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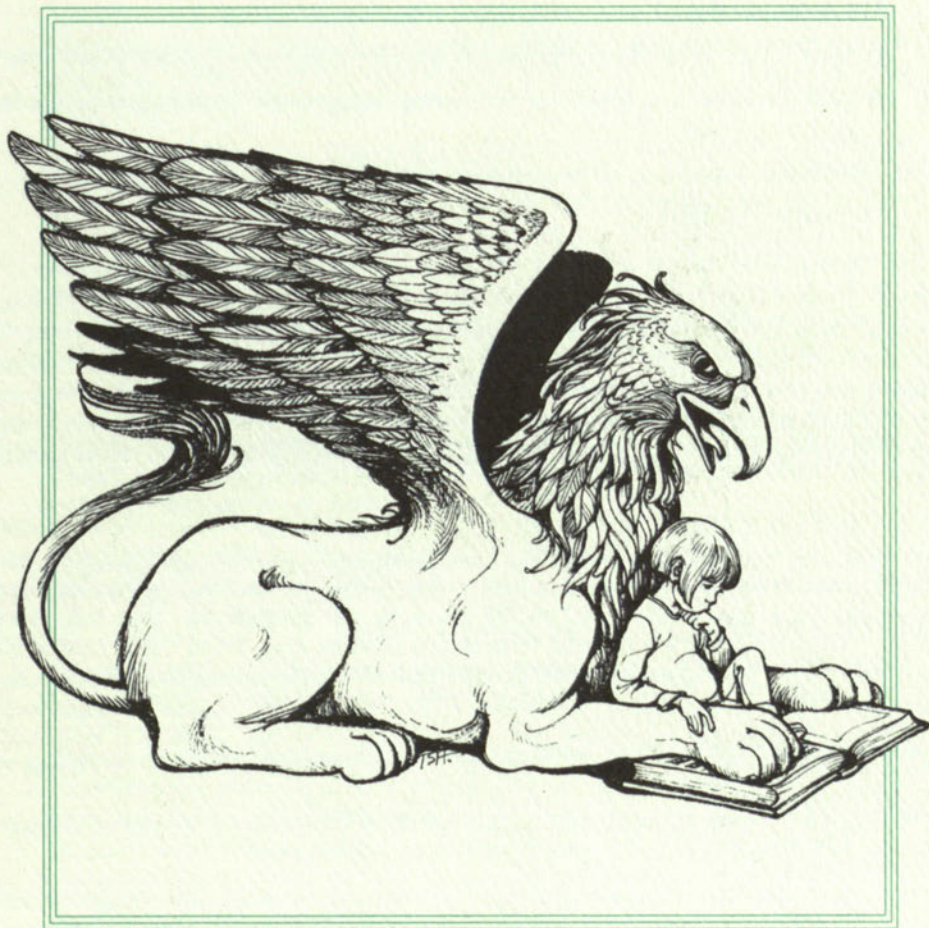
THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

FEBRUARY 1989

VOLUME 42

NUMBER 6



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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED
WITH ANNOTATIONS

- * 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.
- C.U. Curricular Use.
- D.V. Developmental Values

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The Bulletin
of the Center for Children's Books

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
GRADUATE LIBRARY SCHOOL

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New Titles for Children and Young People

Aiken, Joan. *Give Yourself a Fright: Thirteen Tales of the Supernatural*. Delacorte, 1989. ISBN 0-440-50120-2. [192p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-10. Not really a scary collection, this contains a variety (in both quality and subject) of stories that have in common a macabre twist. Several of the stories link the power of poetry with that of demonic force—"The Ill-Natured Muse," for instance, about a suave safecracker tortured by the tiresome spirit of Laodameia, who forces him to copy out canto after canto. "Aunt Susan" is a deliciously Hitchcockian tale and "The Jealous Apprentice" is a story, reeking with underworld argot, about a school for thieves run by the strict and highminded Gwen Forbush. The most powerful story by far is "The Lame King," which describes the drive of a strong old couple to the "Last House," where, it appears, they will be euthanized. Death here is not the spectre it appears in the other stories: "it was like walking into a grove, Mrs. Logan thought," where one is sung to sleep. The above four are the best selections; the others are standard issue ghost stories. RS

Andrews, Jean F. *The Flying Fingers Club*. Kendall Green/Gallaudet, 1988. Paper ed. ISBN 0-930323-44-0. 100p. Paper ed. \$3.95.

Ad Gr. 3-5. Donald, the protagonist, is a learning-disabled child who is bitter about spending a second year in third grade and getting help through work in a special class. The new school friend he makes, Matt, is deaf and has come, with an interpreter, to try fitting into an ordinary school classroom. Matt teaches Donald to fingerspell and sign, and this ability to communicate makes it possible for them to enjoy playing together and also to work as a team in solving the mystery of who is stealing the newspapers that Donald's sister delivers. This is a story that is in every respect adequate (plot, characterization, style) but no more; it is informative about some of the problems of deaf or learning-disabled children and how they cope with such problems, but the provision of that information slows the narrative. ZS

Baker, Barbara. *Third Grade Is Terrible*; illus. by Roni Shepherd. Dutton, 1988. ISBN 0-525-44425-4. 106p. \$10.95.

R Gr. 2-4. Liza suffers bone-crunching disappointment in being arbitrarily transferred on the first day of third grade from glamorous Mrs. Lane's

class, to which she's been looking forward with her best friend, to a strict and homely teacher who demands that Liza do her work well or redo it. The protagonist is empathetically presented, yet realistically immature in her reactions. While the style is simple, the characterizations are less so, a dynamic reminiscent of Cleary's books for the same age level. Particularly well handled is Liza's temperamental intensity and her transition between an old and new friend. Baker has captured the shifting fortunes of classroom life at a gracefully lowered reading level. The black-and-white drawings are adequate but somewhat stiffly exaggerated in expression. BH

D.V. Teacher-student relations

Block, Francesca Lia. *Weetzie Bat*. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020536-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020534-2. [96p]. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 9-. Only in Los Angeles. Like much of the new-wave culture it celebrates, there's no doubt that this is the kind of book that's mostly style: "You are my Marilyn. You are my lake full of fishes. . . . my pink Cadillac, my highway, my martini, the stage for my heart to rock and roll on, the screen where my movies light up," he said." That's My Secret Agent Lover Man comforting Weetzie Bat after the death of her father. Weetzie met My Secret Agent Lover Man when a genie gave her three wishes. My Secret Agent Lover Man was one, a beautiful house was another, and "a Duck for Dirk" the third. Dirk is Weetzie's best friend, a Duck is a cute guy, and with the genie's help, Dirk meets the perfect Duck named Duck and everybody moves into a beautiful house (left to Dirk by his just-dead Grandma Fifi), where they all have a baby, Cherokee Love. Oh, and don't forget Cherokee's evil twin, Witch Baby: "As soon as she could talk, she would go around chanting, 'beasts, beasts, beasts,' over and over again." Stranger than any of this is the fact that the author makes it all work. Her theme is friendship, her tone affectionate, her imagery sentimental but true to type. The prose alternates rhapsodies-in-neon with I-can-read conversations: "'I feel weird,' Weetzie said. 'Me too,' Dirk said. Duck scratched his head." You will too, but despite its startling subject matter, this is one innocent—*sweet*—book. RS

D.V. Family relations; Friendship values

Bonnors, Susan. *Just in Passing*; written and illus. by Susan Bonnors. Lothrop, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07712-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07711-0. [32p]. Library ed. \$11.88; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 3-6 yrs. Communication is established without words, both in the story and by the story, in a book that has gentle humor, variety, and the sort of pattern (rather than plot) that produces viewer-involvement. Realistic pictures, some in small frames, are executed in mixed media: pen and ink, watercolor, and colored pencil and they show how, beginning with the moment when an elderly woman sees the unselfconscious yawn of an infant she passes, seeing a yawn evokes a similar action. Yawn produces answering yawn as people and animals pass each other. Incidentally, the passing scenes inform young children about aspects of everyday life and about their environment. ZS

D.V. Everyday life concepts

Bowkett, Stephen. *Gameplayers*. Gollancz/David & Charles, 1989. ISBN 0-575-03932-9. 159p. \$16.95.

