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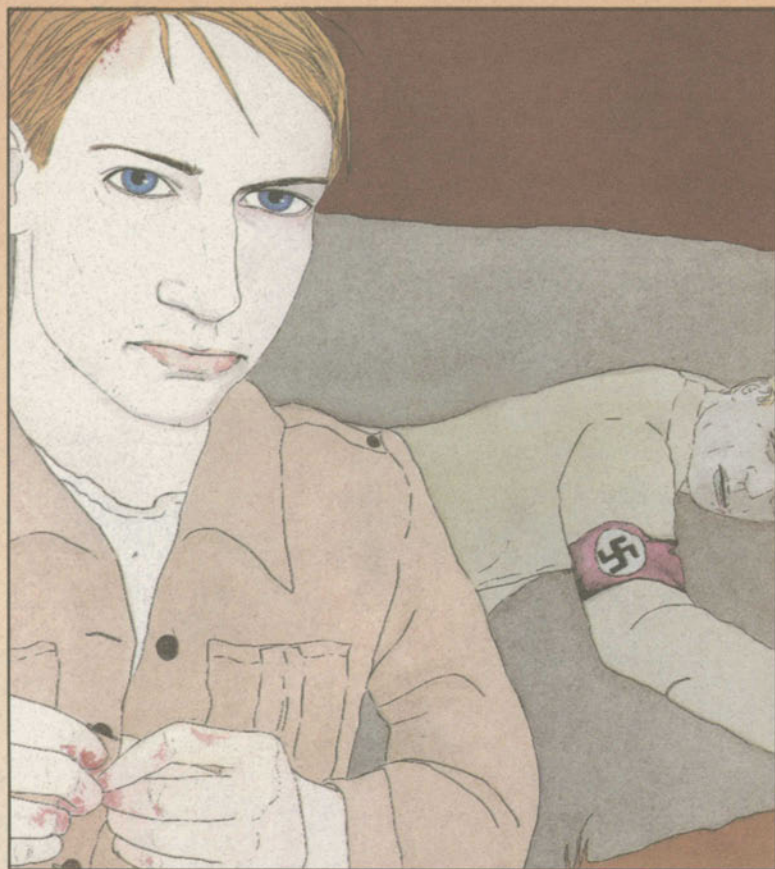
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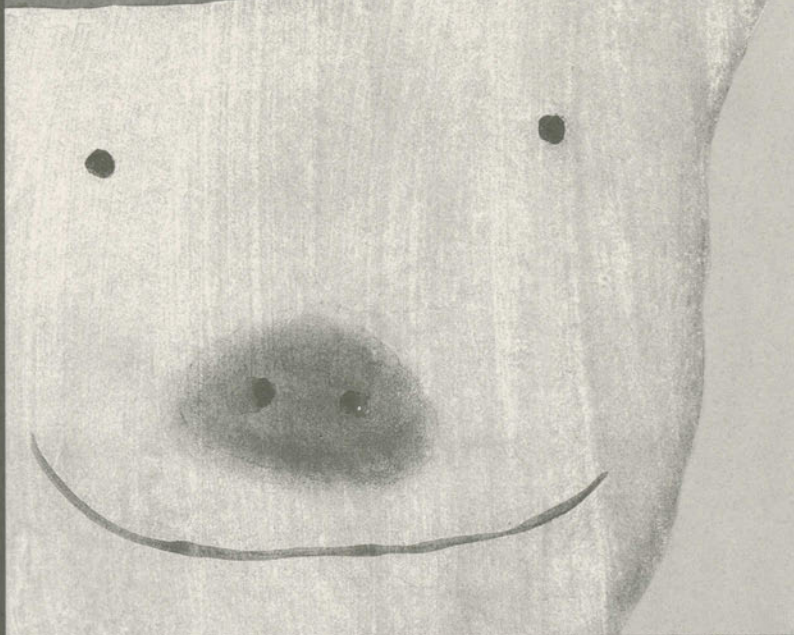


University of Illinois
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A PIG IS BIG

by Douglas Florian



Bulletin Blue Ribbon 2000

★ “Moving from pig to cow to street to city to planet to universe . . . nimble and imaginative verse describes the bigness of various items [as it] vividly and amusingly explores perspective. The [full-color] art lets the fancy take flight. Kids will enjoy the mind-expansion of this offbeat tale.”

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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

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

Soldier X

by Don Wulffson

As World War II moves into its final months and German defeat is all but inevitable, the Wehrmacht launches a desperate effort to hold its eastern line. Narrator Erik Brandt spends his sixteenth birthday on board a troop train headed to the Russian front, where he and other teenage German conscripts will ostensibly relieve exhausted veterans—but more probably become cannon fodder in the bloody barrage.

Erik has no enthusiasm for soldiering, but he believes that he's serving in defense of family and *Heimat* and that his facility in Russian language, acquired from maternal relatives who immigrated illegally to Germany, will assure him a cushy job as interpreter. Within hours of arrival at Tarnapol, though, Erik crouches in a front-line trench, facing a major Russian offensive. One boy after another falls in action, and a gravely wounded Erik finds himself behind enemy lines. His allegiance to the Wehrmacht is now another casualty of war; he exchanges uniforms with the corpse of a Russian soldier and begins a dangerous charade that is the only hope for saving his skin. During his hospitalization Erik employs every trick he can muster, feigning amnesia and casting each word and gesture into credible Russian, to convince patients and staff that he is the Aleksandr Dukhanov named on his purloined identity papers. Nicknamed "X," he succeeds so well that he eventually wins the affection of beautiful nursing aide Tamara, but his ruse collapses when he utters "Ach Scheisse!" in Tamara's hearing. She is horrified to realize she's put her trust in the enemy, and Erik knows his life now hangs on her discretion. Before they can begin to repair their sundered trust, they are forced to evacuate and cast their lots together as refugees. As they negotiate the shifting lines of another German advance, their survival depends on X/Erik's bilingual skills and his now well-honed knack for deception.

Wulffson bases his fictionalized tale on "the lives of two very remarkable people" whose identities he does not disclose, and his graphic descriptions of battles and perilous escapes are searing and authentic. Just as artillery bombardment obliterates familiar landscapes, the war ravages certainty and trust and renders humans unreadable. Erik and fellow recruits hope the emaciated Jews who serve them in the mess line are truly criminals: "Because if they are not, then we are." German sergeant Dopelmann, so severely disfigured that he disgusts his young charges, is actually a philosophy teacher who zealously turns his pedagogical skills toward keeping boy-soldiers alive. Ethnic heritage does not predict political affiliation. Tamara learns Erik is not the Nazi party member she believed all Germans to be, and Erik learns that Tamara is a staunch anti-Stalinist. Erik himself, the ironic embodiment of ambiguity, is twice wounded in friendly fire—by a German officer who mistakes him for a Russian, and by an American soldier who believes he's accidentally wounded a civilian.

In concluding his tale, Erik makes it clear that armistice does not bring tidy peace to war's survivors. He is now a retired history professor living in the United States, and he maintains his deception, allowing curious students to assume his war injuries were sustained while fighting the Nazis. His wife, Tamara, convinces him "to put into writing what happened. With patience, she explained to me the reasons why she believed it had to be done." Erik declines to name these reasons, however, and Wulffson tacitly charges the reader to attribute purpose to Erik's narrative. Is this an urgent anti-war exposé, deriving interest from the viewpoint of "the enemy"? The unburdening of an old man's crushing, perhaps shame-filled memories? Or is it at last a reclamation of identity—the bold decision to lay dark lies to rest? (Imprint information appears on p. 284.)

Elizabeth Bush, Reviewer



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ALEXANDER, SUE *Behold the Trees*; illus. by Leonid Gore. Levine/Scholastic, 2001 [48p]

ISBN 0-590-76211-7 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 7-10 yrs

This picture book gamely attempts to cover Middle Eastern history from 5000 BCE to 2000 CE, focusing on arboreal extinction and reforestation. The story begins, ominously, with no verbs: "Trees, leaves, twigs, branches, bark-covered trunks, roots going down into dark, damp soil. Shields for the earth against the searing sun and drying winds." Expressionistic spreads in ghostly shades of green and brown suggest epic events that will remain elusive to children without an adult translator (as in a depiction of troops in togas and victory laurels bearing away a giant seven-branch candlestick from a temple). The section "Siege of wars/ Roman rule" explains that "the Romans called the land Palestine, and, like each of the armies before them, cut down trees to build fortresses and palaces, shrines to their gods, cities and towns. And no new trees were planted." Finally, Jewish settlers arriving after 1918 replant the barren land: "Cypress and pine, eucalyptus and acacia, orange and olive, lemon and pecan, oak and palm." Although it will be especially challenging to keep children attentive to this lyrical description without benefit of specific action, this will be a luminous experience for young listeners already initiated into the ritual of putting "pence and pounds, centimes and francs, pfenings and marks, centavos and pesos, guilders, rands, florins, dimes and dollars into small blue banks to buy trees for the land." Others may need a landfill of background to reach the conceptual heights suggested in text and illustration. BH

ANDRONIK, CATHERINE M. *Hatshepsut, His Majesty, Herself*; illus. by Joseph Daniel Fiedler. Atheneum, 2001 [42p]
ISBN 0-689-82562-5 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-6

Accumulated evidence has led scholars to believe that between the reigns of Thutmosis II and III, woman regent Hatshepsut ruled as pharaoh. Although Andronik admits that little is known about Hatshepsut's life, she manages to glue shards of evidence together with a plethora of "perhaps's" and "probably's" to produce a sketchy representation of the woman regarded as god-king. Intricate family relationships, incestuous by modern standards, that brought Hatshepsut to the throne would have been more clearly presented in a genealogical tree than in the text, and readers may struggle to understand that Hatshepsut is aunt, step-mother, and even prospective mother-in-law (and referred to as "sister" in a cited Egyptian record) to the boy whose position she usurps. Fiedler's paintings—most in sunset hues—present figures just slightly more relaxed than those of ancient Egyptian art but sorely missing their precise modeling and elegant proportion. Particularly problematic, or at least underexplained, is a spread depicting temple construction, in which an earthen ramp runs behind this building "set into the side of a mountain" and the swing arm of a crane is obviously too short to reach the ground. There's probably not enough information here to satisfy a "biography report" assignment, but interpretation of the archaeological record is of considerable interest and students drawn to all matters Egyptian will want to take a look. EB

AYLESWORTH, JIM, ad. *The Tale of Tricky Fox: A New England Trickster Tale*; illus. by Barbara McClintock. Scholastic, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 0-439-09543-3 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 4-7 yrs

Aylesworth (*The Gingerbread Man*, BCCB 2/98) revisits traditional folktales with this story of a too-clever fox. Tricky Fox brags to Brother Fox: "Stealing chickens is too easy! . . . I'm going to get me a fat pig!" Brother Fox swears to eat his hat if Tricky Fox succeeds, so T.F. grabs a sack and off he goes. The wily animal puts a log in the sack and proceeds to a cottage, where he not only gains entry from a kindhearted woman but gets her promise that she won't look in his sack while he's sleeping. To make a long cumulative tale short, she looks, and he uses her duplicity to trick her out of a loaf of bread. Tricky Fox proceeds to the next cottage, and then the next, each time trading up—from log to bread to chicken to pig. This old tale may be familiar to readers and listeners from Galdone's *What's in Fox's Sack?* (BCCB 10/82) or Lang's "Travels of a Fox." McClintock's mixed-media illustrations (watercolor, ink, and gouache) are executed in an old-fashioned style inspired by Wilhelm Busch and magazine illustrations from the turn of the twentieth century. The rather prim images of tidy cottages housing properly dressed little old ladies dealing with the con-fox supreme play cheekily against the humor of the plot, and McClintock manages to make even the non-action sequences intriguingly detailed. An occasional awkwardness in the text intermittently slows the forward momentum, and the conclusion is just a shade anticlimactic. Nevertheless, this tale has humor and a dashing if decorous style that will make it a strong readaloud. Detailed source notes are included. JMD

BENNETT, CHERIE *Anne Frank and Me*; by Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld. Putnam, 2001 [352p]

ISBN 0-399-23329-6 \$18.99

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 5-9

There is some irony in basing Holocaust fiction on the premise that a person who dies in the gas chamber can return to life all the better for the experience. Nicole Burns is a superficial teenager who, during a class visit to an Anne Frank exhibit, time-trips back to occupied Paris as Nicole Bernhardt and goes through the inevitable stages of Nazi persecution. We see in detail, and she remembers later in flashes: "The Occupation. The Vel d'Hiv roundup. The black market. The attic. Drancy. The transports. The selection. The gas chamber." Although reminiscent of Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* (which is mentioned as a TV adaptation assigned to Nicole's high school class), this lacks Yolen's storytelling finesse and suffers from cliché in both style and substance ("Jack's words played over and over in her mind, a wound etched on her heart"). The already complicated fantasy structure, whose internal logic is not clear, is further cluttered by public diary entries in the form of Nicole's contemporary web site and wartime letters from hiding. Tonal contrasts that seem calculated to amuse instead stretch credulity, as when Nicole turns to her Parisian mother in 1942 and says, theoretically in French, "I used to play flute in the geek-fest school orchestra, but I sucked so bad my parents let me quit." Even when the story gains momentum in its clearer stretches, information-laden passages interrupt the flow of conversation or dramatic action. The connection with and echoes of Anne Frank seem forced and spurious. The play that generated this novel has won praise for its power, but something must have been lost in the translation from one medium to the other. We have many young adult books on the subject that are strong in focus and writing, such as Pausewang's *The Final Journey* (BCCB 12/96) and Lobel's *No Pretty Pictures* (10/98); point readers to them. A timeline is included. BH

BLUMBERG, RHODA *Shipwrecked!: The True Adventures of a Japanese Boy*. HarperCollins, 2001 [80p] illus. with photographs

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029365-9 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-17484-1 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Born into an early nineteenth century Japanese fishing family, fourteen-year-old Manjiro seemed an unlikely figure to affect the course of Japanese-American relations. When a storm left Manjiro and his colleagues stranded outside legal fishing boundaries with no hope of rescue by their countrymen, the shipwrecked fishermen had no alternative than to entrust themselves to Captain William Whitfield, a New Bedford whaler passing through Japan's rich whaling grounds. Returning with Whitfield to New England, Manjiro became the first Japanese citizen known to visit America, and after a period of education and employment, he returned home to become first a prisoner in his homeland and finally an honored foreign affairs advisor as Japan reluctantly opened her doors to the West. Blumberg sets Manjiro's encounter clearly within the context of his age and culture: foreigners were fearsome devils, and Japanese laws aimed at preserving social and political stability prescribed perpetual exile for citizens who left Japan and death for citizens who attempted to return. Readers will be particularly intrigued by Manjiro's observations regarding the differences between American and Japanese living stan-

dards and deportment (“Ordinary men carry watches”; “A mother . . . gives of all things, cow’s milk as a substitute for mother’s milk”), and report writers seeking an unusual biography will have hit the jackpot. Maps and period artwork—some rendered or inspired by Manjiro—and source notes are included. EB

BOBER, NATALIE S. *Countdown to Independence: A Revolution of Ideas in England and Her American Colonies: 1760-1776*. Atheneum, 2001 [368p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-689-81329-5 \$26.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 9-12

