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THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

May 2003
Vol. 56 No.9



University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

* Asterisks denote books of special distinction.

R Recommended.

Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.

M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.

NR Not recommended.

SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.

SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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THE BIG PICTURE

Mack Made Movies

written and illus. by Don Brown

Who could have predicted that the hindmost part of a vaudeville horse would advance to the foremost rank of Hollywood producers? Yet in Don Brown's picture-book circle of acquaintances, such strides are commonplace. If straitlaced Victorian spinster Mary Kingsley can jaunt off to West Africa (*Uncommon Traveler*, BCCB 7/00) and bookish monk Columcille can ignite a war (*Across a Dark and Wild Sea*, BCCB 5/02), why shouldn't a no-name, bit part, showbiz wannabe become one of the founding fathers of Tinseltown? As Brown's story goes, Mack Sennett's scrabble from Canadian farm to tower office on a movie lot is natural as can be.

The self-dubbed "King of Comedy" begins his theatrical career with a string of disappointments, compressed here into a few pages of wry recap. There's the infamous horse debut, some musical blundering, and, at last, some modest stage success with slapstick ("Audiences loved it. Mack did, too"). Then, with Sennett's gamble on the exciting new film industry, the action takes off. Sennett schleps scenery, directs corny romances, learns the craft, and ultimately establishes his own studio, where he makes the "goofy, guffawing, golly-gee movies" he loves. Kids see the Sennett star in action: Mabel Normand pitching a pie, the Keystone Kops thrown from their car "like water from a shaking dog," Charlie Chaplin as The Tramp glancing down from his publicity poster at the throng of theater patrons. And although the text concludes with Sennett at the apex of his career (because the audience, of course, should leave smiling), an endnote admits to the studio's eventual bankruptcy and Sennett's lengthy retirement.

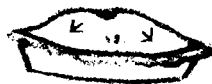
Brown has been consistently adept at establishing the powerful relationship between his subjects and their surroundings, and most of his explorer and adventurer biographies have required him to express visually the vulnerability of tiny but resilient individuals against overpowering backdrops of mountain, jungle, desert, and sky. Mack Sennett, though, operates in a mundane human milieu, with no call for artistic sweeps of landscape. Nonetheless, Brown knows right where Sennett belongs—tucked in among a crush of moviegoers, buried in a crowd of stagehands and extras, intimately sharing his own story while perched on an overturned bucket, and often left out of the picture altogether. What could be more appropriate? The measure of Sennett's success is in the accomplishment of his actors and the reaction of his audiences, all gloriously realized in Brown's controlled, spidery lines and monochrome watercolor washes. A most dissatisfied audience regards Sennett's early dance routine with forehead slaps, downed thumbs, rude "razzberries," and a gallery of facial expressions ranging from ennui to outright disgust. In later, happier times, actors plunge head-first into vats of plaster, slip in puddles, dangle from flagpoles, tumble off "Kop" cars, and, of course, catch

pies in the face. Brown clearly understands that Sennett's trademark pandemonium must take center stage and that to capture "people chasing people, people chasing cars, people chasing dogs, dogs chasing people—anything, as long as it was funny" is to capture the man himself.

It would be nigh impossible to discuss the early days of filmmaking without examining the principle behind the motion-picture camera and some of the logistical challenges inherent in the recording process, and Brown deftly reduces the technicalities to a few neatly integrated observations. After noting Sennett's decision to switch from stage to screen, Brown takes a brief intermission to explain just what the young man's getting into. A single page of diagrams displays a hand-cranked camera aimed at a posing pup, a coil of film displaying the dog as it "moves" through successive celluloid frames, and a man viewing the dog as it goes through its paces: "The camera captures the action as a series of still pictures. The still pictures are displayed quickly one after another to give the impression of movement." Any questions? Then please direct your attention to the pointing finger, and "Flip the pages to watch the dog dance." A quick riffle of the lower-right corners does indeed set the pup prancing in an effective and entertaining demonstration of persistence of vision. Then it's back to the main feature, as Sennett learns his craft from the bottom up. Simply cranking the camera is something of an art: "If they were cranked too slowly, the actors on film appeared to jump around like kangaroos. If cranked too fast, the picture seemed to crawl in slow motion." Sets are ramshackle and sunlit, staffed with limited personnel; rain cancels a day's schedule, and even the boss must handle the grunt work: "I was telephone operator, bookkeeper, actor, director and film cutter. It took a lot of physical endurance to get through the work. My hair turned white."

Children who are familiar with the Don Brown canon may wonder at first how Mack Sennett slipped onto his roster of explorers and adventurers, people who made their mark on foreign soil and even in thin air. Sennett should feel right at home, though, since "his breakneck pacing left audiences breathless." And that is exactly what adventurers do. (Imprint information appears on p. 352.)

Elizabeth Bush, Reviewer



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ANDERSON, JANET S. *The Last Treasure*. Dutton, 2003 257p
ISBN 0-525-46919-2 \$17.99

R Gr. 5-9

All his life, Ellsworth's father has told him "We're the Smith family . . . the two of us. We're all the family we need." Then out of the blue he receives a letter from a distant cousin, telling him that the extended family needs his help in unraveling a family mystery. When he arrives at the Square in Smiths Mills, New York, he begins to unravel a complex family history—*his* family history—of love and hurt, joy and loss. John Matthew Smith, the family patriarch, has hidden three treasures among the houses he built for his family and their future children. Two of the treasures have already been uncovered, each during a time of family financial

crisis. Now the Smiths are in both financial and emotional disarray, with unresolved quarrels threatening to dissolve the family altogether. When Ellsworth meets Jess, a cousin his own age, they join forces to assemble the clues that will enable them to find the treasure and, more importantly, to put their family back on track. A suspenseful and intricately crafted mystery with just a hint of the supernatural, this story is also a repository of Quaker wisdom and intergenerational family values of forgiveness and care. Reminiscent of the depth and texture of Lucy Boston's Green Knowe books, Anderson's story of the Square speaks to the role of place and history in the durability of families. KC

APPELT, KATHI *Bubba and Beau Go Night-Night*; illus. by Arthur Howard. Harcourt, 2003 32p
ISBN 0-15-204593-7 \$16.00 R 4-7 yrs

Baby Bubba and hound dog Beau (of *Bubba and Beau*, BCCB 4/02) are back for day of errand-running with Big Bubba ("Yep, going bye-bye was better than butter on toast") that ends with a final stop at the Freezee Deluxe for ice cream ("Sister, those napkins came in handy"), after which they all arrive home to the arms of Mama Pearl. Big Bubba and Mama Pearl are ready for bed, but not Bubba and Beau: "No siree, Bob! Going night-night was *not* the first order of business." Well, like many mothers before her, Mama Pearl tries everything she can think of, but finally Big Bubba comes to the rescue. He takes Bubba and Beau bye-bye in the family truck, where, after a nighttime tour of town, the two unwilling sleepers are "plumb tucked out" and fall fast asleep. Howard's watercolor and pencil images provide a humorous subtext to Appelt's clever, understated text. The illustrations make the most of the clean white pages, using the tension between positive and negative space to good effect. The cowboy-hatted Big Bubba with baby Bubba over his shoulder and puppy bloodhound Beau under his arm is a study in the art of comic contrast. The story is divided into mini-chapters of four to six pages, giving this the look of a chapter book while keeping a simplicity of format that will please both transitional readers and younger listeners, even as their adult caregivers do some rueful remembering. JMD

ARRINGTON, FRANCES *Prairie Whispers*. Philomel, 2003 [192p]
ISBN 0-399-23975-8 \$17.99
Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 5-8

Twelve-year-old Colleen has delivered her premature sister, but "the baby came too soon and lived less than an hour"; her mother loses consciousness, her little brother falls asleep, and her father is not at home. On her way to get help from a midwife, Colleen passes a covered wagon and finds a dying woman who makes her promise to take care of the healthy baby she has just delivered, gives her a gold watch and a box of money, and warns her of the baby's cruel father. If Arrington's setup sounds contrived, her taut writing renders it completely credible. No word is wasted as this situation develops into a drama of rising suspense, supported by vividly selective details of setting and characterization. Step by step, conscientious Colleen is drawn into a web of lies and theft to honor her promise and ensure her parents' happiness in thinking the baby she has swapped is theirs. Her growing alienation from her family in the isolated environment of prairie life during the 1860s is as suspenseful as the climactic events, including a rattlesnake's striking her brother (who discovers the gold watch and threatens to betray her secret) and a

raging firestorm. What keeps the plot from becoming melodramatic is an unswerving but subtle focus on the protagonist's conflict between loyalty to the rigid moral code she has been taught and fidelity to an innate sense of ethics that ultimately determines her choices. Also nuanced is the character of the cruel father who suspects that Colleen has taken his money; although it's true that this threatening figure will sacrifice his baby out of greed, he also surprises—once he has his own box of money back—by returning the money Colleen has stolen to give him: "Colleen saw a light in O'Brien's eyes. A shadow of something good. Fleeting as a lone feather caught on a blade of grass, waiting for a sure wind." This is one of the few cases of figurative language, and young readers will be swept into some hard realities of the past through identification with complexities of innocence and guilt that can stir up dread of retribution in their own lives. BH

ASQUITH, ROS *Babies*; illus. by Sam Williams. Simon, 2003 22p
ISBN 0-689-85501-X \$12.95 R 6 mos-3 yrs

If it's true that babies love to look at other babies, then this is the book for them. Round-headed, dot-eyed infants parade across glossy, heavy-stock paper in this listy but rhythmic tribute to small fry of all temperaments: "There are big babies/ and little babies, // do-lots and/ do-little babies, // happy babies, / cross babies, // and 'I'll show you who's boss' babies." Williams' multiracial cast has the casual charm of Oxenbury's board-book tots, and the combination of comfy, earthtoned images and giggly rhymes makes this a bouncy lap book. And there's a nifty payoff—after lauding babies throughout, in the end the text (and the reader aloud) says, "There are many different babies, / but I'll tell you something true. // The baby that I love the best, / with all my heart, is . . . // YOU!" On the inside cover of the book, opposite the final text, is a Mylar mirror, so the listening baby can see his or her face. This isn't much more than cute, but it's very cute indeed, and that goes a long way with teeny-tinies and their doting grownups. JMD

BAILEY, LINDA *Stanley's Party*; illus. by Bill Slavin. Kids Can, 2003 32p
ISBN 1-55337-382-0 \$14.95 R 6-9 yrs

Left home alone, with a couch just waiting for a pooch to warm it, Stanley the dog succumbs to temptation and crawls up on the sofa ("The couch was more comfortable than he'd ever dreamed"). Since his people are none the wiser on their return, Stanley gets progressively more daring on successive nights on his own, bopping to the sound system and raiding the refrigerator. Inevitably, he finally opens the house up to a wild dog party ("It was the best dog-gone party a dog ever had!"), and equally inevitably, that's the night his people come home early ("At first, they didn't say anything. Then they said together, very loud, 'STANLEY! BAD DOG!'"). The text is somewhat lengthy, but this is no aimless shaggy dog story—there's specific humor in Stanley's explorations, in his noncommittal but secretly telling responses to his people (he greets them with "Burp" after his foray into the fridge), and in the cumulative invitations to and accumulations at the culminating wingding. Slavin's acrylics have the thickly mottled textures of plaster, but their lively and exaggerated line is anything but sculpted—bug-eyed, bulbous-nosed (generally bulbous, actually) Stanley is an amiable everymutt with the most exuberant line in doggy dancing since Snoopy. The dog party itself has all the decorum of a frat-house bash, leading up to a priceless discovery scene where a dozen pups freeze in mid-merriment, peering up aghast at the returning humans. Kids will revel in

the dog party, and they'll yearn to experience the temptations of parental departure first-hand. DS

BASKIN, NORA RALEIGH *Almost Home*. Little, 2003 [200p]
ISBN 0-316-09313-0 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Sixth-grader Leah is steeped in bitterness about her situation: after living in relative happiness with her mother and beloved younger sister, Anne, she was stunned when her mother left with her new boyfriend and Anne for the west coast, leaving Leah to her father and stepmother, where she fiercely resists any attempt to suggest that this is actually her home. Leah is also completely out in the cold at school, until she hooks up with fellow outsider Will Hiller. Will's different drummer is a peaceful one, and Leah is drawn to his easygoing imagination and his interest in drama, which allow her to begin to explore her own creative expression. Though Baskin pulls her punches a bit by making Leah's abandoning mother actually a stepmother, the book is otherwise brutally honest about the ability of adults to treat a loving child as dispensable and the effects of being discarded on that child. There's also honesty in the portrait of Leah's father, who's misguidedly trying to help his daughter by giving her space when she's already drowning in it. Leah herself is palpably and understandably angry, taking believable pleasure in punishing her father's new wife even if she doesn't really understand why ("I was definitely winning. But what I didn't know"); in contrast and credible complication, Leah is also grief-stricken and yearning, desperately missing her little sister (the book offers a particularly tender acknowledgment of the importance of sibling bonds) and ready to connect with the accepting Will. This is a respectful and affecting portrait of a girl discovering family strengths as well as family weaknesses. DS