R *Gr. 7-9*. For thirteen-year-old John, the Dungeons and Dragons-like fantasy game he plays is both adventure and refuge. In the game he is Jan Wildblood, a fierce warrior contesting the evil wizard Scorbius. In real life he is "ordinary John Warner—sometimes he felt he would give anything to change places." Despite John's firm friendship with his older sister, his family is troubled and unable to find the magic solutions and strength that help Jan in his quest. While the interior fantasy story is formulaic, it is blended skillfully and in pleasing proportion to the realism. John's fellow game-players are a dramatic mix, including good friends, the school scapegoat, and Jeff, the "routemaster," whose identification with the evil wizard increases as the game progresses. Of particular interest to D&D players, the spooky-eyed cover (latest trend in YA jacket art) will draw in suspense fans as well. RS
D.V. Brothers-sisters

Branscum, Robbie. *Cameo Rose*. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020559-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020558-X. [96p]. Library ed. \$11.89; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M *Gr. 5-7*. The narrator, a beautiful orphan in love with her neighbor Billy Joe, starts her story with an attention grabber: "It was a plain fact that I didn't know who killed Homer Satterfield, and I figured I knew ever'body and ever'thin' that went on in the Arkansas hills where I lived." She questions all of them, too, in "assisting" her grandfather, who's the local sheriff and who is shot and hospitalized shortly afterwards. *Cameo Rose* is obviously the next victim, and readers will race her to identify the culprit. The characters here are well realized but the dialect is heavy going and the plot is too farfetched to support the tonal weight of suspense, romance, and poignancy. However, as a regional mystery, this will hold its own with Branscum fans. BH
D.V. Boy-girl relations

Carlson, Nancy. *Poor Carl*; written and illus. by Nancy Carlson. Viking, 1989. ISBN 0-670-81774-0. [32p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad *4-7 yrs*. In a refreshing switch from most adjustment-to-baby stories, this one begins with big brother enumerating the reasons why he's glad not to be the new baby: "Poor Carl has to eat yucky rice cereal and strained prunes"; "when it's Carl's nap time, Mom and I make cookies and she lets me lick the bowl." On the other hand, "everyone thinks he's so cute" and "he doesn't have to eat Brussel sprouts," but on balance, big brother is happy and proud to be just that. Carlson's dog-family is an appealing lot (even grumpy, sleepy Mom, feeding Carl his breakfast), but the pictures aren't as clever as usual from this artist; while Carlson's sense of perspective has always been skewed, the drawing here is unusually awkward. RS
D.V. Baby, adjustment to; Brothers

Carson, Jo. *Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet: Selections from the People Pieces*. Orchard, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08408-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05808-5. [96p]. Library ed. \$12.99; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-. Arranged on the page to appear almost as free verse, these are 49 brief excerpts from anecdotes Carson has heard among Appalachians and has adapted for public performance. They are loosely organized into five sections called Neighbors and Kin, Observations, Relationships, Work, and We Say of Ourselves. These are voices roughened by labor and tried by tribulation. They range from a battered woman warning others about her ex-husband ("he does love you, he loves you hurt and he will hit you again") to a black man recalling, after a waitress refuses to serve him and his daughter, the beating he received in jail after a sit-in more than 20 years before ("this is the same story as the one that cracked my head open. The only thing that changed is the law"). There are jokes along with the pain, women's viewpoints as well as men's, fragments of experience shaped into monologues and dialogues, a balance of dialect with straightforward informality of style that's easy to read aloud. Students taking speech or drama classes will find some inspiring pieces here, as will those interested in collecting oral history or researching their roots. "I could fill you up with stories, stories I ain't told nobody yet, stories with your name, your blood in them. Ain't nobody gonna hear them if you don't and you ain't gonna hear them unless you get back home. When I am dead, it will not matter how hard you press your ear to the ground." Listen and learn. BH
C.U. Reading aloud

Charlton, Michael. *Wheezy*; written and illus. by Michael Charlton. Bodley Head/Random, 1988. ISBN 0-370-31150-7. 26p. \$10.95.

Ad Gr. 2-3. This thinly veiled bibliotherapy has a noble aim and needed information, but also some organizational problems. William has asthma, and along with the physical pain, feels lonely and unable to participate in sports or have a pet like the other children do. His doctor instructs him in the causes of asthma attacks and the use of medical inhalers; his teacher suggests William start an asthma scrapbook (William's cover for the scrapbook is a drawing of an asthma-tortured soul that will evoke instant recognition in anyone who's suffered the affliction). Pages of the scrapbook alternate with the narrative, and there is a third cartoon monologue that runs along the right-hand margin, an arrangement that is hard to follow. The information is fairly complete (although it does not caution against the potentially habit-forming effects of asthma inhalers) but it does need to be tidied up. RS
D.V. Handicaps, adjustment to

Christopher, Matt. *The Spy on Third Base*; illus. by George Ulrich. Little, 1988. ISBN 0-316-13996-3. 62p. (Springboard Books). \$9.95.

Ad Gr. 3-5. In this sequel to *The Hit-Away Kid* (BCCB 5/88) third baseman T. V. Adams displays his seemingly uncanny ability to figure out what the opposing team is going to do next. Nothing magic about it; T. V. simply has learned to observe and remember the styles and skills of the other players. But a newspaper picks up on the "psychic" angle, and T. V. has to endure the jealous taunts of his teammates as well as threatening phone calls that warn him to keep quiet. Like the first book, this has a lot of detailed baseball

action that will appeal to fans, but it lacks a strong narrative. The phone calls seem pitched in only to mark time between games, and the revelation of their source is out in left field. Still, an easy walk. RS

Cobb, Vicki. *Why Doesn't the Earth Fall Up? and Other Not So Dumb Questions about Motion*; illus. by Ted Enik. Lodestar, 1989. ISBN 0-525-67259-1. 40p. \$12.95.

R Gr. 3-5. Cartoon style drawings, quasi-humorous in tone, illustrate a text that deals with such questions as "Why Does a Rolling Ball Stop Rolling?" or "What Is a Swinging Object Good For?" Cobb is an experienced science writer, and her answers here are clear, succinct enough to inform without overloading the comprehensive abilities of middle-grade readers, but giving enough coverage to make concepts of the laws of motion understandable. ZS
C.U. Science

Conford, Ellen. *Genie With the Light Blue Hair*. Bantam, 1989. ISBN 0-553-05806-1. [160p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 4-7. Although Jean, the narrator and protagonist, is fifteen, this light fantasy is—in both style and subject—liable to appeal to a younger audience. It's a familiar pattern: the genie who misinterprets magic wishes, creating comic dismay. Here the genie is Arthur who's blue from head to toe, who looks like Groucho Marx, and who is terse and rather bossy. Jean tries a few wishes, but nothing seems to work out well, even when she's turned into the most popular girl she knows and thereby acquires that girl's handsome boyfriend. Eventually, Arthur announces he's made a mistake, that he was really assigned to Jean's aunt. The plot is featherweight, but it probably won't diminish the enthusiasm of Conford fans, who expect humor, good dialogue, a pleasant writing style, and only enough characterization to lend credence to the action. That's what they'll find here, a capably written story that's entertaining. ZS

Crew, Linda. *Children of the River*. Delacorte, 1989. ISBN 0-440-50122-9. [224p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-12. A long-favorite plot of both writers and readers is here given an absorbing contemporary context. Sundara has a crush on the local football hero, Jonathan, who is interested in her as well, but her aunt and uncle don't approve. With her aunt and uncle, 13-year-old Sundara escaped from Cambodia at the beginning of the Khmer Rouge terror. Now, four years later, she has no idea if her parents and sister are alive and still carries the guilt of having Aunt Soka's baby die while in her care on the packed and hysterical refugee boat. "They made me throw her into the water." Even in Oregon, Soka is determined to bring Sundara up as a proper Cambodian girl (no dates, and an eventually arranged marriage with a Cambodian boy) and, while encouraging Sundara's determination to become a doctor, is afraid and unable to show her niece love. Except for the idealization of Jonathan as a sensitive, always-there hero, the story is neither sentimental nor sensational: both the horror and the romance are real. This first novel is notable for its strong storytelling and thorough characterization. While teens will enjoy the romance, it's the relationship between Sundara and her aunt that is most involving, both as a

dramatic family portrait and as a picture of “new Americans” who know they will never see their home again. RS