Students whose previous classroom encounters with the American Revolution left them with little more than a blur of Coercive Acts and royal governors have a second chance to put fragments into order. Bober offers a brilliantly organized review ordered around the potent ideas that drew Mother Country and her rebellious children—or is it Tyranny and her repressed slaves?—into conflict. Events are covered in standard chronological order, but alternating chapters focus on the debates that swelled and finally raged on the east and west shores of the Atlantic. Under this scheme, colonial agent Benjamin Franklin tiptoes diplomatically among British commoners and peers, while General Thomas Gage reports to King George from American turf that the colonists “will be Lyons.” In Bober’s hands, the scope of “ideas” transcends thought frozen in documents to include those informal but equally heated political spats over which wives harangue their husbands, friendships are broken, families are irreparably divided, and ministers fall from influence. Since ideas are best understood in the context of the persons who articulate them, Bober includes a wealth of insightful biographical sketches that humanize a historical drama frequently in peril of passing into patriotic myth. A chronology, list of main characters, period illustrations, and a forthcoming index are included. EB

BOOTH, MARTIN *Panther*. McElderry, 2001 [96p]

ISBN 0-689-82976-0 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

On vacation in England’s West Country, Pati and her friend Simon suspect that legends of wild panthers preying on livestock are true. Pati in particular is fascinated with the big cats and well read in tracking lore, and she intends to stalk the animals for a provocative photograph. She realizes that it must be a private expedition with just her and Simon, since otherwise the animals will be endangered by local farmers, so she and Simon set out over the moors to find their panther. The book is refreshingly accessible to the middle grades, and the plot is pleasantly unusual (though reality doesn’t support its certainty about West Country big cats); there’s also a Disneyesque appeal in the two kids’ adventure, the specter of the evil authorities threatening the wild creature, and Pati and Simon’s monopoly on the proof (Pati does indeed see and photograph the panther). Some of the Disney downsides emerge as well, however, with unlikelihood pelting the plot from all sides (Pati’s unerring tracking makes finding the panther a breeze) and goofy adult scenes occasionally interpolated for no apparent reason. The appeals may nonetheless satisfy quite a few readers, and the book will be a particular boon to youngsters looking for something compact but dramatic and to struggling older readers who’ll appreciate a quick payoff. DS

BRUCHAC, JOSEPH, ad. *How Chipmunk Got His Stripes: A Tale of Bragging and Teasing*; ad. by Joseph and James Bruchac; illus. by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey. Dial, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-8037-2404-7 \$15.99

R 4-7 yrs

Brown Squirrel overhears Bear bragging about his unconquerable strength and bets him he can't keep the sun from rising the following day. Despite Bear's best efforts, the sun does rise, and Brown Squirrel teases Bear: "Bear is foolish, the sun came up. Bear is silly, the sun came up." Bear does not take this teasing well, and, when Brown Squirrel flees his wrath, "Bear's long, sharp claws scratched Brown Squirrel's back from the top of his head to the tip of his tail." When the scratches heal, Brown Squirrel has "long pale stripes all the way down his back where Bear had scratched him. He was Brown Squirrel no longer. He was now Chipmunk, the striped one." This *pourquoi* story is succinctly written in simple, concrete language, and repeated chants give listeners an opportunity to participate actively in the narrative's unfolding. Aruego and Dewey's watercolors, while a bit more jingly than their illustrations for George Shannon's *Lizard's Home*, feature the same clean palette. The animal characters don't quite attain the expressiveness of a Boynton cast, but the pictures are large enough to be seen and enjoyed by a group, especially the opening spreads that show the huge Bear barely contained in or breaking out of the frame. This easily appreciated tale will strike a chord with young listeners who are probably familiar with both ends of the bragging/teasing spectrum. Authors' notes give background on the story sources. JMD

CLARK, EMMA CHICHESTER *Where Are You, Blue Kangaroo?*; written and illus. by Emma Chichester Clark. Doubleday, 2001 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-385-90003-1 \$17.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-32797-8 \$15.95

Ad 4-7 yrs

Emma's sometimes a little careless with her toy friend Blue Kangaroo, leaving him on the slide, on the bus, or near the monkey cage at the zoo. Her "Where are you, Blue Kangaroo?" always presages his retrieval, but Blue Kangaroo begins to worry about Emma's inattentiveness and finally deliberately secretes himself to teach her to take better care of him. There's a pleasing rhythm to the text, and Emma's connection to Blue Kangaroo is sympathetically treated, but the logic of the conclusion is stretched: why would this particular disappearance mend Emma's ways when the others didn't? Clark's watercolors show Blue Kangaroo as a perky and cuddleable critter and Emma as bright-eyed charmer, but the faces and compositions are rather bland and the candylike colors are wearing though cheerful. This doesn't have the emotional engagement of Hilary McKay's *Where's Bear?* (BCCB 1/99) or Ian Whybrow's *Sammy and the Dinosaurs* (9/99), but youngsters with their own wayward toys will empathize with Emma's concerns. DS

COWLEY, JOY *Agapanthus Hum and Major Bark*; illus. by Jennifer Plecas. Philomel, 2001 [48p]
ISBN 0-399-23322-9 \$13.99
Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 1-3

Agapanthus Hum (of *Agapanthus Hum and the Eyeglasses*, BCCB 4/99) is on a trip to the animal shelter with her "good little Mommy" and "good little Daddy" to pick out a kitten. Agapanthus is distracted by a "little dog with floppy ears, short legs, and a tail like electric string" who "waggled his paws and squeaked at her."

Despite her parents' reservations, "the heart of Agapanthus Hum was so full of squeaky little dog that there was no space left over for a kitten of any kind," and it is the dog she finally, happily takes home. In seven chapters the dog gets a name (Major Bark), shreds Agapanthus' favorite T-shirt, plays with her friends, enters a dog show, and comes home with a blue ribbon—which he promptly shreds. Cowley's language is manageable but not dull, and her story is wholesome but not boring. Her lively protagonist dashes through these pages with the same ease as in her first outing, pausing only for Major Bark to lick "her glasses right off her eyes." Plecas' watercolors are bouncy and energetic; the squiggly outlines of Major Bark fairly quiver with excitement, while the pigtailed Agapanthus' enthusiasm is barely contained within her own jittery lines. In *Agapanthus Hum*, Cowley and Plecas capture the inexhaustible enthusiasm of an energetic child; her soulmates are out there waiting for her. JMD

CRISP, MARTY *Private Captain: A Story of Gettysburg*. Philomel, 2001 [304p]
ISBN 0-399-23577-9 \$18.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Ben Reynolds is unable to lighten either the family business responsibilities or the heartache of his newly widowed mother, so he sets off to find his older brother Reuben, a Union Army captain who Ben is certain will be at the next "big battle," probably on their home turf of Pennsylvania. Pampered younger cousin Danny and Reuben's faithful retriever, Captain, tag along as local rumors lead the trio toward the coming carnage at Gettysburg. Their adventures along the road, including a perilous river crossing and encounters with enemy troops and deserters, never seem too troubling though, because Captain predictably saves their collective hides at every turn, procuring a milk cow in a most timely manner, towing Ben across the Susquehanna, finding old friends (dead or alive), fending off murderous Rebs, and, of course, bringing Reuben home. Crisp's plot turns are more likely to elicit murmurs of "What a dog!" than "What an adventure!" However, her sensitive depiction of townfolk in the war-torn area, who must house the troops, nurse the wounded, and bury the dead, does contribute an unusual perspective to the canon of children's Civil War fiction, and Ben's involvement with real-life photographer Alexander Gardner (forced and improbable as it is) should impel readers to view period battlefield photos with a discriminating eye. EB

DASH, JOAN *The World at Her Fingertips: The Story of Helen Keller*. Scholastic, 2001 [256p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-590-90715-8 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

In this accessible biography, Dash recaps the life of an extraordinary woman. The popularly known events of Helen Keller's early years—the arrival of teacher Annie Sullivan and her efforts to break through to Helen—are encapsulated in the first few chapters, after which the text turns to Keller's continuing education, her years at Radcliffe, and her growing autonomy. Dash is candid about teacher Annie Sullivan's personality conflicts with Keller's other mentors and about the possible drawbacks of Sullivan's symbiotic relationship with her pupil. The success of Keller's books, journal articles, and lectures clearly paints her as a charismatic personality and not just an interesting curiosity. Dash avoids sentimentality, letting the events of Keller's life speak for themselves, although moments of heartbreaking pathos

provide a rare glimpse into Keller's dependence and isolation (her mother's termination of Keller's engagement, without her knowledge, to an apparently sincere suitor is one such incident). The occasional unsupported sweeping generalization ("More than most women, Helen was born to love and be loved and to become a loving mother of children") mars an otherwise straightforward if slightly dry text. Although a fairly substantial bibliography is included, the lack of source notes for quotes from diaries, correspondence, and other writings is a serious drawback. Still, the events of Keller's life have their own innate fascination, and biography readers will appreciate this sturdy volume. JMD

DEPAOLA, TOMIE *On My Way*; written and illus. by Tomie dePaola. Putnam, 2001 [80p]

ISBN 0-399-23583-3 \$13.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 2-4

The saga of dePaola's early life related in *26 Fairmount Avenue* (BCCB 6/99) and *Here We All Are* (BCCB 9/00) continues with this reminiscence of kindergarten and first grade. dePaola describes his baby sister Maureen's recovery from pneumonia, a family trip to the 1939 World's Fair, and his theatrical debut as the blushing bride in a "Tiny Tot Bridal Party." The author has a remarkable memory for the quotidian details of his childhood, remembering not only the minutiae of everyday existence but his emotions and thoughts as well. There is a bit more of the grownup dePaola here than in the first two books, but the humor is clear and the selection of incidents indicates the author has a comfortable familiarity with the concerns of his audience. dePaola speaks directly and conversationally to the reader and/or listener, and his simple vocabulary and sentence structure make this easy autobiography an anxiety-free read. The chapter-heading and closing silhouettes, full-page and spot art, depict a cheerful cast of characters from dePaola's personal history set in a well-scrubbed middle-class environment. This will be welcomed by the primary-grade set who may recognize that their lives, too, can contain such drama. JMD

DRAPER, SHARON M. *Darkness Before Dawn*. Atheneum, 2001 233p

ISBN 0-689-83080-7 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 7-12

The final book in Draper's trilogy about a group of African-American high school students in Ohio focuses on the emotional life and times of its narrator, senior Keisha Montgomery, but also satisfies readers' curiosity about what happened to survivors of previous books. Keisha's narration is presented—a bit awkwardly—as an extended flashback during the graduation ceremony. This frame (much of which is repeated verbatim in the last chapter when the story comes full circle) contains some evocative descriptions (the graduates' faces are "unwrapped packages of smiles and success") and allows the novel to end with Keisha's inspiring graduation speech, after which the seniors are ready to leave "the shadows of the past behind." The heart of the novel, however, starts with the suicide of Keisha's boyfriend the previous year (see *Tears of a Tiger*, BCCB 1/95) and ends with her own recovery from a sexual assault. The anorexia of a young dancer (a central character in *Forged by Fire*, 6/97) is also dealt with, along with the more mundane stresses of teen romance and college applications. Events, however, move with unnatural coherence, with two characters—one a homeless woman—serving as little more than *dei ex machina*. A lack of realistic details (about anything other

than clothes) leaves readers with a less than fully realized vicarious experience. Dialogue is always informative but less often convincing, and role models espousing healthy choices abound. That said, this vision of high school as group therapy is not so far off the mark, and many readers will be willing and able to fill in the emotional blanks from their knowledge of the previous books or their equally turbulent lives. FK

EASTON, KELLY *The Life History of a Star*. McElderry, 2001 [208p]

ISBN 0-689-83134-X \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

“What could happen to my brother who always came out on top of everything?” thought Kristin before David left for Vietnam; since he returned two years ago and lives as a “ghost” in the family attic, she now knows. At fourteen, Kristin is old enough to see beyond the family denial to the terrible tragedy that has struck her household, and in her journal she comments on the family strains (her parents’ marriage begins to melt under the pressure) as well as her own daily travails (her best male friend wants to be more than friends). Easton’s voice for Kristin is so on-target she might well be channeling: the novice philosophy, the snide and superficial dismissals self-considered to be perception, the heavy-handed adolescent humor (“I thought up a new replacement for the Big Bang Theory: the Squeaky Fart Theory”); the depiction of her disintegrating family and even her friends, several of whose lives have taken a sharp turn for the worse, is equally pitilessly accurate. Unfortunately, this reality chokes out some narrative necessities: we don’t get a chance to develop much sympathy for Kristin, and even with some flashbacks to her brother’s prewar character we’re not sufficiently engaged with him to feel the loss of his current condition and of his eventual death. The narrator’s strong voice may nonetheless pull readers into this incisive drama of a family privately suffering their part of a national tragedy. DS

EIGE, LILLIAN *Dangling*. Atheneum, 2001 [176p]

ISBN 0-689-83581-7 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Ben’s weird and wonderful friendship with his weird and wonderful friend, Ring, takes a shocking turn when Ring walks into the river at a joint family picnic and disappears. Unable to believe that Ring has drowned, Ben reexamines their brief relationship from its beginning at the start of sixth grade, recalling the many mysteries—Ring’s elaborate stories about the exploits of his friend Fox, his abrupt disappearance at Christmas, his family’s secretive ways. The full story finally comes out after Ring turns up in another state: a ward of Ohio, Ring had run away to join his beloved foster parents when they moved, but when it looked like his illegal residence would be discovered he ran again in order to protect those foster parents from trouble. Eige has a nice line in understated yet creative turns of phrase (“She can always read me like I came in big print,” Ben says of his mother), and she makes the enigma of Ring’s disappearance into an effective blend of yearning and mystery. The book falters when Ring reappears, however, becoming suddenly overexplanatory, and there may be some confusion about chronology (flashbacks and present narration are both related in present tense) and characters (adults and kids alike are referred to by first names, relationships are explained late, and delinquencies are slow in coming). Ben’s stubborn if puzzled loyalty remains absorbing,

though, and readers will empathize with his persistence as well as Ring's dilemma.
DS

FEDER, HARRIET K. *Death on Sacred Ground*. Lerner, 2001 [192p]

ISBN 0-8225-0741-2 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 7-10

Vivi Hartman returns in another adventure, here traveling with her father to the little New York town of Pikes Landing. The town was built on reservation land leased to whites by the Seneca, and tempers are high since the rates recently underwent a considerable hike, but Vivi's there for other reasons: her rabbi father must preside over the services for Mindy Solomon, an orthodox Jewish girl just Vivi's age, who died in what initially looked like an accident and is now said to be murder. Vivi attends Mindy's school in order to get information for a school project, and she begins to uncover the community factions that may have played a role in Mindy's death and continue to present a threat. The mystery is so convoluted that it's difficult to keep track of what's happened and to whom (there's little characterization), and Mindy's surprise killer comes out of left field (except for his connection to a group of proselytizing Christians, who are reductively depicted as the main source of trouble); Vivi's occasional hurt over her parents' divorce and her mother's distance is similarly random. There's nonetheless some interest value in the cultural convergence of observant Jews and Senecas, with Vivi intrigued by unfamiliar customs that nonetheless resonate with her own beliefs and practices, and the book examines some serious issues of faith. Readers taken by this unusual theological blend may find wading through the boggy mystery a fair price to pay.
DS