BRASHARES, ANN *The Second Summer of the Sisterhood*. Delacorte, 2003 [384p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-385-90852-0 \$17.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-72934-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

The Traveling Pants, those miraculous jeans that fit each wearer to a "T" and seem to conjure life-changing events (*The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, BCCB 12/01), are off to an unpromising start this summer. Lena's stuck clerking in a clothing store; Carmen's babysitting and seeing a guy she can't quite seem to focus on; Tibby's off at film school, courting the attention of a fellow student with considerable talent and an overload of attitude; and poor Bridget, who's put on so much depression-induced weight that she can't even zip The Pants up, is sweating in Alabama, getting to know the grandmother her father will have nothing to do with. So disappointing are The Pants, in fact, that the girls barely keep them for the week before shipping them off to the next destination. Ah, there's still some magic left, though, as Carmen's mother finds out when she borrows them for a date herself. It's the Motherhood of the Sisterhood, if you will, that becomes the unifying motif in this outing, as each girl learns that there's more to Mom than she thought. Tibby's mother really does care for her as much as she does for the younger siblings; Carmen's mother is still a vibrant babe with a shot at romance; Lena's mother had a past amour that threatened her marriage; Bridget's deceased mother was as deeply beloved as she was intensely troubled. This is no Ya Ya Redux, though; the girls still hold center stage, floundering in romances, wrestling

with extra-Sisterly friendships, and relying on the unwavering love and support of the quartet. Last year's Sisterhood fans can start passing around this new installment, sharing like all good Sisters do. EB

BRENNAN, HERBIE *Faerie Wars*. Bloomsbury, 2003 [370p]

ISBN 1-58234-810-3 \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-10

Prince Pyrgus Malvae has left his father's palace to, in the king's view, go slummin' among the commoners, pursuing his passion for protecting and rescuing animals. Political intrigues have left the heir vulnerable to ambush, and a very narrow escape while saving a kitten destined for the glue-factory cauldron convinces the king it's time to send Pyrgus into hiding until the heat is off. The teen reluctantly agrees to temporary transportation to a safer Alternate World, but a traitor within the court has tampered with the portal, and Pyrgus arrives in contemporary Britain with a dose of slow-acting poison in his body and no obvious way home. Help is at hand: obliging teenager Henry Atherton has an elderly friend, Mr. Fogarty, whose past careers as physicist and armed robber recommend him as just the soul to restore the portal to working order and the prince to his otherworldly realm. While the plot has little new to offer in the way of twists and turns, Brennan takes obvious delight in fashioning a cast of villains so melodramatic and dastardly (to wit, the kitten-killing, demon-conjuring glue-factory owner, his obese, pedophilic partner, and even the Prince of Darkness himself) that readers are likely to plow straight ahead just to keep the bad guys within sight. Brennan seems more at home on terra fey than terra firma, and a subplot involving Henry's mother's infidelity is a nonstarter. There's enough menace and mayhem, though, to leave parental issues in the dust, and older fans of Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* (BCCB 7/01) should march right into battle. EB

BROWN, DON *Mack Made Movies*; written and illus. by Don Brown. Roaring Brook, 2003 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-7613-2504-2 \$23.90

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7613-1538-1 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 2-4

See this month's Big Picture, p. 347, for review.

BROWN, JO *Pirate Jam*; written and illus. by Jo Brown. Gingham Dog/McGraw-Hill, 2003 [26p]

ISBN 1-57768-442-7 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 6-9 yrs

Fredbeard and Little Jim are rather substandard pirates, who washed out of pirate school ("Arg! You two be useless pirates!" said their teacher") on account of generally nonpiratical tendencies ranging from a preference for tea over grog to an inclination towards seasickness. With their little dog Patch, they keep house on an island, but it's hard for them to find a nonpiratical niche in the island community. Some beachfront spoils (washed up, not garnered at swordpoint) provide the answer: Fredbeard makes jam from the shipwrecked sugar and garden strawberries, Little Jim knits nice woolly sweaters from the serendipitously found yarn, and both commodities prove popular items in the island market. The story rambles on somewhat, and the journey is more pleasurable than the destination (their success-

ful day doesn't really seem a long-term solution to their plight). Brown is gifted, though, at comic detail (Fredbeard fails as a letter carrier partially because of his sword's tendency to tear holes in the packages) and turns of phrase ("Instead of making someone walk the plank, they'd rather walk the dog"), and there are plenty of giggle-worthy plays on pirate conventions for buccaneering readaloud audiences. The illustrations are cheerfully roguish, with high-pitched candy-bright colors adding a Caribbean flair to the ex-pirates' island. This doesn't have quite the swashbuckling flair of some recent comic pirate titles, but this could keep the Jolly Roger flying for youngsters not quite ready for Cannon's *On the Go with Pirate Pete and Pirate Joe* (BCCB 9/02). DS

BUCHANAN, JANE *The Berry-Picking Man*; illus. by Leslie Bowman. Farrar, 2003 87p
ISBN 0-374-40610-3 \$15.00 Ad Gr. 3-5

Many a child has been haunted by the presence of a figure like Old Sam, not homeless exactly, but embarrassingly odd in his behavior, unwashed, and dependent on charitable individuals for his only human contact. Unfortunately, Meggie's mother is just such a charitable individual, and nine-year-old Meggie has inherited Mama's empathetic nature while at the same time hating to be anywhere near Sam. This situation is complicated by her two older sisters, who tend to belittle both Meggie and the old man. The book is relentless in its spotlight on the problem and somewhat limited in dramatic action, but it nevertheless clearly delineates the stages of maturity through which Meggie passes in reconciling her conscience with her instincts, thereby affecting her sisters' behavior as well. The author is careful to include a warning against stranger danger via Meggie's mother: "I don't ever want you to feel you have to hug or touch anyone you don't want to. Your body is yours. You have the right to decide who can touch you and who can't." However, when Old Sam is injured in a fall, Meggie insists that her mother invite him to spend Christmas with the family and manages to express affection despite his ongoing aberrations. Sometimes the author tells more than she shows, but Meggie's dilemma, along with a subplot of her wishing for and finally getting a camera from her photographer-mother, make this brief novel an accessible transition between easy-to-read books and more complex fiction. Each chapter features a full-page black and white painting; the images tend towards the stiffly posed and literal but occasionally offer the spontaneity of snapshots. BH

CABOT, MEG *Princess in Waiting*. HarperCollins, 2003 225p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-009608-X \$16.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-009607-1 \$15.99

R Gr. 5-9

Followers of the adventures of Mia Thermopolis, Princess of Genovia, will know that just as she has at long last gotten together with Michael Moskowitz, her true love and her best friend's older brother (at the end of *Princess in Love*, BCCB 5/02), she's getting whisked off for presentation to the Genovian people. In Genovia, Mia makes a few gaffes, causes a furor, and scornfully observes a visiting playboy prince, with whom her grandmother would like to see her paired; mostly, though, she moons over Michael and fears that her distance is putting him off. Upon her return to New York, she's even more afraid she's losing him, because of the competing claims on her attention and her general lack of significance and talent ("If it weren't for the fact that I am a princess, I would be the most ordinary

person alive"). Mia's new Michael anxiety is largely a crisis of narrative convenience, so at times she's simply whiny rather than endearingly uncertain. Cabot's winning formula still delivers, however; Mia's tenure in Genovia is an amusing travesty (it's her suggestion that Genovia install parking meters that sets the entire cabinet into factional turmoil), and the encounters with society-page celebrities, especially the real ones (Prince William makes a heart-throbby appearance) are a luxurious enhancement. Mia's saga is starting to show a few signs of wear, but she's still the princess with whom everybody'd like to be best friends. DS

CAZET, DENYS *Elvis the Rooster Almost Goes to Heaven*; written and illus. by Denys Cazet. HarperCollins, 2003 [48p] (I Can Read Books)

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-000501-7 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-000500-9 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 2-4

Elvis the rooster thrills to his great significance in the world, bringing the sun up every morning with his crow; it's therefore a devastating blow to him when a poorly timed bug ingestion keeps him from his crucial task—and the sun rises anyway ("The sun had risen without him. Elvis fainted"). While a shattered Elvis waits for his now meaningless life to end, concerned barnyard inhabitants hatch a plan to restore the stricken chicken. Poultry being a bit paltry in the plotting department, the plan is more notable for creativity than for smooth execution, but eventually they restore Elvis to his state of triumphant misbelief. As well as understandable and welcome echoes of Cazet's *Minnie and Moo* easy readers, there's a *Chicken Run* flavor to the slapstick proceedings, especially in the trio of clucking hens, two of which never really grasp the situation, and kids will revel in the comic melodrama of the obtrusively languishing Elvis. Additional humor comes from the shady figures of Little Willie, an underworld bird in dark glasses and fedora, and his taciturn muscle duck, Rocky; there's also a repeated motif of bug inhalation that adds satisfying grossness as well as narrative symmetry. The larger cast and smaller figures make the illustrations here somewhat more finicky than those in *Minnie and Moo*'s adventures, but mobile-faced Elvis is a gifted comic star with some snort-worthy closeups, and Rocky's looming bulk marks him as a duck to watch. Dumb-cluck chickens are enjoying a peculiar surge of popularity at the moment, but novice readers will find Elvis standing out from the rest of the flock. DS

CHAMBERS, ROLAND *The Rooftop Rocket Party*; written and illus. by Roland Chambers. Porter/Roaring Brook, 2003 33p

Library ed. ISBN 0-7613-2744-4 \$23.90

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7613-1888-7 \$16.95

R 4-7 yrs

When Finn, an inquiring young boy, meets the famous rocket scientist Dr. Gass, he's rather disappointed. Dr. Gass doesn't have a single real rocket, and his scientific explanations are a bit much for Finn to take (he "went on explaining until Finn begged him to stop"); nor does he have any truck with Finn's belief that the water tanks on the city roofs are really "big red rockets, ready for liftoff!" It turns out that Finn had the right of it—in a trip that contradicts everything Dr. Gass has affirmed, a Night Thing escorts the little boy on a rocket journey to the moon, where there's a celebration for the Man in the Moon's birthday that lasts until Finn's safe return to Earth and bed. There are definite echoes of *Where the Wild*

Things Are in the fantasy voyage, nighttime bacchanal, and safe return, and the implication of scientific paucity of imagination is itself unimaginative as well as clichéd. There's nonetheless a quietly dreamy rhythm to the exchanges between Finn and the good doctor, and the grave serenity of the tone enhances the magic of Finn's lunar revelry. Chambers' illustrations match that tone, using thick, scrubby black lines to anchor the compositions and shimmering washes of color to accentuate the gentle fancy. Spreads deftly tuck in mock-helpful illustrations of Dr. Gass' detailed explanations, contrasting them with the sweeping scope of Finn's exploits; the Night Thing and the party games are depicted with creativity but with a groundedness that avoids flimsy whimsy. This will be just the thing to send spacey youngsters into orbit at bedtime. DS

CHRISTENSEN, BONNIE, ed. *In My Grandmother's House: Award-Winning Authors Tell Stories about Their Grandmothers*; ed. and illus. by Bonnie Christensen. HarperCollins, 2003 195p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029110-9 \$19.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-029109-5 \$18.99

R Gr. 6-10

Twelve short stories, all new, are contributed by women writers who remember their grandmothers variously as humble, imperious, sensible, troubled, distant, clever, heroic, warm, or just downright perfect. Nostalgic hymns of praise from Ji-Li Jiang ("To My Nai Nai") and Alma Flor Ada ("My Abuelita, My Paradise") are vivid, but they might pall were they not interspersed with glimpses of more emotionally complex relationships such as the one Gail Carson Levine reveals in her tense "Visit to Grandma's" or the one Beverley Naidoo portrays in "Granny Was a Gambler," about her mentally ill grandmother. Readers may be especially interested in some of the famous children's book authors here, including Beverly Cleary, whose grandmother set her "stitching . . . through life" in "Grandma and Her Needle," and Jean Craighead George, whose grandmother finally ends her storytelling with the never-ending narrative "And Then Another Locust Came and Took Away Another Grain of Corn." Other stories, by Minfong Ho, Pat Cummings, Bonnie Christensen, and Joan Abelove, offer a spectrum that will engage anyone hooked into the first story, Cynthia Leitich Smith's "The Naked Truth" about her indomitable "sexy grandma." Perhaps the most important aspect of the book is its point about time: these (and all) elderly women were once as young as the teenage readers now thinking about their own grandmothers. BH

COLLICOTT, SHARLEEN *Toestomper and the Bad Butterflies*; written and illus. by Sharleen Collicott. Houghton, 2003 32p

