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THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

April 2001
Vol. 54 No.8



University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

University of Illinois Press



The Stray Dog

by
Marc
Simont

from a
true story by
Reiko Sassa

★ "Two children play with a stray dog while on a family picnic. They don't take him home, but the whole family thinks about him, and the next Saturday they return to the same spot. [This time] the children save Willy from the dogcatcher and adopt him, to everyone's joy. [With] all the earmarks of a classic . . . this *Stray Dog* should find a home in readers' hearts everywhere."

—Starred review / *The Horn Book Magazine*


★ "Simont continues his magic here . . . a great tale."

—Starred review / *School Library Journal*

"Splendid artwork—something Caldecott Medalist Simont has been noted for the past 60 years—sets this book skipping like a stone on water." —*Kirkus Reviews*

★ "A charmer." —Starred review / *Publishers Weekly*

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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

April 2001
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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

Under New York

by Linda Oatman High; illustrated by Robert Rayevsky

Picture books about famous cities sometimes have that in-crowd feeling, the sense that they are aimed at an audience that is already familiar with the locale. Presumably, this intended audience can recognize and appreciate the city's features and their interpretation in words and pictures. Sometimes that inside-story feeling is mitigated by an irresistible protagonist like Hilary Knight's *Eloise*, but titles that feature the city itself as the main character, like this one, tend to err on the side of the touristy, with postcard-pretty pictures of obvious choices.

Welcome to a tour of the Big Apple, above and below ground. High's *Under New York* is neither touristy nor obvious. The opening lines limn the geology below the city ("Under New York,/ below skyscrapers and moonshine and sky,/ there are stones and sand, clay, and lots of big rocks/ made by glaciers, millions of years ago"); the text then segues into descriptions of assorted underground activities. The author packs the book with the concrete details that children find compelling, and her words, colored with childlike enthusiasm, depict the city as a place worth exploring. The free verse is rhythmic and enthralling, with strong imagery that imbues it with a certain urban intensity: "Under New York,/ below taxicabs and tour buses and carriage horses,/ there are railroad tracks and trains whizzing past,/ clattering fast,/ bringing visitors to the city and taking them home again"; "Under New York,/ below sidewalks and manholes and streets,/ there are roaring machines and open elevators,/ ladders and shafts and workers,/ making new tunnels for water."

That sense of childlike enthusiasm comes through with commendable clarity in Rayevsky's mixed-media (paint, photo-collage, ink) illustrations. Double-spread bleeds on matte-finish paper feature thick, sans-serif type in ivory, black, or white, depending on the background. The palette features primarily earthy hues (lots of olive green and harvest gold) that contrast with the industrial strength black and concrete gray used for architecture and infrastructure. The stylized array of images range from energetic views of the city streets to surreal settings featuring the seething activity going on beneath the city's surface.

The split perspective (each spread is divided by a horizontal line separating top and bottom) shows both above and below ground: above is the bustle of busy streets, commerce, people, traffic; below is a different sort of bustle that includes shops, subways, sewers, "and once, an alligator,/ reported *The New York Times* in 1935." On selected spreads the illustrative divisions between above and below are thematically related to the text: piano keys divide a park above from the jazz club below; directional signage provides the break between a busy "upside" intersection and the subway beneath. The art captures a city both obvious and mysterious; dynamic curves add energy and verve to compositions that present specific details of the environment in free-flowing geometric shapes. Rough but

effective caricatures in strokes of black highlighted with spots of color represent the city's industrious citizens, the figures characterized by the graceful sweep of their defining lines and dashes of facial features. The child-friendly endpapers open with a kid's drawing of the city complete with crayon scrawls and stick figures and close with a New York City subway map with some fanciful decorations (chugging train, parent and child).

A concluding addendum, "(Some) Notes from Underground," gives additional specifics about the different types of activities that go on under New Yorkers' unsuspecting feet. High's words and Rayevsky's images invite children to widen their horizons by showing them an alternative way of seeing. This is a visually arresting, concept-stretching, imaginative introduction to life in the big city that is certain to spark some archaeological leanings in listeners. (Imprint information appears on p. 304.)

Janice M. Del Negro, Editor



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

AHLBERG, ALLAN *My Brother's Ghost*. Viking, 2001 87p
ISBN 0-670-88779-X \$9.99

R Gr. 4-8

Ahlberg's touching and eccentric supernatural novella may be a surprise to those who know his work through *Each Peach, Pear Plum* (BCCB 7179) and *The Jolly Postman*, but ghost-story fans will appreciate the brief, almost documentary tale. The narrator, Frances, is nine years old when her ten-year-old brother Tom dies in an accident; their younger brother Harry is only three. Tom's accidental death (he is hit by a milk truck when he runs into the street after his dog, Rufus) is a blow that leaves his already orphaned siblings without their protector; his subsequent appearance as a slightly confused ghost resuming his old role is actually less shocking than his sudden demise. Frances relates Tom's arrival, his sojourn, and his final departure in matter-of-fact language that gives this memory of childhood a reliable authority sometimes missing from ghost tales. There is no flapping ghostly raiment or rattling chains or horrific visions; just Tom, looking the way he always did, leaning up against a tree, walking Frances to school, making sure Harry gets to the bathroom at night so he won't wet the bed. Tom stays until Rufus grows old and dies, and then he smilingly leads his (ghost) dog away. The point of view is a bit adult, but this title still feels like a family story, slightly faded and fuzzy with time, but real. You can't ask for more than that from a ghost story. Readers seeking that elusive short chapter book will appreciate the small trim size and brief but eloquent text. JMD

AHLBERG, ALLAN *The Snail House*; illus. by Gillian Tyler. Candlewick, 2001 32p
 ISBN 0-7636-0711-8 \$13.99 Ad 4-7 yrs

Grandma is minding the children, and as the day winds down she gathers her charges to the porch for a story—an impromptu fantasy about three children (identical to the grandkids) who “all of a sudden got so very, very small that they could leave that house of theirs by a crack under the door—and no one notice.” They move into a neatly furnished snail-shell house, and as its owner makes his sluggish way through the garden, they have a series of adventures involving a falling apple, a lost baby, and snail-eating thrush. Each tale is far too brief and gentle to stir much excitement in older lap-sitters, frequent intrusions and asides will sully the clarity of the stories for the youngest listeners, and Grandma’s failure to explain the shrinking magic will leave everyone befuddled. Tyler offers a pretty bit of bookmaking, though, in her romantic line-and-watercolor scenes, which are quite nearly capable of carrying the story without words. The snail house itself is a charming fantasy, from the clothesline hung between the snail’s antennae to the maple “whirlybird” ceiling fan, and the prosaic fauna are aptly intimidating. Varied layouts incorporating full bleeds, tiny vignettes, and Raymond Briggs-styled boxes and strips keep the visuals lively when the storyline lags, and the perils and delights lurking in the dense foliage may inspire imagined adventures beyond Grandma’s wildest dreams. EB

ALMOND, DAVID *Heaven Eyes*. Delacorte, 2001 [240p]
 ISBN 0-385-32770-6 \$15.95
 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

Three friends—Erin Law, January, and Mouse—run away from an orphanage and raft downriver. They navigate the Black Middens, a mass of mud and industrial muck surrounding the abandoned factory site where they find Heaven Eyes, a strangely compelling little girl (“There were webs stretched between her fingers. Her face was moon-pale. Her eyes were moon-round, watery blue. Her voice was high and light and yearning”) and Grampa, the unbalanced old man who cares for her. Heaven Eyes believes Erin and her friends are the “treasure” she has been waiting for: “‘Here they is, Grampa!’ she called. ‘Didn’t me tell you? Here is my treasures come out of the black Black Middens.’” Grampa begs to differ, but the uncanny little girl persuades him to let them stay. Heaven Eyes adopts Erin as her sister, instantly loving her; Grampa takes on Mouse as his helper in plundering the Middens. January slowly withdraws from his close camaraderie with Erin; he keeps his distance from everyone, determined to find out what secrets the old man is keeping. The voyage across the Black Middens is the transition from the mundane to the magical, and Almond’s language changes accordingly; his epic descriptions give a sense of great portent that adds to the surreal, otherworldly atmosphere. Unfortunately, the awkward incorporation of mystical elements mars the rising action; there is so little context for the unexplained events that they are more incongruous than intriguing. The relationships among the children are dynamic, however, and the details of Grampa’s fanatical search of the Black Middens are absorbing. By closely hewing to the traditions of the hero’s journey (the children set forth, enter a different world, encounter mystery and danger, exhibit bravery and save the princess), the book maintains strong forward momentum. Recommend this to readers who like their adventure with mystical overtones. JMD

ALVAREZ, JULIA *How Tía Lola Came to Visit Stay*. Knopf, 2001 [160p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-375-90215-5 \$17.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-80215-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

Miguel is having a hard time. His parents are divorced, and he and his younger sister, Juanita, have moved with Mami (their mother) from New York City to Vermont, leaving their artist father behind. Miguel is adjusting to a school where he is the only Latino, he's desperate to make the local Little League team, and he misses his father. Mami is having a few adjustment problems of her own, so she sends home to the Dominican Republic for a little tender loving care. Enter Tía Lola, Mami's favorite aunt, come to rescue not only her niece but just about everyone else she meets. Even Miguel has to admit that Tía Lola has "a voice impossible to resist. Like three handfuls of chocolate chips from the package in the closet, a can of Pringles, and his favorite SpaghettiOs, all to himself." Alvarez' characterizations are so distinct and she choreographs the players' interactions with each other so gracefully that the plot becomes more archetypal than predictable. In the end Tía Lola wins over the town, a crusty landlord, and even Miguel, and if she's a bit too good to be true it doesn't matter because by this point in the novel she has won the reader over as well. Alvarez is an affectionate narrator, observing the behaviors and feelings of all her characters, but especially Miguel, with whom she has a particularly delicate touch. Any Spanish words used in the text are defined immediately after, in context; the book includes a note about the specific idiosyncrasies of the Spanish spoken in the Dominican Republic. JMD

ASHABRANNER, BRENT *No Better Hope: What the Lincoln Memorial Means to America*; illus. with photographs by Jennifer Ashabranner and historical photographs. Twenty-First Century, 2001 64p (Great American Memorials)

ISBN 0-7613-1523-3 \$24.90

Ad Gr. 4-8

Seven brief chapters review Lincoln's presidency, discuss preliminary plans for a permanent memorial, describe the processes by which architect Henry Bacon and sculptor Daniel French developed and executed their creation, and suggest how the site has "become a symbol of the 'patient confidence' that Lincoln had in the wisdom and courage of the common people." Ashabranner's obvious admiration for Lincoln occasionally manifests itself in arguable claims and inflated language (the Lincoln Memorial may not be "the nation's best-known symbol of unity and greatness," nor is it entirely valid to claim that Lincoln died to preserve the nation). Moreover, the actual construction of the memorial is not covered in the detail young readers might desire, and only a few of the events staged at the memorial (Marian Anderson's concert, Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and the millennium celebration) are discussed in depth. Still, historical photos, a page of memorial measurements and statistics, and a bibliography and index make this a serviceable volume, and although this title doesn't offer much tourist appeal for children anticipating a trip to the capital, report writers will find what they need. EB

ATWELL, DEBBY *Pearl*; written and illus. by Debby Atwell. Lorraine/Houghton, 2001 32p