D.V. Aunt-niece relations; Boy-girl relations

Delacre, Lulu, comp. *Arroz con Leche: Popular Songs and Rhymes from Latin America*; tr. by Elena Paz; comp. and illus. by Lulu Delacre. Scholastic, 1989. ISBN 0-590-41887-4. [32p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad 3-6 yrs. This bilingual collection of folk rhymes, chants, and fingerplays from Mexico and Puerto Rico (and a couple from Argentina) is illustrated in bright pastels that are a little too sweet but have an attractively fluid line despite their occasionally awkward perspective. The translations sometimes sacrifice rhyme for literal meaning, and sometimes just the opposite. “Ting-a-ling, ting-a-long. Ting-a-ling, ting-a-long./ With her I will marry, with her I belong” does not really have much to do with “Tilín, talán, sopitas de pan. Allá viene Juan, comiéndose el pan,” and some metric adjustment will have to be made if children want to sing the English words to the appended music. An acceptable addition, however, to the Spanish-language collection. RS

Galbraith, Richard. *Reuben Runs Away*; written and illus. by Richard Galbraith. Orchard, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08390-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05790-9. [32p]. Library ed. \$12.99; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad 2-5 yrs. Anna may love her teddy bear Reuben, but he’s tired of being tossed around, hung up by clothespins, parachuted out of a tree . . . “Reuben had had enough.” So he runs away to the city, and there endures much worse: smog, crowds, snobbery, and the ultimate ignominy of being sold to a junk shop. All ends well, with Reuben brought back home through a plot device that’s more than a little contrived. The large, bright, watercolor illustrations could tell the story alone, and they add dimensions of drama and detail that compensate for the slight idea and text. RS

Golder, Stephen. *Buffy’s Orange Leash*; by Stephen Golder and Lise Memling; illus. by Marcy Ramsey. Kendall Green/Gallaudet, 1988. ISBN 0-930323-42-4. 32p. \$8.95.

Ad Gr. K-3. At the Red Acre Farm Hearing Dog Center, friendly Buffy was trained to listen for certain sounds (doorbell, telephone, baby crying) and to react appropriately. “When the alarm clock goes off in the morning, Buffy jumps on the bed.” In the course of finding out how Buffy helps the Johnson family, readers also learn about sign language and TDDs, and, more essentially, the fact that deaf people share the same interests and problems as everyone else. There is undue emphasis on the color of Buffy’s leash, implying that all Hearing Dogs have orange leashes (“The special leash and collar tell people that he is a Hearing Dog”) although this is not always true. Colored-pencil illustrations are plentiful and clear, but in one case unhelpful: to illustrate that “Buffy can go wherever the Johnsons go” with a picture of the family and dog strolling in the park does not convey the fact that Hearing Dogs, like Seeing-Eye Dogs, are allowed in places that other dogs are not. However, told in simple, direct prose, this is a good introduction not only to Hearing Dogs, but also to the daily life of deaf people. RS

Graham, Bob. *Bath Time for John*; ISBN 0-316-32304-7. *Here Comes John*; ISBN 0-316-32305-5. *Here Comes Theo*; ISBN 0-316-32307-1. *Where Is Sarah?*; ISBN 0-316-32306-3. Each book: written and illus. by Bob Graham. Little, 1988. 32p. \$4.95.

R 2-5 yrs. Four small books about two children and a dog, first published in Great Britain, are written and illustrated with pleasantly low-key humor. They describe very small events in the lives of John (too young to talk, a lively crawler) and his older sister Sarah and their bouncy dog Theo. In the first book of the series, Sarah gives chase when Theo runs off with John's bath toy, and John crawls out of his little tub to follow. In the other titles, John meets a snail, he takes his first wobbly step, and all three play in tall grass in the last book. The unpretentious scope of the stories makes their activities familiar; the ink and crayon pictures have the same light touch as those in the books by James Stevenson. The author is Australian, the stories have a universal appeal. ZS

D.V. Brothers-sisters; Environmental concepts; Everyday life concepts

Grant, Cynthia D. *Phoenix Rising; Or How to Survive Your Life*. Atheneum, 1989. ISBN 0-689-31458-2. [160p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-10. Rather old-fashioned in its singleminded exploration of *The Problem*, this is a competently crafted novel about a girl adjusting to her older sister's death from cancer. 17-year-old Jessie has found her dead sister's diary, and selections from it alternate with Jessie's narration. From the diary, we learn of Helen's fear, anger, and ultimate acceptance of her disease ("Today is all we have"); Jessie goes through similar stages of her own. Helen is idealized, and the members of her family each too-predictably show different ways of coming to terms with her death. While YA literature has become increasingly more subtle in its handling of self-help topics, the straight-ahead "death book" is still widely popular, and this novel will answer the perennial appeal. RS

D.V. Death, adjustment to; Sisters

Gray, Nigel. *A Balloon for Grandad*; illus. by Jane Ray. Orchard, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08355-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05755-0. 30p. Library ed. \$13.99; Trade ed. \$13.95.

R* 4-7 yrs. A picture book with plot, poetic writing, psychological reassurance, natural ethnic representation, and exceptional art, this uses particularized details to focus on an experience of general concern among children. Sam's balloon has blown out the back door, and as his father holds him close, they have that throat-catching experience of watching a beloved object fly high . . . and away. Dad comforts Sam by describing an imaginary journey "high over the sparkling blue-green sea where silver fish leap from the waves; high over the hot yellow sand of the desert where scorpions, and spitting spiders, and sidewinder snakes hide from the heat" to Grandad Abdulla's. "And sandgrouse will peck at it . . . and falcons will fall on it, and hawks will fly after it, and vultures with their big hooky beaks and their sharp talons will tear at it, but the dry desert wind will help it to dodge and weave and nothing will harm it." Of course, when Grandad Abdulla receives the balloon he immediately perceives it as a message from Sam "to show that, although he's so far away, he's thinking of me." Associating the loss of a toy with separation from a dear

family member brings this story very close to home, and those common sadnesses are brilliantly lightened by Chagallian art lending child-like perspective to the landscapes—both physical and emotional—that are crossed here. The sudden, almost cubist contrasts of shape and color in the illustrations reflect the jerky flight of the balloon, which is also captured in the rhythms of the prose. The book design itself is filled with complex patterns balanced by enough free-floating space to save the images from clutter. For Everychild. BH
D.V. Grandparent-child relations; Love for toy

Harrison, Michael, comp. *The Oxford Treasury of Children's Poems*; comp by Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark. Oxford, 1988. ISBN 0-19-276055-6. [175p]. illus. \$17.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 3-6. An anthology of old favorites and less familiar poems has no discernible arrangement of material, has a broad range of chronological appeal—including many poems to read aloud to quite young children—and has a variety of illustrative techniques in color and in black and white. These come from diverse artists, but information on this is not prominently displayed, and while there is an index, not all the pages are numbered. The quality of the selections ranges from silly-but-fun to incisive or beautiful; there's nothing fatuous or jingly: a nice selection of poetry. ZS

Henkes, Kevin. *Jessica*; written and illus. by Kevin Henkes. Greenwillow, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07830-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07829-X. [24p]. Library ed. \$11.88; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 4-7 yrs. Henkes' latest dauntless heroine is Ruthie, a little girl whose best friend is Jessica. "There is no Jessica," say Ruthie's parents (in big boldface type), but Ruthie stands firm by her imaginary friend, even taking her along to the first day of kindergarten where a surprising—yet inevitable—new friend is found. Jessica may be invisible, but there's nothing unreal about the strong friendship Ruthie shares with her, vignettes of which are pictured in tiny, tidy, line-and-watercolor illustrations scattered cleanly and cleverly among the text. This is an exceptionally well designed picture book, with a witty use of white space and an imaginative variety of type and line placement. For example, the line "And if Ruthie was glad, Jessica felt exactly the same" tootles out of Ruthie's horn as she blithely marches through a meadow of wildflowers. Henke's felicitous prose makes this a prime pick for reading aloud to kids and their significant others, invisible or not. RS
D.V. Friendship values; Imaginary powers

Hines, Anna Grossnickle. *They Really Like Me!*; written and illus. by Anna Grossnickle Hines. Greenwillow, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07734-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07733-1. [24p]. Library ed. \$11.88; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad 4-6 yrs. Little Joshua begins his story with "My big sisters are mean," and the pictures show Ably and Penny teasing but (realistically) not always without provocation. Put in charge of Josh by their errand-bound mother, the girls blindfold their brother, walk him about, and pretend they are leaving him alone in the woods. They go off, Josh removes the blindfold and discovers he's right at the front steps. He hides, they panic. Rueful, the sisters

ply him with kind attentions when he does emerge from under the porch. Conclusion: "They really like me." Line and crayon pictures, neat but repetitive, complement a story that deals realistically with a situation that will be familiar to most children with siblings, is simply told, and is adequately illustrated but has a sedate quality, particularly in the passiveness of the children's faces. ZS
D.V. Brothers-sisters

Hissey, Jane. *Old Bear Tales*; written and illus. by Jane Hissey. Philomel, 1988. ISBN 0-399-21642-1. 75p. \$16.95.