ISBN 0-618-14092-1 \$15.00

R 5-8 yrs

Toestomper (a small rodential creature) is still living happily with his caterpillars (from *Toestomper and the Caterpillars*), but one day they "completely covered themselves with strange blankets, went to sleep, and wouldn't wake up." Eventually, of course, they do wake up—as butterflies of a particularly flighty temperament. Anxious caretaker Toestomper tries to teach them the necessary skills and caution to keep them safe in a dangerous world, but the butterflies merely get cockier and more annoying until finally they run afoul of Big Tooth, the "biggest giant of all." This seems at first blush to be a sweet little story with cuddly illustration, but there's more to Toestomper's adventures than that. Between the scary iguanas, the problematic flying lessons ("Those are dumb wings," the butterflies accurately in-

form Toestomper. "They only go down"), and the mischievous butterflies ("We're not afraid of Big Tooth!" the butterflies bragged. "We're going to zoom him!"), there's a gentle eccentricity to the text and the storyline that'll make youngsters sit up and take notice. They'll certainly be startled by the climax, wherein Big Tooth (a resentful hippopotamus) snaps up the butterflies in his mouth, and they'll be as thrilled as first audiences of the Jonah story with the twist that lets the subjects out hale and hearty (and, fortunately, somewhat chastened). Sly touches of psychedelia invigorate the demure, fuzzy-textured gouache: with his fringe jacket and headscarf, the otherwise trim Toestomper looks a bit of a rodential Deadhead, and the patterned blue butterflies could have been designed by Peter Max. Audiences will relate to Toestomper's babysitting efforts even as they gleefully support the youthful hubris of the butterflies. DS

COOKE, KAZ *The Terrible Underpants*; written and illus. by Kaz Cooke. Hyperion, 2003 [32p]

ISBN 0-7868-1924-3 \$12.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 4-6 yrs

It's happened to almost everyone: that dreaded day when you have to dig deep into the back of your drawer to uncover those not-so-savory underpants. When Wanda-Linda's father has put all of her good underpants on the line to dry, she has no choice but to fish out her terrible underpants—the ones with the loose elastic and the scratchy bit and the baggy seat. Even though Wanda-Linda's parents assure her that no one will notice the terrible underpants, her quotidian tragedy assumes larger-than-life proportions when the wind blows up her skirt in town, her friends see her underpants on the playground, and a TV news crew captures them on film as she does a handstand. What's a girl and her pet wombat to do? Wanda-Linda's logical solution (she removes the offending garment entirely) may not meet with universal approbation and it's a bit flat after the fizzy humor of the proceedings, but it solves her problem. The cartoon-style illustrations tend to rely on Wanda-Linda's body and her pet wombat for expression of emotion, since our heroine's lopsided smile seems to stay in place no matter what betides, but there's still plenty of energy in the uncluttered compositions. Besides, such good cheer and resourcefulness in the dire circumstance of having to wear unpleasant underthings is surely a lesson worth learning for the more fastidious (or should I say anal?) young reader. KC

CRUM, SHUTTA *The House in the Meadow*; illus. by Paige Billin-Frye. Whitman, 2003 32p

ISBN 0-8075-3393-9 \$15.95

Ad 3-7 yrs

This reworking of the popular children's rhyme "Down in the Meadow" begins with ten friends celebrating the marriage of a young couple. These turn out to be great guests to invite, because all the adult attendees practice trades that the couple will need to build their first home. When the next spring arrives, Charlie shows up with his backhoe, Pete with his concrete truck, Kellie with her paint buckets; even gray-haired Florence is still ready to bend pipe alongside her crew well past the age that many men would have turned in their wrenches. There's occasional strain in the rhyming scheme ("Plumb!" said Florence. "We plumb," said the 4./ So they joined all the pipes going through the new floor") and in reconciling construction requirements with the countdown concept itself. Either the contractors are lavish

in their hiring policies or are building in an area with exceptionally strong trade unions, judging from the massive workforce that shows up on the site of the modest house: eight concrete masons, six well drillers, five roof shinglers, and a plumber with four apprentices. The cut-paper and realia collages are somewhat hackneyed in style, but they're still lively, with elements generously layered to achieve remarkable depth as the house fairly blooms. Now, if those painters would please lay a dropcloth over that hardwood floor . . . EB

CRUTCHER, CHRIS *King of the Mild Frontier: An Ill-Advised Autobiography*. Greenwillow, 2003 [272p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-050250-9 \$17.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-050249-5 \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 8-12

How does one grow up to become a banned-book writer? In this insightful and often hilarious *Kunstlerroman*, readers meet Chris Crutcher, the meek, gullible, hopelessly unathletic boy who would grow up to write books that chronicle the world of the teen misfit. Obsessed with unattainable girls, young Chris dons coon-skin caps (he believes that his acne-ravaged face will take on a craggy outdoorsy appeal if he can just manage the wilderness survival training of the Boy Scouts) and endures unthinkable gross hazing rituals (his high-school athletic club makes creative use of oysters and olives in their initiation proceedings) in order to attract the various girls of his dreams. As one might imagine, he meets with little success, but he ends up with good stories to tell. This is vintage Crutcher; under the humor there crackles a fierce anger toward the institutions and people who refuse to take responsibility for the emotional lifeworld they are bequeathing to their children. Here teens will find the biographical source material for some of the most infamous scenes (remember the penis in the popcorn bag in *Running Loose*?) and heartbreaking characters (the little girl rubbing her skin raw trying to wash the black off from *Whale Talk*, the man who had shaken his child to the point of brain damage in *The Crazy Horse Electric Game*, among others) in his novels. One can imagine a number of classroom writing activities that might stem from pairing this autobiography with the novels, from adapting real people and events into fiction, to students writing their own lives as creative nonfiction. In addition, the comic memories of boyhood will give this book an indisputable appeal for adult men, making it an excellent choice for a reading group of fathers and teens. KC

DE ROSAMEL, GODELEINE *Drawing with Objects*; written and illus. by Godeleine De Rosamel. Gareth Stevens, 2003 24p (Drawing Is Easy)

ISBN 0-8368-3627-8 \$15.95

R Gr. K-3

Despite the optimistic claim of the series title, drawing is not easy, as the stickman-challenged will attest. De Rosamel, however, has the perfect palliative for kids who panic at the sight of paint and pencil—try tracing the outline of common household objects, and then spiff up the results. Small bottles (vitamin, glue, juice) are starters for broad-snouted piggies; just add springy tail, dot eye, squat legs, and a splash of puddle for wallowing. Several varieties of pliers yield a menagerie of dinosaurs that only require jagged teeth, stick legs, and whatever epidermal embellishment the artist desires. Spoons and spatulas morph into mice and moles, hamsters and ladybugs; tape dispensers make snails and whales. Each double-page spread is a paragon of simplicity and clarity, with the object traced in four steps on

one page and the finished products in chunky black line filled with crisp matte color on the facing page. Reading the text, which amounts to little more than object labels, is purely optional. Now even the art-room washouts can doodle with confidence and pride. EB

DEARDEN, CARMEN DIANA, comp. *Little Book of Latin American Folktales*; ad. by Pilar Almoína de Carrera, Pascuala Corona, Rafael Olivares Figueroa, et al.; tr. by Susana Wald and Beatriz Zeller; illus. by María Fernanda Oliver, Heinz Rose, and Irene Savino. Groundwood, 2003 [132p]

ISBN 0-88899-543-1 \$8.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

Ten traditional Latin American tales with foreign roots ("Spanish American versions of tales from many parts of the world, passed from generation to generation and carried over into Latin American and Venezuelan lore") are here retold by Latin American writers and storytellers. The stories include variations on well-known western folktales such as "Cinderella," "Hansel and Gretel," "The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs," and additional tales with familiar motifs. The introduction mentions the "sparkle that imbues the language of the people who tell these stories as part of their daily lives," and, while the stories are not the sort to elicit guffaws, the retellings are gracefully spare, with subtle, clever moments of humor. For example, in the "Hansel and Gretel" variant "Ocelot, Jaguar and Lion," the children encourage their widowed father to marry a neighbor because she gives them sweets, to which the father replies, "My little ones, first the honey, then the vinegar." Each tale is illustrated with full-page color images and black-and-white spot art by one of the contributing artists, all of whom run to dreamlike styles. The small trim size of this pretty piece of bookmaking is sure to lure fairy and folktale lovers, even while the content helps fill the need for a wide range of materials on Latin America. There are no specific written sources provided, but notes on each tale give some context; short biographies of each adapter are included, and a brief glossary is appended. JMD

DEFELICE, CYNTHIA *Under the Same Sky*. Farrar, 2003 215p

ISBN 0-374-38032-5 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 5-8

Joe Pedersen overestimates his parents' generosity when he asks for a motor bike for his fourteenth birthday. Not only does his father fail to buy the other-guys-have-'em argument, he goes so far as to challenge Joe to earn the money for the "Thunderbird" by laboring alongside the Mexican migrant workers on the family's New York produce farm. Joe calculates the days required to accrue the cash at minimum wage and agrees to show his father what he's made of. It's clear from the start that he's not made of much, though, and only after weeks of backbreaking toil does he build the muscles, character, and cultural understanding that readers will see coming from a mile away. It would take a thick-skinned adolescent indeed to miss the shrieking message of the value of a buck, and this title's pleasures come not from the predictable trajectory of the message-driven plot but from those revelatory moments in which the spoiled teen weighs the value of his vacuous buddies against his hard-earned money and the even harder-earned respect he's beginning to gain among the Mexican workers. Through a related plot involving Joe's love interest, Luisa, and her forged visa, DeFelice introduces readers to the problematic rudiments of INS mission and practice, and although she clearly places the Pedersens

on the side of the enlightened angels, she does thoughtfully present pros and cons to the issue of undocumented workers. EB

DENNIS, YVONNE WAKIM *Children of Native America Today*; by Yvonne Wakim Dennis and Arlene Hirschfelder. Charlesbridge, 2003 64p illus. with photographs

ISBN 1-57091-499-0 \$19.95

R Gr. 3-6

The foreword by Buffy Sainte-Marie contains an accurate summation of Dennis and Hirschfelder's crisp overview: "This book is a collection of brief profiles of Native American tribes and culture groups designed to give school-age children a snapshot of the wealth of information there is to learn." The selection of tribes and cultures is broad, and its contemporary focus and geographic organization are unusual and welcome. Divided into regions (Northeast, Southeast, Central, Plains, Basin-Plateau, Southwest, California/Washington, Alaska, Hawaii, and Urban People), the book includes twenty-five Native community profiles, while making clear that "the nations in this book are just a few of more than 500 Native cultures." Each two-page profile includes very general but not always easily accessed information: where the community is located, where the children go to school, what they do for fun, what kind of work their parents do. A "More facts about . . ." insert gives the location of the community's largest population group, some notable members of that particular tribe, and a short list of neighboring peoples. Glossy color photographs depict the day-to-day life of individuals in each community, and while there are some images of children in traditional regalia, most of the pictures show kids in everyday wear, doing everyday things. The text sometimes suffers from overgeneralization, but the lingering impression of the communities presented is one of intense richness and variety. A bibliography (including books, magazines, organizations, and websites), glossary, and index are included. A large map of the United States shows the present-day locations of the communities profiled. JMD

FOX, FRANK G. *Jean Laffite and the Big Ol' Whale*; illus. by Scott Cook. Farrar, 2003 32p

ISBN 0-374-33669-5 \$16.00

R 5-9 yrs

Jean Laffite is popularly known for being a notorious pirate during the War of 1812, but this is a whale of a different color. Aided rather than impeded by the scarcity of detail about Laffite's early life, Fox spins a fancy tall tale of the legendary figure's origins and early adventures. Laffite "came from up the river—that's all anyone knew," and it is plain from the beginning that he is an unusual baby: he drinks coffee with chicory, swims like a catfish, and knows all there is to know about the Mississippi River. Good thing, too, because "one hot summer day, when Jean was a strapping lad of sixteen, something happened: The biggest, deepest, widest river in all of the United States went completely dry—overnight." Jean walks upriver and discovers what is keeping the Mississippi from flowing: "A whale. A big ol' whale. Even bigger than a blue whale. It was stuck in between the banks, like a stopper in a sink." Well, Jean sprinkles a little cayenne pepper into the whale's blowhole, and one huge sneeze later the Mississippi is unblocked and the whale is free. Jean digs a hole (Lake Pontchartrain) and fills it with water and fish so the whale can visit. The author has a rip-roaring way with words, and the telling of this fishy exaggeration has an easy, rhythmic flow. The humor is evident

not only in the catchy narrative but in Cook's gently boisterous images. The illustrations are lit up and crackling, from the round and rosy baby Jean to the smiling figure of the great white whale he befriends. The graceful sweep of the compositions, the quirkily detailed landscapes, and the golden glow of the palette suggest an idealized world where yarns like this one are everyday occurrences. The tall-tale shelf can sometimes look a little sparse; this will be just the title to help fill in the gaps. JMD

FRIEDMAN, DEBRA *Picture This: Fun Photography and Crafts*; illus. by Jane Kurisu and with photographs. Kids Can, 2003 40p (Kids Can Do It)