ISBN 0-395-88416-0 \$16.00

Ad 6-9 yrs

In the aftermath of her seventy-fifth wedding anniversary (circa 1960), nonagenar-

ian Pearl reflects on her family history and, concurrently, on the history of the nation. Each double spread illuminates a family episode—from her grandfather's memory of George Washington's inauguration, to the death of her brothers in the Civil War, to her husband's proud ownership of the first television on the block. Atwell manipulates Pearl's travels and domestic moves, one suspects, to make her eyewitness to more Big Events than most humble citizens are privileged to encounter; Pearl sees the buffalo stampede through Fort Worth, meets the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk, hears Dr. King preach in Alabama. Although Pearl's narration adds homely commentary to each era ("Most all of the men lost their jobs when the stock market crashed. I never understood what that meant. All I understood was it was mighty tough to keep food on the table"), listeners will certainly realize that beneath the veneer of fiction lies a social-studies lesson straight from the textbook. Primitive full-page paintings adorn each recto, while cramped text and a black-and-white vignette occupy the facing page. There's a lot of history here to digest at one sitting, but the engaging scenes may invite listeners to drop in on Pearl's reminiscences. EB

BAKER, KEITH *Little Green*; written and illus. by Keith Baker. Harcourt, 2001 32p

ISBN 0-15-292859-6 \$16.00

R 2-5 yrs

A little boy sits in his window, drawing pad and paint brushes in hand, recording the manic peregrinations of a hummingbird: "Stopping, starting, dashing, darting, Zigging, zagging everywhere." Baker keeps the boy's masterpiece hidden from view until the final spread, which reveals not the detailed portrait of the bird itself that the audience is led to expect, but a scrawly mishmash of multicolored lines tracing its dizzying flight. It's a slight joke, but this upending of predictability is pitched at just the right speed for youngsters whose own drawing skills may not be much more advanced. Cut-paper collages feature tropical-hued flora against a brilliant, broad blue sky, while *Little Green's* aerial antics are traced in a dashing, grainy white line. Large shapes on generous spreads will travel well to the back rows of the storytime crowd. This may be just the title for welcoming the return of all things buzzing and blooming. EB

BERGER, MELVIN *Mummies of the Pharaohs: Exploring the Valley of the Kings*; by Melvin and Gilda Berger. National Geographic, 2001 64p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-7922-7223-4 \$17.95

Ad Gr. 4-8

Stunning photographs, superbly reproduced, are the true draw of this volume on several of the notable cliff burials in the Valley of the Kings. The golden death mask of Tutankhamun will be a familiar image, but no more powerful or memorable than a black-and-white inset of his coffin being hoisted from its wooden shell or the full-page closeup of the pharaoh's gold-sheathed, mummified toes. A panoramic view of the interior of Seti I's tomb and an overhead shot of Hatshepsut's cliff temple ably convey the settings in which the mummies and artifacts were interred, and the curled fingers of Ramses II, raised against an ebony background, should satisfy every mummy-hound's dream. Though workmanlike, the text doesn't scale the heights of the illustrations. Organization appears haphazard, as the mummies are not introduced in order of their reign or discovery. The mummification process, presumably similar in all burials, is not discussed until the last pages, and the well-known story of Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon receives more atten-

tion than the equally fascinating stories behind other discoveries. Visual learners will probably brush these concerns aside, however, and children who simply “wanna see the pictures” will find these well worth their perusal. EB

BLACKSTONE, STELLA *There's a Cow in the Cabbage Patch*; illus. by Clare Beaton. Barefoot, 2001 32p
ISBN 1-84148-333-8 \$14.99 Ad 2-5 yrs

Two farmers try to sort out a farmyard fiasco: “There’s a cow in the cabbage patch, moo, moo, moo! She should be in the dairy, what shall we do?” Though the audience may have suggestions, they’ll realize, as the tale unfurls with more out-of-place animals, that the pandemonium will become worse before any solution can be found, and they will quickly take up guessing each new twist. The story is long and the finish abrupt, but the conclusion is humorous as it sorts the misplaced back to their proper locations. Beaton’s appliquéd felt scenes are somewhat static for such a lively story, but they lend a down-home feel to this farmyard saga and create interest with varying stitches, buttons, and patterns in strong primary and secondary colors. This title begs for audience participation; pair it with Sue Williams’ *I Went Walking* (BCCB 12/90) for a moo-ving storytime experience. EAB

BORDEN, LOUISE *The Day Eddie Met the Author*; illus. by Adam Gustavson. McElderry, 2001 [36p]
ISBN 0-689-83405-5 \$15.00 Ad Gr. 2-4

Excitement fills Eddie’s school at the prospect of a visit from a real live author, and Eddie’s no exception: he’s planning to ask the author a question about her writing. When the big day arrives, Eddie is rapt in the assembly, but when it comes time for question and answer his query gets lost in a sea of eager kids. Fortunately, the author singles him out after the assembly to respond to him, and an inspired Eddie is on his way to becoming a writer himself. Eddie’s (and the class’) enthusiasm is realistic and carefully evoked, and the message of human connection through literature (Eddie’s question is “How do you write books that have parts meant for me?”) is an important one. It’s over-reverently treated here, however, with everybody sweet and understanding from start to finish, and the absence of tension makes the long story even longer. Gustavson’s watercolors are thickly textured and his treatment serious; though the faces are sometimes vague and Eddie occasionally looks too old for a third-grader, there’s a creative use of perspective throughout that enlivens the visuals. Though it lacks the high spirits of Pinkwater’s *Author’s Day* (BCCB 4/93) or Helen Lester’s *Author* (4/97), this would be a useful prep for an author visit. DS

CHILD, LAUREN *Clarice Bean: Guess Who’s Babysitting?*; written and illus. by Lauren Child. Candlewick, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 0-7636-1373-8 \$16.99
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-6

In this sequel to *Clarice Bean: That’s Me*, Clarice Bean’s parents have to go out of town, and they need a babysitter for their sons and daughters. With nowhere else to turn, Mom is forced to ask her younger brother, Ted. Clarice Bean and her Uncle Ted “get along like a house on fire,” which is just what Mom is worried

about. Uncle Ted's babysitting is fraught with incident: little brother Minal Cricket lets Albert, Clarice Bean's class guinea pig, loose, Uncle Ted knocks Minal out with a well-aimed soccer ball, they all drive "like 50 miles an hour" to the emergency room, and Minal gets his head caught in a fence while chasing Albert. Mom returns, and with a steely calm she yanks order out of chaos. Clarice Bean's hyperactive storytelling relates the saga of loving but slightly inept and infinitely attractive Uncle Ted with great panache. Mixed-media illustrations feature a hyperkinetic cast of characters, all sharp edges and angles and flying hair and expressive eyes. The style is a combination of the compositional geometry of Maira Kalman, the loosely flowing line of Chris Raschka, and the collage-and-photo technique of G. Brian Karas, featuring a character that could be Hilary Knight's Eloise with a more wholesome family background. Pulsating background colors—hot pink, sunshine yellow—contrast with photo-images of brick and countryside. The literally meandering text wanders over the pages, alternating fonts and sizes, over, under, and around images, physically propelling the eye as the words propel the plot. Young readers just about Clarice Bean's well-informed precocious age will revel in her escapades. JMD

CLEARY, BRIAN P. *To Root, to Toot, to Parachute: What is a Verb?*; illus. by Jenya Prosmitsky. Carolrhoda, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 1-57505-403-5 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 1-3

"Whether you scale a wall or a fish,/ make a design on a cup or a dish,/ take out the garbage,/ or sharpen your knife—/ verbs are a part of your everyday life." Can't argue with that, and when Cleary cites oodles of examples in infinitive form or within the context of a phrase, he's on pretty solid ground. Soon his jingles diminish into simple rhymed wordlists, though, and many of the terms he offers do double duty as nouns ("Punt or pass or shoot or score,/ swim or paddle, pitch or pour"). The book makes the briefest of forays into forms of "be" and "have" and tosses in a selection of "ing" endings without pointing out the helping verbs hidden in contractions ('leaves when they're falling and wind when it's blowing"). Prosmitsky supplies a lot of sprightly visual nonsense through the antics of her lumpish, Kilroy-schnozzled critters who variously "disturb" sweethearts on a beach, "whack" their buddies, and "slam" doors as friends try to "sleep." While this doesn't approach the elegance or clarity of the Ruth Heller standard *Kites Sail High* (BCCB 1/89), its appealing silliness and a bit of adult intervention might drive the lesson home nonetheless. EB

COLLINS, PAT LOWERY *Just Imagine*. Houghton, 2001 [244p]

ISBN 0-618-05603-3 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Mary Francis is one of the fortunate Depression-era kids whose father has a steady, decent-paying job. His comfortable salary still has to support two households—the shabby apartment in an eastern mill town where he lives with Mary Francis and his mother, and a home in Beverly Hills, where his wife aggressively promotes the movie career of their adorable little son, Leland. Although these domestic arrangements are meant to be temporary—just until Leland's star ascends—Mary Francis is afraid the family will never reunite, and the alternate bickering and cold silences among her parents and grandmother make her fears seem well founded.

When the pressures of her life become overwhelming, Mary Francis calls upon the family “gift” she believes she’s inherited, the ability to separate spirit from body and float above the turmoil. Again Collins treats the metaphysical imaginings of a troubled adolescent with a rare blend of respect and humor (see *Signs & Wonders*, BCCB 11/99), but in this case Mary Francis’s spirit “flights” are not particularly involving or, for that matter, even pertinent to the family drama. Nonetheless, the hopes and hurts of this very credible family should engage readers’ interest and sympathies even without the fanciful plot line, and Mary Francis’s fierce loyalty to both flawed, loving parents is thoroughly convincing. EB

CRUTCHER, CHRIS *Whale Talk*. Greenwillow, 2001 [224p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029369-1 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-18019-1 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

T.J. (short for his given name of The Tao Jones) hates the jock worship at his high school, which is why he’s gone through nearly four years without playing on a school team despite his considerable athletic talents. A mixed-race kid in a largely white town (T.J. was adopted in early youth), he’s gotten his share of hatred from the jocks (and their recent-graduate ringleader, Rich Marshall), too. He nonetheless ends up as captain and driving force behind his high school’s first swim team, which comprises a broad sampling of misfits, and he takes particular pleasure in using the swim team’s likelihood of lettering to taunt the überjocks, so tensions are running high. When Rich Marshall’s sons and stepdaughter end up in foster care with T.J.’s family, serious trouble seems inevitable. There’s more than a sprinkling of sentimentality here, and the book doesn’t avoid clichés about underdog sports teams (“I have never coached a team with the guts this team has,” the coach predictably proclaims); it also seems to waver a bit on some of its moral stands (physical threat seems to be variably acceptable). It nonetheless has a hard core of smoldering anger that is almost palpable, which a lot of readers will appreciate: T.J. is merciless in his disdain of the unjustly powerful in his world, and his victories over them provide a particularly sweet satisfaction. The book balances out the pleasure of those victories with a painful price (Rich Marshall’s revenge attempt kills T.J.’s father), but there’s pain throughout—what’s emphasized are the human bonds that can surmount and heal human destruction. The emotional dynamics are the main point here, and they’ll keep Crutcher fans—and other young adults disturbed by daily injustice—absorbed throughout. DS

DiCAMILLO, KATE *The Tiger Rising*. Candlewick, 2001 [128p]

ISBN 0-7636-0911-0 \$12.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Since his mother’s death, Rob and his father have been living in the Kentucky Star Motel in rural Florida, where, in the woods behind the motel, Rob finds a beautiful full-grown tiger in a cage. Rob has no friends at school until he meets Sistine, a girl in a frilly pink dress who beats up anyone who teases her, and Rob finds himself telling Sistine about his discovery. She asks to see the tiger for herself and subsequently campaigns to convince Rob to help her free the big cat. Meanwhile, the motel owner puts Rob in charge of feeding the animal, dropping raw meat by his hotel room home twice a day and giving Rob the keys to the cage. Rob’s acceptance of his own painful emotions about his mother’s death expands through

his friendship with Sistine, and the two of them literally free the tiger from the cage while symbolically freeing Rob's grief. DiCamillo's latest work is written with the same flavor of magical realism that won her acclaim for *Because of Winn Dixie* (BCCB 6/00), with lyrical prose and deft descriptions that evoke inimitable settings and main characters. Unfortunately, the supporting cast of characters here are more stock than those in her previous novel, with Rob's father characterized mostly by his strong silence and a black maid at the motel functioning as a "prophetess" to the two children. Nevertheless, DiCamillo's careful descriptions spin threads of emotion that are both gossamer and bold, portraying Rob's isolation and his slow recovery with honesty and sympathy. Young readers who enjoyed DiCamillo's first novel won't be disappointed by her second. KM