Ad Gr. K-2. Each chapter, in this book about the articulate toys of a household, is a separate episode, the pencil and crayon illustrations being highly textured and realistic if sugary in depicting toys that are plush or furry or wooly (All stuffed bears in the lead roles, although there are some other toys). In the first chapter the bears decorate a dollhouse for Christmas, in the second they wrap one of their number as a Christmas gift, in the third they go on a winter picnic. Like the illustrations, the writing is just sugary enough to lose effectiveness as narrative. Still, the appeal of the subject matter will no doubt make the book palatable for the read-aloud audience. ZS

Johnson, Angela. *Tell Me A Story, Mama*; illus. by David Soman. Orchard, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08394-2; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05794-1. [32p]. Library ed. \$13.99; Trade ed. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 5-7 yrs. Bedtime serves as the setting for a mother-daughter conversation in which the child requests a story and then proceeds to remind her mother of all the details. This is more a friendly family history than a story, however, and the similarity between the child and her mother as a child, as well as between the mother and the grandmother as a younger woman, may confuse young listeners ("which one said that?") unless the adult reader can simulate two distinctive voices with natural ease. The realistic watercolor paintings are dominated by warm browns and are spaciouly formatted, if occasionally posed. A modest but welcome addition to the decreasing number of books centering on the experience of black characters. BH
C.U. Family life (unit)
D.V. Mother-daughter relations

Joose, Barbara M. *Anna, the One and Only*; illus. by Gretchen Will Mayo. Lippincott, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-397-32323-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-397-32322-0. [144p]. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 2-4. Moving to a new town, starting third grade there, and already overburdened by her older sister Kimberley, who was neat and bright and pretty, made Anna feel both apprehensive and inadequate. Well, one way to make an impression is to wear lots of jewelry the first day of school, right? Wrong, as Anna discovers when the jewelry contributes toward such disasters as staining her sister's borrowed (without permission) blouse or catching in the rings of a notebook and causing binder and pencil box to spill. This is the sort of light disaster humor primary grades readers enjoy, and it pervades the rest of the story as well. Few readers will be surprised when Anna proves to be kind

and sensible in the final episode, since they will have found her a sympathetic character throughout. This isn't as well written as Beverly Cleary's stories about Ramona, but it will probably evoke the same empathetic enjoyment and amusement. ZS

D.V. Adaptability

Katz, Welwyn Wilton. *The Third Magic*. McElderry, 1989. ISBN 0-689-50480-2. [208p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-10. Ambitiously and extensively plotted, this science-fiction/fantasy saga takes Arthurian legend for its narrative core. 15-year-old Morgan LeFevre has come to Tintagel to help her father with a TV documentary on King Arthur. Morrigan, a Sister in a matriarchal society on the planet Nwm, has also been sent to Tintagel, but centuries before, where her ordained destiny is to become Morgan Le Fay, sister of Arthur and mother of Mordred. Arthur and Earth are pawns in a classic good-and-evil conflict between the Circle and the Line, its evil male counterpart. The story gets far more complicated than this (it eventually turns out that Morgan is her own ancestress) and readers not familiar with genre quirks will be quickly swamped. The first third of the book is convoluted even by genre standards, but once Morgan is kidnapped to Nwm and embarks on a quest for the Grail, most of the confusion is cleared up and the book gains excitement and direction. The plotting leaves little room for theme or character development, but fantasy fans who enjoy cleverly worked-out time-and-space-travel-fiction will find here a unique recasting of a legend. RS

Landis, J. D. *The Band Never Dances*. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-023722-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-023721-X. [288p]. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

NR Gr. 7-10. An attempt to show the rock and roll world from an insider's perspective, this tells of a female drummer's (quick) rise to stardom. 16-year-old Judy Valentine's passion for drumming began, she tells us, in the womb, and was later nurtured by her older brother Jeffrey, who is now dead, a suicide. Judy keeps his ashes in her tom-tom, so Jeffrey can dance while she plays. Yeah, it's weird, but the obsession is almost supported by the melodramatic plot and purple prose: "I just stood there, quiet and still, going crazy for the man I knew was doing this all for me, and for them, and for the world forever kissing his feet and biting his scornful lips with soft kisses and promises of nights of love." Who's biting who? Fun in a trashy-novel kind of way (but no sex or drugs, and Judy only drinks Tab) this has hints of authorial behind-the-hand laughter scattered throughout ("He said my name, softly, whisperingly, when I passed him in a hotel or backstage, Judy, Judy, Judy . . .") that indicate Landis may know better. RS

D.V. Death, adjustment to

Le Guin, Ursula K. *Catwings Return*; illus. by S. D. Schindler. Orchard, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08403-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05803-4. [56p]. Library ed. \$10.99; Trade ed. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. Although the startling ingenuity of winged felines is necessarily diminished by a second appearance, this is still a story that qualifies as heartwarming without becoming maudlin. Secure in their barnloft with

access through the pigeonholes, two of the four cats in *Catwings* (BCCB 9/88) decide to visit their mother, Mrs. Jane, in the city. They find the old neighborhood under attack by wrecking balls and barely rescue Mrs. Jane's last kitten, winged and black, before saying good-bye to their aging mother, who has been adopted by a benefactor. Schindler's pen-and-wash drawings are as precisely delicate as Le Guin's writing style. A neatly formatted book that will appeal mightily to cat (and series) lovers. BH

Maass, Robert. *Fire Fighters*; written and illus. with photographs by Robert Maass. Scholastic, 1989. ISBN 0-590-41459-3. [32p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. K-3.* Although the text of this read-aloud book is a bit choppy, it gives information that is adequate in what is covered and how clearly it is stated. The oversize pages accommodate color photographs of good quality and the subject is usually of considerable interest to the read-aloud audience, both because of the dramatic nature of the work of fire fighters and because of the perennial lure of that Big Red Noisy Important vehicle. The combination of good coverage and good photographs makes this one of the best books on the subject. ZS

Martin, C. L. G. *Day of Darkness, Night of Light*; illus. by Victoria M. Williams. ISBN 0-87518-357-3. Shaffer, Ann. *The Camel Express*; illus. by Robin Cole. ISBN 0-87518-400-6. Each book: Gemstone/Dillon, 1989. [46p]. (It Really Happened!). \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad *Gr. 2-4.* These two books in the easy-to-read series "It Really Happened!" draw on inherently dramatic facets of history. The first is based on the fires that threatened the Great Lakes area during an especially dry season in 1871, and the second, on background information about the "U.S. Camel Corps" and the pony express. A documentary note follows each story. Unfortunately, both suffer from the stiffness of contriving a plot to fit events. In *Day of Darkness . . .*, young Daniel helps the citizens of Menominee, Michigan, fight a heroic battle to save their town from fast-moving flames. In the end, he sees his archenemy Barth, who taunts him for cowardice in an opening incident, exposed for dressing as a woman to shelter on a rescue ship. *The Camel Express* throws in an unlikely series of wolves, Indians, and bandits to heighten the suspense when an old man takes his granddaughter on a dangerous camel ride to deliver a pony-express mail bag. These books do have value in showing that the past is as lively as the present, but one wonders if young readers wouldn't enjoy a factual account as much as, or more than, a fictionalized one. The black-and-white drawings in *Camel Express* are much better drafted and less postured than those in *Day of Darkness*. BH

Mayne, William. *Gideon Ahoy!* Delacorte, 1989. ISBN 0-440-50126-1. [160p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R* *Gr. 6-9.* Gideon is a deaf, mentally retarded seventeen-year-old undergoing a transition that provokes one family crisis after another. Mum, Grandpa Catt, twin toddlers Mercury and Tansy, and even Dad, who rushes in and out of the scene between sailing assignments, are all well realized. The viewpoint, however, is twelve-year-old Eva's, and she has special insight into

the limitations, logic, and language of Gideon. His expressions for pleasure (“Dththth”), upset (“Rauh”), hunger (“Hyagh”), etc. become familiar to the reader, as does Mayne’s use of the present participle for Gideon’s actions, projecting the boy’s perpetual state of “now” without sense of past or future. As portraiture, this is masterful, and there is suspense in Gideon’s running away when his job on a canal boat is terminated. The family reactions when he lies in a coma from which he may never recover make one of the most subtly developed denouements in children’s literature. Mayne is an experimenter, one of the few who will take a chance on unusual techniques of crafting fiction for the young. The perspectives he works with here are sometimes acutely on target (“Eva wiped the [twins’] mouths with a towel, streaking it blue. Saints, she thought. Stains”) and sometimes a bit self-conscious (“the little ones remembered how whiskers would tickle tummies, and were on the table walking them into it, while Mum tried to stow stray legs in night-clothes”). Yet any reader with the concentration to adjust to the odd twists of associative language—and there’s plenty of literal narrative to balance them—will be caught up in Gideon’s fate and rewarded with insights richly written. BH