FRANK, JOHN *The Tomb of the Boy King*; illus. by Tom Pohrt. Foster/Farrar, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 0-374-37674-3 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 9-12 yrs

It's hard to decide whether to howl in outrage or delight at this toe-tapping rendition of the 1917 discovery, excavation, and plunder of King Tutankhamen's tomb, set in eight brief chapters of rhyme that fits neatly, if probably unintentionally, with the tune "A Modern Major General." Although the careful sequencing of events and inventory of the tomb seems to suggest a nonfiction approach, information-book purists will surely indict Frank for allowing Carter and Carnarvon to versify within quotation marks ("To hire a crew of men, he said, / 'to labor in the desert sun/ where nests of poisonous snakes abound/ is not a task that's cheaply done'") and for blithely promoting the veracity of Tut's Curse without presenting contrary evidence. (Even the epilogue, that traditional forum for setting a fictional record straight, leaves readers with a host of "troubling coincidences.") On the other hand, surging verses that gamely attempt the syntactical acrobatics of Sir William Gilbert lyrics and a shamelessly melodramatic tone hint that we need not take all this too seriously. Indeed, Pohrt's detailed line and watercolor pictures, many theatrically cast as tableaux partially bordered with Egyptian motifs, are presented on a buff background that recalls treasure maps and pulp newsprint—an invitation to accept this in the breathless spirit of period readers who followed the drama and its celebrities in print. This insists on being read aloud rousingly, and librarians who revel in working a room may find this an ideal vent for their histrionic impulses. EB

FRAUSTINO, LISA ROWE *The Hickory Chair*; illus. by Benny Andrews. Levine/Scholastic, 2001 [32p]
 ISBN 0-590-52248-5 \$15.95
 Reviewed from galleys R* 4-8 yrs

Adult narrator Louis, blind since birth, recalls his affectionate relationship with his good-humored grandmother who always assured him he had "blind sight" and recounts her final rascally act of leaving legacy notes hidden inside all of her favorite things for each of her heirs. On the day her will is read, the family dries their tears, remembers her exploits ("Once she sneaked into Gramps's workplace and left him a love note—in the wrong lunchbox!"), and then begins the treasure hunt, at which Louis proves particularly adept. Louis doesn't find a note addressed just to him, though; it's only many years later, when his own grandchild pokes her fingers into a hole in the upholstery of the old hickory chair, that the aged note emerges, "For my favorite youngest grandchild with blind sight." Although other picture books deal with the death of a grandparent, it's hard to match Fraustino's offering for delicate prose ("She had a good alive smell—lilacs and a whiff of bleach"), subtle humor, and masterful portrayal of family unity and strength. Andrews' oil and fabric collage scenes are spare and understated, with a few accoutrements that suggest setting and stark monochrome backdrops of rich mauve, green, or gentle gray against which gracefully stylized, elongated figures mourn, celebrate, and remember. EB

GAMMELL, STEPHEN *Ride*; written and illus. by Stephen Gammell. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 2001 [32p]
 ISBN 0-15-202682-7 \$16.00
 Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

A brother and sister fight the age-old battle of the back seat on a grand scale in this saga of a family drive. Narrative consists solely of dialogue, much of it resoundingly recognizable ("Hey your foot is over!" "Well you're touching!"); the proceedings soon zoom beyond the mundane, however, when the sibs start hurling furniture at one another, sending each other into space, and transmogrifying into enraged and fearsome dinosaurs ("You're about to be extinct!" "Phew. . . . You already stinct!"). The mop-headed sibs have an overstuffed Cabbage-Patch look, but Gammell's free-form strokes and spatters make his characters far from cutesily salable; the watercolor, pastel, and colored-pencil illustrations use contrasting hues for edgy energy, with surprising touches of orange, aqua, and chartreuse that add an appropriate frazzle. The fantasy elements (and the safety-concerned may wish to consider the absence of seat belts in that category) blend easily into the realistic frame, and the final scene (featuring a cross-sibling jam-sandwich squirt) foreshadows a rematch. Siblings who've had a glimpse of the ideal in Zolotow's *Do You Know What I'll Do?* (BCCB 1/01) will recognize a more familiar reality here. DS

GAUTHIER, GAIL *The Hero of Ticonderoga*. Putnam, 2001 [240p]
 ISBN 0-399-23559-0 \$16.99
 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

"If you can make an oral report interesting enough—say, about drinking, swearing, and generally getting in trouble—people will listen. Personally, I like it when people listen." When the coveted report topic on local hero Ethan Allen lands in the lap of unenthusiastic Thérèse LeClerc, she adopts this as her strategy for turn-

ing her “C” grade into a “B” and catching the attention of classmates, who regard her as unredeemably quiet and average. Her spin on Allen, which plays up his less than admirable attributes, catches their attention all right, but sixth-grade sub Mr. Santangelo sees something in Thérèse’s cheekiness that’s worth developing, and he presses her to expand her report into a long-running saga that culminates with a class trip to Fort Ticonderoga. Gauthier packs plenty of comic bite into Thérèse’s narration, and although readers may wade through far more than they care to know about Allen and his Green Mountain Boys (and they may wonder why the book is set in the 1960s), the ongoing report should draw them in as surely as it draws Thérèse’s classmates. Background issues of sixth-grade squabbles, jealousies, and busted friendships are right on the mark, and it’s thoroughly refreshing to find a protagonist who is a perfectly average student with parents who love her just the way she is. EB

GUTMAN, BILL *Adopting Pets: How to Choose Your New Best Friend*; illus. by Anne Canevari Green. Millbrook, 2001 64p
ISBN 0-7613-1863-1 \$22.90 Ad Gr. 2-5

Gutman, author of *Becoming Your Cat’s Best Friend* (BCCB 6/97) and other titles in the “Pet Friends” series, here takes a different look at the pet process, making the case for adopting pets from shelters and rescue leagues. The book outlines the overpopulation problem in dogs and cats today and goes on to examine the problems of pet-store animals and the necessity of taking any pet acquisition seriously (hence a digression on the inadvisability of advertising your pet as “free to good home”); it then discusses some of the workings of shelters and the process of selection. Gutman makes a good case for thoughtful pet ownership and adoption rather than purchase, and he also provides some useful discussion of youthful volunteer and assistance possibilities. The advocacy sometimes tips into sheer opinionatedness, however (“It’s almost bizarre that so many people worry about lions, tigers, gorillas and other wild animals becoming extinct, but not about the problem of too many dogs and cats”). The book also paints rather a rosy picture of shelters where there’s always a plethora of time and knowledge for animals and people, and it offers a wavering favoritism of no-kill shelters, often singling them out, without ever exploring the different philosophies in any depth. Still, it’s a useful philosophical treatment of a heart-tugging issue, and its thoughtful approach will make a handy complement to Peg Kehret’s more emotional *Shelter Dogs* (BCCB 4/99). There’s a missed opportunity here with the absence of photographs, so there are no eloquent real-life faces advancing their cause, but the perky colored cartoons add some leavening to a serious subject. A bibliography of books and websites and an index are included. DS

HEANEY, MARIE, ad. *The Names Upon the Harp: Irish Myth and Legend*; illus. by P. J. Lynch. Levine/Scholastic, 2000 96p
ISBN 0-590-68052-8 \$19.95 R Gr. 5-8

A specialist in Irish studies undertakes the formidable task of selecting eight stories from Celtic lore and adapting them for young readers: “Moytura” and “The Children of Lir” from early mythology; “The Birth of Cuchulainn,” “Bricriu’s Feast,” and “Deirdre of the Sorrows” from the Ulster cycle; and “Finn and the Salmon of Knowledge,” “The Enchanted Deer,” and “Oisín in the Land of Youth” from the Finn cycle. The constant battles and romantic tragedies that characterize these tales are neither glossed over nor glamorized, and the immense cast and legendary

events are rendered as clearly as possible given the abridgment of what once took days for a bard to recount. Some elements are familiar from European fairy tales and even Biblical scenes, including—in the first story alone—a Rapunzel-like figure discovered in her tower by a handsome young man, a baby cast into and rescued from the sea, and a David-and-Goliath confrontation between a young hero and his gigantic enemy. Each of these motifs, however, takes an unexpected turn that will draw an older audience ready for more sophisticated narrative dynamics. Lynch's vividly literal paintings bedeck every spread, from dramatically horrific battles to windswept landscapes and queenly beauties with definite New Age tendencies. Poet Seamus Heaney's translation of a poem from the Gaelic concludes one of the stories, and an extremely helpful pronunciation guide is appended along with source notes and a list of adult books (some from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) for further reading. BHI

HELLMAN, GARY *The Karate Way*; written and illus. by Gary Hellman. Doubleday, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 0-385-32742-0 \$12.95
Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 1-3

The narrator recalls the previous September, when he got the notorious "Killer Miller" for a teacher and a bully singled him out for special attention. To add insult to injury, his parents signed him up for an after-school activity but they wouldn't tell him what activity. It turned out to be karate class, which, after time and practice, increased his self-confidence as well as his physical strength and mental discipline. The pedestrian text ("Karate taught me how to feel good about myself and have a non-quitting spirit") has little pace or flair, but the content is useful despite the absence of style. The cartoon illustrations, amateurish though they are, sometimes possess enough unexpected humor to offset the lackluster writing. This simple introduction to karate will be a popular item in any library, especially since the book can be easily mastered by younger or less proficient readers. There is a fair amount of information here, including a clear indication that getting good at karate requires some dedication and a very cursory introduction to what a new student can expect in a first karate class. The order of belts is given and there is a short glossary of terms. Hellman includes his website address for "anyone out there who would like to get in touch and exchange ideas." JMD

HENEGHAN, JAMES *The Grave*. Foster/Farrar, 2000 245p
ISBN 0-374-32765-3 \$17.00

Ad Gr. 6-8

When a mass grave is excavated in Liverpool, England, Tom finds himself drawn to the site. A fall into the open pit takes him back in time to 1847 and transports him to a coastal town in Ireland. Tom arrives at the moment when a boy named Tully Monaghan has just been rescued from the stormy sea, and he uses modern CPR techniques to restore the boy's breathing, much to the astonishment of the crowd of villagers. The Monaghan family gratefully takes him in, despite his spooky resemblance to young Tully, and Tom, who is an unloved foster child in his own time, finds for the first time people that feel like family. The potato famine is devastating the Irish people, and the Monaghan family begins a long and desperate journey to Liverpool and then on to America. Tom leaves them in Liverpool, after most of the family has died from disease, hunger, or both, and returns to his own time where clues from the past help him to discover the identity of his biological family. Although the opening leaps right into time travel, Tom's repetitive pon-

dering about the mechanics of this travel slows the pace of the first few chapters considerably, and the surprise ending is too contrived to be emotionally effective (Tom was abducted as an infant by a crazy woman who later abandoned him in a department store, and his father is a man he already knows as a caring football coach). Nevertheless, historical-fiction readers as well as fantasy buffs will enjoy this story about a young man who finds his first real family in his own great-grandparents. KM

HOBERMAN, MARY ANN *"It's Simple," Said Simon*; illus. by Meilo So. Knopf, 2001 [34p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-375-91201-0 \$17.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-81201-6 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 3-5 yrs

Simon is out for a stroll in the city when he meets a dog. The dog challenges the boy: "I bet you can't growl," growled the dog. Simon growled a low growl. "Very good," said the dog. "It's simple," said Simon." The boy subsequently meets a cat and a horse, who challenge him, respectively, to stretch and jump; Simon meets both challenges with ease and the same refrain ("It's simple," said Simon"), but his next antagonist is a bit harder to please. The tiger makes Simon growl louder, stretch farther, and jump higher, before tricking the boy onto his back (à la the fox and the gingerbread boy) in order to take him home and eat him. Simon then tricks the tiger into the river, where the boy makes his escape: "'Help!' yelled the tiger. 'I can't swim!' 'It's simple,' said Simon. And he swam down the river and got home just in time for supper." Hoberman's choice of swimming, a skill tigers in the wild actually possess, as the means of the animal's undoing may irk budding naturalists, but the cumulative momentum will carry listeners. So's graceful renderings feature a cocky, energetically drawn Simon, but the animals steal the show. Dog, cat, and horse exude a cozy domesticity that lends them a certain settled air; the tiger, however, is far from domestic. Orange watercolor and washes of black ink with fine line detailing suggest a powerful natural force that draws the eye in nearly all images in which it is present. Storytime listeners will hold their breath until the final splash. JMD

HOFMEYR, DIANNE, ad. *The Star-Bearer: A Creation Myth from Ancient Egypt*; illus. by Jude Daly. Farrar, 2001 [26p]

ISBN 0-374-37481-4 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 7-10 yrs

This is a stately retelling of the birth of Atum and his creation of the gods, goddesses, and the world they rule. The conflict between divine creator Atum and the lovers, Geb (the earth) and Nut (the sky), is the crux of the action. As with many creation cycles, the complexity of this myth is difficult to condense, and the book is heavily weighted with text and concept. While the text sometimes strains for the poetic, Daly's stylized hieroglyph-inspired art is graceful and involving. The light-filled, elegant paintings mediate the density of this tale through controlled compositions and perspectives that alternate between closeups of gods and goddesses and sweeping vistas of earth and sky. The palette leans heavily on varying blue hues, with touches of gold and white for emphasis. The illustrations are set on clean white pages with the text blocks beneath; the arrangement of paintings ranges from a panel a page to multi-paneled pages that resemble a comic strip. A brief note on the origin of the story is included. JMD

HOLT, KIMBERLY WILLIS *Dancing in Cadillac Light*. Putnam, 2001 [176p]
ISBN 0-399-23402-0 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-7

Jaynell's parents are worried that her grandfather is starting to lose touch with reality, but she's thrilled that Grandpap is moving in with her family and she's content to follow him around and keep her eye on him, as her parents wish. Though she relishes her spy mission and her increasing closeness to Grandpap, she's puzzled by his interest in the Pickenses, the family Jaynell's normally tolerant mother denounces as "white trash." Grandpa dies shortly after passing on his empty house, the family home, to the Pickenses; when Jaynell's relatives refuse to believe he genuinely gave the impoverished family the house, Jaynell is torn between her jealousy and dislike of the Pickens clan and her knowledge that the bequest was indeed her grandfather's true wish. The multitude of plot threads diffuse the story's impact somewhat (the 1969 time period and the anticipated moon shot never really pull their narrative weight), and Jaynell's dramatic intervention in a Pickens emergency has more than a touch of contrivance, but this is a sensitive and effective portrayal of a granddaughter's evolving understanding of a beloved grandfather. Holt also gives respectful treatment to Grandpap's final reexamination of his life in the gift of the house and also in his splashing out on a flashy Cadillac, which thrills his grandchildren but arouses other, more complicated emotions in his adult relatives. The thorny aspects of familial relationships are honestly depicted, whether it be Jaynell's distaste for her sister, Racine (whose dance lessons are funded by the sale of the Cadillac, much to Jaynell's chagrin), or the tension between the adult offspring of Grandpap, who have very different approaches to his legacy. This is both a tender account of a grandparent-grandchild relationship and a subtle exploration of long-term family dynamics. DS