DOYLE, MALACHY *Hungry! Hungry! Hungry!*; illus. by Paul Hess. Peachtree, 2001 26p
ISBN 1-56145-241-6 \$15.95 R 4-7 yrs

A little boy and a "grisly, ghastly goblin" engage in a question-answer session, the little boy posing such queries as "Why have you got such great big feet?" and "Why have you got such skinny little thighs?" The goblin answers every other question with "Hungry! Hungry! Hungry!", and it won't be long before listeners catch on to the rhythmic refrains and understand where the plot is going. Doyle's text is a retelling of the traditional English folktale "The Visitor," collected by Joseph Jacobs. While Jacobs' version is obscured by arcane language, Doyle sets his retelling in the here and now, with a modern little boy instead of an old woman and with a less ambivalent conclusion. The illustrations show the boy meeting the goblin outside the house, and then move inside, as the boy questions the ever-closer goblin about himself and his gustatory goal (lunch). Doyle mitigates the standard "gotcha" ending by having the boy offer the goblin a jelly bean, which he accepts as substitute for a more, shall we say, robust meal. Hess' illustrations have a slick, Anthony Browne finish; the colors are modern neon and the free-floating compositional elements add a touch of the surreal. The goblin is a round-headed green mutant figure that follows the boy relentlessly; the action takes place in a domestic household literally twisted by the arrival of this otherworldly being. Domestic details in each illustration provide viewers with plenty of absorbing stuff to look at. This is just scary enough for storytime, with a tone similar to O'Malley's *Velcome* (BCCB 11/97). JMD

EDWARDS, MICHELLE *Zero Grandparents*. Harcourt, 2001 [64p]
ISBN 0-15-202083-7 \$14.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

Though Calliope James usually loves second grade at Jackson Magnet, Mrs. Fennessey's announcement about upcoming Grandparents Day disrupts her world: Calliope has no grandparent to bring. Her two best friends, Howie and Pa Lia, offer to share their grandmas, and her mother and father offer to come instead, but Calliope still isn't satisfied. Finding a picture of her grandmother Flory Sophia Turnipseed in a family album, Calliope is bolstered by the similarities between her and Flory (teeth, freckles, hands) and by the shawl her grandmother hand-knitted. When Grandparents Day arrives, Calliope is armed with her treasures and ready to tell their story. Calliope's schoolroom dilemma and her refusal to accept substitutes will ring true for the audience. Short chapters and a large typeface will help

to ease newly independent readers' transition to chapter books. The book is rich with black-and-white illustrations in spot and full-page art, their solid lines and homey flavor providing even more accessibility. Suggest this second entry in the Jackson Friends series to kids who may enjoy a sweeter version of Horrible Harry. EAB

EHLERT, LOIS *Waiting for Wings*; written and illus. by Lois Ehlert. Harcourt, 2001 38p
ISBN 0-15-202608-8 \$17.00 R 4-7 yrs

Ehlert's splashy graphics are at their blooming best in this rhyming introduction to the life cycle of butterflies: "Out in the fields, eggs are hidden from view, // clinging to leaves with butterfly glue." In the first third, the pages run riot with purple blossoms and dark green foliage among which the eggs hatch into caterpillars; the caterpillars munch leaves, spin cocoons, and emerge as butterflies. Up until this point the rhyming is simple but graceful. In the middle, wherein the butterflies seek and find a butterfly garden, the text becomes awkward and forced ("They pump their wings, get ready to fly, // then hungry butterflies head for the sky. // Looking for flowers with nectar to eat, // they catch a whiff of something sweet") with a tendency toward imprecise language ("fragrant scent of perfume"). The conclusion (in which the butterflies feast in the garden and then return to the fields to lay eggs) redeems the clumsy middle lines somewhat, and Ehlert's flowers are just irresistible. Scads of golden marigolds, yellow black-eyed susans, purple thistle, pink impatiens, and other blooms fill up the pages, colorfully clamoring for viewers' attention. Butterflies float from page to page and flower to flower; they can be matched with their names and pictures in the "Butterfly Identification" section. (Ehlert also includes a page of butterfly information, a "Flower Identification" page, and instructions for growing a butterfly garden.) Each spread is an amazement of intensely-hued blossoms against stark white pages; the effect makes the flowers pop off the page. Numerous uses, from storytimes to nature crafts to curriculum connections, make this a rewarding choice. JMD

FARRELL, MAME *And Sometimes Why*. Farrar, 2001 [176p]
ISBN 0-374-32289-9 \$16.00
Reviewed from galley

Ad Gr. 5-7

The summer after eighth grade, Jack starts noticing that his longterm best friend, Chris, isn't just a great sports partner but also a very attractive girl. This discovery unnerves Jack, and he's even more dismayed when he sees other boys realizing the same thing. Chris, accustomed to being the overlooked outsider from the wrong side of the tracks, is wary of the changes, but she's not above enjoying some of their effects, including the attentions of country-club boys with status. Jack would like inclusion in the in-crowd himself, so he breaks his friendly date with Chris for the club cotillion to take a more popular girl—which leaves Chris free for a real date. The blossoming of romantic possibilities is a standard plot, but this is an unusual look at it: there's no inevitable progress from friendship to dating (Chris and Jack don't end up with each other), and the complications of social ambition and genuinely confused emotions add dimension. The writing unfortunately doesn't take great advantage of those dimensions, since the snobby unpopular kids' comeuppance comes from the genuine meanness of sympathetic characters (Jack and his older sister), and Jack's emotions remain confusing to the reader as well—is he

suppressing his romantic interest in Chris to keep their friendship, or was he really just jealous? Subplots about Jack's and Chris' families aren't up to the main plot's standard, either, and there are some awkward sit-commy components (Jack's precocious little brother and Chris' cold-cocking of Jack following his attempt to kiss her). The protagonists (particularly Chris) and their situation are memorable, however, and this may suit readers looking for something more offbeat than a traditional romance. DS

FLORIAN, DOUGLAS *Lizards, Frogs, and Polliwogs*; written and illus. by Douglas Florian. Harcourt, 2001 48p
ISBN 0-15-202591-X \$16.00 R Gr. 3-6

Steadily and poetically marching through the animal kingdom, Florian now offers a gallery of reptiles and amphibians in his familiar format. As usual, each spread offers a critter portrait opposing a pithy poem, the format of which varies from brisk couplets ("On Dad's back the eggs are toted./ To his kids he's *toadally* devoted"—"The Midwife Toad") to longer lyrics ("Brown with oval orange spots/ Crimson mottled black with blots./ Neon green with blue-black bands./ Tangerine with lemon strands . . ."—"The Poison-Dart Frogs"). There are also some witty acknowledgments of reptilian predation ("The lump in the middle?/ You don't want to know"—"The Diamondback Rattlesnake"; ". . . But did you know that alligators/ Sometimes swallow second graders?"—"The Crocodile and the Alligator") that will provide some gleeful chills, and several offerings have sonorous wordplay or onomatopoeia that makes them beg to be read aloud ("The Bullfrog" could well be arranged à la *Joyful Noise* for choric reading). The watery watercolors on brown paper are usefully aquatic for the amphibians, but the land-dwellers come off pretty well too: the bug-eyed alligator looms over primary-schoolers obliviously walking into his jaws, and a delicate tracery of brown demarcates the cobra on his sandy ground. Green is appropriately dominant throughout (the brown and yellow python fairly shimmers against his green background), and the incorporation of the verses' imaginative conceits results in entertainingly bizarre visuals such as the wood frog on a popsicle stick. Readers will relish this addition to Florian's series of unnatural history. DS

GREGORY, KRISTIANA *Five Smooth Stones: Hope's Diary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1776*. Scholastic, 2001 [112p] (My America Books)
ISBN 0-439-14827-8 \$8.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 2-5

With the now-predictable combination of childlike interests and political acumen shared by a host of fictional diarists, nine-year-old Hope Potter records her observations of the comings and goings of the fictitious and famous in Philadelphia at the onset of Revolution. Father is off on a secret mission, Mother is running the family bakery, brother Ethan is trying to decide whether he's Patriot or Tory, the widowed Quaker neighbor is "read out" by her family, Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson are buying tarts when they're not meeting in Congress, and Hope reads Thomas Paine and commits portions of the Declaration of Independence to memory when she's not helping in the shop. While this title features some weaknesses of the recent spate of series historical fiction—especially a tendency to offer diary notations that serve no purpose other than the reader's edification—it also shares a commendable strength. Kid-pleasing, authentic details of everyday life abound—

from harsh, often cruel, classroom discipline, to the simple problem of hiding a quill pen from a predatory house cat, to the severe discomforts of life without electricity and central heating. Gregory leaves readers with some cliffhangers and the promise of a coming sequel. Historical notes (in which Betsy Ross is credited with sewing the first American flag) are appended. EB

HIGH, LINDA OATMAN *Under New York*; illus. by Robert Rayevsky. Holiday House, 2001 30p
ISBN 0-8234-1551-1 \$16.95 R* 5-8 yrs

See this month's Big Picture, p. 293, for review.

HOBERMAN, MARY ANN, ad. *There Once Was a Man Named Michael Finnegan*; illus. by Nadine Bernard Westcott. Tingley/Little, 2001 30p
ISBN 0-316-36301-4 \$14.95 R 4-7 yrs

Hoberman extends the musical tale of Michael Finnegan, who "had whiskers on his chin-igan,/ Shaved them off and they grew in-igan,/ Poor old Michael Finnegan, begin-igan." In this version, Michael's propensity for performing bad music earns him a kick in the "shin-igan," as well as a tin full of money (the neighbors pay to keep him quiet), which he uses to buy a car to visit relatives. When even they make fun of his violin playing, he is despondent until he finds the canine "Quinn-igan," who shares the same musical tastes. Hoberman effectively employs the four-line-stanza form throughout the tale, ending each line with "igan" to continue the silliness, and ending each stanza with "begin-igan," prompting more stanzaic shenanigans. Westcott joins in with her signature watercolor and ink illustrations, extending the humor of the text with double-page spreads bleeding off the pages. A cotton-candy palette contributes to the lighthearted mood created by breezy lines. Combine this with Iza Trapani's *The Itsy Bitsy Spider* for extended storytime adventure as you dream up more (mis)adventures for these folkloric folk. Musical notation is included. EAB

JANOWITZ, TAMA *Hear That?*; illus. by Tracy Dockray. SeaStar, 2001 34p
Trade ed. ISBN 1-58717-074-4 \$15.95
Library ed. ISBN 1-58717-075-2 \$15.88 Ad 3-6 yrs

Mom and her towheaded son, the narrator, hear a buzzing and wonder together about the source of the sound. As they listen more closely, they hear more noises ("Hear THAT?") until they are wandering around the house, chasing noises and imagining more and more outrageous sources ("'Maybe it's our wombat,' I said. 'Going through the smelly garbage in the kitchen'"). The illustrations show increasingly frenetic scenes, including a kitchen full of kangaroos and a walrus spilling out of the fridge. Finally, the noises all turn out to be Daddy, coming home on a very rainy evening, and the final page shows him starting a renewed round of fun, asking "Hear THAT?" The story here is inarguably slight, the Daddy solution rather baffling (how would he be making those noises?), and some of the flights of fancy seem more forced than others. The illustrations are invitingly silly, however, with loosely cartoonish compositions that feature onomatopoeic words leading off to the next page. The audience might consider the Daddy answer slightly unfair, since it was Mom's first suggestion at the very beginning, but they may be willing to suspend critical judgment in favor of an imaginative romp around the house, playing their own games of "Hear THAT?" KM

