about the decision she must make, Tess is also troubled by the feeling of unease that comes over her whenever she enters the woods on her uncle's land. His plan to sell the property is disrupted by the disappearance of his three children, and Tess risks everything in an attempt to save them before her final switch.

This concluding volume in Thompson's Switchers trilogy (which includes *Switchers*, BCCB 7/98, and *Midnight's Choice*) has a suspenseful pace that builds to a foregone but still engaging conclusion. Thompson captures a certain gloom-and-doom foreboding and fills the woods with it, giving the book a dark sense of place that adds considerably to the something-is-not-quite-right atmospherics. Tess' dilemma involves a choice between eternal life and human mortality, and although her decision is inevitably anticlimactic, her ambivalence about her reasons for that decision contributes a frisson of tension. Thompson's characterizations are strong, and her descriptions of switching are mesmerizing; that and the forthright Tess make up for the slightly soft conclusion. JMD

TRUEMAN, TERRY *Stuck in Neutral*. HarperCollins, 2000 [128p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028518-4 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028519-2 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

Shawn's narration has the sarcastic edge of many fourteen-year-olds, but Shawn himself is different in one simple and powerful way—his cerebral palsy prevents him from voluntarily controlling any of his muscles. His mother and two siblings are unaware that he not only has the ability to perceive and understand the world around him but is actually blessed (or cursed) with a perfect memory for every detail of his life so far. And his life may not go much farther: recent details lead Shawn to suspect that his father, who left the family years ago, is plotting to kill him in order to end the misery he's sure his son endures. Poetry written by Shawn's father (a Pulitzer-Prize-winning writer and frequent TV talk-show guest) opens each chapter; although the poetry itself is amateurish, the plot is riveting, as Shawn reveals more about the roots of his suspicions and the facts of his everyday existence without muscle control. Trueman's characterization is fascinating, portraying Shawn as a believably philosophical young man who, while still hoping for a chance to make connections to others, can understand his father's wish to end his pain. In the end, Shawn loses consciousness to one of his many daily seizures at the moment that his father is approaching his helpless body, and readers are left suspended in the tension of an unknown outcome. Trueman has created a compelling novel that poses questions about ability and existence while fostering sympathy for people with severe physical limitations; readers will find themselves immersed in questions of "what if" at the same time that they are drawn through the story by Shawn's witty voice. KM

TURNER, MEGAN WHALEN *The Queen of Attolia*. Greenwillow, 2000 280p

ISBN 0-688-17423-X \$15.95

R Gr. 9-12

"The Queen's Thief" has been captured by the ruthless queen of a neighboring country waging war on his homeland; Eugenides (Gen, from Turner's *The Thief*, BCCB 11/96) has been betrayed to his enemy, the Queen of Attolia, by his gods. His suffering and redemption, the military strategy involved in waging war on three fronts, and the limited options open to a disputed ruler determined to hold her throne are three convergent threads of this character-driven novel. Gen is an enigmatic individual with hidden motives; his love for Attolia, while not obviously foreshadowed, is convincing, as is his close friendship with the Queen of Eddis, for whom he thievs. The rival queens have a solid physicality; their enmity is clearly explained, and their rapprochement is no more than hinted at. Eddis fights for her

kingdom as Attolia fights for hers, using any available weapon to win; Attolia regrets her apparently barbaric decisions, but even Eddis understands the bitter necessities that rule her foe's actions. More complex than its predecessor, this sequel is also thematically darker, with a more densely layered setup. While the pace is not swift, it is steady as a heartbeat, pulsing toward an inexorable conclusion. There's a slight arrhythmia when Gen blackmails Attolia into a promise of marriage, but Turner's resolution is both unexpected and convincing. Fans of *The Thief* are a few years older now, and they may well appreciate the subtleties of Gen's continuing story. JMD

WALTERS, ERIC *Three on Three*. Orca, 2000 122p  
Paper ed. ISBN 1-55143-170-X \$3.99