D.V. Handicaps, adjustment to

McKenna, Colleen O’Shaughnessy. *Fourth Grade Is a Jinx*. Scholastic, 1989. ISBN 0-590-41735-5. [176p]. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. McKenna’s first novel about Collette, *Too Many Murphys* (BCCB 10/88) was a model of the well-made school and family story; this sequel is just as fresh, warm, and funny. Fourth-grade looks like it’s going to be a lot of fun—until Mrs. Johnston breaks her leg and Collette’s mother is asked to substitute. Collette is horrified, suggests her mother take up aerobics if she feels like a change of place, and then tries to amend the insult with an I-love-you-Mom hug. “Thank you,” said Mother politely before she broke away to finish putting out the napkins.” Of course Mom does a great job, even winning over snotty Marsha, and rising to the occasion for any number of entertaining classroom disasters, including a priceless encounter with a world-weary milk money monitor. It’s good to see a widely appealing school story set in a parochial school; equally refreshing that the school is headed by a nice nun. RS

D.V. Mother-daughter relations; Teacher-student relations

McKissack, Patricia C. *Nettie Jo’s Friends*; illus. by Scott Cook. Knopf, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-394-99158-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-394-89158-9. [32p]. Library ed. \$13.99; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 5-7 yrs. Nettie Jo is trying to stand still for her flower-girl-dress fitting when Mama says that Annie Mae, Nettie Jo’s tattered old doll, must have new clothes to go to Cousin Willadeen and Charles Henry’s wedding. Unfortunately, nobody in the family has a spare sewing needle. From there, the plot follows a folkloristic pattern of animal helper tales, with Nettie Jo going to a rabbit, a fox, and a panther for help in finding a needle. After she relieves each creature of a problem, all three bring her a needle in an ending that’s somewhat more mystical than traditional. Densely textured paintings portray, with sweeping, rounded motion, a pigtailed black child and slyly caricatured animals in an old-fashioned southern setting. The intensification of patterned narrative

devices with unexpected artistic depth make this a solid story hour choice for small groups that can gather close to the ruddy, subtly toned illustrations. BH

Miller, Margaret. *At My House*; ISBN 0-694-00276-3. *In My Room*; ISBN 0-694-00271-2. *Me and My Clothes*; ISBN 0-694-00272-0. *Time to Eat.*; ISBN 0-694-00264-X. Each book: written and illus. with photographs by Margaret Miller. Crowell, 1989. [16p]. (My First Words). \$3.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 3-18 mos. Clean, simple, and well photographed, these four books show one object per page against a solid-colored background: an apple and a banana on facing blue pages, for instance, with the identifying words clearly lettered above the pictures. All the books emphasize objects common in a baby or toddler's life, from bottles to potty chairs, and are of a manageable size with rounded corners and sturdy binding. The children shown on the covers are multi-ethnic and appealing without being cloying. While this kind of series has been done before and done well, it will be endlessly useful in any public library, nursery school, or day care setting where well-designed board books tend to meet an early demise among teething patrons. BH

Nabwire, Constance. *Cooking the African Way*; by Constance Nabwire and Bertha Vining Montgomery; illus. with photographs by Robert L. and Diane Wolfe. Lerner, 1988. ISBN 0-8225-0919-9. 48p. (Easy Menu Ethnic Cookbooks). \$9.95.

R Gr. 5-9. While many of the tastes and textures here may daunt the average, underage, American P B and J consumer, this book will be a handy resource for study units on Africa. After a necessarily overgeneralized introduction to "the land, the people, the food," and common utensils and menus of various peoples, the text is organized by food groups: breads and staples (e.g. fufu), snacks and appetizers (meat on a stick), fruits and vegetables ("versatile plantain"), soups and sauces (groundnut sauce), main dishes (meat curry), and desserts (vermicelli and raisins). Instructions are clear and ingredients relatively easy to obtain. Like other books in the series, this includes safety tips, a metric conversion chart, and an index. Geographic sources are given for the recipes, all of which are drawn from the fifteen countries of West and East Africa. BH
C.U. Africa (unit)

Namioka, Lensey. *Island of Ogres*. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024373-2; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024372-4. [208p]. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-10. Another story of medieval Japan (*Valley of the Broken Cherry Trees*, *Village of the Vampire Cat*, and others) that features the courage and sagacity of the ronin (retired samurai) Zenta and Matsuzo. In this tale of a power struggle on an island, a third ronin, Kajiro, plays a major role. There's a bit of a love story, an element of mystery, good historical details, and rather more depth of characterization than is usually found in adventure novels. Namioka's style, plot, and pace are strong. ZS

Park, Barbara. *My Mother Got Married (And Other Disasters)*. Knopf, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-394-92149-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-394-82149-1. 128p. Library ed. \$11.99; Trade ed. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. Park has consistently shown an ability to shed humorous light on potentially dreary situations. In this sequel to *Don't Make Me Smile*, Charles' unhappiness about his parents' divorce and about being "displaced" by stepfather Ben (and Ben's teenage daughter and preschool son) makes him a prime candidate for a surprisingly fresh treatment of a common theme. Although the protagonist's first-person voice is entertaining, his selfishness is candidly realistic. At one point he ruminates about having to share a room with five-year-old Thomas: "Sharing is not normal. . . . The only time lions like to share is when they're already finished eating. And to me, that's not sharing. That's full." Later he refuses to feel flattered that Thomas follows him around: "It would be like wading through a swamp and coming out with a leech on your leg. You would never really feel proud that you're the one it picked." The author has a way of introducing information naturally. In describing his best friend, Charles talks about how his "mother says it's getting hard to tell us apart. This is funny only if you know Martin is black." The plot is hardly noticeable among the family interactions. Charles denies adjusting to the new situation even after Ben's quiet understanding brings them closer. But he does accept it, and comes close to admonishing readers (many of whom will have known similar situations) to do the same. BH
D.V. Sharing; Stepparents, adjustment to

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. *The Whooping Crane: A Comeback Story*; illus. with photographs by William Muñoz. Clarion, 1988. ISBN 0-89919-455-9. 88p. \$14.95.

R Gr. 4-6. There's inherent drama in examining a bird that has come close to extinction; from a world population of 21 in 1941, the number of whooping cranes has grown to almost 200. Patent turns a practiced hand to describing the bird's life cycle and characteristics, as well as the complex rescue efforts of scientists who have resorted to various environmental and breeding experiments to rebuild dwindling flocks. The color photographs capture the beauty of the bird, while the black-and-white photos extend the information in pictures of incubating eggs or of chicks getting weighed and sprayed with protective antibiotic. A natural pick for ecology reports. BH
C.U. Nature study

Petersen, P. J. *How Can You Hijack a Cave?* Delacorte, 1988. ISBN 0-440-50063-X. 146p. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. 6-9. A basketball star who has a summer job as a tour guide at Cathedral Caverns, Curt is surprised to find that his boss is a girl his age, Lori (who says they're both basketball players looking for the right college). It is Curt and Lori who rescue a millionaire's daughter from the cave in which kidnappers are hiding her; they are daring and courageous in finding another entrance to the cave and incidentally learning to appreciate each other. The setting is dramatic; the plot is also dramatic but never unbelievable. Carried along by humor and a brisk pace, this adventure has likable characters (albeit not

deeply drawn) and the appeals of suspense, danger, and often-amusing dialogue. ZS

D.V. Courage

Pierce, Tamora. *Lioness Rampant: Song of the Lioness Book Four*. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31116-8. 320p. \$15.95.