JUDES, MARIE-ODILE *Max: The Stubborn Little Wolf*; tr. by Joan Robins; illus. by Martine Bourre. HarperCollins, 2001. 32p
ISBN 0-06-029417-5 \$14.95 R 4-6 yrs

Papa Wolf is determined to change Little Max's chosen vocation (florist): "Wolf fathers and sons are hunters, have always been hunters, and always will be hunters. You, my son, will follow the family tradition." His plans to make a hunter out of Max go awry—instead of joining in, Max warns an approaching rabbit of his father's dastardly plans: "Quick! Save yourself, little rabbit. . . . My papa wants to eat you!" Other plans to alter Max's floral leaning also fail, forcing Papa Wolf to honor his promise and eat his words in the form of a hat, a pillow, and the family dishes, until Papa *does* change Max's mind—by accidentally convincing him to become a perfume maker instead. Bourre's lively illustrations rely on earth colors punctuated by occasional strong reds and greens, and the wolf parent and son are amusingly expressive. Visual jokes abound, with pig, rabbit, and lamb motifs hidden in the articles of daily life (curtains, bedspreads, toys). Though there may be an unacknowledged message about gender roles hidden here, the wolf story is funny in its own right, and Papa Wolf's omnivorous punishment and final surprise disappointment will tickle the audience (they'll gleefully anticipate the final page, where Papa Wolf chokes down the china). Bring this lupine romp out for little ones who may not be ready for Scieszka's *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by A. Wolf but who will appreciate a different wolfish perspective. EAB

JUSSIM, DANIEL *Double Take: The Story of Twins*. Viking, 2001 [96p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-670-88452-9 \$17.99
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-5

It's probably appropriate that books about twins come in pairs, with Donna Jackson's *Twin Tales* (BCCB 2/01) covering much the same ground as this title. Like Jackson's book, *Double Take* discusses conjoined twins, twins separated at birth, multiples beyond two, and the sometimes dark history of twins through the ages, often discussing the same individual cases (the McCaughey septuplets, the conjoined Hensel twins); it goes beyond the previous title in examining the greater cost, healthwise and financially, of multiple birth. The writing is often lackluster, however, and the large number of anecdotes slows the pacing, especially as many are from adults. The book is also more doctrinaire, accepting the idea that individual identity is requisite, while Jackson allows for the possibility that some twins have found eminent satisfaction in a different kind of identity. The black-and-white photographs are often small and dark, providing little contrast, so the result is a sometimes stodgy look that fails to capitalize on the strong visuals of the book's subject. Though this does touch on a few original areas, Jackson's book is the better title; if you've got high demand for that one, you might want to extend your twin family with this. Source notes, a list of additional resources, and an index will be included in the bound book. DS

KIMMEL, ERIC A., ad. *A Cloak for the Moon*; illus. by Katya Krenina. Holiday House, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-8234-1493-0 \$16.95 Ad 5-9 yrs

Haskel, a young tailor, is enamored of the moon: "At night he climbed to the roof of his house, where he lay for hours watching the moon. He never tired of looking

at her." The moon, in the form of a beautiful woman, visits Haskel in a dream; she complains of the cold, and the tailor vows to make her "a cloak of shining silver thread." A friend tells him of a legendary garment made of light that adjusts to fit the wearer; Haskel's quest to find this garment leads him to distant ports. In one such port he locates the garment and, in attempting to discover how the garment was made, finds the secret of weaving with moonlight. He returns home and sews a cloak for the moon, "just as he had promised." Kimmel's adaptation is based on one of the tales of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, an eighteenth-century Jewish mystic. This is a sturdy enough retelling, but the action is subdued: Haskel does little more than travel from city to city, port to port until he finds the garment he seeks. The story lacks tension and there is little to hold readers or listeners. The palette consists of muted, earthy reds, blues, and greens, which suits the moonlight motif, but the gouache illustrations are a haphazard collection of culturally generic panoramas and awkwardly drafted figures. While this doesn't have the excitement of more event-driven plots, this may be just the ticket for those looking for a quiet contemplative tale for reading aloud or storytelling. JMD

KINDL, PATRICE *Goose Chase*. Houghton, 2001 [224p]
ISBN 0-618-03377-7 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

Alexandria Aurora Fortunato had been living a perfectly satisfactory life as Goose Girl, tending her beloved flock of a dozen geese, when without so much as a by-your-leave an old hag granted her stunning beauty and a tendency to brush gold dust from her hair and to weep diamonds. Now a marital prize, she's locked in a tower until she chooses between the Prince of Dorloo (young and benign but also clueless) and the King of Gilboa (old and malicious). Her geese come to her rescue, but escape from the tower is not escape from her suitors. When the hapless prince pursues her, she manages to save him from man-eating ogres and becomes his unwilling comrade as they together attempt to elude the king's agents with the help of Alexandria's fowl friends; while her disdain for the prince lessens as they undergo trials of capture and escape, it looks like the king's great power means an inevitably tragic end—or does it? Rather than a retelling of a folktale, this is a confabulation of many tales' motifs, including the dropping of magical objects that transform to impede evil pursuers, the enchantment of siblings as birds, the royal child living as a commoner, as well as the obvious echoes in Alexandria's position and gifts. The components synthesize amiably into their own fairy-tale-flavored narrative; Kindl's wry and coolly challenging voice, however, brings Alexandria's narration closer to the sharp-tongued adventure of *The Princess Bride* than the retellings of Donna Jo Napoli or Robin McKinley, and at times there's a picaresque mood to Alexandria's adventures. This is less conceptually original than Kindl's other titles (*Owl in Love*, BCCB 10/93 and *The Woman in the Wall*, 3/97), but it may in consequence have broader appeal as well as satisfying readers who recognize self-contained Alexandria as a worthy Kindl heroine. DS

KLISE, KATE *Trial by Jury Journal*; illus. by M. Sarah Klise. HarperCollins, 2001 [208p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029541-4 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-380-97880-6 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-7

Klise romps through the criminal justice system with this tale of Lily Watson, the

first juvenile juror in Missouri (more likely, in the world), which unfolds swiftly through a collection of documents (not unlike Avi's *Nothing But the Truth*). Eleven-year-old Perry Keet is presumed dead and, under a new law that requires a minor to serve in any capital case involving a juvenile victim, sixth-grader Lily is sworn in to help determine whether seedy, semiliterate Bob White is the nefarious perp or an innocent dupe. The legalistic shenanigans that set up the story are mighty difficult to choke down, from the illogical mandate of a juvenile juror as "peer" to the victim rather than the accused; to the impanelment of persons who know the victim and each other; to the ease with which sequestered jurors commune with the outside world, with or without court permission. Clearly, though, Klise doesn't expect for a minute to be taken seriously—shameless puns, outrageous ongoing felonies by the true villain (who's a sly referent to the Wizard of Oz), and a wildly satiric setting in a cross between Potterville and Disneyland make it clear we're not in the real world here. Readers who lament that they can never figure out a mystery by a novel's end will have happily fingered the criminal long before Lily solves the crime and saves the day. EB

KOERTGE, RON *The Brimstone Journals*. Candlewick, 2001 113p
ISBN 0-7636-1302-9 \$15.99 Ad Gr. 6-9

"Brimstone" is the unflattering nickname bestowed on Branston High School by its students; in a collection of free-verse monologues, fifteen of those students offer their individual views of their lives, lives that are on the verge of being changed forever as a bitter and disaffected student joins a plan to amass weapons for massacre of those named on his ever-growing list. The voices run the gamut from an avid player of videogames through a militant African-American girl who derides formal orthography as "jis another way/ 2 keep my black brotherz and sistahs/ down," to the thoughtful son of Vietnamese immigrant parents, as well as the principal players in the drama: Boyd, preparing for destruction, and Lester, the denigrated, who becomes a part of Boyd's plan but alerts the police in time to stop it. The book intriguingly pulls students' private pain into the larger drama, sometimes directly (one girl borrows a gun from Boyd in order to threaten her sexually aggressive stepfather, and another takes a weapon in order to kill herself) and sometimes indirectly (a shy anorexic's main relief, when the plot is averted, is that she didn't end up in the hospital where they'd make her eat). Though the monologues are more prosy than poetic, there's a keen and perceptive edge to many of the voices, ranging from Boyd's harsh and impoverished language to Lester's sad decision to join Boyd ("Okay, fine. So I'll be an anarchist./ I'm nothing now but a fat kid"); there are also some realistic loose ends left. The pieces are somewhat uneven, however, and too much is dependent on implication, so the voices are often more individually compelling than effective as a part of the whole. This is still an insightful and sometimes touching story of youthful pain and despair, however, and it offers an interesting counterbalance to Strasser's more intense and reportorial *Give a Boy a Gun* (BCCB 10/00). DS

LAWSON, JULIE *Destination Gold!* Orca, 2001 [212p]
ISBN 1-55143-155-6 \$16.95
Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Klondike gold is sure to be the financial salvation of Ned Turner, his widowed mother, and his younger sister, Sarah, or so Ned thinks as he joins the throng of prospectors headed to the frozen El Dorado in 1897. He's promptly fleeced by a

scoundrel named “Montana” Jim Daley, but he manages to make his way to the fields, where a seasoned miner takes him on as a wage laborer. On a parallel course, sixteen-year-old Catherine flees to a new life in the Yukon, believing she’s murdered the brutish man who won her in a poker game. As the Muse of Melodrama would have it, both teens were victimized by the one and the same Montana Jim, and it takes near-miraculous interventions by Sarah Turner (who makes her own way to the North), kindly miners, and scruffy but, of course, faithful dog Nugget to secure the pair wealth, romance, and the expected happy-ever-after. Catherine’s story has been tidied up for a young audience (Montana won her because he “needed a servant”), and Ned’s repeated gullibility is a bit of a stretch. Even dastardly Montana Jim is little more than the parody of a villain: “‘Montana, you scum! Let her go!’ ‘Try ’n stop me, kid. Or why doncha sic that mutt on me? Nothin’ I’d like better than to finish it off.’” Still, even clichés are fresh on the first encounter, and readers who only venture into the great outdoors in Mom’s SUV may find Ned and Catherine’s odyssey an exciting adventure. EB

L’ENGLE, MADELEINE *The Other Dog*; illus. by Christine Davenier. SeaStar, 2001 [42p]

Library ed. ISBN 1-58717-041-8 \$15.88

Trade ed. ISBN 1-58717-040-X \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 6-9 yrs

Touché is a happy and cherished poodle discomfited by her owners’ decision to get another dog. The new dog can’t compete with Touché’s considerable charms, in Touché’s eloquent opinion, since it lacks some basic attributes (hair and tail) as well as some basic accomplishments (it’s not housebroken). Eventually the poodle resigns herself to the fact that little Jo “is just of an inferior breed called ‘baby,’” and she turns herself into Jo’s protector and entertainer. There’s a lot of text here for such a youthfully slanted story, and Touché’s change of heart isn’t clearly enough a result of time, so it seems sudden. The poodle’s arch and self-centered narration is very amusing, however, and the dog’s-eye view of the new baby will be obliquely soothing to novice older sibs who have a similarly jaundiced opinion. Cream pages have a slightly retro look appropriate to the Duvoisin air of Davenier’s illustrations, which feature ebullient washes of color and sinuous thready lines that use varying thickness to energetic textural effect. Golden Touché has appropriate star quality, with her corkscrew curls and winning smile fetchingly set off by her top-knot; the spotlight of the spot art gives her maximum opportunity to gain audience attention. Charlotte Voake’s *Ginger* (BCCB 4/97) offered a feline version of dethronement; this is a lighthearted canine/interspecies counterpart. A detailed author’s note (too long for the book’s audience) tells the story of L’Engle’s poodle, the real-life Touché. DS