Trade ed. ISBN 1-55337-046-5 \$12.95

Paper ed. ISBN 1-55337-047-3 \$5.95

R Gr. 3-8

SCHWARZ, RENÉE *Funky Junk: Cool Stuff to Make with Hardware*; illus. and with photographs by Frank Baldassarra. Kids Can, 2003 40p (Kids Can Do It)

Trade ed. ISBN 1-55337-387-1 \$12.95

Paper ed. ISBN 1-55337-388-X \$5.95

R Gr. 3-8

Kids who speed past the craft books on their way to the 796s may pause for a second look at this inviting pair of do-it-yourself titles. *Picture This* focuses (so to say) on composition and presentation techniques adaptable for 35mm, disposable, and, to a more limited extent, digital cameras. Novices and enthusiasts will find hints on capturing shadows and motion, creating montaged panoramas and simple optical illusions, and adding interest to portraits with before/after, bug's-eye, and bird's-eye views. Suggestions for cropping, grouping, and sequencing raise the bar from simple scrapbook-style mounting; a particularly clever mount involves alternating strips from before/after shots and arranging them into an accordion fold that can be viewed from the left as "before" and from the right as "after." Technical terms are introduced slowly and logically, and they are recapped in a closing glossary of "Photographer Talk." *Funky Junk* aims at—dare I say it?—boys, and at any crafters who've had their fill of glitter and ribbon-intensive projects. Kids raid hardware store and tool bench for requisite nuts, bolts, wire, and assorted connectors to be fashioned into sci-fi-worthy metal aliens suitable for display on zipper pulls, notebooks, key chains, etc. In most cases, the hardware-store hunt will prove lengthier than project execution, but for kids who can't yet tell a wing nut from a ring terminal, items are clearly marked in the introduction and organized into typical departments at the hardware store. Minimal supervision is required (although adults may need to assist younger handypersons with craft knives and quick-setting epoxy as indicated). Projects progress from streamlined crocodilian mini-monsters that can hang on combination locks, all the way to a complete gearhead chess set. Pick up the pair for fresh ideas for youth groups and novel possibilities for homemade gift giving. EB

GALLO, DONALD R., ed. *Destination Unexpected*. Candlewick, 2003 221p

ISBN 0-7636-1764-4 \$16.99

R Gr. 7-10

Kimberly Willis Holt, Ron Koertge, Richard Peck, and Graham Salisbury are among the authors whose short stories appear in this collection, which is organized around the broadly conceived theme of journeys to unexpected destinations. The journeys represented here are diverse, from vacations to bus trips across town to walks on moonlit golf courses. Each protagonist manages to confront some troubling

aspect of him or herself or the world and to come to a greater understanding of his or her place in the scheme of things. At first blush, a few of the stories seem a bit ethically simplistic, but when one remembers that the audience for these stories has a fresh eye for hypocrisy, especially in dealings with adults, it is easy to forgive a bit of "chicken soup for the soul." Moreover, many of the stories are not so obvious in their moral implications: for instance, in "Keep Smiling," should Sam tell Ian that she was in the car that killed his cousin, that it was her fault that her friend was driving drunk because she insisted on being driven home? Wouldn't it be better to bear her burden of guilt silently than to aggravate Ian's loss? How much drudgery should Helene have to endure on her "vacation" in "Tourist Trapped"? Sure, her aunt is having a difficult pregnancy, but did that mean it was fair to expect Helene to be housekeeper, nanny, and cook all rolled into one? Not all of the protagonists end up on the side one would expect in a moral dilemma, which paves the way for follow-up discussion. Each story is followed by an author's note that tells a bit about its genesis; these notes may also serve as inspiration for young writers to find stories in their own experiences, newspaper clippings, and even urban legends. KC

GAY, MARIE-LOUISE *Good Morning, Sam*; written and illus. by Marie-Louise Gay. Groundwood, 2003 [26p]

ISBN 0-88899-528-8 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 3-6 yrs

Sam, younger brother of the irrepressible Stella (*Stella, Star of the Sea*, BCCB 5/99, and others) adamantly refuses his sister's help in getting dressed: "No," said Sam. 'I can do it by myself.' 'Are you sure?' 'Yes,' said Sam." So Sam begins—by playing with the dog. When he finally gets around to pulling off his nightshirt, he gets stuck ("Stella, help!" called Sam. 'My head grew bigger in the night'); then he can't find his underpants, or get his shirt on, or locate a matching sock, or uncover either of his shoes. He finally manages to get all his clothes on, but when they are leaving the house Sam points out that Stella (who has been busy helping him dress) has not managed to dress herself: "Stella?" said Sam. 'What now?' sighed Stella. 'Didn't you forget something?' giggled Sam." Gay's sturdy and dependable Stella is a gem, and the fizzily enthusiastic Sam is a chip off the old block. The story's success lies in its simplicity and in the slice-of-life reactions of Gay's characters. The sparkling and translucent watercolors make the most of their homely details, whether it be the general gleeful dishevelment of Sam's room or the stout, sausage dog happily assisting in Sam's toilette. Stella and Sam were a pair to be reckoned with from their first outing; fans will be pleased with the continuing biblio-melody of this sibling duet. JMD

GOODHART, PIPPA *Pudgy: A Puppy to Love*; illus. by Caroline Jayne Church. Chicken House/Scholastic, 2003 [26p]

ISBN 0-439-45699-1 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 3-5 yrs

Poor Pudgy! No one will play with him, and to make matters worse the naughty pup snitches food from the table, makes a mess, and runs away to the woods. Equally lonely Lucy has chosen the same refuge, and when Pudgy discovers her there the two quickly become friends in this brief, plainspoken tale of girl-meets-dog. While the storytelling is slight indeed (adults and older children may wonder

where Pudgy's owners are and why they don't go looking for him after he runs away), preschoolers who've experienced the sorrow of being playmateless will likely appreciate the simplicity and directness of Goodhart's narrative ("Nobody will play with Pudgy . . . and nobody will play with Lucy. So they are sad"). Young beginning readers will find this within their reach as well, thanks to the minimal text, elementary vocabulary, and large, easy-to-read sans serif font. Church's wide-eyed, cartoonish Pudgy and Lucy are demure in expression and posture but also robust, with solid, rounded figures (outlined in smudgy black) and chubby, freckled, rosy-cheeked faces. Pudgy's plump little charcoal-gray body is a pleasing contrast to the muted greens, golds, reds, and blues of the parchment-patterned, speckled, and/or rubber-stamped backgrounds, and his protruding brown ears are perky echoes of Lucy's stylized brunette pigtails. This title may not be the most memorable pup in the litter of "kid-and-dog" picture books, but it's got heart, and the loyalty and companionship between Pudgy and Lucy will resonate with little listeners. JMH

GOODMAN, SUSAN E. *Nature Did It First!*; illus. with photographs by Dorothy Handelman. Millbrook, 2003 24p
ISBN 0-7613-2413-5 \$21.90 Ad 4-7 yrs

In this concept book, young viewers are encouraged to see similarities between the ways humans and animals adapt to the circumstances of their environments. On the right side of each spread, there is a photograph of a human solution to a problem, like a baby carrier or a spill-proof container. Children can guess how "nature did it first" before turning the page to find the animal counterpart, as in the built-in baby carrier of the kangaroo or the spill-proof container of an egg, respectively. As a guessing activity, the book might have worked better if the natural feature were shown before the human adaptation; it would be a rare elementary student who would know that the proboscis of a moth or butterfly works like a straw or that termite nests sometimes sport umbrella-shaped caps, but they could easily work it out the other way around. However, the concept and the connections themselves are clever, and they will doubtless act as springboards for youngsters to make their own connections. KC

HALLIDAY, JOHN *Shooting Monarchs*. McElderry, 2003 135p
ISBN 0-689-84338-0 \$15.95 M Gr. 7-12

After a childhood of being neglected by his alcoholic mother and ridiculed by authority figures, Macy is now a young man unable to relate to others except through violence. He's particularly drawn to teenage girls, and after murdering one and coming threateningly close to another, life's currents send him towards the little town of Shiloh. A small drama is already playing itself out there, with outsider Danny Driscoll yearning after popular Leah Henderson, who's dating brutish jock Chad Peterson. When Macy abducts Leah, it's Danny and not Chad who comes to the rescue, but at a very high cost. This is a bit of a twist on the usual crime drama, and there's some raw acknowledgment of the ripple effect of Macy's kind of deprivation. Halliday's prose has a flatness of affect that may be designed to evoke Macy's own emotional limitations, but unfortunately it ends up being largely uninvolved in its own right, with plodding explanation substituting for intimacy with the characters, who exist largely to fulfill their narrative role. The understated style also clashes wildly with the purple sentimentality of the climax,

wherein Danny takes a bullet, confesses his love to a rescued Leah, receives a kiss in return, and dies ("Macy's bullet had pierced his heart"). Readers looking for explorations of the dark side and its consequences will be better off with Cormier or Duncan. DS

HEGI, URSULA *Trudi & Pia*; illus. by Giselle Potter. Schwartz/Atheneum, 2003 34p
ISBN 0-689-84683-5 \$16.95 Ad Gr. 3-6

Young Trudi, a dwarf, yearns to be like other children: "Sometimes, during the day, she'd hang from door frames or tree limbs by her fingers until they were numb, convinced she could feel her arms and legs getting longer." One day, on a visit to a traveling circus, Trudi sees Pia, the animal tamer. Pia is a dwarf, too, but "while people laughed at the clowns and monkeys, they did not laugh at the dwarf woman. They were awed by her skill and courage." After participating in part of the show as a willing volunteer, Trudi follows Pia to her trailer; when the performer lets the girl in, she blurts, "I have never met anyone like me." Pia assures her that dwarves are everywhere: "I have met one hundred and four, to be exact." Trudi asks questions and the kind circus performer answers, until in the end, Pia tells Trudi that her loneliness can only be alleviated when she learns to love herself. This unusual short story is based on Hegi's adult novel *Stones from the River*, and its distillation into a picture book is not entirely successful. Though the incident has been carefully chosen to show readers and listeners what the world is like from Trudi's point of view, the viewpoint tends towards the adult and, occasionally, abstruse. Potter's gouache illustrations are set in a nostalgically nonspecific, Euro-town environment, with girls in pigtails and skirts and boys in short pants. Facial expressions are a bit undifferentiated, and the focus of the compositions is not always obvious (the fantasy sequences are particularly diffused). Although Hegi's text can be bit opaque, this is still an unusual look at what it means to be an outsider in an insiders' world, and children may well find their encounter with Trudi illuminating. JMD

HOBBS, WILL *Jackie's Wild Seattle*. HarperCollins, 2003 [192p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-051631-3 \$16.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-17474-4 \$15.99
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-8

Shannon and Cody are excited to spend the summer with their athletic, free-spirited uncle in Seattle while their parents, both physicians, answer the call of Doctors without Borders to work in the refugee camps along the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan. When they arrive in Seattle, they are surprised at the physical frailty of their uncle and by his obsession with his volunteer work at Jackie's Wild Seattle, a rescue and rehabilitation operation for wildlife in and around the Seattle area. Cody and Shannon eagerly join him in his work, and their summer turns out to be even more rewarding than they had hoped as they participate in daring "hot" rescues of animals that find themselves in all sorts of predicaments caused by the encroachment of the human community into their habitats. Hobbs offers a tightly stitched moral universe, where all of the adults and children busy themselves doing the Right Thing and every utterance and decision proves to be measured and wise. The children's ability to perform amazing rescues with very little training or experience strains credibility; for instance, after Uncle Neal has his thumb nearly sev-

ered by the free talon of a trapped hawk, Shannon evades a similar fate as she deftly wields his penknife to cut the net around the bird and get him into a carrier. Later that same penknife is used by Tyler, a juvenile offender doing his community service at the center, to perform a C-section on a dead doe. Despite the contrived sequence of people triumphing over various obstacles—Uncle Neal overcomes cancer, Tyler an abusive father, Shannon her fear for her parents, and Cody his survivor guilt after 9/11—there are enough thrilling moments with the animals to keep the budding wildlife enthusiast on the edge of his or her seat. KC

HOPKINS, LEE BENNETT, comp. *A Pet for Me: Poems*; illus. by Jane Manning. HarperCollins, 2003 48p (I Can Read Books)
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029112-5 \$16.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-029111-7 \$15.99 R Gr. 1-3

Twenty short poems about pets make up this easy-reader poetry collection, with offerings from poets both well known (Karla Kuskin, X. J. Kennedy, Alice Schertle) and less familiar (Tom Robert Shields, Avis Hartley). Pint-sized pet devotees will be glad to find that a wide variety of critters are represented, from tarantulas and tortoises to more ordinary cats and dogs. While a few of the poems border on the singsong (only one non-rhyming poem is included), the continuous use of rhyme will be helpful to novice readers. Manning's attractively stylized kids and pets frolic together or simply veg out, while subtle but articulated patterns give a pleasant texture to the jewel-toned clothing and backgrounds. A few of the featured pets are rendered rather blandly, and an occasional clunky layout of text makes some poems a bit difficult to read, but overall the color, content, and composition of the art are well-matched to the kid-friendly poetry. Since poetry doesn't always get a lot of play among the easy-reader crowd, it's nice to see a collection that beginning readers can tackle with confidence; teachers might also find this useful to spark a pet-themed poetic writing project. JMH