HORVATH, POLLY *Everything on a Waffle*. Farrar, 2001 [160p]
ISBN 0-374-32236-8 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 5-8

Primrose lives in Coal Harbour, a small village in British Columbia, and she's waiting for the return of her parents, despite the fact that everyone insists that they died in a storm at sea. When her bachelor uncle Jack's life finally overlaps with hers, she moves in with him, trying to avoid the machinations of syrupy counselor Miss Honeycut (who wants Primrose out of Jack's house and Miss Honeycut in). Primrose finds comfort in familiar surroundings and acquaintances, such as her mothball-scented former foster mother, Miss Perfidy, and Miss Bowzer, owner and chef at the town restaurant, where everything is served on a waffle. She's sufficiently distracted, however, that she manages to lose not one but two digits under Jack's care, and that's enough to get Primrose sent into foster care with the irresistibly sympathetic Evie and Bert, who leap into Primrose's life with wonderfully partisan vigor. The book doesn't offer an easily encapsulated plot but instead sees Primrose through her time of troubles as she bounces off people and events like a pinball, anchoring herself down each chapter with a narratively relevant recipe (finishing, of course, with waffles). Sharp in both perceptions and honed edges, Primrose details not the gentle and predictable path of therapeutic adjustment but the price and reward (her parents do indeed return) of a determined adherence to instinctive belief. If there's a villain here, it's orthodoxy: it's the uncategorizable and surprising bonds between people that bring satisfaction, not

the ordained social protocols. Add to this Horvath's tart and relentless humor, and you've got a fine, quirky followup to *The Trolls* (BCCB 2/99). DS

HOVEY, KATE, ad. *Arachne Speaks*; illus. by Blair Drawson. McElderry, 2001 40p
ISBN 0-689-82901-9 \$17.95 R Gr. 3-6

Hovey braids strings of couplets into the voices of Arachne, self-made weaver and artisan, and Athena, goddess of wisdom and patroness of weavers. Arachne holds her gift for weaving with fierce possessiveness; she credits only herself for her skill and refuses to pay tribute to the goddess. Her disrespect draws Athena to earth, and the two compete to see who is the mistress of the loom. Arachne weaves a brilliant blasphemy, for which she is severely punished by Athena; in a last effort to maintain her autonomy Arachne hangs herself and wakes "from death's white vision still dangling from the tree." Athena has turned her into a spider, but Arachne has the last word: "Now, hosts of artisans/ spin on in Arachne's name./ Athena, on her throne,/ languishes alone,/ still envying my fame." Death and transformation leave Hovey's Arachne smugly satisfied with the outcome of her encounter with the goddess; not even immortality can win against this determined woman's art. Rhyming couplets can be deadly, but for the most part Hovey has admirable control over any singsong tendencies, and her storytelling is forceful. The narrative—in Arachne's voice, with occasional interpolations by Athena—has a dramatic arc and furious pace that rushes over any rhythmic irregularities in the text. Drawson's acrylics ratchet the intensity up a few notches with their in-your-face perspectives. Monumental views of the stern Athena contrast with framed scenes of the ancient action set as if on a movie screen, complete with toga-garbed viewers. Drawson's uneven but still compelling images are deliberately awkward, and the harsh angularity of line adds a stylized sharpness to the human figures that makes them both distant and startling. The unusual illustrations are certain to attract browsers; the passionate words and images will hold them fast. JMD

HURST, CAROL OTIS *Through the Lock*. Lorraine/Houghton, 2001 [172p]
ISBN 0-618-03036-0 \$15.00 R Gr. 4-7

Twelve-year-old Etta doesn't have many options: though the early nineteenth century Massachusetts economy provides a mill job for her older sister, and her brother's got a place on a farm, she's struggling to survive on her own. Walter, a boy also on his own, grudgingly allows her to share space in his shack by the canal, and they're soon joined by Jake, the son of parents cloistered in the Shaker settlement. The three determine to secure their position by taking over as lockkeepers, thereby getting on the canal company payroll, but first they have to chase away the river boys who are paid to sabotage the canal construction and maintenance. Hurst structures her story around one of the less-celebrated aspects of American history, and she paints a vivid picture of a New England teetering all unknowing on the precipice of radical change; Etta's narration is never heavy-handed or overexplanatory, however (nor preachy—her older sister is quite happy with the millwork that allows her financial independence and a more urbanized life), and the story keeps a firm focus on the three youngsters' attempts to eke out a living and control their own destiny. The cover unfortunately confers a misleadingly contemporary look, but readers intrigued by Ellen Howard's story of British ca-

nals, *The Gate in the Wall* (BCCB 5/99), will want to check out this account of their American counterpart. DS

ICHIKAWA, SATOMI *The First Bear in Africa*; written and illus. by Satomi Ichikawa. Philomel, 2001 33p
ISBN 0-399-23485-3 \$14.99 Ad 3-6 yrs

With hospitable grace, Meto and his savanna-dwelling family tolerate a group of Asian tourists who come to visit their small African village. After submitting to photographs and videotaping (“I smile. They look funny”), he gazes with friendly curiosity at a little girl holding a stuffed toy. The tourists drive away, Meto and the little girl waving to one another: “But no! The girl has forgotten her little animal!” The tale of six tourists now turns into an epic chase as Meto races through the savanna in pursuit. He meets Kiboko (hippopotamus), Simba (lion), Tembo (elephant), and Twiga (giraffe); the indigenous fauna are curious about the “strange animal” Meto carries. They follow him to the airstrip and watch him return the bear to its owner. The news of the stuffed toy’s ursine identity spreads among the animals, who “marvel” at the appearance of “the first bear in all of Africa.” The quick switch from the meeting between Meto and the tourists to a talking animal tale is unexpected, but most youngsters will probably not only roll with it but like it. The opening illustrations present the meeting of Meto and the little girl with childlike solemnity; by contrast, Meto’s encounters with the animals have a touch of visual slapstick (his dash across the savanna on the giraffe’s back, waving the stuffed bear in the air and followed by a horde of curious carnivores and herbivores, is particularly effective). Ichikawa’s watercolors are precise without losing their sense of spontaneity. The savanna and its occupants are a tad generic, but the connection between Meto and the little girl is a sincere one, and the scenes of Meto with the various animals will no doubt inspire Dolittle dreams. The realistic beginning of the story is slow, but the chase has built-in suspense, a strong pace, and a rousing conclusion. A brief glossary of Swahili words is included. JMD

JACOBSSON, ANDERS *In Ned’s Head*; written by Anders Jacobsson and Sören Olsson; tr. by Kevin Read. Atheneum, 2001 [144p]
ISBN 0-689-83870-0 \$16.00 R Gr. 4-6
Reviewed from galleys

Sixth-grader Ned leads a life fraught with trials: there’s his hapless friend Arnold; the class bully, Nugget; the girl(s) of his dreams; the awful name of Ned; and the fear that someone will discover that he keeps a diary—this diary, in which he describes his days. Amid the pell-mell chaos of his life, Ned manages to attain two important milestones in one fell swoop when he finds that his adored Nadia likes him and also likes his name. The pleasures here are more those of writerly milieu than of plot; events are mostly wryly amusing everyday occurrences piling on top of each other, but Ned’s narration has a humorous bluntness and fetching weirdness that makes it all enjoyable (“Arnold is a good friend. He’s worse at ice hockey, he’s pretty weak, and his dad doesn’t have a red convertible Corvette”). Though Ned’s saga is considerably lighter, the wide-eyed knowingness here is similar to that in Bjarne Reuter’s Buster books (*Buster’s World*, BCCB 9/89, etc.), and like Buster, Ned has a weakness on the concept of correlation that leaves him often viewing events as random though he’s precipitated them. This Swedish import differs from the Buster books in being largely Americanized in its translation (though

not always effectively), and there's a relentlessness to the boys' breast fixations that doesn't balance well with the generally airy approach. Overall, though, this is an odd and amusing narrative, and the one-lineresque short sentences will spice up a readaloud as well as inviting more tentative readers to dive in. DS

JACQUES, BRIAN *Castaways of the Flying Dutchman*; illus. by Ian Schoenherr. Philomel, 2001 [327p]
ISBN 0-399-23601-5 \$22.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

In a few dozen rousing, cliché-ridden pages ("Off into the seas the battered craft sped, like a fleeing stag pursued by the hounds of hell into the midwinter wastes of the ocean, headed again for Cape Horn and destiny"), Jacques reimagine the fate of the mythical "Fleiger Hollander" (as he renders the Dutch). Avaricious, murderous, and ultimately crazed Captain Vanderdrecken loses the *Dutchman* and is condemned to sail his ghost ship throughout eternity, but a heavenly apparition saves mute stowaway Neb and his faithful Labrador retriever, Den, restores Neb's speech, gifts Den with the ability to communicate his thoughts, and sends the duo on an everlasting mission to do good in the world. After a brief, disjointed episode in which Neb and Den brighten the life of a lonely Chilean shepherd, Jacques finally gets down to the real business of his novel—Neb and Den's reappearance nearly three hundred years later in a cozy English village badly in need of saving from a heartless developer. Ben and Ned, who have now pointlessly reversed their names, pursue a trail of clues to establish the good guys' claim to the land—and toss some pedantic messages about constructively coping with bullies and anger into the bargain. Jacques nearly scuttles his own ship with an overweighted, unbalanced cargo of plotting. Readers hoping for a heart-pounding tale of the *Dutchman's* doomed crew will be disappointed, but those who fancy old-fashioned sleuthing with a touch of fantasy may nonetheless find the survivors' landbound adventures diverting. EB

JORDAN, SHERRYL *Secret Sacrament*. HarperCollins, 2001 [352p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028905-8 \$15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028904-X \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 8-12

As the eldest son of a wealthy Navoran merchant, Gabriel is expected to take over the family business when his father dies. With his mother's support, Gabriel refuses, and he instead pursues his dream of becoming a healer. His success takes him to the best teachers in the land and brings him into favor with the Empress Petra, who comes to treasure him above all her counselors in the interpretation of her dreams. Young Gabriel becomes increasingly aware of animosity towards him amongst the Empress's powerful advisors, until one night an attempt on Gabriel's life goes awry, and his favorite brother is killed. While taking a walk after his brother's funeral, he meets a beautiful woman named Ashila, who is one of the Shinali people. Although the Shinali were conquered long ago by the Navoran people and driven away from the coast and into the plains, a prophesy well known to both groups says that the Shinali will rise again, and a Navoran will spark their rise. Gabriel fulfills the first part of the prophesy, saving the captured Shinali from slaughter by using his influence with the Empress, although he is forced to sacrifice his own life in the process. Although the pace occasionally lags, Jordan has woven a richly detailed tapestry of augury and political intrigue, and Gabriel's

growth, both in his understanding of himself and in his awareness and acceptance of his foretold role, sustains the narrative through the tragic end. Gabriel is a memorable character who is both mystically powerful and engagingly human, and young adult fantasy fans will be transfixed by this mythic tale of an injustice that is slowly but surely overcome. KM

KETTEMAN, HELEN *Mama's Way*; illus. by Mary Whyte. Dial, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 0-8037-2413-6 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

With "daddy gone," Mama has been hard pressed to make ends meet by cleaning houses and doing seamstress work. Wynona takes their reduced circumstances with pretty good grace until it comes time for her sixth-grade graduation and she is faced with wearing a friend's hand-me-down dress. Pleading and sulking don't seem to bring the eighty-five-dollar dress Wynona covets any closer, and after calmly but firmly stating the impossibility of her daughter's wishes, Mama is silent on the subject. Shortly before the big event Mama presents Wynona with the requisite cash, which she has obviously earned through extra work, but a younger brother's broken bone (a convenient contrivance serving as little more than impetus to a predictable plot) changes the plans: "We can use this money for the hospital bill, Mama. I already have a dress." Whyte's watercolors bring the old-timey tone of Kettelman's text up to date with a very contemporary cast—blue-jeaned Mama has sensible short hair and worry-worn but attractive features, and quintessential adolescent Wynona is quite pretty when she isn't pouting. Background scenes dissolve into areas of patchy texturing, which direct viewers to focus on the emotional interplay of characters rather than setting. While crusty adult readers may be unsympathetic, child listeners will focus on Wynona's sacrifice of her money and on the beautiful dress Mama remakes for the graduation. EB

KIMMEL, ERIC A. *Website of the Warped Wizard*; illus. by Jeff Shelly. Dutton, 2001 [128p]

Trade ed. ISBN 0-525-46656-8 \$14.99

Paper ed. ISBN 0-141-31167-3 \$4.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

Jessica (Jess) is satisfied with playing endless games of the videogame "Gopher," until her friend Matt suggests they try a new website (fictional, though located at a real domain). When she enters the site, she realizes this is not just any other internet game: it talks back to her, and her room begins to fill with objects and characters from the game, including a knight in black armor, who then reveals himself as her friend Matthew (now Sir Matthew the Lionhearted). As the two journey through the game, they discover they are in the time of King Arthur, albeit a time filled with technological anachronisms. They make friends (Dennis the Centaur whose last job was with someone who carried a wand and whose initials were HP, a black horse who used to be Sir Lancelot, and Elfric the Elf-now-Giant) and enemies (Robin Hood and his band of Merrie Biking Men—and women in the case of Maid Marian; and Marlon, Merlin's evil clone, discovered in the "Chambers of Secrets"). Madcap adventures ensue, with a final showdown between Jess and Marlon (don't worry, no one really dies in cyberspace). Kimmel writes with slapstick, sometimes forced humor, sending his characters across the screen at warp speed; unfortunately the plot is predictable and the characterizations too minimal to add much depth. Still, kids will love the idea, belabored premise or not, of

being sucked into a computer game. Fans of Scieszka's Time Warp Trio series (*Knights of the Kitchen Table*, BCCB 7/91, etc.) will enjoy this spoof. EAB

KORNBLATT, MARC *Understanding Buddy*. McElderry, 2001 [120p]

ISBN 0-689-83215-X \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

Fifth-grader Sam misses the warmth and affection of the family housekeeper, Laura White, after her death in a car accident. When Laura's son Buddy appears in Sam's class and refuses to speak, Sam feels an unspoken connection to him. He therefore defends the silent Buddy against class taunting, even to the point of causing a rift between himself and his friend Alex. Sam's struggle to understand death is intensified by the silence imposed at home (Sam's mother thinks she's protected her son from the sad truth about Laura), carried out at school, and reinforced by Buddy's silence after his mother's death. Through soccer, Sam and Buddy begin interacting, at first without words, then building to written communication and later spoken words. Kornblatt effectively portrays the inner life of children struggling with death, grounding the story in details of familiar daily life (family, school, synagogue, soccer). His conclusion brings together the story threads but resists tying them up neatly: though Sam and Alex are reconciled, Sam acknowledges their relationship may never be the same, while he recognizes that he and Buddy have only started their friendship. Offer this to readers not quite ready for Konigsburg's *Silent to the Bone* (BCCB 10/00). EAB