LEWIS, J. PATRICK *A Burst of Firsts: Doers, Shakers, and Record Breakers*; illus. by Brian Ajhar. Dial, 2001 [34p]

ISBN 0-8037-2108-0 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

Twenty-two poems celebrate a variety of achievements, some lighthearted (“First Parachute Wedding”) and some serious and significant (“First Men on the Moon”). There’s also a generous helping of athletics (“First Non-Japanese Sumo Wrestler,” “First Man to Win the Heavyweight Boxing Title Three Times”) and just general

trivia (“First House of Cards with More than 500 Decks”). Though the theme is piquant, it’s rather stretched—some achievements are less firsts than mosts or onlies (“The Biggest Bubble-Gum Bubble Ever Blown”), fiction is admitted as well as fact (the brontosaurus’ tail is the first breaker of the sound barrier), and not all of the facts are correct (Ruby Bridges wasn’t the first child to integrate an all-white school). The poems are also uneven: Lewis is at his best with tight rhyme, bouncy rhythms, and soundplay, which serve some verses well (“First Man to Win Springboard- and Platform-Diving Gold Medals in Two Olympics”) but undercut serious topics with their jingly effect. The line-and-watercolor illustrations have an amiable exaggeration reminiscent of Kevin O’Malley’s work; layouts and compositions are energetic and varied, and readers will enjoy hunting for the bubble-gum-bubble blower, whose huge bubble lifts her up into the sky and floats her through the rest of the spreads in the book. This doesn’t quite have the zing that one would like, but readers will be curious about the idea and may wish to add their own versical firsts. DS

LIPP, FREDERICK *The Caged Birds of Phnom Penh*; illus. by Ronald Himler. Holiday House, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-8234-1534-1 \$16.95 Ad 5-8 yrs

Eight-year-old Ary contributes to the family income by selling flowers to tourists on the streets of Phnom Penh, but she dreams of a better life in the “green world outside the capital city.” She gives her hard-earned coins to a cunning bird lady near the temple steps and selects a bird from the cage that she can set free to carry her wishes aloft; the bird, however, returns to its keeper, because it “had grown accustomed to its prison.” Ary’s grandfather counsels her to choose a bird more wisely, and on her next visit Ary selects a bird with memories of its freedom, whose release is more gratifying: “The little bird grew smaller and smaller as it moved into the east, where the sun was a yellow sliver, a lemon rind of dawn. Ary knew in her heart somehow, in some way, her wishes would come true.” Lipp’s evocation of a young girl’s wish to escape urban poverty is earnest and heartfelt, but while adults can readily infer the extent of Ary’s need, young listeners will miss the concrete details to drive the point home. The fresh “yellow winds” of the countryside seem to be Ary’s dreamed alternative, but Lipp romanticizes away the arduous labor and probable poverty of the rice farmers as well. Himler likewise offers such hazy, prettified city scenes that the audience is unlikely to discern why Ary wants to escape. The custom of sending wishes heavenward on birds’ wings is appealing, though, and listeners may want to compare Ary’s dreams with those of the homeless narrator in Bunting’s *Fly Away Home* (BCCB 5/91). EB

MANNING, MICK *Supermom*; ISBN 0-8075-7666-2; *Wash, Scrub, Brush*; ISBN 0-8075-8668-4. Each book: written and illus. by Mick Manning and Brita Granström. Whitman, 2001 [31p] \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 3-5 yrs

These two titles compare human habits of mothering and hygiene to similar habits of creatures throughout the animal kingdom. *Supermom* is the weaker of the two titles, drawing very loose connections between animal mothering (carrying babies via mouth or piggyback style) and human mothering (carrying a baby on a scooter) and possessing a distinctly anthropocentric sensibility. Line-and-watercolor illustrations add appeal, as in a spread showing moms on the verso and their babies on

the recto, with the onomatopoeic sounds of each species connecting the mom and baby. In *Wash, Scrub, Brush*, Manning explores all aspects of human bathroom use, from hand washing to lice removal, including veiled references to flatulence along the way (“Someone smells like they’ve laid a rotten egg. Phew!”). The minimal explanations are likely to need adult interpretation, as in a spread on worm prevention, showing a picture of a cat (“Kittens and puppies . . . need to be wormed by a vet”) and an up-close picture of pinworms (“Pinworms . . . make your bottom itchy”). Nevertheless, the cheerful illustrations of happily hygienic round-faced figures may facilitate some direct discussion of potentially uncomfortably private bathroom topics. Unfortunately, art in both books is compositionally cluttered with animal examples that are occasionally irrelevant. Although some families may use *Wash, Scrub, Brush* as a personal-hygiene conversation-starter, most will want to look elsewhere for books showing mothering habits of animals. KM

MAZER, NORMA FOX *Girlhearts*. HarperCollins, 2001 [224p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-06866-9 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13350-9 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

At thirteen, Sarabeth finds her life changing drastically when her mother suddenly collapses and dies of a heart attack; this leaves Sarabeth, whose father died years ago, completely alone. She moves in with her mother’s best friend, Cynthia, which proves a strain on everybody: Cynthia’s husband resents the intrusion on their privacy, new mother Cynthia finds it exhausting to drive Sarabeth across town to school, and Sarabeth bitterly misses her own home. As it becomes harder for Sarabeth to find a place for herself, she becomes interested in connecting with the families her mother and father left behind in their small home town. Though the story leaves quite a few loose ends (why was Sarabeth’s mother in the park where she died? What happens in Sarabeth’s possibly-more-than-a-friendship with the appealing James?), Sarabeth’s narration is penetrating and poignant in its evocation of bereavement. Mazer is particularly perceptive in her depiction of Sarabeth’s keen need for her friends, which makes Cynthia’s plan for her to transfer to a nearby school unbearable; grief also realistically makes Sarabeth often out of step with those same friends and even the realities of the situation as she struggles to deal with the relentless barrage of change. Sarabeth’s search for her place after terrible loss makes a poignant story that will resonate with many readers. DS

McEWAN, JAMIE *The Heart of Cool*; illus. by Sandra Boynton. Simon, 2001 [48p] (Ready-to-Read Books)

ISBN 0-689-82177-8 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 2-3

Polar bear Bobby doesn’t just aspire to be cool enough to survive at his new school, he is determined to be as cool as humanly—or in his particular case, animally—possible. Bobby idolizes Harry Haller, the celebrated “emperor of cool,” and carefully copies his dress, mannerisms, and radical skateboard moves; he succeeds so well that Bobby virtually freezes one day in class, and only Harry recognizes that his protégé has, in fact, arrived “right at the center, right at the heart of cool.” Of course, schoolyard royalty never reigns unchallenged, and Siggie Sidewinder dares Bobby to top his own skateboarding skills. Bobby gets so lost in the coolness of his

awesome flight that he boards right out of the half pipe and lands in a hedge. He's lost his fans, but Harry seems to appreciate his experience: "You know, Bobby. Many catch air. Only a few take flight." McEwan steers early-chapter-book readers toward considering issues of peer pressure and self esteem, but the "cool is internal" message is inexplicit enough that kids may not grasp it. Is Bobby cool because he successfully emulates Harry? Is he cool because he finds his own psychic center? Is he truly cool in spite of or because of his flight and fall? Weighty matters, these, and the lengthy text doesn't have quite enough wit to sustain its momentum. Boynton's deadpan cartoon menagerie offers congenial company, however, and they and McEwan's wryly humorous tone may be enough to keep kids reading. EB

MORA, PAT, ed. *Love to Mamá: A Tribute to Mothers*; illus. by Paula S. Barragán M. Lee & Low, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 1-58430-019-1 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

Thirteen poems by thirteen Latino authors (Francisco X. Alarcón, Mora herself, and others) provide a variety of views on mothers and mothering. The poems are written, for the most part, from the points of view of the adult poets recalling the specific loving women who influenced their lives. The mostly free-verse poems focus on the domestic, with food figuring prominently as a source of love and security. There is a wistfulness about some of the entries, especially when they refer to the way a song or a story would remind the women about their old homes. The quality of the poetry is uneven (and the inclusion of only one poem in Spanish is a curious decision), but overall the stronger poems carry the day. Computer-enhanced mixed-media illustrations (pencil, cut paper, gouache) serve as busy visual backdrops for the poetry. The opaque, saturated palette gives a poster-like flatness to the compositions, but slightly askew geometric figures add additional energy. Remember this for May displays and programming. JMD

MORRIS, GERALD *Parsifal's Page*. Houghton, 2001 [240p]
ISBN 0-618-05509-6 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-10

Morris returns with a new entry in his light retellings of Arthurian legends: the quest of Parsifal, seen through the eyes of his inexperienced young page, Piers. The boy's father is a skilled blacksmith who wants to pass on his trade, but his mother is a former lady-in-waiting with a taste for grandeur, and she encourages him to sign on with a passing knight. Piers' new master turns out to be both a traitor and a fool, who meets a swift and deserved end at the hands of uncouth but honest would-be knight Parsifal. The boy changes masters, and he journeys with the unmannerly though potentially heroic Parsifal on his quest to do deeds worthy of admission to the Round Table. Morris takes an irreverent tone toward Parsifal's unswerving loyalty to the code of the Round Table and his to mother's advice, yet he never loses sight of the goal—the successful completion of the quest—and to that end, Parsifal grows into a true hero. The darker aspects of Arthurian lore are precisely handled, and their presence provides the shadow necessary to balance the lighter humor. Old friends from previous titles (*The Squire's Tale*, BCCB 7/98, *The Squire, His Knight and His Lady*, 3/99) make small but critical appearances that will be appreciated by fans. Morris includes a note with information on his sources and interpretations. JMD

MYERS, WALTER DEAN *The Greatest: Muhammad Ali*. Scholastic, 2001 172p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-590-54342-3 \$16.95 R Gr. 6-9

The public life of former boxing heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali is given close scrutiny by Myers, who in his introduction states, "In his private life, Ali is revealed to be a man of human faults and human weaknesses. I appreciate the 'normal' Muhammad Ali, but I choose to write about 'The Greatest.'" Myers' focus is Ali's boxing career and his place in the history of professional boxing in the United States in the last half of the twentieth century. The book concentrates on Ali's preparations for his battles both in the ring and out, paying particular attention to the psychological and physical endurance a boxer must have in order to be a champion. Ali's boxing career is set against the influences of the rising civil rights movement of the sixties and seventies. His willingness to stand by his beliefs whatever the cost (they nearly cost him his boxing career when he converted to Islam, changed his name from Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali, and refused to be drafted) is emphasized by Myers, who returns to it again and again. This is a particularly good inside view of the organized sport of boxing. The text analyzes Ali's career and moral choices in the context of the rapidly changing American social and political landscape. Black-and-white photographs scattered throughout give a sense of Ali's powerful physical presence. A chronology of Ali's fights, a bibliography, and an index are included. JMD

NAPOLI, DONNA JO *Albert*; illus. by Jim LaMarche. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-15-201572-8 \$16.00 Ad 5-8 yrs