JONES, DIANA WYNNE *The Merlin Conspiracy*. Greenwillow, 2003 [480p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-052319-0 \$17.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-052318-2 \$16.99
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-10

Roddy and her friend Grundo are members of the royal court of Blest, and they spend their lives roaming all over the kingdom with their sovereign, whose job it is to maintain the balance of not only Blest but of all the worlds it touches. Though of wizardly origins, Nick is the adopted son of a novelist living in modern-day England; he knows about the magic-filled other worlds but, much as he longs to, he just can't reach them. When the Merlin of Blest (the court magician) dies suddenly, Roddy and Grundo discover an insidious conspiracy that may undo the magical balance of the multiverse. Meanwhile, Nick, attempting to access the magic that is his birthright, meets powerful sorcerer Romanov, who sets the boy on a path that enmeshes him in the plot to overthrow Blest. The story alternates between narrators Roddy and Nick, as their paths intertwine and they arrive at the final, horrific confrontation between good and evil. Jones' tight, descriptive prose propels readers through layers of untrustworthy relatives, mythological figures, complex worlds, and magical hierarchies. The race against time to save the balance of magic adds an undercurrent of desperation to the already fast pace. The action is packed, but what makes this complicated story work is the characteriza-

tion, both primary and secondary. The main characters have that instant recognition factor, those attributes that will make readers care about them up front. Secondary characters are less developed but still artfully drawn, with specific personality traits and tics that make them solidly three-dimensional. Holding it all together is an understated humor that whispers through presentations of political and social structures both admired and derided. The ending is a bit abrupt, but given the pell-mell ride that came before, readers won't mind. They'll be too busy looking for the hopefully inevitable sequel. JMD

JONES, URSULA *The Witch's Children*; illus. by Russell Ayto. Holt, 2003 32p
ISBN 0-8050-7205-5 \$16.95 R* 5-8 yrs

When a witch's three children go for a stroll in the park, the squirrels warn the pigeons that it means trouble; sure enough, trouble arrives. Little Gemma is sailing her boat on the pond when the wind blows it over: "Oh no!" shouted Gemma. "Who will save my little boat from sinking?" The witch's Eldest One helpfully turns Gemma into a frog, who then swims out and saves her boat, but when she asks to be turned back into Gemma, the Eldest One says he hasn't learned to do that yet. The Middle One steps in, turns the trees into a palace, the ice-cream lady into a princess, and the squirrels and pigeons into soldiers and footmen. The ice-cream-lady princess kisses Gemma the Frog, who turns into a handsome prince. Now everyone wants the spells reversed, but the Eldest One and the Middle One have used all the magic they know. That's when the Little One (who has "laughed till she split her trousers") steps up with her one piece of magic: "The Little One opened her mouth wide and yelled . . . 'MOMMY!'" Mommy witch comes flying out of the clouds to set everything right, after which "the witch's children flew home on their mother's broomstick . . . and they all had cake." Ayto's line-and-watercolor illustrations reflect the breezy nature of the sly, clever tale. Elements—from feathers to trees to hair to sails—blow around carefully balanced compositions, the natural and magical combining in a whirlwind of activity. The angular cartoons feature human characters that are all head and skinny legs, while the pigeons are puffed up balls of feathers with bright eyes. This lighthearted bit of witchy whimsy hits the mark and bounces off, giggling. JMD

KHAN, RUKHSANA *Ruler of the Courtyard*; illus. by R. Gregory Christie. Viking, 2003 34p
ISBN 0-670-03583-1 \$15.99 R 5-7 yrs

Saba is afraid of the chickens in the courtyard ("Bony beaks, razor claws, with GLITTERY eyes that wonder, wonder as they watch me, how easy it would be to make me scream"), so much so that every visit to the family bathhouse seems fraught with danger. One day, after a breathless dash to out-race the chickens, Saba completes her ablutions and sits enjoying the quiet of the empty bathhouse—that is, until she spies a snake coiled in the corner. After two attempts to trap the snake with the bath bucket, she succeeds: "But it's too quiet, much too quiet. No sound's coming from the bucket. No moving or hissing of a trapped and angry snake." The reason? "It's not a snake at all. It's a drawstring. A nala. I trapped my Nani's nala. All that fuss to catch the rope that ties up Nani's baggy pants." A relieved Saba races from the bathhouse to chase the chickens, the "savage little bullies," proclaiming "I AM MIGHTY SABA! RULER OF THE COURTYARD!" While listeners may feel a bit deceived by the fake snake dénouement, Khan (au-

thor of *Dahling, If You Luv Me, Would You Please, Please Smile*, BCCB 12/99) offers a text that effectively depicts both Saba's fear and her joyful triumph over it. Christie's art displays a new style here; the forms are softer, less angular, and he uses masses of color to insinuate identifiable architectural forms. Despite the somewhat anticlimactic conclusion, overall the story has energy and suspense, and audiences may well be inspired to tell their own family tales of misplaced fears. JMD

KUSKIN, KARLA *Moon, Have You Met My Mother?: The Collected Poems of Karla Kuskin*; illus. by Sergio Ruzzier. Geringer/HarperCollins, 2003 322p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027174-4 \$17.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027173-6 \$16.99 Ad Gr. 3-5

Drawn from collections published between 1958 (*In the Middle of the Trees*, BCCB 6/58) and 1992 (*Soap Soup*, BCCB 6/92), as well as from anthologies, picture books, and other publications, this compendium of more than 200 poems includes more than fifty lively new ones as well as many old familiars. Selections range from light two-liners ("I am watering the plants./ I'm also watering the ants") to poems that go on and on—"A boy had a mother who bought him a hat" lingers for nine pages. The quality, too, is somewhat variable. The best poems take a reader by surprise or offer a satisfying pattern of construction—"I woke up this morning," a favorite readaloud, does both. A few of the poems seem to exist just for the sake of end-rhymes ("Isn't it queer/ that an ear/ can hear?"), while others feature the clever twist that raises them above the level of jingles ("If my eyes/ were where my nose is/ I would blink/ to smell the roses"). None of the poems have titles and the index doubles as a table of contents, which can be problematic, especially as it's prone to error. The print is large, the design spacious, and the pen and ink line drawings humorous; though they don't quite have Shel Silverstein's wickedly inventive edge, there's still amusement, as in the picture of a reptilian creature lying on its back, legs up and mouth stuffed with what appears to be a new potato, all on a plate lined with other new potatoes, as a prospective young diner looks on: "I have a hunch/ I won't like lunch." Kuskin is a veteran at making poetry accessible to children, and this will prove popular in school and public libraries that haven't already stocked up on her previous books. BH

LANG, AUBREY *Baby Lion*; illus. with photographs by Wayne Lynch. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2003 [36p] (Nature Babies)
ISBN 1-55041-711-8 \$11.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

Baby Elephant; illus. with photographs by Wayne Lynch. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2003 [36p] (Nature Babies)
ISBN 1-55041-715-0 \$11.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

The Nature Babies series by wife-and-husband team Lang and Lynch features stories about the first year of life of various animals in the wild. The accounts are factually informative, and they also follow a distinctive narrative line, which makes them compelling for young readers. Unlike many nature books, these stories refuse to romanticize the abilities and the seamless adaptation to their environment of the wild animals but instead point out that, for instance, mother lions get cranky when their cubs are too playful or when the hunt has been unsuccessful, or that sometimes baby elephants fall into water holes and get stuck, and that these huge

babies can be frightened by a tiny rabbit unexpectedly flushed from its hole. While not anthropomorphizing their subjects, the authors nonetheless interpret their actions and family structures in ways that are meaningful to their audience. Even when compacted into thumbnails to fit in these titles' petite trim size, Lynch's crisp color photographs offer narrative movement as well as personal portraiture. Each volume contains an index as well as a brief "Did You Know?" collection of facts, making the offerings in this series an appealing introduction to denser scientific treatments of their subjects. KC

LINDGREN, ASTRID *Mirabelle*; illus. by Pija Lindenbaum; tr. from the Swedish by Elisabeth Kallick Dyssegaard. R & S/Farrar, 2003 26p
ISBN 91-29-65821-7 \$15.00

Ad 6-8 yrs

A little girl, living secluded in the country with her financially strapped parents, longs for a doll. One day, while her parents are in town trying to sell the fruits of a meager harvest, the girl opens a gate for a strange old man in a horse-drawn wagon; the man rewards her with a glowing seed that she plants in the garden and that grows into a pretty blonde doll in a red hat and dress. Already delighted to have the doll, the girl is even more thrilled when she discovers that the doll, who calls herself *Mirabelle*, can walk and talk. In the end, the girl becomes the doll's happily proprietary mother, and she invites the audience to visit: "Just follow the narrow lane that leads to our house. I promise I'll be standing at the gate with *Mirabelle*." Lindgren offers a tale about a secret close to children's hearts, the belief that their toys are real. Autocratic, spoiled, and demanding *Mirabelle* is just a little too real, however (one wonders just what *Mirabelle* would do if the narrator decided to grow up and have a life); the lengthy text is also somewhat stiff and the passage of time abrupt. Lindenbaum's watercolors effectively evoke the rural, fey timelessness of Lindgren's setting (which is reinforced by rose-scattered endpapers and the gnomish-looking little girl), but again *Mirabelle* is just too weirdly alive, looking more like a over-ringleted toddler than a doll, however magical. Still, this is a story that reflects the desire of a lot of wishful thinkers, and *Mirabelle* may well be their dream come true. JMD

LOVE, D. ANNE *The Puppeteer's Apprentice*. McElderry, 2003 186p
ISBN 0-689-84424-7 \$16.95

Ad Gr. 4-7

Having fled her life as an orphaned, abused, and neglected kitchen helper, Mouse has the good fortune to hook up with a group of travelers on their way to York, whose merry company answers her longing for love and family. Alas, they go their separate ways when they reach York, and Mouse is left perilously on her own in this bustling medieval town. When she spies a puppet show in the marketplace, she is riveted, and her destiny is sealed; she simply must find a way to become a puppeteer. She stows away on the showman's cart, and her adventures as apprentice to this mysterious puppeteer begin. Slowly, she ingratiates herself to her new master; even more slowly, she learns the dark secrets that will eventually destroy their difficult but nevertheless fulfilling life on the road. The cast of characters is predictable for a story set in medieval England; the charming, irresponsible minstrel, the warm, gossipy goose woman, the beautiful, distressed damsel, the odious villain, and even the magnanimous duke offer few surprises. The portrayal of Mouse herself is undeniably derivative and clichéd—an orphan, named after vermin, breaks gender and class conventions in order to make good in a world that

does not welcome another mouth to feed, making comparisons to Cushman's *The Midwife's Apprentice* (BCCB 5/95) and *Matilda Bone* (12/00) inevitable. While Love's story lacks the psychological complexity and social commentary of Cushman's work, it nonetheless offers a satisfying narrative line with sound period detail and believably strong female leads. An author's note detailing the history of puppeteering and a bibliography of sources on medieval life are included. KC

LUPTON, HUGH, ad. *Pirican Pic and Pirican Mor*; illus. by Yumi Heo. Barefoot, 2003 40p

ISBN 1-84148-070-3 \$16.99

R 5-8 yrs

Pirican Pic and Pirican Mor, two nut-loving boys, go to gather walnuts, but while *Pirican Mor* climbs the tree and throws the nuts down to *Pirican Pic*, *Pirican Pic* "caught the nuts as they came down, and cracked them open with his little hammer. But all the nuts that *Pirican Pic* cracked, he ate, so that when *Pirican Mor* climbed down from the tree there were no walnuts for him at all." *Pirican Mor* is irate, and he tells *Pirican Pic*, "I need a stick both hard and straight/ To whack and thwack poor *Pirican Pic*/ Who ate ALL of my WALNUTS!" This is more easily said than done, as the tree *Pirican Mor* approaches for the stick wants to be cut with an axe, the axe wants to be sharpened with a stone, the stone wants to be wet with water . . . well, you get the drift. British storyteller Lupton's adaptation of this Scottish folktale (no source note is included, although this is similar in structure to the tale of "The Old Woman and Her Pig") has a robust rhythm and language that lends itself easily to reading or telling aloud. That energetic, oral immediacy is enhanced by Heo's lighthearted oil paintings. Human and animal characters sporting eccentric physiologies free-float among varying planes and perspectives in foreground-focused compositions infused with color and light. Font changes for varying lines of the refrain make the text as much a part of the overall design as the images themselves. The conclusion of this humorous tale (*Pirican Mor* succeeds in his quest and returns to the tree to exact vengeance, only to find a pile of already cracked walnuts waiting for him) is unexpectedly satisfying, and adults will welcome the non-pedantic delivery of so worthy a message. JMD