LALICKI, TOM *Spellbinder: The Life of Harry Houdini*. Holiday House,

2000 88p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-8234-1499-X \$18.95

R Gr. 4-6

Harry Houdini may not have instant recognition with grade-school kids, but he is still the father of modern magic and illusion. Lalicki's biography of the master escape artist and showman follows this Jewish immigrant from Wisconsin to New York City, from vaudeville to European theatres, focusing on his fierce determination and drive to be the best in his field. Black-and-white period photographs of Houdini in action—Houdini dangling above a Washington D.C. street in a strait-jacket; Houdini being submerged in the icy waters of a bay—add a frisson of sensationalism to this lively biography. Quotes from Houdini and his contemporaries provide a personal context for what youngsters may consider ancient history. In an author's note, Lalicki describes his research into primary and secondary sources, and a timeline, bibliography, and index are included. Lalicki has bridged the divide between past and present with an irresistible distillation of the daring, danger, and magic that was Houdini's life. JMD

LESTER, JULIUS *Ackamarackus: Julius Lester's Sumptuously Silly Fantastically Funny Fables*; illus. by Emilie Chollat. Scholastic, 2001 [40p]

ISBN 0-590-48913-5 \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

Lester provides six original fables (each complete with a pair of morals) that offer some unusual looks at the animal kingdom. In "How Bernard the Bee Lost His Buzz," for example, Bernard sacrifices his buzz in pursuit of his beloved bluebird but then finds a happier match with a bee thrilled with a non-buzzing partner; "The Flies Learn to Fly" tells of the time when flies discovered the advantages of

commercial air travel; “Ellen the Eagle Finds Her Place in the World,” which is not a rocky eyrie but a cushy penthouse apartment where she models for governmental eagle images on stamps and whatnot. Lester’s writing is uneven, with some of the stories weak and meandering and his style sometimes dipping into the precious, but there’s some rollicking and energetic storytelling as well. Both read-aloud audiences and readers alone will appreciate the anaconda who is “so long its tail is in Monday and its eyes are looking into next Tuesday,” and they’ll relish the trials of Adalbert the alligator, depressed about the ugliness of alligators: “Alligators have tried wigs and makeup and if you want to see something that is truly ugly, it is an alligator in a blonde wig. Being so ugly meant they didn’t have any friends. Well, that’s not exactly true. They didn’t have any friends because they ate them.” The font variations (phrases periodically emphasized in color and italicization) are generally superfluous, but the picture-book layout is attractive. Spiky acrylic art with occasional touches of collage has a complementary solid weirdness, but the illustrations sometimes lack focus and power, leaving them jostling graphics rather than narrative propellants. This nonetheless offers some useful and entertaining possibilities, including popping a fable into an otherwise serious unit about animals and encouraging kids to write their own stories. DS

LONG, MELINDA *Hiccup Snickup*; illus. by Thor Wickstrom. Simon, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-689-82245-6 \$16.00 Ad 4-7 yrs

Our narrator is distraught one morning when she’s visited with an intractable case of hiccups. Her grandmother assures her that a triple iteration of the rhyme “Hiccup snickup/ Rear right straight up./ Three drops in the teacup/ Will cure the hiccups” will do the trick, but before the girl can complete the task the whole family’s after her with hiccup solutions of their own. The cumulation of remedies adds absurdity (“So there I was, scared to death, in a wet shirt, wearing a paper bag and eating an apple, while standing on my head, holding my breath, and saying, ‘Hiccup snickup . . .’”), but it doesn’t seem to chase the hiccups away. Finally the whole family, eight including the dog, perform the rhyme together, working their way up to a frenzied and hilarious rendition that leaves them all laughing and the narrator cured—but the rest of them with the hiccups. The cumulation isn’t enough to lift this out of a one-joke groove, and the repeated rhyme doesn’t have enough sparkle of its own to bear the repetition, but there’s plenty of opportunity for lively performance drama with this little number; you’ll have no trouble roping audience members in for assistance. The illustrations are somewhat muddy-toned, but there’s a rubbery limberness to the participants’ wiggly arms and legs that adds bounce to the already gleefully disheveled scenes. The participatory hiccups will continue long after the book is closed, so be ready with remedies of your own. DS

LOOK, LENORE *Henry’s First-Moon Birthday*; illus. by Yumi Heo. Schwartz/Athenum, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 0-689-82294-4 \$16.00
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

All the Chinese relatives will be arriving to celebrate the one-month birthday of narrator Jen-Jen’s baby brother Henry, and Jen-Jen is running the show—with a bit of assistance from Gnin-Gnin (Grandma), who handles such minor details as all the cooking and most of the cleaning. If the specifics of this particular celebration are unfamiliar to many listeners—red envelopes of money tucked into the crib, good-luck symbols adorning the house—the pandemonium of preparations

hindered by an overexcited sibling won't be. Heo's loopy mixed-media scenes, in which floors tip and household accoutrements fly while tight-lipped Gnin-Gnin struggles to keep her humor, are explained by Jen-Jen in turn ("This is how to eat pigs' feet and ginger soup. My cousins and I spit out the knuckles and try to reconstruct the feet"). Hostess Jen-Jen is sweet and frenetic as a sugar high, and her party is a definite event of the season. A glossary of Chinese terms is included. EB

LYNCH, CHRIS *Freewill*. HarperCollins, 2001 [160p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028177-4 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028176-6 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 9-12

Seventeen-year-old Will labors away at woodwork in his remedial high school, where even among the weirdos he's a weirdo, keeping determinedly to himself. He's surprised to feel the start of a connection to fellow woodworker Angela, a tough athlete, and that connection is underscored when they're both moved first by a fellow student's death in a nearby pond, then the subsequent death of that student's boyfriend. Will is himself haunted by tragic deaths in water, and he sculpts wooden monuments for his fallen schoolmates; the woodworking teacher is dismayed both by Will's powerful and formless sculpture (when there's a real market for Will's kitschy little gnomes) and also Will's removal without permission of the classwork that technically belongs to the school. There's more distress than that when Will's sculptures start appearing at locations in *advance* of tragedy there; outsiders begin to suspect Will of involvement, while he attempts to unravel the mystery. Lynch's control over Will's narration is superb; the boy refers to himself as "you" throughout, distancing himself from his own existence and giving a dreamlike flavor to the bizarre sequence of events. There's a real Holden Caulfield echo as well, but with the grief and rage of bereavement (Will's father drove his car into the water, killing his wife and himself) as well as the constant threat of suicide, so that the pain and desperation are magnified. The crime element and its conclusion lack the sheer hypnotic fascination of Will's treading water in his world, but it does help to illuminate his genuine attachment to Angela (a character who retains both mystery and admirable impact to the end) when one of his sculptures signifies danger for her. The indelible component here is Will's struggle with the terrible freedom to follow his father or to live ("Choice, Will. It can kill you. It is supposed to be what makes living worthwhile. It is what makes not living an option"), which will resonate with the many readers who know that struggle intimately. DS

MANDEL, PETER *My Ocean Liner: Across the North Atlantic on the Great Ship Normandie*; illus. by Betsey MacDonald. Stemmer House, 2000 45p

ISBN 0-88045-149-1 \$16.95

Ad Gr. 2-4

Fictional adult narrator Paul remembers the *Normandie* crossing that brought him and his family from New York to Le Havre in spring of 1939. The insubstantial plot turns involving a shipboard friend stuck in a storage bin and a romance between a cabin steward and stewardess could easily be resolved in a few lines. The real interest here is the ship herself and the pampered life aboard her—from her dominance of Pier 88 to her mammoth engine room, from formal dinners to luxuriously appointed suites. MacDonald's watercolor scenes and vignettes are occasionally successful at conveying the astonishing size and opulence of the vessel;

awkwardly rendered figures, whose hair and clothing are annoyingly inconsistent from spread to spread, are far less convincing. A guest introduction offers items of interest concerning the *Normandie* and the French Line, but it is cast in prose too challenging for many chapter book readers: "Normandie remains forever a paradigm of elegance, chic, and stylishness, boasting the most compelling maritime design scheme ever conceived." Still, resurgent interest in the *Titanic* tragedy has directed children's gazes seaward, and Mandel demonstrates that an ocean liner may be of considerable interest even when it remains afloat. EB

MILICH, ZORAN *The City ABC Book*; illus. with photographs by Zoran Milich. Kids Can, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 1-55074-942-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 6-9 yrs

Stephen T. Johnson's *Alphabet City* (BCCB 1/95) used photorealistic painting to display the letters of the alphabet in various aspects of the urban landscape; Milich goes one step further and uses actual photographs, employing overlaid red to highlight the letters' forms in the black-and-white images and offering upper and lower-case examples of the letter in question underneath or across from the photo. While the book takes some latitude, with a few pictures relying on fairly arbitrary boundaries for definition of individual letters, in general it's loyal to its reality with some fascinating results. High points include the A of a front-door transom and a Q found in the wheels of the bicycle-lane symbol. Some of the pictures have a stark drama even without their alphabetic emphasis (the row of S railings trailing off into the distance, for instance), while others require that red accent to pull the image together, but all of them have an austere handsomeness as well as conceptual utility. This might make an interesting contrast with Johnson's book, and it could certainly prompt a variety of assignments ranging from urban studies to art. The final single-page gallery offers tight closeups of all the letters in situ. DS

MILLER, DAVID *Just Like You and Me*; written and illus. by David Miller. Dial, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-8037-2586-8 \$15.99

Ad 4-7 yrs

Vivid collage spreads offer comparisons between animals and people: "Deep in the jungle the bird of paradise loves to show off.// Just like you and me." Other similarities include moving like the wind (the cheetah and a girl on in-line skates), a desire to play together (penguins and a sports team), and "lounging lazily" (a lion and a kid tipped upside down in an armchair). The series is just a catalogue in no particular order, and some of the characterizations and comparisons are pretty stretched; nor is it entirely clear what concept this sequence of parallels is furthering. Some of the interpretations are wryly amusing, however, such as the kid who, like the chameleon, tries to blend in (covered in paint, he hides under the table as parental legs stand right by him). The main value of the book really lies in the paper-sculpture art, which is clearly the product of intricate craftsmanship (the leopard is an amazing assemblage of tiny paper strands in a checkerboard pattern that results in the impression of spots); though the craftsmanship is sometimes more intriguing than the ultimate artistic impact, the animals especially have a texture and dimensionality that makes them unusually corporeal. This doesn't match the utility of Steve Jenkins' cut-paper baby biology, but some youngsters may appreciate this offbeat look at our place in the animal kingdom. End matter explains a bit more about the featured fauna. DS

MOERI, LOUISE *The Devil in Ol' Rosie*. Atheneum, 2001 202p
 ISBN 0-689-82614-1 \$16.00 R Gr. 4-8

Wart's mother is in labor, which in itself is a dangerous prospect in 1907 on an isolated Oregon horse ranch, and at the same time the wildest horse, Ol' Rosie, has torn through the fence again, leading all the horses out into the large cattle pastures. Wart's father sends him out to bring back the horses on the one old horse that didn't run, and the boy begins a harrowing twenty-four hours of survival. His horse is injured, he cuts his hand, blinding snow begins to fall, and he sees bloodstains along a ravine wall that show that a cougar has wounded one of the horses. Moeri's tense and suspenseful writing keeps the pace moving rapidly through a series of near disasters in which Wart's inexperience and distractibility are shown with nail-biting clarity. When he finds the horses, he suffers a serious injury (he ropes a horse that lunges suddenly, scraping the skin around one of his eyes so badly that he cannot see), and when they are almost home, wild Ol' Rosie attacks and kills the cougar that has been stalking the horses; both incidents are graphically described but not gratuitously gross. Eventually, Wart makes it back to the ranch, leading all of the horses behind him, into the arms of his previously critical father, who affords the boy new respect and demonstrates his previously unspoken love of his son. Despite one or two slow moments when Wart is reliving memories along his trek, Moeri's writing is gripping and her storytelling is outstanding. Readers will have trouble putting down this gritty story of a young boy's quest to save his family's ranch. KM

MOSER, BARRY, ad. *The Three Little Pigs*; ad. and illus. by Barry Moser. Little, 2001 [32p]
 ISBN 0-316-58544-0 \$14.95 R 4-7 yrs
 Reviewed from galleys

Moser, whose forays into folk and fairy tales have included a retelling of Rumpelstiltskin (*Tucker Pfeffercorn*, BCCB 6/94), here revisits that popular if unfortunate trio of brothers, the Three Little Pigs. Let loose by their mother on Valentine's Day, the three take the usual path, leading to disaster for two of them and triumph for the third. Moser sticks with tradition in his retelling (it's very close to Jacobs' version), but his illustrations are another snort-inducing matter. The humans have a generic monumentality, but the animals are more individualized; the pigs' watercolor visages are emotion-specific, and their pink portbellied bodies with their thick curly tails have a porcine solidity that rivals other versions' depictions. The illustrations feature a generous helping of visual jokes: the wolf reclines in the ruins of pig number two's house with a distended tummy, cleaned ribs in a bucket, and a bottle of "Bubba's No Cook BBQ Sauce" ("It's excellent on Pork!"); the third little pig builds his house of "nowolf brick" held together with "Wolfe Pruf Cement." Part of what makes this arch retelling feel so irreverent is that the laughter of the finally triumphant pig is a knowing guffaw and not an innocent giggle. No source note is included. JMD

MURPHY, RITA *Black Angels*. Delacorte, 2001 [208p]
 ISBN 0-385-32776-5 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 5-8
 Reviewed from galleys

Celli lives in the small town of Mystic, Georgia, with her mother, brother Ellery, and Sophie, the black woman who works for their family. Sophie "speaks her

mind,” organizing efforts to end the racist customs prevalent in 1961; although Celli’s mother doesn’t mind, Celli herself is exasperated by Sophie’s insistence on participating in potentially dangerous demonstrations, particularly since Celli’s mother is off visiting their aunt for the month of July and Sophie is in charge of the two children. Celli also longs for some contact with her long-missing father, and her hopes soar when she receives a letter from her grandmother on her father’s side. The girl arranges to meet her grandmother for lunch, but she is shocked when she finds that Grandmother Pearl is black. Slowly, Celli begins to accept her biracial heritage as well as the significance of civil-rights struggles, and, after a heated demonstration, she hides a fugitive biracial man and then helps to free Sophie from jail. The opening of the novel is weighed down by long exposition and slow introduction of central conflicts, and the plot strains at the seams, barely holding together the various threads of a missing father, an absent mother, small-town racism, and Celli’s repeated visions of “black angels” outside her window and in her backyard. Nevertheless, Celli is an engaging character, portrayed with sympathy and emotional complexity, and this is an often-compelling portrait of a young girl’s struggle with her own biracial identity in the context of the civil rights movement. KM

MURPHY, WENDY B. *Spare Parts: From Peg Legs to Gene Splices*. Twenty First Century Books, 2001 160p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-7613-1355-9 \$23.90 R Gr. 5-8