Albert sticks his hand out his window every day to check the weather; if the weather is "right, just right," he will put on his hat and take a walk. The problem is the weather is never right, and Albert always stays inside. One morning Albert sticks his hand out the window and a cardinal drops a twig in it; the dumbfounded Albert watches as a cardinal couple builds a nest in his palm. The female cardinal lays four eggs: "Albert scratched his head. If he pulled his arm in, twisting to get it back through the grillwork, the nest would surely fall apart. So he stood there." Albert stands at his window for weeks; he sleeps standing up and he starts growing a beard. He watches cardinals care first for their eggs and then for their chicks. Eventually all the fledglings but one fly away; with Albert's encouragement ("Go for it, Birdie," said Albert. "Fly") the reluctant fledgling takes off, and so, finally, does Albert. Napoli's premise requires a pretty willful suspension of disbelief, but, once the premise is accepted, the progression is logical and Albert quite disarming. LaMarche's colored-pencil illustrations make the redheaded Albert a finicky but expressive Ichabod with disarming eccentricities, and the cardinals are cute as the dickens, with inquiring shiny black eyes and expectant, considering tilts of their heads. This is sentimental and contrived but not unappealing, and, as morals go, learning how to take the good with the bad is not an unworthy lesson. JMD

PAULSEN, GARY *Guts: The True Stories behind Hatchet and the Brian Books*. Delacorte, 2001 148p
ISBN 0-385-32650-5 \$16.95 R Gr. 6-9

Curious fans wanting to know how closely incidents in Paulsen's own life are reflected in the life of Brian, hero of *Hatchet*, etc. sparked this somewhat haphaz-

ard but ultimately engrossing deconstruction. Paulsen divides his book into six chapters with jazzy titles such as “Heart Attacks, Plane Crashes and Flying” and “Eating Eyeballs and Guts or Starving: The Fine Art of Wilderness Nutrition,” and takes the reader on a leisurely but interesting tour of his memorable wilderness adventures. Each chapter opens with a quote from one of the “Brian books” that mirrors some incident in Paulsen’s own life; interspersed with the Brian-related anecdotes are additional personal anecdotes about hunting and wilderness experiences along with bits of survival lore. Here and there Paulsen has his tongue firmly in cheek, especially when he recalls his own naïveté as a beginning woodsman. He also acknowledges that not everyone approves of hunting, and he is well aware of the conflict between his love of nature and his love of the sport. This title rambles more than the also autobiographical *Woodsong* (BCCB 10/90), and it lacks the cohesion provided by that title’s organization around Paulsen’s first Iditarod. Paulsen’s tone is as intimate as a conversation around a campfire, however, and his fans will be content. JMD

RIVERS, KAREN *Waiting to Dive*. Orca, 2001 [128p]

Paper ed. ISBN 1-55143-159-9 \$6.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Ten-year-old Carly loves the water, and she’s excited when summer swimming lessons reveal extra talent that leads her to diving lessons. There’s a social side, too, since she’s joined at the pool by her best friend, Montana, and finds a new friend in another budding diver, Samantha. She’s therefore excited about a weekend at the family cabin with her friends, but events take a devastating turn when Montana dives into the water, hits her head, and breaks her back. Carly is overwhelmed: she’s worried about her hospitalized friend and she misses Montana at school, and she’s lost her confidence in diving. Carly’s voice is plainspoken and credible, which makes her turmoil touching and accessible (when leaving Montana’s hospital room, she thinks, “But the funny thing is, until she suggested it, it didn’t occur to me that I should feel bad. And now I do”). The subplot about Carly’s resentment of her stepsiblings and longing for her late father is tactfully interwoven with the main story, and even Montana’s accident is handled without melodrama (she regains mobility with time). This is a skillfully understated chronicle of a girl’s growth in the face of adversity. DS

ROBBINS, KEN *Thunder on the Plains: The Story of the American Buffalo*; written and illus. with photographs by Ken Robbins. Atheneum, 2001 32p

ISBN 0-689-83025-4 \$16.00

R Gr. 3-5

In a straightforward, kid-friendly text, Robbins reviews the bison’s turbulent history on the North American continent: arriving via an Asian-American land bridge, migrating across the mountains, thriving on the plains as the revered “Tatonka” of the Lakota, and narrowly surviving decimation by habitat destruction and overhunting. A manageable amount of the continuous text is rationed onto each generously illustrated spread. Robbins’ photographs—majestic shots of broad plains and snowcapped mountains, and dramatic closeups of the buffalo—display his signature color-enhancement; they blend harmoniously with intelligently selected period paintings and engravings and museum artifacts in a tidy, spacious layout. Succinct coverage and prose well-suited for a readaloud make this an excellent classroom choice; just make certain students have an opportunity to examine the pictures. EB

ROTH, SUSAN L. *Happy Birthday Mr. Kang*; written and illus. by Susan L. Roth. National Geographic, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-7922-7723-6 \$16.95 Ad 5-9 yrs

Sam's grandpa, Chinese immigrant Mr. Kang, has three wishes for his retirement: "I want to read the *New York Times* every day. I want to paint poems every day. And I want a bird, a hua mei, of my own." Mr. Kang's wishes come true, and Sam accompanies him on his sunrise trips to Sara Delano Roosevelt Park, where he and other elderly Chinese immigrants bring their bird cages and revel together in birdsong. But Sam is troubled by the sight of the caged birds and convinces his grandfather the bird should be free. Against his wife's wishes, Mr. Kang releases the bird, only to find him on the railing when they return home. Roth clearly implies that keeping a hua mei is a tradition of great importance within Mr. Kang's community, but she never explains just what the tradition entails. Likewise, Mr. Kang's concluding poem on the bittersweet experience of emigration is too tenuously connected to the bird's escape and return for most young listeners to follow. Roth's mixed-media collages are visually arresting, however—fanciful constructions of cut paper, photographs, silk brocades, Chinese restaurant menus, woven wooden slats, newspaper clippings and corrugated cardboard that coexist in vibrant harmony with bordered blocks of text in a bold font suggestive of hand lettering. Even if cultural gaps are not successfully bridged, many listeners will enjoy their field trip to a pocket of grace and calm in the big, noisy city. EB

SCRIMGER, RICHARD *Bun Bun's Birthday*; illus. by Gillian Johnson. Tundra, 2001 [24p]
ISBN 0-88776-520-3 \$12.95
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

The title is the problem, as far as young Winifred is concerned: she's sorted out that she's out of the limelight for every other birthday party, and since the last party was for her brother, Eugene, she's convinced it's her turn; unfortunately, her elementary grasp of sharing didn't factor in baby Bun Bun, since this birthday will be Bun Bun's first. Winifred is bitterly disappointed at ceding the center of attention, but she perks up when her mother mentions that "no one remembers their first birthday: "So I will remember Bun Bun's first birthday, but she won't. . . . So it is really my party today, more than Bun Bun's." Though the text is a bit lengthy for its youthful subject (and this doesn't have quite the pizzazz of Look's *Henry's First-Moon Birthday*, BCCB 2/01), it's also charmingly individual, with a fresh turn of phrase, a generous helping of appealing family details, and an original look at the continuing dilemma of dethronement. Johnson's line-and-watercolor art has some of the spiky personality of Amy Hest's work, but there's also a softness in the blurred lines that adds character; the lively party double-spread, overflowing cake and balloons, displays authentically untidy festivity. Whether they're competing with their siblings for the limelight or not, youngsters will want to join in the celebration. DS

SIERRA, JUDY *Preschool to the Rescue*; illus. by Will Hillenbrand. Gulliver/Harcourt, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 0-15-202035-7 \$15.00 Ad 4-7 yrs

A hungry mud puddle deceives an unwary pizza van into its gloppy grasp, and that's only the start of its triumphs: when a police car comes to help the pizza van,

it gets stuck fast too; a tow truck, backhoe, and fire engine each in turn come to help and find themselves joining the puddle's captives. Then it's "preschool to the rescue!" and the children dive in with a will and with a diverse collection of implements ("shovels and sand, and rocks and bricks, and rubber bands and Popsicle sticks"); they free the now obviously toy vehicles and then stay to play in the mud themselves. There's a pleasing rhythm both to individual lines of the text (there are plenty of slurpy sound effects ripe for performance) and to the cumulation, but the internal rhymes encourage an expectation of verse that makes the unrhymed lines a letdown; while the preschool heroism is satisfying (and it's a nice touch that they tame the mud puddle by turning it into "mud pies and mud cakes and mud muffins and mud cookies and mud pizzas"), it comes out of nowhere. Hillenbrand's mixed-media art personifies the mud puddle effectively, giving it a gleeful glower; while the preschool animal kids are cute, they lack the mud puddle's force of character. The double-spread romp in the puddle is still inviting, however, and the jelly-bean colors of clothes and landscape offer a vivid contrast to the chocolatey mud. Despite the flaws, this could make an entertaining pre-recess read on a wet spring day. DS

SINGER, MARILYN *Didi and Daddy on the Promenade*; illus. by Marie-Louise Gay. Clarion, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 0-618-04640-2 \$14.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 3-5 yrs

Preschooler Didi jumps on Daddy's bed on Sunday morning and demands to go out. Out they go; Daddy says "Didi, go slow!" But Didi says, "No!" She's in a hurry to get to the best place on earth. She's in a hurry to get to the Promenade." Father and daughter walk along the Promenade, a sheltered park and walkway in Brooklyn with a famous view of the Manhattan skyline. Far from being an inside look at New York City book with a limited audience, this is a buoyant look at a family's typical Sunday outing. Didi and Daddy talk, observe, describe, and interact fully with one another in simple but effective language ("Puppy!" says Didi. "Little yellow puppy." "Dog!" says Daddy. "Big black dog") that echoes real child-adult conversation. Parent and child have a grand old time: they listen to street musicians, bark at the dogs, play at the playground and, finally, when a sudden thunderstorm surprises them, race home through the rain. Gay's watercolor and ink illustrations feature friendly people taking the air in a well-groomed city park. The compositions are a little less delicate than her illustrations for the Stella books (*Stella, Star of the Sea*, BCCB 5/99, and *Stella, Queen of the Snow*, 1/01), but they capture the glee of a beautiful day that just happens to be in Brooklyn. The ending will make listeners want to run out and play in the puddles: "Away they fly, laughing and splashing up the best place on earth. Up the skippy, drippy, sparkly, parkly, perfect Promenade." JMD

SPRINGER, NANCY *I Am Morgan le Fay: A Tale from Camelot*. Philomel, 2001 [240p]

ISBN 0-399-23451-9 \$17.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

In *I Am Mordred* (BCCB 6/98) Springer took the arch-villain of Arthurian legend and gave him a complicated but understandable humanity. Here she attempts to redeem another questionable denizen of Camelot, the sorceress Morgan le Fay.