LYNN, JODI *Glory*. Puffin, 2003 [176p]

Paper over board ed. ISBN 0-14-250038-0 \$9.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Thirteen-year-old *Glory Mason* is a rebel in her fundamentalist Christian community of Dogwood, West Virginia, where the tight-knit families use no electricity, gasoline vehicles, household appliances, telecommunications, or other "modern conveniences" in an effort to isolate themselves from "the evils of the outside world." The women's traditional role as housekeeper is particularly galling to *Glory*, in sharp contrast to her best friend *Katie*, a model child who nevertheless "strays" with *Glory* and as a result is drowned in an accident that gets *Glory* expelled, midwinter. Shunned by her family and everyone else she knows, *Glory* stumbles through snow-covered woods for many days, staving off starvation with berries, nuts, fish, and game till she finds a far-off barn and makes a friend from the outside world. The setup of the cult-like situation initially involves some forced dialogue, expository description, and stock secondary characters, but once the story accelerates toward inevitable disaster, the pace becomes compelling. Similarly, the details of *Glory's* mountain journey are barely credible but nevertheless have the

age-old appeal of survival stories. Ultimately, the willful determination of the protagonist despite her devastating loss and the semi-romantic relationship she forms with her rescuer will hook an audience of young readers who are beginning to feel both the pain and excitement of separating from their own home rule. BH

LYNN, TRACY *Snow*. Simon Pulse, 2003 259p
Paper ed. ISBN 0-689-85556-7 \$5.99

R Gr. 7-10

Snow (aka Jessica) copes fairly well with her new stepmother, managing to keep her recently acquired fancy clothes clean while staying out of the new Duchess' way. All that ends, however, when Snow reaches adolescence and her beauty begins to assert itself. A chance encounter with an overly amorous young count results in Snow's being blamed for looking "like a slattern" and "behaving like a commoner," and her movements, heretofore relatively unfettered, become greatly circumscribed. When Snow's desperate stepmother attempts to regain her youth and her fertility through an experiment requiring Snow's heart, Alan, a young musician, helps Snow escape to London. Ill-equipped to fend for herself in the city, Snow is robbed of her small resources almost upon arrival and then taken in by an odd gang of thieves, the members of which have certain animal characteristics reflected by their names—Cat, Raven, Mouser, Sparrow—with whom Snow is surprised to find that she has much in common. This dense, novel-length retelling of *Snow White* gets off to a rocky start with an unnecessary and overwritten prologue, but once Lynn gets into the body of the story the imagery exerts an eerie fascination, and the action builds inexorably to the final betrayal. The isolated castle of Snow's family and the highly romanticized streets of Victorian London provide dramatic backdrops for unfolding events. Secondary characters are particularly well drawn; primary character Snow seems a bit hampered by her traditional lineage, but Lynn sets her loose in the end in a conclusion that will delight lovers of happily ever after even while confounding their expectations. JMD

MARTIN, JACQUELINE BRIGGS *The Water Gift and the Pig of the Pig*; illus. by Linda S. Wingerter. Houghton, 2003 [32p]
ISBN 0-618-07436-8 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R* 6-9 yrs

Isabel, the narrator, is very fond of her grandfather: he captained the schooner *Arundel* around Cape Horn and left the sea to marry Isabel's grandmother, taking with him the Pig Who Went Around Cape Horn and bringing to the region his water gift, his ability to find water (and sometimes other things) with a Y-shaped stick. Isabel lives happily with her grandparents and the Pig of the Pig, the last pig from the last litter of her grandfather's pig, until "bad luck rained down like a three-day storm." Grandfather becomes dispirited, and finally, the Pig of the Pig disappears. As usual, Martin brings a grave wonderment to her storytelling, enlivening her dreamy tone with details of quietly brilliant originality and infusing her understated text with sympathetic emotion. The addition of a genuine antagonist, in the person of crabby neighbor Ben Stinchfield ("mean as his little biter dog"), raises the tension of the plot without ever overconcretizing Isabel's worries about Grandfather and the Pig of the Pig. Where Petra Mathers' illustrations for Martin's *Grandmother Bryant's Pocket* (BCCB 7/96) had a rustic solidity, Wingerter's acrylics have a similar folk-art flavor but gain a gently worn woodgrainy effect from their bristly brushstrokes, and there's an unfussy delicacy to the rosy-cheeked faces

of persons and pigs. The artist is also a dab hand, pardon the pun, at landscapes, depicting the changing New England seasons in green spring leaves, golden summer grasses, and russet autumnal vistas under Vs of migrating geese, quietly abetting Martin's atmospheric writing with atmospheric visuals. As story of family, as story of bad luck surmounted, as a quietly effecting pig tale and more, this is a nuanced and satisfying production. DS

MARTIN, NORA *Flight of the Fisherbird*. Bloomsbury, 2003 150p
ISBN 1-58234-814-6 \$16.95 R Gr. 4-6

Thirteen-year-old Clem Nesbitt has always been vaguely jealous of dainty Sarah Hersey, the daughter of her Uncle Doran's business partner. Upon her father's death, Sarah moves in with the Nesbitts and, much to Clem's distress, begins to undermine the affection and comfortable rapport Clem has always enjoyed with her uncle. In fact, Uncle Doran has proposed to fifteen-year-old Sarah, and the prissy teen delights in taunting Clem with her shining prospects: "I don't care that he is old, and as ugly as everyone else in your family. . . . He's rich and has promised to give me every thing I want." Clem's faith in Uncle Doran, already shaken by this misbegotten engagement, is fatally undermined when she rescues a drowning man, Tong-Ling, who has been tossed off Doran's merchant boat *Doran Bull* and left for dead. Doran and his tight-lipped crew member, Ray Chung, have been smuggling Chinese immigrants into the country when a revenuer raid caught them by surprise and they dumped their human cargo overboard. With the enthusiastic help of her new friend, Jed, Clem must pacify distraught Sarah, outrun storms in her dory *Fisherbird*, and outwit the now murderous Doran and Ray Chung in an effort to bring Tong-Ling to tenuous safety on the Washington mainland. The plot may be pure melodrama, but it's tightly crafted and fast-moving, and its running theme of the plight of Chinese immigrants (many of whom were returning citizens) during the period of Chinese exclusion acts lends historical plausibility to the depiction of nineteenth-century life. This heart-thumping cat-and-mouse chase should be just the thing for summer adventure readers. EB

MASINI, BEATRICE *The Wedding Dress Mess*; ad. by Lenny Hort; illus. by Anna Laura Cantone. Watson-Guipitt, 2003 30p
ISBN 0-8230-1738-9 \$15.95 Ad 6-9 yrs

Filomena designs and sews the most beautiful wedding gowns in Italy, all the while daydreaming of the man next door. When Filippo finally proposes, Filomena's passion for her art gets the better of her, and she spends more time working on her dress than pitching woo with her intended. On the day of the wedding, Filomena's gown is so overwhelming that her frightened groom flees the proceedings. She chases after him, shedding her finery bit by bit as she goes, until the couple reunite and wed, Filippo in his "stylish green suit" and Filomena in "her simple white dress." The physical comedy will elicit giggles, but Filippo's reaction is seriously overblown, and the humor of the aesthetic dilemma will largely be lost on young audiences. The dissonance created by the traditional expectations of beauty evoked by the words and the playfully stylized ugliness of the art (the bulging eyes, the sparse teeth, and the noses hanging like limp balloons) effectively conveys the theme that beauty is to be found in simple things while suggesting that there's something essentially humorous about courtship. In addition, the use of collage art reinforces how complicated but paper-thin the traditional trappings of weddings can be.

Filomena's pursuit of Filippo takes place on a game board that features spaces where the bride loses her shoe or advances three spaces for getting a wedding present, suggesting that marriage depends on a roll of the dice. Such subtle postmodern play will likely prove elusive for the target audience, but it will certainly stock their imaginations with images that counter more traditional views of weddings and happily ever after. KC

MAURER, RICHARD *The Wright Sister: Katharine Wright and Her Famous Brothers*. Roaring Brook, 2003 [128p] illus. with photographs

Library ed. ISBN 0-7613-2564-6 \$25.90

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7613-1546-2 \$18.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

If young aviation enthusiasts are familiar with Katharine Wright, it's probably as the figure in starchy white in a group photograph, or a signature among the family's frequently quoted correspondence. Here Maurer attempts to elevate her to a position of greater prominence and to connect her supportive efforts directly to the success of brothers Wilbur and Orville. An extensive bibliography with ample primary sources seems to indicate Maurer's done his homework, but the effort to propel Katharine into her own renown never quite takes off. Much of Katharine's life would be considered commonplace, in fact, among her contemporaries—an adolescent girl taking on household responsibilities at her mother's death, a school-teacher passed over for promotion by male administrators, an aging spinster daughter expected to care for her father until his passing. Even in her more public role as social manager during her brothers' business trips in Europe and Washington, DC, Katharine is presented as more charming than indispensable. Maurer doesn't manage to make Katharine's contribution to publicity and paperwork nearly as exciting as the brothers' aeronautical exploits (even during the family's momentous dinner meeting with Octave Chanute, Katharine's preoccupied with watermelon slices), and he fails to fully capitalize on the irony of her position as the best-educated member of the family or of widespread rumors that she was the mathematical "brains" of the operation. Choppy vignettes finally explode into full-blown love story when Katharine is reunited in middle age with old college friend Harry Haskell, and Maurer bursts into sentimentality: "Katharine felt the familiar tug of family ties in one direction and her heart's eager yearning in the other." True aeronautics fans may welcome this supplement to Wright family history, but it will take some imaginative reading between lines to appreciate Katharine's role. Index and black-and-white photos are included. EB

McLEAN, JACQUELINE *Women of Adventure*. Oliver, 2003 [160p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 1-881508-73-0 \$19.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-9

Seven nineteenth- and twentieth-century women who pushed their boundaries, both geographical and social, take the spotlight in this smoothly written yet somewhat tepid collection of brief biographies. The selection of adventurers should guarantee nonstop thrills, from Mary Kingsley's forays into the heart of West Africa, to Marguerite Baker Harrison's career as a U.S. spy in post-World War I Berlin and Bolshevik Russia, to Ann Bancroft's treks across the Poles. However, McLean concentrates more heavily on marking milestones and enumerating sites

visited than in fleshing out the details of the journeys themselves. Each chapter stands alone, and no effort is made to cross-reference women who made their marks on the same projects (both Harrison and Latin American explorer Harriet Chalmers Adams were founders of the Society of Women Geographers), or to examine what seem to be recurring themes of strained childhoods, home- or self-schooling, and unsuccessful marriages. Readers should, nonetheless, come away with an understanding of the breadth of women's contributions in fields from ichthyology and anthropology to cartography and government intelligence. Black-and-white photographs, an index, and a bibliography are included. EB

MICUCCI, CHARLES *The Life and Times of the Ant*; written and illus. by Charles Micucci. Houghton, 2003 32p
ISBN 0-618-00559-5 \$16.00 R Gr. 2-5

In the latest entry in his respected Life and Times series, Micucci plumbs the anthill and explores the insect's development, methods of communication, roles within the ant community, and place within broad ecological systems. The author stumbles a bit as he moves between the general and the specific: the "Ant Calendar" that lays out a typical year makes no adjustment for location (would that it were 50 everywhere in February!) and applies only to underground nesters. Likewise, after discussing the wide range of ant sizes, it is difficult to explain the estimate that together "nine hundred of them would weigh less than an ounce." Nonetheless, the watercolor scenes and diagrams—some literal, others enlivened with cartoon ant guides—do clearly explicate ant anatomy and habitat. Related miscellanea, from gold mining ants to invoking the proper saint to halt ant infestation, should please trivia hounds, and a table of contents to the double-page "chapters" will guide report writers straight to the point. Budding myrmecologists should find this a browser's paradise, and casual readers may gain enough respect for these intelligent, complexly organized insects to watch where they step. EB

MITTON, TONY *Plum*; illus. by Mary GrandPré. Levine/Scholastic, 2003 60p
ISBN 0-439-36409-4 \$17.95 Ad Gr. 3-5

British author Mitton provides his first American poetry collection in this compilation of twenty verses, offering entries from lyrics ("Plum") to long humorous ballads ("Mrs. Bhattacharya's Chapati Zip Machine") to spooky rhymed tales ("Green Man's Lane") and a few other styles along the way. The longer poems show definite signs of strain and flagging energy, and there's more determination than accuracy to much of the scansion; sometimes entries are stronger on whimsy than on focus. The conceits are often humorous and kid-appealing, however (food-hurling devices and oversized fleas being good for capturing youthful attention), and when the poet's at his best—as in his shorter lyrics, such as "Plum" and "Growing" or the dialogue "What Is Under?"—he catches some of the spirit of Charles Causley in his quietly folksy inquiries. GrandPré's oversized and mystical pastels provide some playful drama, but they're ill-suited to the homey merits that are Mitton's strongest, drowning out the resonance of the subtler pieces and underscoring the frantic busyness of the more energetic entries. Overdesign also interferes sometimes with the poems (the scansion of "Flightpath" is sufficiently ambiguous that it needs proper line breaks rather than visual play for success) and, more often, with the poems' titles, which end up dwarfing rather than introducing their subjects. Young readers may still enjoy GrandPré's fantastic worlds, but