The human body’s amazing capacity for regrowth often lags behind its need for same, and over the centuries we’ve made some ingenious attempts at bridging that gap. Murphy traces the history of those attempts from Roman-era artificial legs to twentieth-century experiments with the artificial heart. Along the way, she covers the role of war in surgical developments, the development of medical hygiene, and other factors in the evolution of component-replacement technology. While the components aren’t always successfully grafted together, and historical practice is sometimes credulously assumed from historical textbooks, there’s a provocative range of ground covered here. “Repair Shop” sidebars offer precis on particular procedures (blood transfusions, false teeth, and plastic surgery get their moments in the limelight), and the book personalizes the problem by using one chapter to focus on a young amputee learning to use his prosthetic leg (the prosthetist notes that limb prostheses, like computers, are improving so fast that users are keen to upgrade long before their current models wear out). More than just a congratulatory puff piece, the book makes no bones about many contemporary limitations and also touches usefully on ethical questions surrounding much of this progress. Photographs of varying degrees of utility appear throughout; endnotes, a glossary, a bibliography, and an index are included. DS

MUSGROVE, MARGARET, ad. *The Spider Weaver: A Legend of Kente Cloth*; illus. by Julia Cairns. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 2001 [34p]
ISBN 0-590-98787-9 \$16.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 6-9 yrs

Musgrove tells a story “widely known among the weavers of Ghana” of the origin of kente cloth. Two expert weavers are inspired by a spider’s dance while she constructs an intricate web: “In time, the weavers redesigned their looms so they could imitate the spider’s weaving dance. At first, they copied her patterns in

black and white thread, but soon they dyed their threads in bright colors and developed many new patterns themselves. And they named this new woven cloth kente-nwen-ntomoa—what today is commonly called kente cloth.” Musgrove, author of *Ashanti to Zulu* (BCCB 3/77), omits any specific source for the tale, but her afterword gives historical information about the origin and uses of kente cloth and the various ideals and proverbs its patterns represent. While the story itself has some appealing elements (the friendship between the weavers, the connections between humans and nature), the pace is slow and the concluding payoff is minimal. Compositions are simple, and they feature several examples of the complexly woven and dyed kente cloth. Jungle green vegetation provides a restful background for the weavers’ discovery of the spider, but other compositional elements are too undifferentiated to have much impact. While this title lacks spark, it has obvious curricular applications that may make it a useful addition to classroom and other collections. JMD

NEWMAN, LESLÉA *Cats, Cats, Cats!*; illus. by Erika Oller. Simon, 2001 [26p]
ISBN 0-689-83077-7 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

Mrs. Brown lives “in a great big house on the edge of town” amid a sea of “cats, cats, cats!” She dearly loves her kitties (“She loved the softness of their fur/ She loved the loudness of their purr”), but after she goes to bed a wild feline party begins (“Cats in the entryway throwing confetti/ Cats in the dining room eating spaghetti”). Come dawn it’s naptime for the cat crowd as Mrs. Brown once more purrs with pride in her kitty brood. The verse is sometimes awkwardly crafted, and the elements of the story aren’t quite clear: does Mrs. Brown know that the cats are partying all night, and if not, why doesn’t the confetti and such make her suspicious? The watercolor blobs of cats are exceedingly endearing, however, with their blocky bodies and squarish heads balanced by perky spikes of ears. There’s not much individuation or specific focus, so the splendor here lies in numbers and overall effect, but viewers will also enjoy hunting through the catastrophes for their favorite feline in the Brown family and the odd detail of kitty celebration. This doesn’t have the witty cohesion of Hassett’s *Cat up a Tree* (BCCB 11/98), but it’s still a world filled with lovable malkins, which is all that some young viewers will desire. DS

NICKLE, JOHN *TV Rex*; written and illus. by John Nickle. Scholastic, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 0-439-12043-8 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

M 5-8 yrs

Rex misses his grandfather and the things they used to do together, such as watching *Deep Sea Hunt*, their favorite TV show. In his loneliness, Rex climbs into the console of his broken television, where he finds himself inside an episode of *Deep Sea Hunt*; an octopus with eight TV sets gives Rex a magical remote control that allows him to travel into any show on the air. Rex moves through program after program until he finds himself in an old black-and-white sci-fi show with a robot chasing him. Rex feels the robot’s clamp on his back, but then realizes that he is actually feeling the grip of pliers, and holding the pliers is his Grandpa, who has just returned from Florida. The final illustration shows Rex snuggled in Grandpa’s lap, illuminated by the cathode-ray glow. Although the fantasy of Rex’s TV ad-

venture has some appeal, the sudden return of Grandpa is utterly confusing, since the placement of Grandpa's tools, TV, and pictures in the attic implied that Grandpa was more permanently absent from Rex's life. The illustrations have a retro feel, showing '50s style furniture and appliances in a garish palette of turquoise and orange, lit by the occasional lurid glow of a television set; they're more glitzy than fanciful, and their jarring loudness makes the textual confusion more acute. Youngsters who engage with the channel-surfing TV fantasy will be put off by the deceptive presentation of Grandpa's absence and the rosy but illogical conclusion. KM

PARK, LINDA SUE *A Single Shard*. Clarion, 2001 [160p]

ISBN 0-395-97827-0 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Tree-ear, an orphaned Korean boy who lives under a bridge with his crippled adult friend Crane-man, dreams of bettering himself by learning the potter's trade. His twelfth-century village is renowned for its delicate celadon ware, and the craftsmanship of Min, a master revered by fellow masters, is the benchmark by which Tree-ear sets his standards. Unfortunately, trade apprenticeship is traditionally limited to sons, and although Tree-ear manages to connive his way into working as Min's assistant, his chances of becoming a potter are virtually nonexistent. When a royal commission comes within Min's grasp, however, Tree-ear seizes a chance to rise in his employer's eyes by delivering sample vases to the emissary at Songdo. Patience and perfectionism, as Park demonstrates, are vital to a celadon potter's art, but although Tree-ear eventually masters both, readers will become squirmy waiting for him to hit the road to Songdo, adventures, and the happy (if wishful) ending. Concluding notes expand on the celadon trade and discuss liberties taken with Korean history of the period. EB

PECK, ROBERT NEWTON *Extra Innings*. HarperCollins, 2001 [192p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028868-X \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028867-1 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-10

When three generations of the Stonemason family die in the explosion of a private jet, sixteen-year-old Tate, the sole survivor, moves into Great-Granddad's Florida mansion to wait out his final years of adolescence and to recover from the devastating emotional and physical damage of the crash. Great-Aunt Viddy, the quintessential proper Southern black lady, redirects some of Tate's frustration and anger by confiding to him long-withheld stories of her own past, leading up to her adoption into the white Stonemason clan at age ten. Baby Vidalia had been abandoned in the bus of the Ethiopia Clowns, a black baseball team that eked out a living during the Depression by playing exhibition games with small-town white teams—games the Clowns had to lose if they were to leave town with their pay and their hides intact. Tate comes to realize that although his shattered leg shatters his hopes for a career on the diamond he can turn his writing skills to recording the Clowns' tale with the verve and sensitivity it merits. Peck paints a seductive portrayal of a young man's journey back to health—so seductive that only in retrospect will readers suspect there's a lot of tale left untold. How did Vidalia transform from shoeless waif to heiress within the context of a white Southern family? And how does Viddy know about Tate's writing skills? Still, the Stonemasons are a family worth meeting, and Viddy's memories alone are well worth hearing. EB

PETERS, JULIE ANNE *A Snitch in the Snob Squad*. Tingley/Little, 2001 [196p]
ISBN 0-316-70287-0 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-7

The four sixth-grade friends known collectively as the Snob Squad (see *Revenge of the Snob Squad*, BCCB 9/98) are back, and they're facing a real problem: money has been stolen from a teacher's purse, and everybody's under suspicion. Tough Snob Squadder Max is the administration's prime suspect. A second theft implicates Max further (though suspended for the first theft, she was seen on school property at the time of the money's disappearance), but her friends try to keep their faith in her. They'd like to blame Ashley, the principal's snobbish daughter, but several other people are also wielding suspicious amounts of money—and one of them is narrator Jenny's boyfriend, Kevin. Though the book offers a provocative wrinkle in Jenny's discovery that her friends have been reluctantly suspecting her, the theft plot is muddy and contrived (Kevin may be cleared of theft charges, but a sixth-grader who gives his girlfriend expensive gold jewelry may need investigation nonetheless). The additional subplot of Jenny's troubled family's attempts to grow closer is often awkward, but there's some genuine warmth in Jenny's evolving relationship with her older sister. There's little in the way of characterization or depth here, but it's still a serviceably speedy low-impact school story. DS

PINCZES, ELINOR J. *Inchworm and a Half*; illus. by Randall Enos. Houghton, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 0-395-82849-X \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

M 4-7 yrs

Inchworm's *raison d'être* is mensuration, and with each "loop" (Pinczes' term for her locomotive technique; kids might prefer "scrunch") of her agile little corpus she ticks off another inch of the particular vegetable she traverses. Then "one day the unthinkable happens; / My measurement's off just a bit. / One, two, nearly three! How could this be? / There's no way I can possibly fit." Obviously what's needed is a fraction, and a series of progressively smaller fraction-of-an-inchworms come to her aid. Pinczes' bouncy text lays out problem and solution with reasonable clarity, but Enos' illustrations are quite another matter. Although his colored linocuts featuring a sweetly perplexed inchworm and smug little helpers are appealing in their own right, disregard for scale will leave visual learners befuddled. "Tiniest 1-inch new greens" are several times larger than the "3-inch pole beans" which with they share a spread; "4 1/2-inch asparagus spears" vastly outstrip the "7-inch celery" that retreats into the background. In another scene, the half-inchworm attempts to demonstrate his relative length by measuring the inchworm's girth. Stick with Bruce MacMillan's *Eating Fractions* (BCCB 9/91) for an elementary-level introduction, or better yet, hand a child a ruler. EB

RENEAUX, J. J., ad. *How the Animals Saved the People: Animal Tales from the South*; illus. by James Ransome. HarperCollins, 2001 [64p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-16254-1 \$17.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16253-3 \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

Renowned storyteller and musician Reneaux retells eight tales from the American South in this lively collection. The tales are diverse, coming from Appalachian, African-American, Creole, and other cultures, but all have one thing in common: the overt humor and singular language of the reteller. Reneaux has a knack for the

tasty turn of phrase, and these stories are spiced with images, from Miz Alligator's "smooth-as-silk, pea-green suit" to a gigantic black cat's "green glassy eyes." The illustrative style echoes a paler Barry Moser or Jerry Pinkney (although the animals are more stuffed menagerie than active story participants); awkward drafting and clumsy layout mar the presentation. Still, there is enough energy in the mixed-media images to keep the pages turning. Reneaux's is an engaging voice, and her surefire, never-fail stories to read and tell will be a happy addition to folktale shelves. Source notes and suggestions for "digging deeper" are included. JMD

ROCHELLE, BELINDA, comp. *Words with Wings: A Treasury of African-American Poetry and Art*. Amistad/HarperCollins, 2001 [48p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029363-2 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16415-3 \$16.95

Reviewed from galley

R Gr. 6-10

Poets are paired with artists here for a gallery of twenty spreads portraying various aspects of African-American experience. Many of the selections are well known: Countee Cullen's "Incident" faces Lev T. Mills' charcoal drawing "Gemini I"; Gwendolyn Brooks' "John, Who Is Poor" partners Charles Dawson's painting "Marbles"; and Langston Hughes' "My People" shares a spread with Aaron Douglas' painting "Into Bondage." Bold-hued backgrounds contextualize each set, often picking up dominant colors in the graphic images; the page designs are all distinctively different but each spread is internally cohesive. Although styles vary both verbally and visually, the overall result is an eye-catching picture book for older elementary, junior high, and even high school students who can catch the conceptual intricacies of a piece such as Alice Walker's "How Poems Are Made: A Discredited View" and Beauford Delaney's attendant "Can Fire in the Park," a brilliant composition that looks like finger painting has been used to depict heat mirage. As is inevitable with works not originally conceived as parts of a whole, the words and pictures occasionally seem to limit or over-define each other's meanings rather than expand or complement them. Sometimes, however, the exposure of one form to another can magnify echoes, and the quality of such a set rivets both mind and eye in a format that will attract attention from young people who might never make it to an art museum or more substantive anthology. BH

RODOWSKY, COLBY *Clay*. Farrar, 2001 [176p]

ISBN 0-374-31338-5 \$16.00

Reviewed from galley

Ad Gr. 4-7

Eleven-year-old Elsie is starting to question the peripatetic and isolated life she lives with her mother and younger brother, Tommy, and when some suppressed memories reawaken she realizes she has good reason for concern: her mother kidnapped Elsie (really L. C., short for Linda Clay) and Tommy (really Timmy) from the home of the siblings' custodial father. Her mother's long-ago insistence that Elsie's father doesn't want his children any more makes her uncertain, but when Tommy becomes ill and Elsie's mother refuses to seek outside help, Elsie alerts someone to their predicament. By extending its focus to include Elsie's return to her father and grandfather, the book gives a side of the drama not often seen, but it also attenuates the energy and hinges the book in the middle; neither Elsie's spontaneous recollection nor her self-renaming as "Clay" (neither Elsie nor Linda) are credible, and her mother is more a villain than a well-rounded character. Elsie's voice is honest and vivid, however, and her narrative is particularly effective at

conveying her anxiety about her troubled younger brother, who proves to be autistic, and her struggle to negotiate her loyalties to Tommy and to her mother. While this doesn't have quite the drama of Mazer's *Taking Terri Mueller* (BCCB 6/83) or the psychological tension of Pfeiffer's *Twice Taken* (3/94), the naturally dramatic situation retains its interest, and readers will find Elsie's dilemma absorbing. DS

RYLANT, CYNTHIA *The Great Gracie Chase: Stop That Dog!*; illus. by Mark Teague. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 0-590-10041-6 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 4-7 yrs

Gracie is a "little round dog" who likes her restrained and familiar surroundings: "For Gracie, a quiet home was the best home." She's therefore considerably discomfited when painters arrive and set everything askew, with their "clangy ladders and big-person voices!" Their response is to put the noisy little dog outside, whereupon she starts to take a walk by herself; when she's spotted leaving, the pursuit begins, with eventually the whole town joining in *The Great Gracie Chase*. The text doesn't always make sense (why would Gracie still think of her outing as a walk when she knows she's running away from people trying to catch her?), and it occasionally has a slightly precious air (especially with direct addresses to the reader such as "Do you know what?"), but the story of the baffled little dog's eluding of her pursuers remains enjoyable. Teague's compositions never quite give the group chase its frenetic due, but he creates a round and pettable world enhanced by unusual perspectives ranging from dog's eye to overhead (the latter revealing a blimp apparently following along with the chase). The art adds some entertaining items to the pursuit (bicycle wheels flying off from the speed, concerned onlookers observing through windows), and Gracie herself is a solidly endearing armful of brown-and-white pup. If you've got kids ready for a little canine chaos, this might just go the distance. DS

SEDGWICK, MARCUS *Floodland*; written and illus. by Marcus Sedgwick. Delacorte, 2001 [144p]