Springer opens directly into a crucially important scenario: the fathering of Arthur on Morgan's mother, Igraine, by Uther Pendragon. After the birth of the future king and his disappearance with Merlin, political machinations make it necessary for Morgan and her sister Morgause to go into hiding with their nurse, Ongwynn. Ongwynn recognizes Morgan's potential for sorcery, and she trains the curious, fearless child to the best of her knowledge and ability. Morgan's magical and moral development are the crux of her journey, and her choices regarding both have lasting (literary) impact. Springer's Mordred was an adolescent boy in futile search of his father, a tragic figure tormented by his origins and cornered by fate; Morgan is a spiteful child jealous of her baby brother's hold on their mother's attention, and this reductive motivation somewhat dissipates the impact of her determination to destroy Arthur and Camelot. Still, Morgan's is an involving, intriguing voice, and while much of her story requires at least some background in Arthurian legend, there is enough action, romance, and revenge here to hold even reluctant readers. JMD

STEWART, SARAH *The Journey*; illus. by David Small. Farrar, 2001 [38p]
ISBN 0-374-33905-8 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-9 yrs

Hannah's Aunt Clara has given her the perfect birthday gift—the opportunity for the young Amish girl to leave her quiet village for the first time and visit the big city, Chicago. In the company of her mother and her mother's friend Maggie, Hannah takes in all the sights, viewing the bustle from a skyscraper observation deck and a river cruiser, visiting a department store, poking around in the aquarium and cathedral and art museum; at night she commits the day's adventure onto the pages of her diary. Words, however, capture only a fraction of her observations, and it is Small's watercolors that cleverly manifest how Hannah assesses each exotic new experience. Each spread that documents her diary entry is followed by a wordless spread comparing some aspect of city life with her Amish farm. The horse carriage near Buckingham Fountain reminds her of learning to manage the buggy back home; the view from Sears Tower toward the Indiana steel mills recalls the view of spreading fields and pastures from Aunt Clara's porch. Good humor abounds as haughty mannequins gaze down their plaster noses at the simply garbed trio who giggle at the very thought of donning fashionable get-ups, and there's tender reverence as the adults admire towering cathedral vaults while Hannah imagines neighbors huddled peacefully in their meeting house. Although there's an undeniable logic problem concerning the unexplained premise of Amish women on a week's lark in the city, no judgment is passed here on which life is proper; readers are simply allowed to share with Hannah a satisfying Town Mouse/Country Mouse peek at life down the other end of the road. EB

TAYLOR, ALASTAIR *Swollobog*; written and illus. by Alastair Taylor. Houghton, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 0-618-04348-9 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R* 5-8 yrs

"Swollobog" is the moniker of a voracious canine, bestowed upon her by her young mistress, who narrates this story. It's clear that Swollobog has an unstoppable appetite ("She also likes carrots, yogurt, pizza, toenail clippings, and door handles"), so it's not surprising that she runs into trouble when her family takes her to the

fair. The nature of the trouble is somewhat startling, however: she downs a huge helium balloon and floats away over the sea. Frightened but inventive, the family ties a piece of peanut brittle to the tail of a kite, and when the airborne Swollobog predictably snarfs up the candy the balloons pop and sends her plummeting; though at first she sinks below the waves, she leaps right out of the water in response to thoughts of cheese. The narrative is rather wordy, but the chatty informality, with its dry humor ("she was still our Swollobog, and we were reasonably pleased to have her back") has a definite charm. The tall tale of appetite is whimsical without being cloying, and the food focus is a tasty touch. Taylor's illustrations are delicious: his gouache figures have some of the solidity of Dan Yaccarino's creations, but with their own angularity and motion, and Swollobog herself is an endearing yet maddening dachshundesque being with a torpedolike muzzle (the better to shoot down fleeing cheese, presumably). Spot art in skewed rectangles, speech in and out of balloons, and zingy colors that accent or happily clash with Swollobog's rich orangey-gold keep the energy high. Kids will delight in this dog story with a difference. DS

THOMPSON, LAUREN *One Riddle, One Answer*; illus. by Linda S. Wingerter. Scholastic, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 0-590-31335-5 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 7-10 yrs

The learned princess Aziza persuades her loving father to allow her to pose a riddle in order to choose the man she should marry. Aziza's riddle confounds suitor after suitor ("men young and old tried to solve the riddle. But none had the answer"). Finally, a young farmer, a lover of numbers like the princess, offers the mathematical solution. The two embrace their joined fates: "With this answer, you have won my hand," says Aziza; "With this riddle, you have won my heart," Ahmed replies. Thompson shapes her story very like a traditional folktale and draws on motifs and images that will resonate with readers and storytellers familiar with wise princesses and their search for suitably enlightened or at least clever spouses. The author sets her tale in Persia, making Aziza the daughter of an indulgent sultan. The story is not linked to any specific source, although the author's concluding note discusses the complex calculations of Aziza's riddle and explains the origin of mathematics in ancient Persia. Thompson's storytelling is simple and elegant; her language is graceful and understated, the focus always on Aziza's ability to rise to the occasion. Wingerter's paintings feature the delicate details of Persian miniatures; tiny blossoms and ornamented garments, jeweled saddles and decorated carpets add intricate and intriguing details to the airy compositions. The palette leans toward soft, dusky hues of violet, blue, and red, and the characters possess a graceful animation. The resultant volume is a genuine marriage of art and text that skillfully delivers a subtle tale. JMD

VANCE, SUSANNA *Sights*. Delacorte, 2001 [224p]

ISBN 0-385-32761-7 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

Despite years of abuse from her father, Baby Girl has always believed in herself, content with her gift to see the future. When she is thirteen, she and her mother run away from the violence, settling in the town of Cot ("Where Boys are Athletes and Girls are Apricots"); there Baby Girl's faith in her own specialness dies as she

begins to see herself through high-school-colored glasses. She eventually comes to terms with her sturdy body and her sexuality ("It was like a hobby, finding out what things interested my body"), and here as elsewhere it is not her mystical powers but her clear-sighted realism that will draw readers into *Baby Girl's* story. Full of characters in every sense of the word, this engaging novel is lightly dated (set in the late 1950s, when Elvis was in the army) and clearly in the tradition of stories about adolescent outsiders forming sustaining alliances. Readers who identify with Selda, a muscular mixed-race teen vigilante, will wish that she was invited to partake more fully in the novel's happy ending, but they will also appreciate her complexity and the way the novel's comic-book sense of poetic justice allows the reader some distance from its hyper-realistic events (attempted murders, rape, animal cruelty) without trivializing them. Though much of the novel's closure comes in a familiar male guise (boyfriend, stepfather, rich white patron), readers are in a position to see these girls shape their own futures. FK

VANDE VELDE, VIVIAN *Alison, Who Went Away*. Houghton, 2001 [208p]
ISBN 0-618-04585-6 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

Susan, who's renamed herself Sibyl, is trying to pursue a normal fourteen-year-old's life despite the shadow over her family: her older sister disappeared three years ago, never to be heard from again. It's a near-miracle that Sibyl manages to elicit maternal permission to take part in an extracurricular play (Sibyl's friend Connie is determined to get Sibyl some coed contact outside of their all-girls' school), and it's clear that Sibyl has her own shadows, since she still avoids telling the truth about Alison to friends and teachers. Sibyl's time in the spotlight does succeed in broadening her world and in connecting her with a nice and compatible boy, but familial closure may be harder to achieve. The book's amiable style makes Sibyl's narration eminently readable, and Vande Velde has a knack for normality that serves as an effective counterpoint to the haunting background. In fact, that haunting gets pushed too far into the background, and Sibyl's secrecy asks a bit too much of readers; the larger story is packed into the last few pages (Alison's disappearance followed increasing wildness, including solicitation of sex for money, and her family feels she may have been a victim of a serial killer of prostitutes), and the resolution isn't well grounded. This lacks the impact of works such as Thesman's *Calling the Swan* (BCCB 11/00) or Cadnum's *Zero at the Bone* (9/96), but it nonetheless offers a sympathetic treatment of a dilemma of sisterly influence writ large. DS

VAUGELADE, ANAIS *The War*; written and illus. by Anaïs Vaugelade; tr. by Marie-Christine Rouffiac and Tom Streissguth. Carolrhoda, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 1-57505-562-7 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

First published in France, this fable tells of the war between the Reds and the Blues, which "had lasted for so long that no one could remember why it had begun." The ardent young prince of the Reds challenges Fabien, the anti-war prince of the Blues, to a war-settling duel, but the Red prince is killed in a fall from his horse just before the duel starts, so even that solution eludes the countries. Fabien then tricks the two kings into becoming allies by claiming that he will lead

the forces of the King of the Yellows against both of them, and he finds a satisfying pacifist home with the King of the Yellows while the Reds' and the Blues' waiting forces on the battlefield develop into a community. The story is well-meaning and less awkward than many moral tales, but it's still contrived, and it ducks some questions that young readers will raise: why doesn't the death of the Red prince suffice to end the war, why doesn't the warlike alliance of the Reds and the Blues attack the Yellows themselves, and what happens when the Reds and the Blues figure out that the Yellows aren't coming? The illustrations, however, are often effectively moody, with tight, solid lines balanced by delicate washes of color, and there are some strong compositions, particularly in the spreads depicting the three kings' throne rooms, all austere halls dominated by the appropriate color. While you're probably better off with the clarity of *Ferdinand the Bull* or Dr. Seuss' "The North-Going Zax and the South-Going Zax," this could serve as a philosophical discussion starter. DS

WALLACE, JOSEPH *Big and Noisy Simon*; illus. by Kevin O'Malley. Hyperion, 2001 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2450-6 \$16.49

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0575-3 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

Likable Simon happens to be big and noisy, and sometimes that can be a bit overwhelming, for Simon himself as well as for those around him. On a trip to Africa with his wildlife photographer parents, Simon is noisier and bigger than ever, and as a result he is exiled from the daily expeditions. A band of elephants inspires him to even greater noisy efforts, until the night he sees the herd in the moonlight, and "the only sound was the whisper of the tall grass brushing against the elephant's sides as they moved slowly past." Simon has an epiphany—he realizes he can decide when he is going to be big and noisy and when he is going to be quiet. The writing here is unforced and sometimes vivid, but the story is built around a contrived premise that generates little tension. O'Malley's vigorous mixed-media illustrations feature an ebullient Simon, mouth open in a wide grin, romping through the savanna in compositions that feature a sunny blue sky and golden grasslands. The elephants are substantially depicted, all twisting sinew and moonlit majesty. While the plot is overly convenient, this may be just the trick for those kids who see themselves—or their friends—in Simon. JMD

WALLNER, ALEXANDRA *Abigail Adams*; written and illus. by Alexandra Wallner. Holiday House, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 0-8234-1442-6 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 2-4

In this beginner biography, Wallner makes a sporting attempt to portray Adams not just as the nation's second First Lady, but as a forward-thinking character of historical import in her own right. It's a weighty task and, given the need of supplying significant amounts of historical context to youngsters relatively unfamiliar with colonial politics and women's status during that period, she is only partially successful. Abigail witnesses the events at Bunker Hill, providing descriptions of the battle for her absent husband and, ultimately, General Washington; she participates in boycotts; she urges her husband to "include [women] in the

laws he was helping to write." Unfortunately, anecdotes concerning her activism are often tucked amid dryly presented observations of family life and lost in the shuffle of standard biographical detail. Nor is Wallner always clear in demonstrating how Adams made herself a driving force in her husband's career: "Abigail believed that helping her husband was her most important job. She gave wonderful dinner parties and talked about politics. Later, John was made ambassador to England." Although short, stocky John Adams is annoyingly depicted with a stature equal to or surpassing his peers, Wallner's naïvely sryled watercolor pictures ably convey the domestic and political spheres in which Adams moved. A short concluding note addresses Adams' legacy and directs readers to extant historical sites. EB

WALSH, ALICE *Heroes of Isle aux Morts*; illus. by Geoff Butler. Tundra, 2001 [32p]

ISBN 0-88776-501-7 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 6-9 yrs

In July of 1832, the ship *Despatch* went aground off the shore of Newfoundland; Anne Harvey, her fisherman father, and their dog Hairy Man rowed out as far as they could in the raging storm, but it was clear they would never reach the ship to bring off the 163 passengers aboard. Hairy Man was a prodigious swimmer, however, and he paddled to the *Despatch* with a rope between his teeth so that they could rig their end of a "breeches buoy" line and convey everyone safely to shore above the lapping waves. Walsh bases her tale on the true story of the Harveys, and the poignant image of a heroic dog in peril (perhaps even more than the *Despatch's* peril) should entrance young listeners. The dénouement, however, seems a bit abrupt and graceless after the chills of the rescue scene ("One day the supply ship came, and took the visitors away"). Butler handily conjures the mud-dark skies, the roiling, swollen seas, and the rocky, foam-lashed coast, but his figure drawing (of both man and beast) doesn't begin to approach the power of the seascapes; thick strokes render the faces weirdly strained and misshapen. Large pencil-sketched motifs that partially border the text vie awkwardly with dense, murky paintings on facing pages. Despite the uninspiring visuals, kids too young for Harlow's novel *Star in the Storm* (BCCB 3/00) may appreciate this chance at a Newfie rescue saga. EB