Ad Gr. 2-5

Third-graders and closet friends Nick and Kia are two of the best basketball players in their grade, and they determine to enter a school tournament. To that end, they manage to enlist fifth-grader Marcus, ace b-ball player and all-around good guy. In the process Nick unfortunately attracts the potentially dangerous attention of Ron, new kid, bad loser, and bully. Practice sessions and games improve as Kia, Nick, and Marcus learn how to play as a team; ultimately their success leads to a scene in the school gym, where rival player Ron tries to take out Nick during a basketball match. A subplot involving a missing wallet (Marcus lives in the low-income projects so he is immediately suspect) adds tension to the final court confrontation. This is fairly programmatic; the players are variations on stock characters and their future is never in doubt. A cool fifth-grader becoming fast friends with two not-so-cool third graders teeters on the edge of wish-fulfillment, but it isn't entirely unbelievable (the motherless Marcus appreciates Nick's mother and home-cooked meals), and the conclusion, though overly neat, ties up dangling plot threads (the misplaced wallet is found, Nick's busy father shows up for the big game). Predictable plotting aside, this is a very useful early chapter book for young sports fans. JMD

WESTON, CAROL *The Diary of Melanie Martin; Or, How I Survived Matt the Brat, Michelangelo, and the Leaning Tower of Pizza*. Knopf, 2000 [144p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-375-90509-X \$17.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-80509-5 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-6

Melanie, her parents, and her younger brother, Matt, are on a family vacation in Italy, where Melanie learns to appreciate Michelangelo, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and even Matt. Melanie relates her trip in a breezy style, addressing her diary (and the reader) directly and including little drawings, fancy lettering, Italian phrases (complete with pronunciation guide), and docent-ish information about museums, churches, and sculpture. Weston captures the voice of the bright, excitable Melanie with ease, and the dynamics between the siblings are right on the money (their favorite museum game is "Point Out the Naked People"). Melanie's journal tends toward travelogue, however, and while readers may come away knowing a little more about Italy and Renaissance art, they will know less about the main character. Still, the voice is convincingly girlish, the setting unusual, and the wrap-up (on the plane home, Melanie writes a thoughtful thirty-line poem about the trip to complete a homework assignment) satisfying. Weston, advice columnist for *Girls' Life* magazine, has her finger on that preadolescent girl pulse, and the result is fluff with flair. JMD

WETHERED, PEGGY *Touchdown Mars!: An ABC Adventure*; written by Peggy Wethered and Ken Edgett; illus. by Michael Chesworth. Putnam, 2000 [34p]  
ISBN 0-399-23214-1 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-9 yrs

Perhaps the only thing more improbable than tentacled, green-headed Martians is presenting sound information about a flight to Mars within the format of an alphabet book. Wethered and Edgett pull it off, though, and primary-schoolers and their teachers will be delighted. Atop each page is an alphabet line: "A You are an astronaut! . . . You are going to Mars"; "B You are ready to board your rocket!" A boxed caption at the bottom of each page expands on the particular theme or stage of the trip: "An astronaut can be a woman or a man. You must study and train very hard to prepare for travel in space"; "When you board the spacecraft, you need to be sure you have enough supplies for a three-year mission." The ever-problematic "Q" and "X" are used to advantage to engage listeners' imaginations and focus their inquiries: "What questions do you have about Mars? . . . What has made this planet look so different, yet so similar, to Earth?" "On this map, the 'X' is in western Candor Chasma. . . . You examine [rock] fragments with a magnifying glass. What do you see?" The accompanying detailed cartoon scenes explicate the apparati and trajectories of the journey, as well as the Martian landscape which the childlike, multicultural astronauts explore. The appended "Mars A-B-Cyclopedia" offers older children more challenging snippets of Mars data to expand and enrich the elementary coverage in the main text. Chalkboard-styled endpaper diagrams put the planets in order (although obviously not into orbital scale) and trace the flight path to Mars and back. Bon voyage! EB

WULFFSON, DON *Toys!: Amazing Stories Behind Some Great Inventions*; illus. by Laurie Keller. Holt, 2000 [128p]  
ISBN 0-8050-6196-7 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-6