Mitton's verse might fare better if read aloud or removed to another setting where its light, and not that of its background, can shine. DS

MYRACLE, LAUREN *Kissing Kate*. Dutton, 2003 198p
ISBN 0-525-46917-6 \$16.99

Ad Gr. 7-12

Lissa and Kate have been inseparable friends for four years, but two weeks ago, everything changed: a drunken Kate kissed Lissa, Lissa kissed Kate back, and now the two aren't speaking. Lissa's narration gradually reveals the reason for the blow to their friendship—Lissa admits she really liked it, while Kate refuses to acknowledge that she did as well ("I'm not like you, Lissa. I'm not a fucking dyke, all right?"). While Lissa struggles to deal with the alteration and perhaps ending of her most significant relationship, she evolves beyond her usual blindness to other human connections, becoming friendly with a good-hearted if way-out classmate, helping her little sister embark on puberty, and supporting her custodial uncle as he embarks on a romance. Lissa's breach with Kate isn't actually the most interesting part of the novel, especially as Kate, despite Lissa's description of the delights of their friendship, seems a fairly limited companion with little to offer beyond superficial attractiveness; Lissa's explorations of lucid dreaming detract from the story, offering programmatic symbolism of feelings treated with more interesting subtlety in the chronicling of Lissa's real life. That's where this book offers substance: Lissa's implicit realization of Kate's deficits as a friend, her explicit realization of her own habitual tendency towards standoffishness, and her half-unwilling succumbing to friendship with hippiesque Ariel provide perceptive insights into Lissa's viewpoint and growth. Her questioning of her sexuality is tenderly described (on reading a lesbian teen's web piece about her lover, she gets "a breath-catching feeling inside, anxious and full of longing"), but it's just part of many aspects of her difficult but rewarding horizon-broadening. Ryan's *The Empress of the World* (BCCB 9/01) is a better story of troubled first love, but Miracle nonetheless offers a sympathetic portrait of disappointment and growth. DS

NIMMO, JENNY *Midnight for Charlie Bone*. Orchard/Scholastic, 2003 401p
ISBN 0-439-47429-9 \$9.95 R Gr. 4-7

Charlie is trying to make a birthday card for his friend and next-door neighbor, Benjamin, when a latent magical gift inherited from his presumed-dead father manifests itself. Before he can say "I don't want to be a wizard," Charlie finds himself enrolled in the infamous Bloor's Academy, home of all manner of geniuses magical and otherwise. Charlie is quickly embroiled in the search for a long-lost girl, the mystery of his missing father, and the machinations of his own wicked relatives. Underlying the fast and furious action is the shrouded history of the legendary Red King and his ten children, five good and five evil, and the epic battle between them that is slowly coming to the fore. Nimmo's likable hero is a good kid who plans to stay that way, and he remains steadfast in the face of threats and blandishments from intimidating, bullying bad guys. The lines between allies and enemies are drawn from the opening pages, with physical attributes as well as revelatory names clearly delineating—or at least broadly hinting at—who's who. Nimmo's characterizations, while not overly complex, have a high comfort level, and her major players are well-defined and sympathetic. The scene—a brooding boarding school with numerous halls, dungeons, and ancient ruins situated in a British city filled with bookshops and cathedrals—provides an appealing back-

drop for the action. Magical and non-magical allies and enemies mix in a fantastical blend that will remind seasoned fantasy readers of Harry's stamping grounds. While there is an occasional plot glitch (Charlie acquires a critical piece of mechanical magic both precipitously and illogically), overall Nimmo's quintet (this title is the first of five) promises to be an absorbing, well-wrought read. JMD

O'MALLEY, KEVIN *Mount Olympus Basketball*; written and illus. by Kevin O'Malley. Walker, 2003 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8845-9 \$16.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8844-0 \$15.95

R Gr. 3-6

O'Malley (author-illustrator of *Velcome*, BCCB 11/97, etc.) brings his slick cartooning and warped sense of humor to this play-by-play picture book about a basketball game between the Olympian Pantheon and the Greek Heroes. Two-dimensional as these pages may be, O'Malley manages to communicate the fevered craziness of a hotly contested basketball game in the staccato, sports-announcer narrative and the larger-than-life cartoon action. The introduction of the players ("He's big. He's strong. He's slippery when wet. He's the brother of Zeus. He's the god of the sea. It's . . . POSEIDON!") sets the tone for the rest of the book. Game announcers Fred and Chet's commentary is the primary text (most of it in bordered text boxes on the tops and bottoms of the pages); the players provide an ongoing, irreverent supplemental patter in dialogue balloons. The halftime show consists of a quick tour of ancient Greece that mentions the scenery, arts and culture, and the glory that was Greece ("Ancient Greece is a place of innovation. New ideas about government, architecture, drama, storytelling, and the fine arts have revolutionized this mighty empire"). The players have that oiled and wind-blown look common in old mythology-adventure movies, and the cartoon art has a florid, slightly over-the-top style that provides an instant jolt of slapstick silliness. The enthusiasm and craftiness of the oversized heroes aside, the gods are a shoo-in, but only after Zeus pulls some divine craziness on the court. A page of suggestions (teachers, books, websites, call numbers) for learning about Greek mythology is appended. JMD

PALATINI, MARGIE *The Perfect Pet*; illus. by Bruce Whatley. HarperCollins, 2003 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-000109-7 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-000108-9 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

Elizabeth longs for a pet. Finding her parents' gift of a cactus insufficient to address the need ("Elizabeth really, really did like the plant . . . but, she still really, really, *really* wanted a pet"), she engages in clever stratagems to angle for a horse, a dog, a cat, or anything, but all to no avail. Finally she discovers her own very satisfactory pet: Doug, the remarkable bug. Doug is somewhat overstretched as a solution, since the reality of the dilemma and Elizabeth's parents' objections are jettisoned without any warning in the face of the fantastical insect. There's still lively humor in Elizabeth's plotting and the comic turns of the narrative (each proposed pet gets a resigned epitaph: "Scratch the horse . . . forget Fido . . . cross off Kitty"), underscored by Palatini's pithy section headings. Whatley's hyperrealistic watercolors mine additional humor from the situation, piling animal-themed trappings onto the hopeful Elizabeth and ridiculous details into imag-

ined scenes of the chaos various undesirable pets would cause (a helmeted Elizabeth whizzes past her stunned parents on a skateboard, pulled by a galloping dog under a teddy-bear jockey), and easygoing Doug is a laid-back companion, one pair of his six legs nonchalantly crossed. This doesn't quite have the resonance of classic pet-acquisition books, such as Graham's "*Let's Get a Pup*," *Said Kate* (BCCB 9/01), but kids will snicker at the humor even as they relate to the protagonist's yearning. DS

PROIMOS, JAMES *Johnny Mutton, He's So Him!*; written and illus. by James Proimos. Harcourt, 2003 42p
ISBN 0-15-216760-9 \$16.00 R Gr. 2-4

One of the weirder easy-reader heroes, sheep-boy Johnny Mutton (from *The Many Adventures of Johnny Mutton*, BCCB 7/01) returns here in five new enjoyably strange schoolboy adventures. First he saves the universe from the depredations of the carnivorous Sweet Baby Doll 5000 (really, it makes sense in context); then he challenges ace cook Mandy Dinkus to a cook-off, throws a party for his friend Gloria Crust, expresses his affection for the owner of the local grocery, and learns about his mother's secret weapon in a heated staring contest. The high-spirited bizarreness gets extra zing from the touches of reality (Johnny wins the cooking contest because "Mandy Dinkus made something so adult the smell alone turned the judges green") and earthy humor (Mamma Mutton's secret weapon is a concentration-shattering fart), and the energetic, colloquial dialogue will quickly reward struggling readers. Proimos' work in television animation shows in the speedy pace and electric energy of the visuals, which have the unthreatening paneled appearance of comic strips. This is therefore a highly accessible early reader with definite appeal for cartoon fans and for anybody who appreciates a protagonist who's oddball yet heartwarming. DS

RAPP, ADAM *33 Snowfish*; illus. by Timothy Basil Ering. Candlewick, 2003 [192p]
ISBN 0-7636-1874-8 \$15.99
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 9-12

Custis is a weedy preteen who's been unwanted and abused, Curl is a teenage prostitute trying not to slip back into a drug habit, and Boobie, the light of their lives, is a quiet, magnetic, and disturbed young man, who's on the run after killing his parents. Together with the nameless baby who's Boobie's younger brother ("Boobie wants to name it, cuz you can't sell no baby that don't got no name") the three travel aimlessly but desperately to "as close to nowhere as possible." They end up in the cold Minnesota winter, sheltering in an abandoned van in a small town; there a sickly Curl weakens and dies, and a grieving Boobie walks off into the snow-blown landscape. Now on his own with the baby, Custis is taken in by Seldom, an old man who'd caught him trying to steal a chicken, and who now, much to Custis' shock, becomes his benefactor. Rapp goes where few other YA novelists, save perhaps Brock Cole in *The Facts Speak for Themselves* (BCCB 10/97), do: the voices of his protagonists (Custis and Curl both provide narration, while the silent Boobie offers the occasional drawing) admit little external judgment, directly depicting the desolation of the life of these throwaway kids, who fiercely attach to one another and whose viewpoints are not so much constricted as scarified. Custis confidently spews the vicious racism he learned from "this fat

man who used to own me," as he unselfconsciously puts it; Curl longs for even the small possibilities of the past as the trio becomes increasingly futureless on their drive into the hinterlands; Boobie's solution to a stressful time at a roadside motel is to torch the place. This isn't naturalism, however, but more a gritty contemporary parable: as in his previous books, Rapp adds his own heightened, creatively colloquial language to the flat, profane voices of his characters, and layered meanings abound. That intensification is sometimes mannered, and there's a sentimentality beneath the hard-edged portraits; racist Custis' redemption (or what passes for one in this world) at the hands of African-American Seldom is, like kindly Seldom himself, somewhat of a cliché. This is still a book that's rare in its brutally frank treatment of the unresolved tragedy that is many young people's lives. DS

RICHARDS, JEAN, ad. *How the Elephant Got Its Trunk*; illus. by Norman Gorbaty. Holt, 2003 32p
ISBN 0-8050-6699-3 \$16.95 Ad 4-6 yrs

Richards retells Kipling's "The Elephant's Child" for the very young, turning it into a simple how-and-why story. A curious little elephant wants to know what the crocodile eats for dinner; she asks members of her family, Giraffe, and then Hippo, but they are unforthcoming. The Kolokolo Bird, however, tells her to "go to the banks of the great, gray-green, greasy Limpopo River, where the crocodile lives, and find out for yourself." So the little elephant goes to the river, meeting monkeys and a lion on the way, and finds the crocodile, who gives her the answer to her question—and, after a tug of war—a new nose, too. The text is contemporary conversational ("Once upon a time, in the days before elephants had trunks, when they had only bumps for noses, there lived a little elephant who was very curious"), gender-adjusted (Kipling's "satiabable Elephant's Child" is now a female), and severely abbreviated (for example there is no Bi-Coloured-Python-Rock-Snake, a key animal helper in the original plot). Much of what gave the Kipling text its unique appeal is missing here, but Gorbaty's cheery illustrations make a valiant effort to supplement the missing charm. The technique (printing ink, rollers, and stencils on black and white paper) results in bright, splashy pictures of jungle animals large enough to be seen by groups that will be young enough to appreciate this cheery cumulative tale. But oh, Best Beloved, don't believe that by reading this you are exposing youngsters to the classic wonder of Kipling, for this isn't, and you aren't. JMD

RUSSO, MARISABINA *The Trouble with Baby*; written and illus. by Marisabina Russo. Greenwillow, 2003 [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-008925-3 \$16.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-008924-5 \$15.99
Reviewed from galleys R 4-6 yrs

Brother and sister Hannah and Sam do everything together, until Hannah gets a new doll for her birthday. "Baby" soon takes Sam's place as Hannah's favorite playmate, leaving Sam hurt and jealous, until he turns an old teddy bear into a playmate of his own. If three's a crowd, then four makes everything right again in this serene, homey tale of overcoming jealousy. The siblings' hurt feelings are tempered by the flattened affect of the art; Russo works with untextured blocks of color to depict recognizable domestic moments. The particularity of the setting and the situation enable a ready identification for young readers who have been

displaced in the court of someone else's affections; Sam's solution, managed without adult intervention, is an easily transferable one. Neither overwrought nor oppressively energetic, this book offers a gentle solution for a rift in an otherwise exemplary sibling relationship. KC

SCHWARZ, RENÉE *Funky Junk: Cool Stuff to Make with Hardware.*

See review under Friedman, p. 360.