WILKERSON, J. L. *American Illustrator: Rose O'Neill*. Acorn Books, 2001 118p illus. with photographs

Paper ed. ISBN 0-9664470-6-9 \$9.95

R Gr. 4-8

Although O'Neill's name may not ring a bell with most young readers, her cherubic, androgynous little potbellied Kewpies might be familiar. But as Wilkerson demonstrates in this smoothly written biography, there was much more substance to O'Neill and her art than that bit of highly successful commercial fluff might suggest. Through short chapters accessible and engaging enough to span the elementary/middle school grades, O'Neill emerges as a pioneer among nineteenth-century professional women, a witty social critic, and an aggressive marketer of her own talent. Although Wilkerson fudges slightly on reconstructed conversations, her account is generally balanced and credible; O'Neill's two failed marriages and the range of critical appraisal of her artwork are handled with particular honesty and dignity. Samples of her work are plentiful and well chosen, but one could

wish they were more cleanly reproduced here. When the 2001 Kewpie postage stamp makes its appearance, have this title on hand to reintroduce O'Neill as a household word. EB

WILSON, JACQUELINE *The Story of Tracy Beaker*; illus. by Nick Sharratt. Delacorte, 2001 [192p]

ISBN 0-385-72919-7 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

Tracy Beaker is writing what her social worker calls "her own special book about you," which ten-year-old Tracy takes to with a vengeance. She fills the pages with her bossy, vivacious, determinedly cheerful account of her life since her mother gave her up, including her two failed foster placements and her current life in a children's home. Her constant writing and taste for fiction (unkindly termed lies by her less imaginative acquaintances) catch the eye of a visiting author, Cam (short for Camilla) Lawson, and the two develop a friendship that Tracy hopes may lead to her finally finding a suitable foster home. Though the end is somewhat of a letdown—Tracy softens towards her archenemy, and her fate with Cam is left up in the air—Tracy's spirited narration and energetic pursuit of her own way are personable and realistic. Wilson gives effective hints about Tracy's sadder side (under duress she gets bouts of "hay fever" that explain her watery eyes and her lies about her mother's glorious success and imminent arrival are clearly self-protective); since there are no illusions about Tracy being merely picturesquely spunky—she's definitely a troublemaker—the insight into her vulnerability adds important balance. Kids looking for a home are an enduringly popular subject, and Tracy's a creditable addition to the category. Sharratt's thick-lined, tightly controlled sketches add interest while remaining credible as Tracy's own drawings. DS

WOOD, TED *Bear Dogs: Canines with a Mission*; written and illus. with photographs by Ted Wood. Walker, 2001 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8759-2 \$17.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8758-4 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

We've got books about dogs with all manner of jobs, but this may be a first: these Karelian Bear Dogs are employed as bear deterrents under the banner "Partners for Life," working with their owner/handler to discourage bears from hanging around human-inhabited areas before the inquisitive bruins become dangerous and must be destroyed. Wood focuses on two of the group's bear interventions, one involving a family of black bears and one some errant grizzlies, in Montana; he also discusses the group's public education labor, both spontaneous and planned, wherein their handler teaches people about good human habits that will reduce the likelihood of bears being tempted into dangerous behavior. Though there are some gaps in the information provided (it's not clear if overall the dogs have made a difference, for instance) and the layout is stodgy and unimaginative, this is a fascinating and original subject. The prick-eared black-and-white dogs are definitely photogenic, and there's plenty of action in the shots. Dog lovers will enjoy this novel look at canine achievement. There are appended guidelines on "How to Keep a Good Bear Good" and the foundation's postal address, email address, and URL are included. DS

WORMELL, MARY *Bernard the Angry Rooster*; written and illus. by Mary Wormell. Farrar, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-374-30670-2 \$16.00 Ad 3-5 yrs

Bernard certainly acts like an angry rooster; he charges the chickens, chases the cat, and pecks the dog's tail. Fellow barnyard critters ask Bernard what is bothering him, but Bernard remains silent. Then he leaps on the pony's back, which prompts the pony to kick and thereby send Bernard flying to the roof, from where he climbs a nearby tree and shouts, "Cock-a-doodle-doo, now I'm higher than you." His barnyard companions exclaim, "So that's what's the matter with Bernard," but many young viewers may require adult elucidation before they understand that Bernard's seemingly angry affronts were in fact attempts to climb up high. The story is therefore somewhat confusing, and it's also disappointingly slight. The crisp woodcut illustrations are attractive, though, showing rustic barnyard scenes printed on a background of cream-colored paper. Wormell's animal figures are outlined in rough black lines, and Bernard's avian form is depicted in saturated black with pink and blue undertones in the printed textures of his feathers. Despite narrative glitches, Wormell's detailed images of farm-animal antics will likely attract some young browsers, who may enjoy making up their own stories about these barnyard denizens. KM

YOUNG, ED *Monkey King*; written and illus. by Ed Young. HarperCollins, 2001 [38p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027950-8 \$16.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027919-2 \$16.95
Reviewed from galleys R 7-10 yrs

Monkey King is the hero of the Chinese epic *Journey to the West*, an adventure tale on the surface, but underneath the story of pilgrims on a quest for Enlightenment. This necessarily highly abbreviated retelling is a stunningly realized visual tour de force. The physical and magical strengths of Monkey are evoked in the powerful curves and lines of his twisting, leaping body; the mystical elements of the tale are reinforced by an impressive foldout illustration of Monkey trapped in Buddha's great hand. Young's mixed-media collages—intense planes of color created with assorted textures of handmade and other paper—provide a continuity not easily found in the text. The source for this retelling is itself a fragmented adventure rife with the sudden appearances and disappearances of a huge cast of characters. Young states that "this adaptation attempts only to introduce the very beginning of this classic tale," but even this small piece of the complex epic is sometimes difficult to follow. Nonetheless, scraps of bright paper in compositions of power and authority provide a visual feast, and the plot is action-packed, which should be more than enough to hold the attention of readers beginning their own journeys. JMD



PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

Birch, Carol. *The Whole Story Handbook: Using Imagery to Complete the Story Experience*. August House, 2000. Paper ed. ISBN 0-87483-566-6; \$12.95. 128p.

Birch, an accomplished storyteller, librarian, workshop leader, and coach, brings her expertise to bear on the use of images and attitudes to “provide an antidote to recitation and other formal presentational modes” in storytelling. A detailed introduction provides both a frame of reference for the reader and an explanation of the author’s rationale. Birch’s goal here is to model concrete tools for storytellers to use to “restore sound—life force, spontaneity, *chi*—to stories fixed in the silence of print.” To that end, succinct but informative sections on working with text, developing character, and evoking setting are interspersed with “prompts,” guided imagery questions provided by the author to help the individual teller discover more precise means of expression for individual stories. Birch’s advice for effective adaptation from text to oral story is based on her own wide experience, and she exhibits both wit and common sense; anecdotes, suggestions, and cautions are forthrightly communicated. The author has the gift of specificity, expertly incorporating theory within concrete examples from specific tales. For those seeking further information, excellent chapter notes and an extensive bibliography are included. JMD

Hegel, Claudette. *Newbery and Caldecott Trivia and More for Every Day of the Year*. Libraries Unlimited, 2000. Paper ed. ISBN 1-56308-830-4; \$26.00. 167p.

Trivia can provide an engaging approach to literature, and Hegel provides a pack of it in calendar form, each day offering three or four entries. Newbery and Caldecott tidbits are rife, but the book takes a broadly literary scope, including factoids about other popular writers for adults and children. The entries are variable: there are some name problems (Ed Emberley’s name is misspelled) and vagueness problems (what “list of the 100 most influential books” includes *Little Lord Fauntleroy?*), and the factuality of some “facts” is arguable (there’s no evidence to support the existence of a pre-Newbery Mother Goose in Boston, for instance). Much of the trivia is quite entertaining, however: Daniel Pinkwater likes to vote for fictional candidates in elections, there’s a kid-catchable continuity error in Karen Ackerman’s *Song and Dance Man*, and Chris Van Allsburg’s wife posed for the monkeys in *Jumanji*; there are also plenty of literary birthdays included. You might want to vet the material, but this collection of tidbits offers a multitude of use possibilities ranging from contests to literary celebrations. Included are appendices listing Newbery and Caldecott medalists and honor books, a list of references, a name index, and a title index. DS

Post, Arden DeVries. *Celebrating Children's Choices: 25 Years of Children's Favorite Books*; by Arden DeVries Post with Marilyn Scott and Michelle Theberge. International Reading Association, 2000. Paper ed. ISBN 0-87207-276-2; \$23.95. 238p.

The Children's Choices project, sponsored by the International Reading Association and the Children's Book Council, has been going strong for a quarter of a century now, selecting 100 titles a year. Post et al. aren't listing the 2500 books (in fact, there aren't even the expected prominent instructions for ordering the lists or viewing them on the web) but instead are encouraging, explicitly and implicitly, classroom use of those books. The opening section describes the project and offers a detailed and research-based argument for the educational importance of children's literature; then three sections explore curricular possibilities for young readers, middle readers, and older readers, respectively. Each of those sections goes for depth rather than breadth, focusing on only seven or eight books (over a significant range of time, genre, and subject) from the Children's Choices lists and offering a multitude of curricular possibilities for each in considerable detail (diagrams, sample forms, etc. are included); the middle readers section includes a special focus on Cinderella books and the older readers section offers a similar concentration on Jean Fritz' historical writing. Even if professionals don't wish to use the exact projects included (and there are so many they're sure to find *something* they like), suggestions here will be easily modified to suit individual purposes and they'll be sure to spark other ideas. Sections conclude with a bibliography and additional suggested books; a references section and a detailed index are included. DS



SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

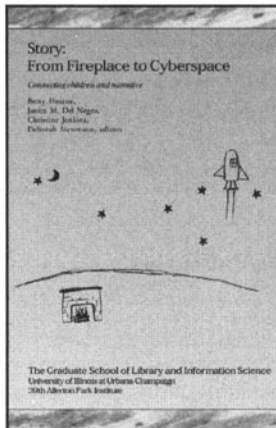
Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject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

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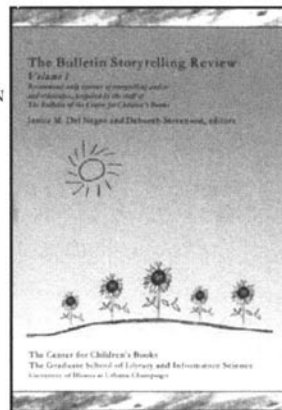
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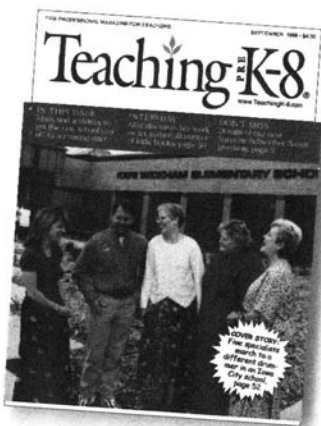
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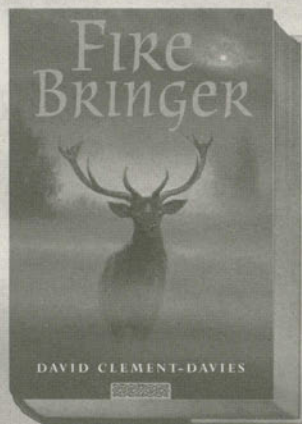
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