From tops to Twister and Slinky to Super Ball, Wulffson dashes through the history (and quite probably some mythology) of two dozen well-known toys and some of their closest cousins. Each chatty chapter begins with an overview of the plaything's genesis (many springing from chemical accidents or weapons development), embellished with plenty of cartoon spot art, and concludes with a fistful of trivia bullets. Wulffson stirs up considerable interest, particularly in toys and games of antiquity ("Hobby horse history is fun and filled with surprises") but offers readers no solid leads to pursue, for although a bibliography is included, specific source notes are not. Given, for example, Wulffson's reduction of Chinese emperor Ch'in Shih Huang Ti's massive terra cotta army to "life-size toy soldiers" and the Trojan horse to the "most clever hobbyhorse of all time," serious researchers might wonder just how much veracity falls by the wayside. Still, this is an inviting topic and its breezy treatment should hook even the most book-shy with an arsenal of didjknow?s to fire off at recess. EB

YEP, LAURENCE *Cockroach Cooties*. Hyperion, 2000 135p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2419-0 \$16.49  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0487-4 \$15.99

Ad Gr. 3-5

Teddy, older brother to Bobby, wisely tries to keep out of the way of bully "Arnie-zilla," but when Bobby incites Arnie's wrath, Teddy reluctantly steps in. Teddy is

desperate to avoid a physical confrontation with Arnie, but it isn't until Bobby discovers the bully's secret fear (involving insects of all kinds, cockroaches in particular, and some cookies with a secret ingredient) that a truce is declared. Chinese-American brothers Bobby and Teddy are cozily ensconced in their family circle. Narrator Teddy learns to appreciate his pesty younger brother, and their developing closeness is affectionately presented. The writing is occasionally choppy, and the transitions between incidents are less than smooth, but the interactions between the characters have the truthful ring of real conversations overheard; the final truce between brothers and bully is believably if somewhat imaginatively accomplished. The title alone will be enough to attract middle-grade readers of a certain humor, and they may be surprised at Yep's ability to make even "Arniezilla" sympathetic. JMD

YOLEN, JANE *How Do Dinosaurs Say Good Night?*; illus. by Mark Teague. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-590-31681-8 \$15.95 R 3-6 yrs

The bedtime habits of dinosaurs are the subject here, with Yolen exploring in verse some important questions: does a dinosaur "slam his tail and pout?", clamor for one more book, or "fall on top of his covers and cry?" It turns out that dinosaurs actually go quite sweetly to bed, with ritual hugs and kisses and sayings of "Good night," so perhaps they'll serve as role models. The simple lyric is somewhat forced, but it makes its point playfully and tenderly. Teague's illustrations make the most and more of the text, with oversized pages displaying a happily hybrid world where a multiracial cast of human parents tuck in a multispecies (each spread includes the dinosaur name somewhere, and the endpapers provide a key as well) cast of dinosaurs. The bulky dino-kids tower over their modest mothers and fathers in bedrooms that'll speak to both contemporary and prehistoric youngsters. Those who warmed to a nightly reading of Boynton's *Dinosaur's Binkit* (BCCB 12/98) will find this bedtime fantasy even more Jurassically satisfying. DS

ZIEFERT, HARRIET *Hats Off for the Fourth of July!*; illus. by Gustaf Miller. Viking, 2000 [26p]  
ISBN 0-670-89118-5 \$15.99  
Reviewed from galleys Ad 4-7 yrs

An oceanside community turns out for the annual Independence Day parade, and each double spread has the good citizens lining the sidewalks as another entry marches by: "The twirlers are walking down the street./ They spin and strut and lift their feet./ Music and drum . . . music and drum./ Who will be the next to come?" Old favorites are well represented—clowns and horses, high school bands and motorcycles—along with such local charmers as a whale float, Revolutionary War reenactors, and Miss Eelgrass, a green-tressed mermaid towed in a fishing boat. Candy-bright colors and the slightly elongated and stylized figures of Miller's marchers will keep preschoolers' eyes steadily focused on the action—that is unless the steady, thumping rhythm of Ziefert's verses sends them off marching to their own imaginary drummers. Unfortunately there's no hint here as to the reason for the Fourth of July and its accompanying hoopla, and unless an adult supplies some background, the flags, Uncle Sams, George Washingtons, and Minutemen are little more than showmanship. EB