SINGER, MARILYN *Fireflies at Midnight*; illus. by Ken Robbins. Atheneum, 2003 32p

ISBN 0-689-82492-0 \$16.95

R* 6-9 yrs

A poet always at her best when writing about the natural world (as in *Turtle in July*, BCCB 9/89) here offers fourteen new poems about animals and, in some way or another, about time. Singer provides quicksilver patterned lyrics for creatures ranging from the robin chirping in the early morning ("Up cheerup I'm up/ Let me be the first to greet the light") to the red eft considering an afternoon trip to the pond ("And I have four steady legs/ few enemies/ and all the time/ in the world"), from the frog croaking his status in the night ("baron I'm the baron/ I'm the duke/ I'm the king") to the mole contemplating underground chronology ("In the beneath/ it is mole time/ the whole time"). Her close-coupled rhythms, employing thrumming repetitions and tumbling rhyme, give her verses all the organic structure of nature ("Web is the work/ is the home/ is the trap/ is the hub/ is the map"—"Spider"); the atmospheric sound effects will conjure up each subject's world even for listeners ensconced in a stuffy classroom. Robbins takes his photographic enhancement in a new direction in these illustrations, sometimes abstracting his figures in a haze of pixels (the grazing horse suggests a Chuck Close portrait from a distance), sometimes delicately augmenting the chiaroscuro (the tan rabbit freezes almost invisibly behind golden stalks of grass), and sometimes making the ordinary into the surreal through the vividness of his contrasts (the monarch butterflies would be at home in one of David Wiesner's picture books). This will be rewarding as a readalone, musical as a readaloud, and promising in its provision of creative choral reads, as well as being a title particularly well suited to sharing outdoors with the soundtrack of the natural world behind it. DS

SMITH, HOPE ANITA *The Way a Door Closes*; illus. by Shane W. Evans. Holt, 2003 [58p]

ISBN 0-8050-6477-X \$18.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-8

In this narrative of a father who loves, leaves, and finally returns to his family, Smith employs various poetic forms to create snapshots of the shifting emotional landscapes of a boy's heart during this momentous event in his thirteenth year. At first the family is happy; the father is strongly attached to his children, his wife, and his mother. Describing a family portrait, young C. J. says, "Back straight and chest out,/ my daddy is proud./ We are his world./ And he's got the whole world/ in his hands." When his father loses his job and fails to find a new one, he despairs and, eventually, walks away from this family he loves. As C. J. grieves, his voice oscillates between bitterness, hope, anger, and sadness. He chides his mother when she dresses up to go out and asks him how she looks: "You look like you forgot,"

he says, his “winter words” calculated to hurt her. He argues with his friend Preacher, who tells him that “Dads are light./ They have no roots./ One strong wind and they’re gone,” returning only “once in a blue moon.” Grandmamma keeps her faith, though, in blue moons and second chances; that faith is justified as the father returns: “He can’t find enough words/ to say how sorry he is. But he keeps on. Each word rooting him to us . . .” The poems vary in style and form, but Smith consistently and forcefully uses the final two lines to deliver the full emotional impact of the moment. Her sustained metaphors over the entire sequence orient readers, keeping hope alive and providing satisfying closure to the narrative. Evans’ poignant alkyd illustrations close any remaining gaps between the eye and the heart; the emotional eloquence of his figures seamlessly complements that of the poetry, weaving together a deeply moving reading experience. KC

WADE, MARY DODSON *Condoleezza Rice: Being the Best*. Millbrook, 2003 47p illus. with photographs (Gateway Biography)

Library ed. ISBN 0-7613-2619-7 \$23.90

Paper ed. ISBN 0-7613-1927-1 \$8.95

Ad Gr. 3-6

The National Security Advisor is quite a prominent person these days, and this compact biography provides an overview of Rice’s prodigious youth and her considerable achievements on route to her current position. Wade looks at Rice’s childhood in Birmingham, Alabama, where she lived under the restrictions of segregation and witnessed firsthand some of the upheavals of the civil-rights movement (she was, in fact, acquainted with one of the girls who died in the 1963 church bombing), then her meteoric rise to academic importance (after rejecting a career as a pianist, since she felt she would never reach the standard she wished) as an expert in Russian affairs and as an administrator, and her work for both the first and second Bush administrations. The style is often choppy and the account superficial and limited, taking sources at face value rather than offering any independent analysis (Brent Scowcroft’s praise of “this slip of a girl” suggests a particular viewpoint in light of the fact that the “girl” was over thirty at the time, but the text leaves the statement unexamined); the tidbitty sidebars are personal but sometimes oddly placed. The book does admit a bit of the controversy in Rice’s Stanford career, and it diligently surveys her career and personality more thoroughly than most encyclopedia articles, so kids daunted by more sophisticated assessments or restricted to print may find this a useful resource. Pictures of Rice’s life and family appear throughout; there are no source notes provided, but a timeline, short list of material for further reading, and an index are included. DS

WILLEMS, MO *Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*; written and illus. by Mo Willems. Hyperion, 2003 [34p]

ISBN 0-7868-1988-X \$12.99

Reviewed from galleys

R* 5-8 yrs

Willems, writer and animator of *Sesame Street* fame, makes his picture-book debut with an irresistible bit of fowl play. Though this enterprising blue pigeon dreams of driving a city bus, even before the book starts the bus driver has asked the book’s audience not to let the pigeon take the wheel. The pigeon pleads, bargains, and otherwise attempts to trick and cajole the viewer into granting his humble wish to drive the bus (after all, his “cousin Herb drives a bus almost every day. True story”). As a readalone or a readaloud, this increasingly desperate one-sided con-

versation assumes the cooperative interaction of its audience; even the youngest auditor can join the fun because the answer is always, say it loud, say it often, "NO!" The frustrated fowl's anguish takes center stage in the streamlined yet remarkably articulate illustrations; tidy charcoal outlines that reveal the sure hand of a seasoned animator are set against plain creamy backgrounds of various muted shades. The simplicity of the illustrations and the pigeon's large, expressive eye fix the viewer in a compellingly dynamic and focused relationship. By putting the child in the deliciously empowering position of being the one to say no to the outrageous request of the pigeon, this avian misadventure begs to be read again and again. KC

WINTERS, KAY *Abe Lincoln: The Boy Who Loved Books*; illus. by Nancy Carpenter. Simon, 2003 40p
ISBN 0-689-82554-4 \$16.95 R Gr. 2-4

This picture-book biography traces Lincoln's life from birth to election, stressing the theme of the future president's early and consistent love of learning. Winters' selection of anecdotes and details hearken to a past period of children's historiography, replete with legends and apocrypha aimed at establishing the inestimable character traits of an up-and-coming statesman: "Folks liked to tell that once he overcharged someone six cents, but 'Honest Abe' walked miles to give it back." Given Lincoln's role as commander-in-chief during the Civil War, there's some potent irony to Winters' observation that "Abe shot a turkey in the woods. But not again. He vowed he would not take the breath from living things." The maelstrom to come, however, is mentioned only in the author's final note, and young children who are most familiar with Lincoln's later image as the gaunt, war-weary leader should certainly be drawn to Carpenter's more personable, gently humorous portrayal of the spindly youngster and the frontier milieu in which he was raised. Softly smudged, canvas-textured oil paintings make the most of Abe's lank and length, and if the scenes are somewhat romanticized into a golden haze, the often lyrical text generally hits the mark: "When politics began to call his name, Abe aimed his words at wrongs he'd like to right." EB

YOLEN, JANE *My Brothers' Flying Machine: Wilbur, Orville, and Me*; illus. by Jim Burke. Little, 2003 [32p]
ISBN 0-316-97159-6 \$16.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 6-9 yrs

Katharine, younger sister of Wilbur and Orville Wright, makes another appearance (see Maurer, above), this time as narrator of her brothers' accomplishments. The wordy account, cast in ragged-right lines that suggest free verse, marks the milestones along the path to success but does not convey the painstaking calculation and experimentation for which the Wright brothers are justly famed, nor does it note the specific problems that needed to be solved to make heavier-than-air flight a possibility. Rather, the audience witnesses a fairly smooth progression from childhood tinkers, to bicycle mechanics, to inventive glider enthusiasts, to self-taught aeronautical engineers, and ultimately to history-making fliers. Katharine ends her narration in 1909 when, after years of watching from the sidelines, she takes a seat next to brother Will and makes her own first ascent. In a closing note, Yolen reviews some of her sources and explains that all but one quote have been documented (although Katharine's claim here that women passengers inspired the

craze for hobbled skirts should probably be taken with a pinch of skepticism). Burke's oil and colored-pencil scenes are flat and static; only two scenes include the Flyer in motion, one of which—a reimagined view of the now famous photograph of the 1903 lift-off—indulges in some problematic exaggeration, with staid Wilbur leaping into the air like a cheerleader. This title will ably introduce the men at Kitty Hawk, but it won't illuminate the disciplined genius that led them there. EB

ZEMAN, LUDMILA, ad. *Sindbad's Secret*; ad. and illus. by Ludmila Zeman. Tundra, 2003 [32p]

ISBN 0-88776-462-2 \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

In this adaptation from *The Thousand and One Nights*, the legendary Sindbad the Sailor is telling the story of his most memorable undertaking to his friend, Sindbad the Porter. In the course of this adventure Sindbad the Sailor finds himself shipwrecked on an island, enslaved by pirates, and befriended by an elephant. He stumbles upon the funeral of a Maharajah, whose favorite dancer, Fatima, is to be burned on his funeral pyre. Sindbad (and his friend the elephant) saves Fatima from certain death and flees to safety—and a happy ending. The plot is packed, and the pace is quick; Zeman also offers an older and wiser hero than in her *Sindbad* (BCCB 2/00), a man who has lived long enough to realize what is truly important. The pencil and watercolor illustrations and text boxes are framed in ornately detailed borders, and each composition, large and small, features magical scenery, from monster-filled seascape to starry skyscape to tropical landscape. Extensive detailing of flora, fauna, costumes, and architecture gives each impressive picture an intricate, coiled clarity. Zeman's combination of breathless storytelling and color-drenched images successfully establishes this picture book as a wonder tale, an impression reinforced by the closing image of a smiling Shahrazad, black hair streaming, riding a starry horse across the night-blue sky. An author's note includes information on Zeman's sources and adaptation process. JMD



PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

WHITED, LANA A., ed. *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. University of Missouri Press, 2002 408p
ISBN 0-8262-1443-6 \$34.95

Whited, a professor of English at Ferrum College in Virginia, has brought together an impressive array of scholarship to address the phenomenon that is Harry Potter. Sixteen essays grouped into seven themes (Harry's Cousins in the Magical Realm; Harry's Roots in Epic, Myth, and Folklore; Harry's Other Literary Relatives; Greater Than Gold in Gringott's: Questions of Authority and Values; Gender Issues and Harry Potter; Harry's Language: Taking Issue with Words; Commodity and Culture in the World of Harry Potter) discuss Rowling's work. Editor Whited's succinct and well-organized introduction ("Harry Potter: From Craze to Classic?") not only outlines what is to follow but also traces the arc of Harry Potter's literary success. From historical literary cousins to socio-political interpretations of the series' setting, from textual comparisons to fan club communities, the essays span a wide range of scholarly perspectives. M. Katherine Grimes looks at protagonist Harry as literary and fantasy hero in "Harry Potter: Fairy Tale Prince, Real Boy, and Archetypal Hero"; Eliza T. Dresang examines the impact of being female in Harry's world in "Hermione Granger and the Heritage of Gender"; Nancy K. Jentsch discusses the translation of Rowling's epic into languages other than English in "Harry Potter and the Tower of Babel: Translating the Magic" (including a dandy table comparing English terms with the French, German, and Spanish translations). Brief biographical information about the contributors is included, as is an extensive bibliography (of books, print journal articles, and online resources) and index. This is an exciting and substantial contribution to early scholarship about an important body of literary work. JMD

SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

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

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 Writers and writing-fiction: Cabot



BEVERLEY NAIDOO

OUT OF BOUNDS

Seven Stories of Conflict and Hope



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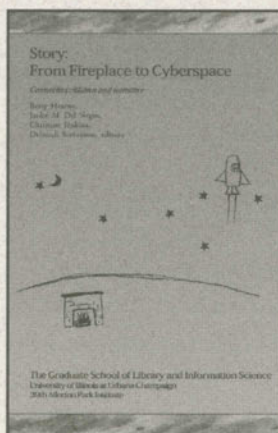
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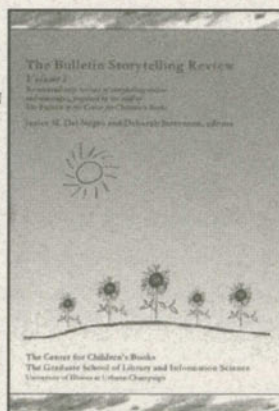
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