R Gr. 7-10. Fourth and last in a series of fantasy/adventure stories, this continues the quests, the triumphs, the magic, the battles, and the love affairs of Alanna (woman, knight, warrior who has become a living legend) and concludes with her victory over evil forces and her betrothal to a reformed (but not venal) rogue. Like the three earlier books, this has plenty of action—usually but not always well-paced—and well-structured plot; it has the appeals of good winning over evil, and of the resilient courage of a believably heroic female protagonist. ZS

Porte, Barbara Ann. *Harry in Trouble*; illus. by Yossi Abolafia. Greenwillow, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07722-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07633-5. [48p]. Library ed. \$11.88; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 1-3. Harry just can't seem to hang on to his library card. His dog, Girl, ate the first one. The second, his father put through the washer. The third is in such a safe place that Harry can't remember where it is. Luckily, the librarian is very understanding (though not above exasperation: "Harry, does this story have an end?") and offers to keep his card in a file at the library. This latest entry in a series about a boy who takes life just a mite too seriously is told in an easy-reader style touched with dry humor. Perhaps in an effort to break up longer sentences, there are a number of unnecessary commas: "You needed someplace safe to keep it, where Girl couldn't eat it, and your father wouldn't wash it." While the ending is somewhat flat (Harry finds his lost card in Aunt Rose's piano bench) readers will empathize with the anxiety and enjoy the revelation that when *he* was a kid, Harry's dad lost things too. Abolafia's cartoon illustrations are as friendly as usual, more flexible in layout and design, and in full color. RS

D.V. Father-son relations

Richardson, Jean, comp. *Beware! Beware!: Chilling Tales*. Viking, 1989. ISBN 0-670-82544-1. [128p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 5-8. Written especially for this anthology, nine stories of eerie magic or ghosts or corporeal possession make a deliciously chilling experience for the fans of the macabre. The best ones, expectably, come from established writers like Jane Gardam, Jan Mark, Peter Dickinson, and Alison Prince. Originating in England, this has a universal appeal in its stories of a ghost who gloats too soon, a boy who acquires—and loses—a twin, a tunnel in which new messages appear in the code devised by two schoolboys . . . only they are written at the top of the tunnel's ten-foot arch. ZS

Rogers, Paul. *Somebody's Awake*; ISBN 0-689-31490-6. *Somebody's Sleepy*; ISBN 0-689-31491-4. Each book: illus. by Robin Bell Corfield. Atheneum, 1989. [17p]. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad 2-4 yrs. Perhaps inevitably, *Somebody's Awake* has more liveliness than its rather confusing companion. In *Sleepy*, somebody isn't sleepy at all, and proves it by energetically getting ready for bed, only to fall asleep before Mom can read him a story. While this message-mixing will be familiar to parents, toddlers can't see themselves that clearly. But breakfast mess, they love. "Somebody" makes breakfast "all by himself," the confident text given a twist with pictures of showering cornflakes, spilled milk, and general havoc. But Somebody more than makes up for the mess with the cup of tea (teabag in tap water) he brings upstairs to Mom and Dad. While facial expressions tend toward the vapid, both books are cleanly designed with warm and casual watercolors, including a too-true portrait (in *Awake*) of a sleepy but forbearing Mom: "I can hear the water running." Slim but pleasant additions to the toddler collection, though at eleven dollars apiece, not cheap. RS

D.V. Parent-child relations

Ryder, Joanne. *White Bear, Ice Bear*; illus. by Michael Rothman. Morrow, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07175-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07174-0. [32p]. (Just for a Day Books). Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. K-3. This is first in a projected series that attempts to show animal behavior from a you-are-it perspective. "Outside your window snow is falling, calling you, changing you . . .," and "you" become a polar bear (although the term "ice bear" is preferred throughout). While the full-color double-page spreads successfully evoke the cold drama of the Arctic, the paintings, like the text, rely primarily on a romantic appeal. "The air is cold and good! You feel like running in the cold fresh air." The gimmick encourages an unconscionable degree of anthropomorphism, allowing the bear powers of metaphor ("You . . . see others moving slowly like pale ghosts across the ice") and assigning the power of intent to the moon, which "shines its silver light so you can see the white snow . . ." The fact that polar bears eat seals is delicately hinted at but ultimately dodged: the seal gets away, and, Max-like, the bear is called to a house by "good supper smells" and turns back into a boy. A sympathetic but sentimental introduction to the polar bear, this needs less whimsy and more facts. RS

Rylant, Cynthia. *Mr. Griggs' Work*; illus. by Julie Downing. Orchard, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08369-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05769-0. [32p]. Library ed. \$12.99; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. K-2. Line drawings and the controlled brightness of restrained crayon work are the media for pictures that have clean composition and that are nicely synchronized with the text. Elderly Mr. Griggs is the postal worker in a small office, and he loves his work so much that it often occupies his thoughts at night and obtrudes in other ways (an acorn-bearing squirrel makes him think "Special Delivery," a lost parcel is a challenging mystery fifteen years later). The style here is pleasantly simple and direct; the plot is on the static side, consisting of Mr. Griggs being ill and then happily returning to work when

he recovers. Nice to have a story about someone who enjoys a job that is not glamorous, but this lacks the action or humor or suspense that make a picture-story appealing to most of the read-aloud audience. ZS

Sattler, Helen Roney. *Tyrannosaurus Rex and Its Kin: The Mesozoic Monsters*; illus. by Joyce Powzyk. Lothrop, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07748-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07747-1. [48p]. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr.4-6. Sattler is fast becoming the lexicographer of dinosaurs, with *Baby Dinosaurs*, *Pterosaurs*, *Dinosaurs of North America*, and *The Illustrated Dinosaur Dictionary* already to her credit. Here she describes the large variety of carnosaurs that roamed the world between 200 and 65 million years ago. Generously scaled, labelled watercolor illustrations will attract young browsers, who seem to gulp down names such as *Carcharodontosaurus* and *Yangchuanosaurus shangyouensis* while finding ordinary words quite indigestible (a pronunciation guide and index to the dinosaurs does appear at the end of the book). A helpful map and a time chart augment the catalogue-style text, which is especially careful to mention how complete are the skeletal remains upon which scientists base their conjectures about an animal's appearance and characteristics. A brief bibliography suggests eight titles for further reading. BH

C.U. Paleontology (unit)

Schwartz, Henry. *How I Captured a Dinosaur*; illus. by Amy Schwartz. Orchard, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08370-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05770-4. 32p. Library ed. \$12.99; Trade ed. \$12.95.

R Gr. K-2. "I asked Mrs. Fegelman if all the dinos were dead." When her teacher replies in the affirmative, but adds that there have been some "strange sightings," Liz begins to compile a scrapbook of Bigfoot-like newspaper stories, and goes with her family on a serendipitous vacation to Baja (scene of strange sightings), where she finds "Albert" (Albertosaurus) and takes him home. "This seemed like a good time to remind my parents that they had promised me any pet I wanted on my birthday." The text of Schwartz-papa provides just the right nonchalant tone for his daughter's funny paintings, which place big blue Albert in her trademark, 1950's-meet-the-80's, California setting. All the kids back home love Albert, of course, and he's a big hit at school assemblies. A touch overextended but nicely told, and it's equally gratifying to see a story that features a *girl* with dino fever. RS

Shaffer, Ann. *The Camel Express*. See review under Martin, above.

Shaw, Janet. *Changes for Kirsten*; illus. by Renée Graef and Keith Skeen. Trade ed. ISBN 0-937295-44-2; Paper ed. ISBN 0-937295-45-0.

Tripp, Valerie. *Changes for Molly*; illus. by Nick Backes and Keith Skeen. Trade ed. ISBN 0-937295-48-5; Paper ed. ISBN 0-937295-49-3.

Tripp, Valerie. *Changes for Samantha*; illus. by Luann Roberts. Trade ed. ISBN 0-937295-46-9; Paper ed. ISBN 0-937295-47-7. Each book: Pleasant Company, 1988. 65p. (American Girls Collection: A Winter Story). Trade ed. \$12.95; Paper ed. \$5.95.