ISBN 0-385-32801-X \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-7

Zoe's eking out a living in what used to be the cathedral city of Norwich, now an island since greenhouse-effect floods have drowned much of England. Accidentally left behind when her parents took a boat to the remaining mainland, she's determined to find them again, and she manages to get away in a boat she's been keeping secret. She ends up not with her parents, however, but on what's left of another island, the former Ely, where culture has fragmented and a gang of youths maintain a rough guerrilla order and fight turf wars with nearby islands. The leader would like to make Zoe and her boat part of his private plan for escape, but Zoe seeks to evade his grasp and continue in her search for her parents. Sedgwick perceptively imagines the postdiluvian world, realistically suggesting that different communities would fare differently in such a crisis, and it makes for an effective plot device as well as setting. Unfortunately, the book slides past some significant questions (what happened to air travel, satellite contact, and radio?) and never quite brings anybody but Zoe into focus; the end (Zoe's happy reunion with her parents on the mainland) is so abrupt that readers may wonder if pages are missing. The flood-plagued world remains a compelling one, however, and this may therefore satisfy readers looking for a take on postapocalyptic existence. DS

SIMONT, MARC *The Stray Dog*; written and illus. by Marc Simont. HarperCollins, 2001 32p
 Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028934-1 \$15.89
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028933-3 \$15.95 R 3-7 yrs

A family on a picnic befriends a scruffy little dog, naming him Willy; believing he belongs to somebody, they leave him behind in the park. After a week of thinking about him, they return to retrieve him, but they discover that he's being pursued by the dog warden. Fortunately, the resourceful kids convince the warden that the boy's belt is Willy's collar, the girl's hair ribbon is his leash, and Willy is their dog, and the family takes Willy home. This is a simple and straightforward story with a certain old-fashioned innocence, and youngsters will appreciate the quick cleverness of the kids in saving their canine friend. Simont's art possesses its usual deceptive ease and friendly watercolor fluidity, both in swift vignettes detailing Willy's charms and double-spreads that bring the viewers right into the world of the park (and in one evocative spread, the bathroom where Willy's getting shampooed to a fare-thee-well). Dogophiles will particularly relish the city-dog paradise that shows a collection of frolicking dogs and humans in an urban park. Especially with the story's reported basis in reality, this will have pooch-loving kids investigating every park with hope and determination. DS

SNELL, GORDON, ed. *Thicker Than Water: Coming-of-Age Stories by Irish and Irish American Writers*. Delacorte, 2001 [240p]
 ISBN 0-385-32571-1 \$17.95
 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 9-12

A dozen strong short stories center on young adults dealing with the personal and social conflicts that comprise contemporary rites of passage. Most are set in Ireland, though one, "Landlocked" by Helena Mulderns, pinions a point of maturation for an Irish girl working in Texas, and another, "Off Ya Go, So" by Chris Lynch, details the bittersweet dénouement of an American boy's love affair in Galway. Emma Donoghue's title story, "Thicker Than Water," captures a family event that seems mundane but has a shocking effect on two sisters' relationship. Other stories deal with an unhappy adolescent's escape from his alcoholic father to an uncertain future in the U.S.; ; a woman's vivid recollection of a childhood marked by her mother's affair with an enchanting neighbor; and a boy's classically daredevil defiance of death as he climbs atop a ruined mansion. Tonal variety makes each story a distinct experience, while careful arrangement assures a cohesive flow to the whole sequence. The characters are subtly nuanced, the plots credibly developed, and the settings richly imagined. These closeups will have young-adult readers seeing across the Atlantic with ease. BH

TANG, GREG *The Grapes of Math: Mind-Stretching Math Riddles*; illus. by Harry Briggs. Scholastic, 2001 [40p]
 ISBN 0-439-21033-X \$16.95
 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 2-4

Sixteen rhymed riddles invite readers to discover shortcuts to finding the number of items in double-spread scenes. In each case grouping is the key—finding a pattern among related items and occasionally adding to or subtracting from the total. There's some genuine higher-order mathematical thinking involved here, as children call upon intuition, observation, and strategizing as well as reliable old

“math facts” to calculate rather than count. “Know Dice” shows six pairs of dice (two rows of double sixes, ones, and threes) and provides the hint, “Before you start please look around,/ Adding’s fast when tens are found.” It suddenly becomes obvious that it will be quicker to group six/one/three four times than to point and count each dot. The “riddles” themselves never amount to more than rhymed instructions, and the workmanlike computer art, which does provide concise diagrams for counting, is flat and bland. Consistent repetition of the same math strategy works well here, though, and with appended answers as a boost, readers who start out slowly will have lots of opportunity to build aptitude and speed. EB

TAYLOR, THEODORE *A Sailor Returns*. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 2001 [160p]
ISBN 0-439-24879-5 \$16.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-6

The impending visit of Grandpa “Chips” Pentreath, a ship’s carpenter presumed lost at sea thirty years ago in 1884, is the most exciting event in eleven-year-old Evan Bryant’s life, and he and his best friend Buddy conjure all manner of speculative tales to account for those missing years. Pentreath in the flesh bears little resemblance to their fancies, but he promptly wins their hearts through his good-natured gentleness, his intriguing stories of maritime adventure, and his willingness to share his expertise in fishing and boat-building. But before Grandpa is quite ready to reveal the seedier side of his past, including a self-defense homicide and subsequent imprisonment in Dartmoor, a local murder casts suspicion upon him and tests the loyalty of his newfound relatives. Taylor’s narrative, which merges Evan’s point of view with Grandpa’s italicized reflections, is both sensitive and suspenseful. The dying old man’s longing to reconcile with his daughter and her son is quietly poignant but never overplayed, and the murder plot is neatly integrated into the larger family tale. Accessible text and challenging human drama could make this an exceptionally good classroom selection for readers of varying abilities. EB

URE, JEAN *Skinny Melon and Me*; illus. by Chris Fisher and Peter Bailey. Holt, 2001 202p
ISBN 0-8050-6359-5 \$16.00 Ad Gr. 4-7

Eleven-year-old Cherry is stewing in her negative feelings for her new stepfather, children’s book illustrator Roland Butter, despite said stepfather’s apparently inexhaustible patience (and the cheery rebus notes that he slips under her bedroom door almost daily). Cherry’s resentment of the scruffy but good-natured Roland becomes more intense when it turns out that her stepfather’s allergies mean that the dog Cherry’s mother promised her (post-divorce and pre-remarriage) is now out of the question. Eventually, Cherry comes around, partly because Roland is a good guy and partly because a visit proves that her father and his new wife obviously have little time for her. Cherry tells her own story through her journal entries. Her stepfather’s rebus notes are included in the body of the text for the reader’s decoding pleasure (answer key in the back of the book), and her mother’s letters to a friend in Texas about Cherry’s adjustment (or lack thereof) to the situation are interspersed throughout. The rebus notes are enjoyable, but the letters, written strictly from the adult point of view, function mainly as a way to show readers how wrong-headed Cherry is being. The letters interrupt the flow of the

story and stall the momentum, and they give little information not available through the main text (Cherry's journal). Skinny Melon (aka Melanie), Cherry's best friend who helps her along her emotionally rocky road, has a relatively minor role in all this so the title may bewilder more literal readers. Nevertheless, Cherry's is a natural, unaffected voice, and the way she uses her journal to "clear things out of the cupboard" of her mind and emotions may encourage readers to do the same. Black-and-white line drawings and facsimiles of the rebus notes are scattered throughout. JMD

WARNER, SALLY *How to Be a Real Person (In Just One Day)*. Knopf, 2001 [128p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-375-90434-4 \$17.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-80434-X \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

"Alone is when you feel the most real," thinks sixth-grader Kara, who's trying to keep a public face of normality despite the turmoil going on at home. With her father working and living a few hours away, Kara's on her own with her mother, whose mental ups and downs have turned into just downs. Kara struggles to keep the nature and extent of her mother's illness a secret, but her schoolwork is suffering, her best friend, Stephanie, is starting to wonder, and her mother is slipping further away from reality. Warner stacks the situational deck a little to leave Kara as isolated as possible, but emotionally Kara's narration is absolutely truthful and her desperation credible and heartbreaking. The book also makes excellent use of Kara's periodic instruction lists to herself ("How to Get Out of Giving an Oral Presentation," "How to Blend In," "How to Fool Your Own Best Friend"), and flashbacks help contextualize Kara's plight; there's also a recurrent theme of her fascination with Karana in *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, whose solitude she envies. Things wrap up overeasily, but Kara's sufficiently entitled to succor that readers won't begrudge her rescue, and they'll all empathize with her fear that she won't be able to meet the demands life places on her. DS

WARREN, ANDREA *Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps*. HarperCollins, 2001 [160p] illus. with photographs

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029218-0 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-17497-3 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Jack Mandelbaum is twelve years old when Hitler invades Poland in 1939. He and his family flee to relatives living in more isolated, rural areas, hoping to escape the worst of the occupation. They fail: Jack, his mother, and his younger brother are rounded up with other Jews and sent to a concentration camp; only Jack survives. Jack's survival is dependent upon the quirks of fate, the whims of guards and kapos, and his stubborn will to live. Warren interviewed her subject for this bio-history, and Mandelbaum's unadorned words have blunt impact. His determination to find his family after the war (his father, mother, and brother all died in the camps, but he was able to locate a favorite uncle), his refusal to succumb to hatred of the enemy, and his building of a successful life in the United States all resonate with the power of personal tragedy and triumph. There is steel in Mandelbaum's determination to "beat Hitler," and his ultimate deliverance will be cheered by young readers. Warren provides some contextual information about

the concentration camps, the human cost of World War II, and a list of suggested readings; an index will be included in the bound book. This Holocaust memoir will find an audience among those readers too young for Bitton-Jackson's *I Have Lived a Thousand Years* (BCCB 4/97) or Lobel's *No Pretty Pictures* (10/98). Black-and-white photographs bring the camps, prisoners, and Jack Mandelbaum's life into sharp focus. JMD

WEATHERLY, MYRA *William Marshal: Medieval England's Greatest Knight*. Morgan Reynolds, 2001 [112p] illus. with photographs
Library ed. ISBN 1-883846-48-X \$20.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Hot on the heels of Shelley Tanaka's *In the Time of the Knights* (BCCB 2/01), Weatherly offers another biography of the fourth son of a minor lord, who rose to become tournament champion, loyal advisor to Plantagenet kings, and regent of England for Henry III, and who, even more remarkably, died an old man in his own bed. With a higher page count and more modest visuals than Tanaka employed, Weatherly includes somewhat more biographical detail and expanded views of duplicated episodes. Since much of the extra space is accorded to mini-essays on feudalism, courtly love, Saladin, etc., and to machinations within the Plantagenet family, readers will glean relatively little extra information on Marshal himself, and it's in a far less visually inviting format. The author does, however, offer source notes as well as a better explanation of the *Histoire de Guillaume le Mareschal*, from which much information concerning the knight was originally derived, making this the preferred choice for conscientious report writers. A timeline, glossary, bibliography, and index are also appended. EB

WHITE, CAROLYN *The Adventure of Louey and Frank*; illus. by Laura Dronzek. Greenwillow, 2001 [26p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-16605-9 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16503-6 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R* 5-8 yrs

Louey the bunny and Frank the bear set out on a nautical adventure, but things don't quite go as planned: the rock on which they take refuge proves to be a whale (which resents having a campfire built upon it), and then they lose their boat, get caught in a storm, climb up on a log (which is really a fish), and finally make it back to shore. The understated, let's-pretend tone of the narrative gives this maritime outing (inspired, flap copy indicates, by St. Brendan's camping on a whale) an offbeat coziness. Tender touches include Louey's fondness for marshmallows and Frank's for pickles and the continuing but equitable disagreements between the two, and there's a guileless charm in the succinct text ("They climbed onto Louey's rock that was Frank's whale. 'I saved the marshmallows,' said Louey. 'Good,' said Frank. 'Now save the boat'"). Dronzek's acrylics depict Frank and Louey as toys (they're small enough to fit into their boat made of shoes), but there's a surprising amount of expression in body position and even in Frank's glassy eyes. Deep sea blues (with brushstroke waves) provide dreamy and attractive backdrops for the main action, and the thick expressionistic lines effectively expand the toylike flavor to landscapes as well as the main characters. A pair of friends on an adventure is a fairly common picture-book plot, but this has an endearing oddness that makes it more than your usual jaunt. DS

WILD, MARGARET *The Pocket Dogs*; illus. by Stephen Michael King. Scholastic, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 0-439-23973-7 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

"Mr. Pockets had a very big coat, and in his very big coat he had two very big pockets," which is convenient because that gives him a way to carry around his two pocket-sized dogs, Biff and Buff. A problem arises when one of Mr. Pockets' pockets develops a hole, and Mr. Pockets is deaf to Biff's woofed warnings about this looming danger; eventually Biff falls through the hole and finds himself among strangers. Friendly people try to help him back home by putting him in a shopping basket, a doll carriage, and a shopping cart, but it's pockets or nothing for Biff, and eventually he's found by Mr. Pockets himself and restored to his repaired pocket. Bits of the story are pure padding, with a jingly edge ("Along the way, people always said: 'Hello, Mr. Pockets!'",), but the basic lost-dog story and the notion of portable pooches in pockets are appealing. King's wiggly lines have a puppyish touch themselves, and he adds enlivening details to the spreads (a mouse and a bird help open up the fateful hole); Biff himself is an enjoyably scruffy little gray guy (though viewers may be confused by the white circle around one of his eyes and wonder why that eye is wide open and staring). The audience will yearn for pocket pups of their own, and they'll appreciate the comforting reassurance of Biff's reunion with his owner. DS

WILSON, JACQUELINE *Bad Girls*; illus. by Nick Sharratt. Delacorte, 2001 [176p]

ISBN 0-385-72916-2 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Mandy is an overprotected ten-year-old, and she's the butt of merciless teasing by the popular girls at school. Redemption comes in the form of tough fourteen-year-old Tanya, who moves into the foster home next door and takes a shine to Mandy, who's the age of Tanya's much-missed little sister. While Mandy thrives under Tanya's protection, Mandy's mother is concerned that Tanya is an unsuitable companion, and Mandy herself is uneasy about Tanya's shoplifting. When Tanya's daring finally gets her and Mandy into trouble, Tanya's sent away and Mandy's facing her tormentors alone once again. Wilson has a keen ear for youthful tones of all kinds, from Mandy's aggrieved narration to the smug needling of her classmates, and she's equally good at the loving missteps of Mandy's mom, who's perpetually fired with the desire to do exactly the wrong thing to protect her daughter. The story's strongest point, however, is its depiction of the friendship between Tanya and Mandy; both girls are clearly fulfilling some unmet needs with the relationship, but rather than belabor the point the book simply emphasizes the importance of the companionship. There's therefore a bit of a balance problem at the end, when the focus moves more to Mandy's persecution (her new teacher, clearly a leading light in Britain's anti-bullying movement, makes the topic a class issue) and leaves Tanya behind (no one ever suggests that Mandy can write or visit her dear friend). Nonetheless, the sympathetic and accurate portrayal of Mandy's desperation and affection will be immediately recognizable to many young readers. Sharratt's trim, controlled line drawings are scattered throughout to enlivening effect. DS

WULFSON, DON *Soldier X*. Viking, 2001 [244p]

ISBN 0-670-88863-X \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

See this month's Big Picture, p. 249, for review.