ZIMMERMAN, ANDREA *My Dog Toby*; by Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemesha; illus. by True Kelley. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-15-202014-4 \$15.00 R 5-8 yrs

Toby is the narrator's beloved Basset Hound, who has many wondrous attributes ("He knows if you drop a piece of sandwich in his food dish even if he's way upstairs") but who has never learned to do a single trick. Toby's mistress is familiar with her friends' talented pooches, so she's eager to get Toby performing—especially if it disproves her older brother's dismissive opinion ("My brother says maybe he's dumb. Toby's not dumb. My brother's dumb"). The strong point here is the narrator's voice, with its blend of loyalty and frustration and its authentic echoing of the major importance a pet has in a child's life. Toby's eventual mastery of the "Sit" command makes for a modest but nonetheless satisfying, to viewers as well as to the narrator and her brother, conclusion. Kelley's sturdy-lined watercolors emphasize genial directness over subtlety, and Toby's combination of droopy ears and pendulum tail gives him a mournful and unassuming charm. Wannabe dog trainers will wag their tails for this one. DS



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

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Barchers, Suzanne I. *Multicultural Folktales: Readers Theatre for Elementary Students*. Teacher Ideas Press, 2000. Paper ed. ISBN 1-56308-760-X; \$24.50. 188p.

Barchers, author of *Fifty Fabulous Fables: Beginning Readers Theatre* and *Scary Readers Theatre*, has put together forty story theatre scripts adapted from traditional folktales from around the world. The scripts are graded according to the Flesch-Kincaid readability scale and grouped by reading levels, grades 1-5. The introduction gives a succinct overview of readers theatre, including the benefits of classroom use, script preparation, and suggestions for getting started. The scripts/stories range from the familiar (Japan's "The Peach Boy" and Russia's "Baba Yaga") to the unusual (Micronesia's "The Tree that Bled Fish" and the Hausa "Why Ants Carry Burdens"). Each script opens with the title of the tale and its country of origin, followed by a summary of the story, suggestions for presentation, props, and delivery, and a list of characters. The scripts themselves are cleanly laid out and easy to read, and, while the success of the adaptations varies, they are all eminently useful as starting points. The division according to readability leads to some odd choices of tales for developmental as well as grade levels, but teachers and librarians using this book will no doubt make their own decisions as to what story would work best with what group. Sources for twenty-eight of Barchers' adaptations are given in the acknowledgments; the remaining twelve are without notes. JMD

Buzzeo, Toni. *Terrific Connections with Authors, Illustrators, and Storytellers: Real Space and Virtual Links*; by Toni Buzzeo and Jane Kurtz. Libraries Unlimited, 1999. Paper ed. ISBN 1-56308-744-8; \$26.50. 185p.

Buzzeo, a school library media specialist, and Kurtz, a children's author, have put together an authoritative (but friendly) guide to connecting children to books via "book people," aka authors, illustrators, and storytellers. Their contagious enthusiasm for their topic is evident from the introduction, and their belief that successful visits are possible in every setting is very reassuring. The book is divided into two parts ("Live Connections with Bookpeople" and "Alternate Connections to with Bookpeople") and ten chapters that cover nearly every possible contingency. Part One covers elements of the successful visit such as working around limitations, choosing the "Right Bookperson," exposing classes to the relevant books, making curriculum connections, and other opportunities such as working with public libraries and hosting a Young Authors Conference. Part Two discusses mail (fan, personal, electronic), real time, virtual visits via the Internet (including information about the ongoing "Read In!" project), and other web-based possibilities. The final chapter offers "A Potpourri of Resources and Props." Each chapter has a list of references; there is an additional reference list at the book's end, as well as subject, bookpeople, and title indices. JMD



## SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

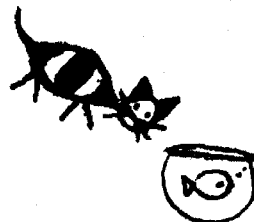
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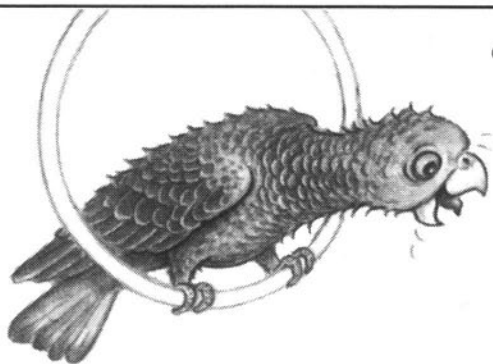
Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject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

- Abortion–fiction: Fienberg  
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# Gloria's Way

by ANN CAMERON  
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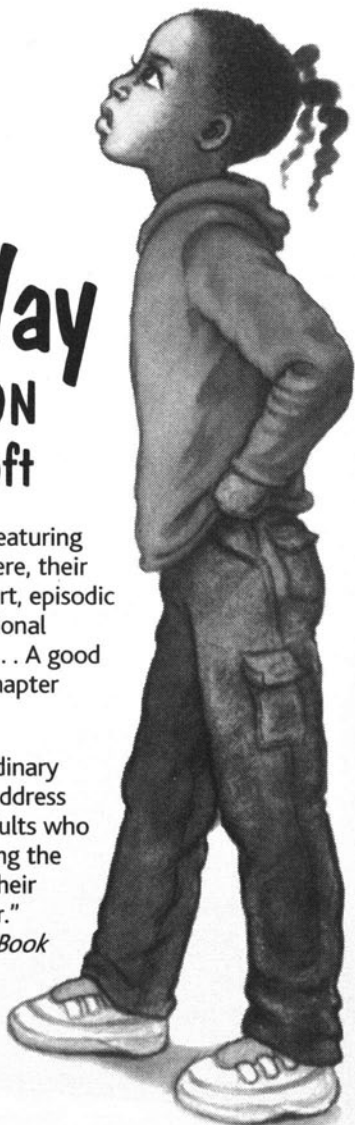
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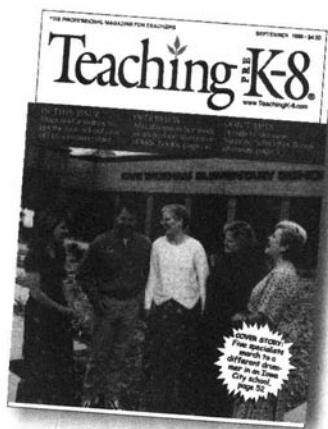
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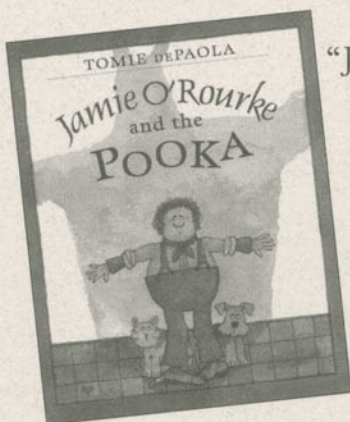
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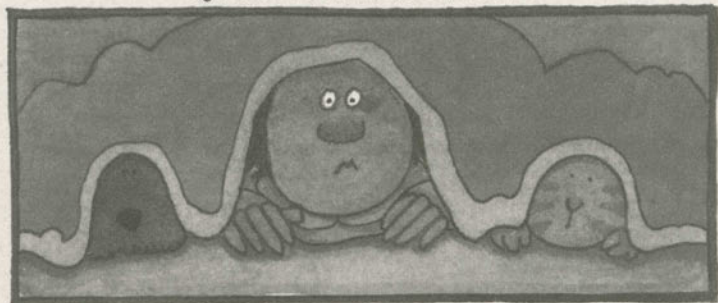
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