Ad Gr. 4-6. *Kirsten* is set in 1854 and describes the life of a girl who is a member of a family on the Minnesota frontier. *Samantha* is set in Manhattan in 1904; the protagonist is an orphan living with an aunt and uncle who are wealthy enough and kind enough to take three more orphaned girls (Samantha's friend Nellie and Nellie's little sisters) into their home. In the third book, a family anticipates the return of their soldier father (World War II) and *Molly* hopes he'll arrive in time to see her take a lead role in a Red Cross show. Historical details are accurate, and the plots are adequately structured, but the writing styles of both authors are rather labored, and the characterization (again, in all three books) is superficial. Each of these books is furnished with several pages of historical background and a stiff paper insert that is part postcard and all promotion. ZS

Sieruta, Peter D. *Heartbeats and Other Stories*. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-025849-7; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-025848-9. [224p]. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-10. These nine short stories—all but one featuring a male protagonist—are characterized by an unpretentious style and generous tone. Their subjects are familiar: getting your own bedroom, finally; missing a girlfriend who has moved away; “25 Good Reasons for Hating My Brother Todd.” That last is one of the best stories, combining humor and sharp empathy to tell about a smart and sensitive “nerd” whose older brother is a handsome, popular jock. Emery's reasons are funny (#17: “He has teeth like Chiclets”) and touching (#22: “He has lots of dates”) and finally wry (#25: “My mother always did like him best”). In “The Attack of the Jolly Green Giant,” David knows his teasing of Molly has gotten out of control, “but I'm afraid to stop. Because if I stop, she won't notice me *at all*.” A few of the stories are melodramatic and seem more liked outlined scenarios for longer fiction, but, on the whole, this is an easy, friendly collection, which, because of its humor and directness, should appeal to reluctant as well as more seasoned readers. RS

Stanek, Muriel. *I Speak English for My Mom*; illus. by Judith Friedman. Whitman, 1989. ISBN 0-8075-3659-8. [32p]. \$10.50. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. K-3. Lupe Gómez helps her mother in all kinds of ways: she answers the phone, helps with the shopping, takes her mother to the dentist—all because her mother can speak and read only Spanish. “At school I use English all the time. At home Mom and I speak Spanish together. And outside our home I speak for her.” A situation that will be familiar to many children (and librarians in immigrant neighborhoods), not to mention a portrait of a resourceful relationship, this ends with Mrs. Gómez beginning English classes. The fact that most of Mom's dialogue is in English (“What did the doctor say?” Mom asked”) may be an unavoidable narrative device, but it will confuse younger readers. Stiff but pleasant pencil drawings generously fill out the story. The book would be a good candidate for bilingual treatment or a Spanish edition. RS

D.V. Helpfulness; Mother-daughter relations

Stevenson, Suçie. *Jessica the Blue Streak*; written and illus. by Suçie Stevenson. Orchard, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08398-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05798-4. 32p. Library ed. \$12.99; Trade ed. \$12.95.

Ad 3-6 yrs. Cartoon style brio of line and exaggerated action make this story of a puppy's first day in her new home both amusing and lively. Even for the read-aloud audience to whom both animals and disaster-humor appeal, however, this may seem an overextended one-gag situation: the puppy dashes about wreaking havoc as the family's five children chase her around. ZS

Sufrin, Mark. *Payton*. Scribner, 1988. ISBN 0-684-18940-2. 151p. illus. with photographs. \$12.95.

R Gr. 6-9. Given Walter Payton's prowess as a football superstar and his popularity as a record-breaker who is also a nice person (nickname: "Sweetness") the biographer who resists hyperbole is to be commended. Certainly Sufrin gives the great halfback his due, but he avoids being fulsome in describing the career Payton concluded with his spectacular performance with the Chicago Bears. The book has a good balance of material about Payton the player and Payton the man; the writing style is smooth, with a narrative quality that makes the book pleasant to read. An index gives access to the contents; the usual list of facts about the biographee's lifetime performance is included—in this case, with unusual statistics. ZS

Swindells, Robert. *A Serpent's Tooth*. Holiday House, 1989. ISBN 0-8234-0743-8. [136p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-12. Lucy is up against more than the usual dose of adolescent woes. Her father's career move has thrust her into a new school with hostile peers; her activist mother and establishment father are strained to the point of separation over Mum's leadership of AMANDA (Apton Magna Anti Nuclear Dump Action), and the NERDS (Nuclear Effluent Recycling and Disposal Services) are stirring up the town against AMANDA protesters camped out in Pit Field, the proposed disposal site. Even more mystifying are people who appear to Lucy but to no one else—men pushing a handcart to various houses and dumping the contents in Pit Field. A nuclear disaster set off by terrorists near a French dump wakes the English town to its own danger, but what really stops the digging is the discovery that Pit Field was the burial ground for the town's Black Plague victims in 1349. The plot is somewhat overloaded and the fantasy element undeveloped beyond functional ghostly appearances. Yet the dynamics among Lucy's family and friends, along with her relationship to the old woman who has inherited a family responsibility to observe the memory of those interred, support the action. The analogy of plague and nuclear threat is clearcut and timely, while the exposure of human strength and weakness in face of such destruction invites discussion. BH
D.V. Parent-child relations

Thomas, Ruth. *The Runaways*. Lippincott, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-397-32345-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-397-32344-1. [304p]. Library ed. \$13.89; Trade ed. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. 5-7.* It is not unusual, in contemporary fiction about friendship between a boy and a girl, to find that the two have been drawn together by the fact that both are loners. In this story from England, two eleven-year-old classmates who happen to be together when they find a thief's cache of money in a deserted house, are so upset by adult interrogation that they run off together despite the fact that each dislikes the other. Nathan is small and bright and black and hostile; Julia is tall, lanky, white, an academic laggard who can barely read. This is the story of their days on the road (with one telephone call to tell parents that they are alive and well) and the growth of trust that becomes friendship. Pace and style as well as firm characterization hold the reader's interest to an extent that is remarkable in what is basically a two-character story. ZS

D.V. Friendship values; Self-reliance

Tripp, Valerie. *Changes for Molly* and *Changes for Samantha*. See review under Shaw, above.

Urdike, David. *An Autumn Tale*; illus. by Robert Andrew Parker. Pippin, 1988. ISBN 0-945912-02-1. 40p. \$13.95.

Ad *5-8 yrs.* An eccentric and slightly self-conscious story, this nevertheless has a dreamlike appeal rooted in the well-remembered intensity of childhood fantasies. It begins with a pumpkin that young Homer carves into a jack-o'-lantern with a hole on the bottom to put his head through. When the harvest moon rises, Homer dons the pumpkin and finds he can understand the surrounding trees, which uproot themselves for a tryst and carry "Mr. Pumpkin" (and Homer's dog Sophocles) with them. Homer experiences a moment of nightmarish panic when he can't get the pumpkin off or keep up with an elm retreating toward home, but he is helped along by an old apple tree, relieved to find the pumpkin comes off easily when the trees resettle at daybreak, and "happy to be only a boy" eating the oatmeal his mother has cooked for him (shades of *Where the Wild Things Are*). Parker's watercolor paintings visualize this eerie venture with brilliant hues against shadow-streaked textures; he's managed to walk the fine line between literal meaning and imaginative impression. BH

D.V. Imaginative powers

Vigna, Judith. *Boot Weather*; written and illus. by Judith Vigna. Whitman, 1989. ISBN 0-8075-0837-3. [32p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *3-6 yrs.* In this likable combination of prepositional instruction and make-believe play, Kim can go anywhere she wants when she has her favorite winter boots on. "Up hills": she climbs her slide and pretends it is a mountain. "Over rocks": a mound in the backyard becomes the surface of the moon. "Above snow": a teeter-totter becomes a ski-jump. Vigna's unassumingly sprightly paintings depict Kim's well-equipped backyard opposite scenes conjured by Kim's equally well-equipped imagination. The concept is appealing and instructive, if slightly static in execution, and like Kim's slide, makes a great jumping-off point for adventures in both grammar and fantasy. RS

D.V. Imaginative powers

Westall, Robert. *Ghost Abbey*. Scholastic, 1989. ISBN 0-590-41692-8. [176p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. 5-9.* Here's a haunted house story that, from the spooky cover to the happy but unsettling ending, delivers the goods. Twelve-year-old Maggi Adams, her younger brothers, and their father go to Foxwist Abbey when Dad gets a job there supervising its restoration. Maggi, overburdened and bereaved since the death of her mother, hopes it will be a new start for the family. The Abbey has it all: gargoyles, locked rooms, a garden maze . . . as well as a real ghost and mysterious singing voices. It also, suprisingly enough, provides a warm and funny romance for Dad in the person of Ms. McFarlane, owner of the Abbey and a fervent believer in "faith." The Abbey and its inhabitants are filled with secrets, and Maggi is content to explore them until she realizes the nature of its stern protection: the Abbey gives new life to the caretakers it calls, but strikes with a vengeance against anyone who seems to be harming it in any way. While providing all requisite thrills, this is gentler than most of Westall's fiction, even to the characterization of the Abbey, which is really the main character here. RS