WYETH, SHARON DENNIS *A Piece of Heaven*. Knopf, 2001 200p

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-98535-2 \$16.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-88535-8 \$14.95

Ad Gr. 5-8

Mahalia (Haley) Moon, the precocious narrator of this thoughtful novel, eventually makes her own small piece of heaven, but her story begins ominously. On a hot summer night before Haley's thirteenth birthday, "Ma, already in her pajamas, sat motionless at the table in the center of the room, staring at the bills," while fifteen-year-old Otis sits on the sofa-bed in their one room inner-city apartment sulking about being grounded for getting three Ds and an F on his report card. Things get worse. Soon after a manic late night grocery-shopping spree, Ma admits herself to the hospital to get treatment for depression. Otis and Haley struggle on together with some help from neighbors and within the structure provided by their own summer jobs—until Otis is arrested for selling stolen merchandise and detained at the juvenile detention center. At this point, Haley herself is forced to move to a group home. The novel's ending self-consciously avoids the fairy-tale resolution that both the reader and Haley—a devoted reader of Grimm's tales—yearn for. While Haley does find supportive friends and some joy, her mother is making only tentative progress and Otis still languishes in jail (a lack of closure that may disturb imaginative readers who relate more to this conflicted underachiever than to his straight-A sister). Instead, readers are invited to appreciate the aesthetic and therapeutic value of the well-swept "dirt garden" Haley has created in place of the junk-strewn yard her employer/mentor hired her to clean up. Though the dialogue sometimes sounds more written than spoken, and Haley's narrational voice is oddly affectless (a treasured thesaurus provides her with both an emotional outlet and an unconvincingly sophisticated vocabulary), an event-filled domestic plot that gives attention to both the practical and some of the quirkier details offers readers a thought-provoking slice of life. FK

ZUSAK, MARKUS *Fighting Ruben Wolfe*. Levine/Scholastic, 2001 [224p]

ISBN 0-439-24188-X \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

After their father loses his job, Cam and his older brother Ruben cast about for some way to make extra cash. A nasty remark about their sister propels Ruben into a fistfight, and word of his talent for boxing reaches fight promoter Perry Cole. Both Ruben and Cam agree to fight for Cole in the raucous fight clubs (fifty dollars for a win, good tips for a good loss), Cam as "The Underdog" and Ruben as "Fighting Ruben Wolfe." It is clear from the outset that Ruben is the fighter, the winner, the champ; Cam is distinguished by his ability to get up off the mat, no matter how much he wants to stay there. Ruben is undefeated in the ring but he isn't sure he can win outside it; Cam wins some and loses more, but he always comes back. When the brothers are scheduled to fight one another Cam knows he can't win, but he's determined to make sure Ruben knows he's in a fight, not a rout. Cam's narrative voice is sweetly naïve, his love of his family, especially Ruben,

clearly evident. The physical action revolves around the boxing ring and the raucous crowd of fight fans: "They're just voices now. No names, no blondes, no beers or anything else. Just voices drawn toward the light, and there's no way to liken them to anything else. They sound like people gathered around a fight. That's all. That's what they are and they like what they are." Zusak portrays a blue-collar family on the edge of falling into poverty, their dogged determination the only thing keeping them afloat. The brothers are distinctly evoked, Cam through his own narration and Ruben through Cam; secondary characters are vague and amorphous, snapping into clarity only when Cam focuses upon them. Scenes of home and family slow the forward momentum of the plot but also provide a context for the personalities of the two brothers. The occasional clumsy phrase or faulty analogy is quickly overwhelmed by the drama of the fights and the brothers' search for meaning. JMD



CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARDS 2001

The Newbery Medal will be awarded to Richard Peck for *A Year Down Yonder* (Dial). The Newbery Honor Books are *Hope Was Here*, by Joan Bauer (Putnam); *The Wanderer*, by Sharon Creech (Cotler/HarperCollins); *Because of Winn-Dixie*, by Kate DiCamillo (Candlewick); and *Joey Pigza Loses Control*, by Jack Gantos (Farrar).

The Caldecott Medal will be awarded to David Small for *So You Want to Be President?*, written by Judith St. George (Philomel). The Caldecott Honor Books are *Casey at the Bat: A Ballad of the Republic Sung in the Year 1888*, illus. by Christopher Bing, written by Ernest Lawrence Thayer (Handprint); *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type*, illus. by Betsy Lewin, written by Doreen Cronin (Simon); and *Olivia*, written and illus. by Ian Falconer (Schwartz/Atheneum).

The Coretta Scott King Award for writing will be presented to Jacqueline Woodson, author of *Miracle's Boys* (Putnam), and the award for illustration goes to Bryan Collier for *Uptown*, text by the illustrator (Holt). The King Honor Book for writing is *Let It Shine!: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters*, written by Andrea Davis Pinkney and illus. by Stephen Alcorn (Gulliver/Harcourt). King Honor Books for illustration are *Freedom River*, illustrated by Bryan Collier, written by Doreen Rappaport (Jump at the Sun/Hyperion); *Virgie Goes to School with Us Boys*, illustrated by E. B. Lewis, written by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard (Simon); and *Only Passing Through: The Story of Sojourner Truth*, illus. by R. Gregory Christie, written by Anne Rockwell (Knopf).

The American publisher receiving the Mildred L. Batchelder Award for the most outstanding translation of a book originally published in a foreign language is Scholastic Press/Arthur A. Levine for Daniella Carmi's *Samir and Yonatan*; the honor award goes to David R. Godine for *Ultimate Game*, by Christian Lehmann.

The Michael L. Printz Award for a book that exemplifies literary excellence in young adult literature goes to David Almond for *Kit's Wilderness* (Delacorte). Honor books are *Many Stones*, by Carolyn Coman (Front Street); *The Body of Christopher Creed*, by Carol Plum-Ucci (Harcourt); *Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging*, by Louise Rennison (Delacorte); and *Stuck in Neutral*, by Terry Trueman (HarperCollins).

The Robert F. Sibert Award for most distinguished informational book for children goes to Marc Aronson for *Sir Walter Raleigh and the Quest for El Dorado* (Clarion). Honor books are *The Longitude Prize* by Joan Dash, illus. by Dusan Petricic (Foster/Farrar); *Blizzard!* by Jim Murphy (Scholastic); *My Season with*

Penguins: An Antarctic Journal, by Sophie Webb (Houghton); and *Pedro and Me: Friendship, Loss, and What I Learned*, written and illus. by Judd Winick (Holt).

The 2002 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture will be delivered by Philip Pullman.

Robert Lipsyte is the 2001 winner of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for Outstanding Literature for Young Adults honoring an author's lifetime contribution in writing books for teenagers.

The Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction goes to Janet Taylor Lisle for *The Art of Keeping Cool* (Jackson/Atheneum).

The ALSC Distinguished Service Award goes to Margaret Mary Kimmel.

The Canadian Library Association's Best Book of the Year for children is Kenneth Oppel's *Sunwing* (Simon). The Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrator's Award goes to Zhong-Yang Huang for *The Dragon New Year: A Chinese Legend* (Raincoast). The Young Adult Canadian Book Award goes to Katherine Holubitsky for *Alone at Ninety Foot* (Orca).

The Carnegie Medal was awarded to Aidan Chambers for *Postcards from No Man's Land* (Bodley Head).

The Kate Greenaway Medal was awarded to Helen Oxenbury for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Candlewick).

The Hans Christian Andersen Award for writing goes to Ana Maria Machado of Brazil. The award for illustration goes to Anthony Browne of the United Kingdom.

NCTE's Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children goes to *Hurry Freedom: African Americans in Gold Rush California*, by Jerry Stanley (Crown); Honor Books are *America's Champion Swimmer: Gertrude Ederle*, by David A. Adler, illus. by Terry Widener (Harcourt); *The Amazing Life of Benjamin Franklin*, by James Cross Giblin, illus. by Michael Dooling (Scholastic); *Michelangelo*, written and illus. by Diane Stanley (HarperCollins); *Wild and Swampy: Exploring with Jim Arnosky*, written and illus. by Jim Arnosky (HarperCollins); and *Osceola: Memories of a Sharecropper's Daughter*, ed. by Alan Govenar and illus. by Shane Evans (Hyperion).



SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

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

- Africa—stories: Ichikawa
 African Americans—fiction: Draper; Murphy, R.
 African Americans—poetry: Rochelle
 ALPHABET BOOKS: Milich
 American Indians—fiction: Feder
 American Indians—folklore: Bruchac
 ANIMAL STORIES: Aylesworth; Bruchac; Hoberman; Lester; Miller; Moser; White
 Animals: Gutman
 Animals—fiction: Booth
 Archaeology: Andronik
 Archaeology—poetry: Frank
 Arithmetic: Pinczes; Tang
 Art and artists—fiction: Lynch; Park
 Aunts—fiction: Peck
 Baseball—fiction: Peck
 BIOGRAPHIES: Blumberg; Dash; dePaola; Lalicki; Warren; Weatherly
 Birthdays—stories: Look
 Boxing—fiction: Zusak
 Brothers—fiction: Crisp; Zusak
 Brothers and sisters—fiction: Easton; Rodowsky; Wyeth
 Brothers and sisters—stories: Gammell; Ketteman; Look
 Bullies—fiction: Wilson
 Cars—stories: Gammell
 Cats—stories: Newman
 Chinese Americans—stories: Look
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 Civil War—fiction: Crisp
 Computers—fiction: Kimmel
 CONCEPT BOOKS: Milich
 Crime and criminals—fiction: Feder; Lynch; Peters; Rodowsky; Taylor; Wilson; Wyeth
 Death and dying—fiction: Holt; Kornblatt; Peck
 Death and dying—stories: Fraustino
 Diaries—fiction: Jacobsson
 Disabilities: Dash; Murphy, W.
 Disabilities—stories: Fraustino
 Divorce—fiction: Ure
 Dogs—fiction: Crisp
 Dogs—stories: Cowley; Rylant; Simont; Wild
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 Egypt, ancient: Andronik; Hofmeyr
 Egypt—poetry: Frank
 Ethics and values: Feder; Ketteman; Warren
 FABLES: Lester
 FANTASY: Heneghan; Jacques; Jordan; Kimmel; Nickle; Sedgwick
 FOLKTALES AND FAIRYTALES: Aylesworth; Bruchac; Heaney; Hofmeyr; Moser; Musgrove; Reneaux
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 Forests: Alexander
 Foster care—fiction: Eige; Horvath
 Friendship—fiction: Booth; Eige; Hurst; Jacobsson; Kornblatt; Lynch; Peters; Wilson
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 FUNNY STORIES: Jacobsson
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- Gods and goddesses: Hofmeyr;
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 Grandmothers–stories: Fraustino;
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 Wulffson
 Writers and writing: dePaola
 Writers and writing–fiction: Peck



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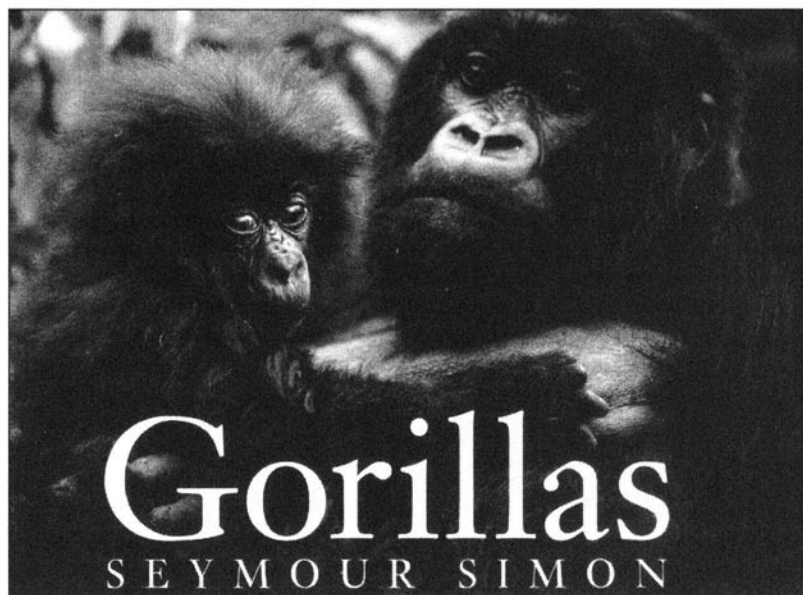


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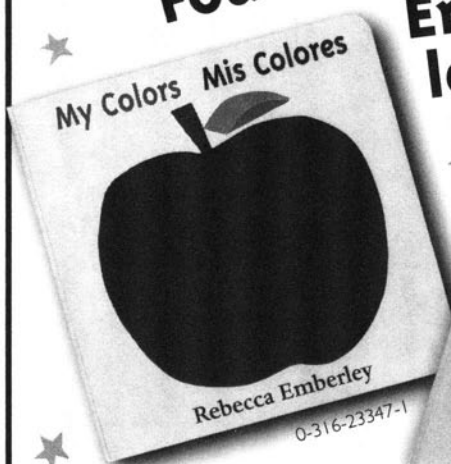
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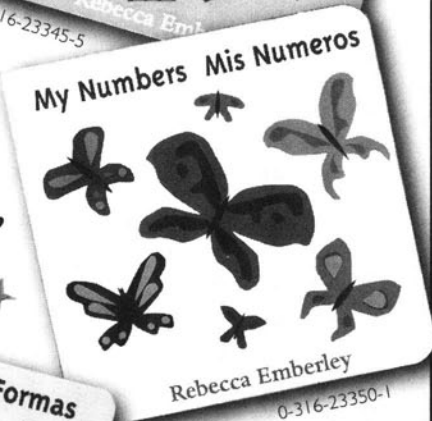


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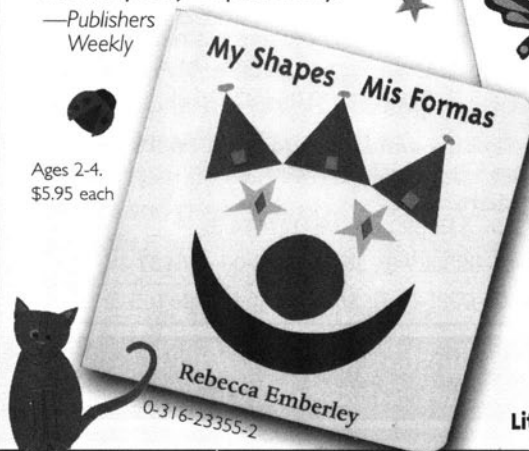
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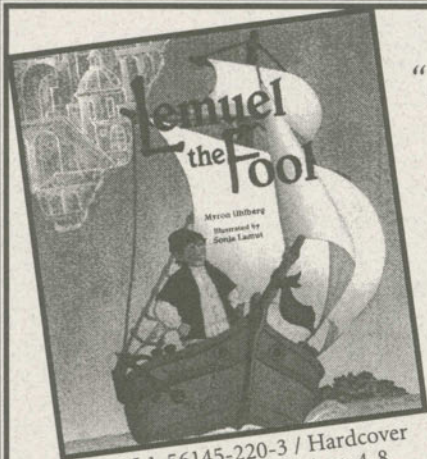
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