D.V. Family relations

Wrightson, Patricia. *Balyet*. McElderry, 1989. ISBN 0-689-50468-3. [144p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. 5-8.* Like other Aborigine spirits Wrightson has written about, Balyet is both playful and dangerous, her thousand years of solitude making her yearn for the company of young humans whom she lures to their deaths for the sake of a moment's warmth. Mrs. Willet, "an aboriginal Australian and a Clever Woman" on a trip to tend the sacred sites of her people, finds teenage Jo stowed away in her old car. Rebellious Jo repeatedly breaks promises to stay safe in camp: she wanders into rocky gullies, trysts with two brothers motorcycling nearby, and neglects a babysitting charge who wanders into the wild and almost dies at the hands of Balyet. Yet it is Jo who precipitates the crisis that lays the spirit to rest, through Mrs. Willet's ancient magic. The author's note acknowledges a nineteenth-century source for the legend of Balyet and advises readers that she, rather than the human characters, is the center of the story. Indeed, none except Mrs. Willet is more than functionally developed, but the intensity of the triangle between spirit, old one, and youngster is magnetic enough to hold the book together, and Wrightson's verbal landscapes are, as always, vividly rendered. BH

D.V. Older-younger generations

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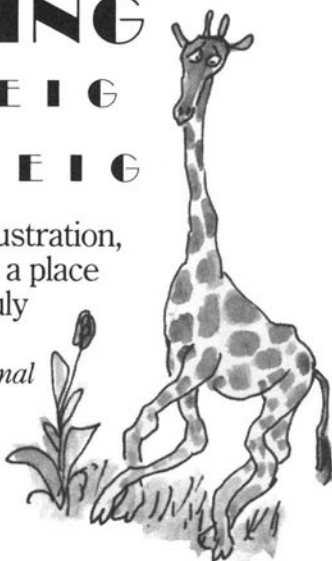
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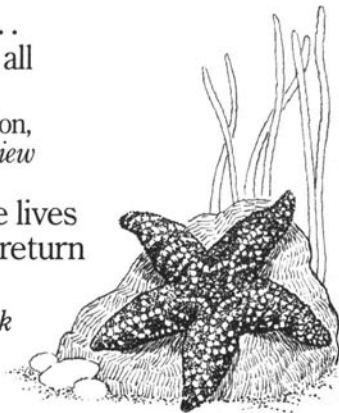
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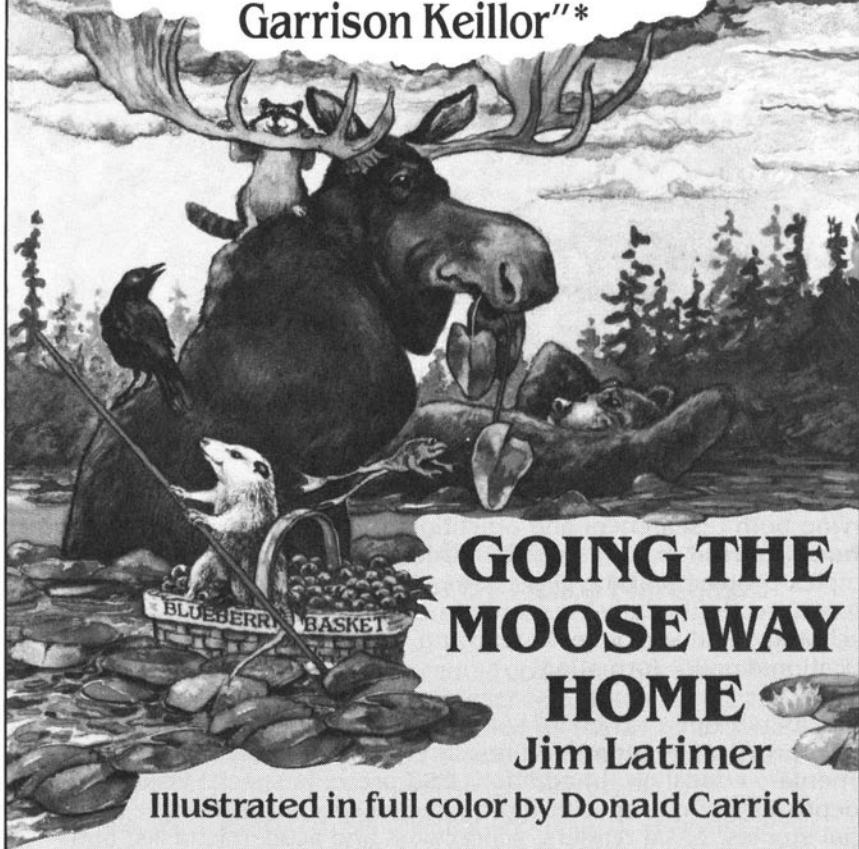
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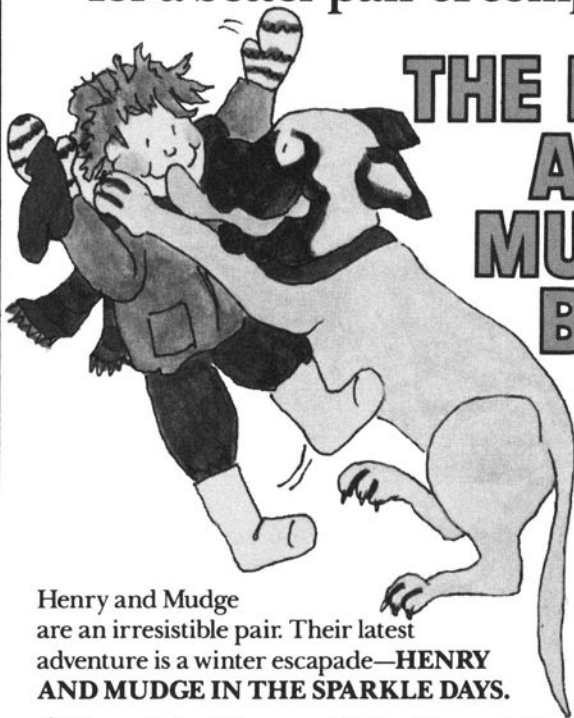
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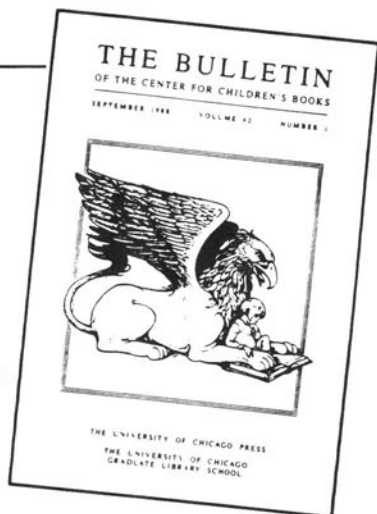
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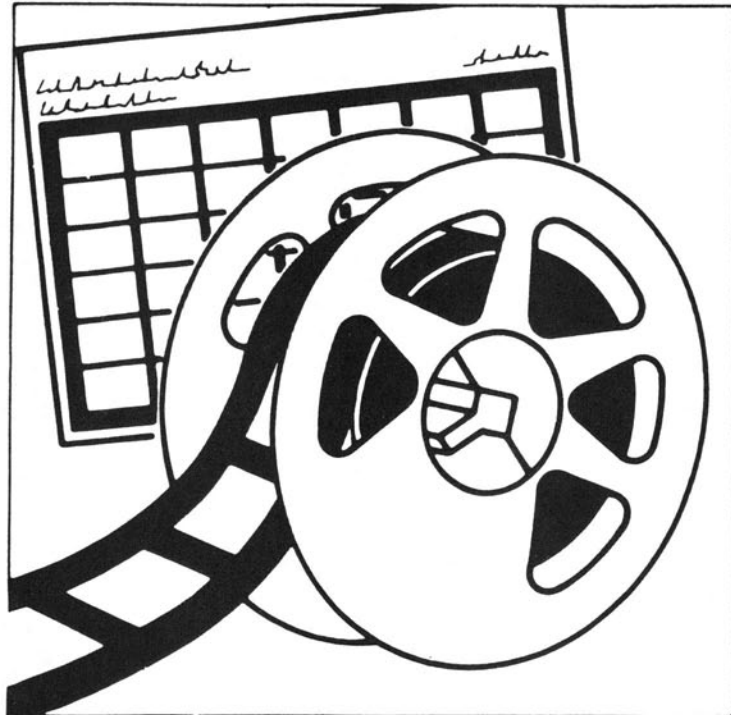
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