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THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

February 1998
Vol. 51 No. 6



University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

University of Illinois Press

Finalist for the
1997 National Book Award

TOR SEIDLER
Mean Margaret

PICTURES BY JON AGEE



SLJ Best Books '97

★ *ALA Booklist*

★ *Publishers Weekly*

PW Best Books '97

★ *School Library Journal*

◆ *Kirkus Reviews*

"A wildly funny story of a newly wed woodchuck couple who find a willful, wailing human toddler and take her into their home and into their hearts." —*SLJ's* Best Books '97

"Tor Seidler writes in the great tradition of Kenneth Grahame, Walter R. Brooks, and E. B. White, creating worlds where friendship matters, animals talk, and little girls who listen—even ones as mean as Margaret—can learn a life-changing lot about loving-kindness." —*Booklist*

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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

February 1998
Vol. 51 No. 6



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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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Cover illustration from *Baba Yaga & the Wise Doll* by Hiawyn Oram, illustrated by Ruth Brown. Illustrations ©1997 by Ruth Brown. Used by permission of Dutton Children's Books.

THE BIG PICTURE

Baba Yaga & the Wise Doll

ad. by Hiawyn Oram; illus. by Ruth Brown

Witches, like it or not, have a strong hold on our collective imagination. Whether they are wise women in primeval forests or wicked women in dark towers, the stories in which they appear and the visual images in which they are rendered intrigue us from a very early age.

The opening image of Baba Yaga in this picture-book retelling of the traditional Russian folktale is a riveting one. The witch, dressed in variegated black with red shoes, sits in a high-backed chair. Her hat, broom, and cauldron, symbols of her power, surround her, as do her "trusty Toads," who tell her, "You are truly terrifying," to which she replies "I hope so. That's what I'm here for!" And indeed, that is what this particular witch is here for, to be a terrifying symbol of the unknown, the dangerous, and the forbidden. She anticipates and relishes the challenge she knows will come.

While the lack of any source note is disconcerting in an era when folktales are not just story collections or storybooks but are used as examples and bridges to specific cultures, variants of this familiar tale are easy to locate. The story of Baba Yaga and the wise doll has been oft retold, both in standard collections such as Virginia Haviland's *Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Russia* and in dramatic picture book versions for older readers, including Marianna Mayer's *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave*, which has highly ornamental illustrations and language. Oram himself has a gift for pithy turns of phrase, compressing description into action and dialogue. He has retold this story in eminently oral language, bypassing character development and the dysfunctional family of usual protagonist Vasilisa in favor of a barreling plot and a child heroine named Too Nice.

Too Nice is driven from her home by her bullying sibs, Horrid and Very Horrid, who tell her, "... visit Baba Yaga. Bring us back one of her Toads in a jeweled jacket and a diamond collar. If you do that, we might play with you." Too Nice speaks to her "dearest possession," her Doll, a farewell gift from her dead mother, saying, "Now what? ... It's unbearable to stay and unbearable to go." The Doll replies (in only one of the down-to-earth wisdoms scattered throughout this book), "No one can stay and go at the same time. ... Put me in your pocket, listen to my advice when I have any, and let's be off." And off they go. Baba Yaga sees Too Nice coming and, in all her witchy glory, goes to meet her. Brown plays up the visual shenanigans when Too Nice meets Baba Yaga—not only has Baba Yaga "pulled her nose down and her chin up until they met in a terrifying crescent," but she rides her house like a bucking bronco, her child-gobbling toadies hanging on just behind. Too Nice's first terrifying glimpse of Baba Yaga provokes

an "I can't do this," but the Doll says, as good friends are wont to, "Oh yes, you can." So Too Nice knocks on the door of the House on its scaly chicken legs and is admitted to the mysterious, terrifying, and fascinating realm of Baba Yaga.

Full of the emblems of Baba Yaga's witchery—a sneering, sharp-toothed Cauldron, salivating Toads in diamond collars, jars with heaven only knows what in them, and piles and piles of dirty dishes ("Do them all by morning or Cauldron will cook you" says the witch)—the inside of the House on chicken feet does not disappoint. Shadow and light play tag in these compositions, with the dark Baba looming over the dark house, and the golden firelight blanketing the girl as the Doll, her shadow huge on the golden wall, assists her in each task. As is often the case, the bad guy is more fun than the good guy, who in this case is a sweet-faced, wide-eyed youngster. Ruth Brown's illustrations give readers a Baba Yaga of archetypal mien. With her sweeping black cloak, wild eyes and hair, and long, talon-like fingernails, she is an opponent whose defeat will be the stuff of legend—or folktale.

And who will defeat her? Why, the heroine, of course, that sweet-faced young girl, that innocent, protected by her mother's love. In the tradition of traditional tales, Too Nice (with the help of the magical Doll) overcomes three tasks set by Baba Yaga, and as a reward is granted one of the child-eating, diamond collared Toads. But Too Nice's triumph is different from slaying the dragon or severing the giant's head, for Baba Yaga dances with glee when Too Nice passes the final test. The young girl learns wisdom from the old crone and wins the day, to both of their delights. "And when Too Nice led the Toad back to Horrid and Very Horrid, he wasted no time. ONE! TWO! He gobbled them up, then quietly hopped back to the forest." This is folkloric justice at its finest—the horrid little Horrids don't merit any sympathy—they get what they deserve. And Too Nice, "not surprisingly after all she'd been through, stopped being Too Nice and became . . . well . . . Just About Right." Looking for stories with strong female protagonists? Tell this one. (Imprint information appears on p. 176.)

Janice Del Negro, Editor



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ALFORD, JAN *I Can't Believe I Have To Do This.* Putnam, 1997 180p
 ISBN 0-399-23130-7 \$16.95 R Gr. 6-9

On his twelfth birthday, Dean Matthews receives a journal from his mother, and if that weren't bad enough, she wants him to write in it every day for a year. The device of a journal imparting the narrator's innermost thoughts is not a new one, but that's okay, because there's a lot going on here. Dean's best friend, Aaron, falls in with some bad company in the person of Stach, a new, older neighbor boy who

dabbles in shoplifting and vandalism, alcohol and drugs. Dean caves in to peer pressure and winds up in the wrong place at the wrong time, much to his regret, but Aaron is willingly sucked into Stach's destructive wake, and serious consequences ensue. Dean finds some new friends, pays for his unintentional foray into criminal behavior with some deserved community service, and gives the strong impression that he has seen the dark side and wants nothing further to do with it. The first-person narration uses immediate, believable language, and even the grown-ups have a few good lines. While the plot exposition is somewhat programmatic, it is heartening to find a book that capably depicts a likable character who finally learns the danger of just going along with the crowd, and it is even better when the dynamics of family and friends support his self-realization without preachiness or coyness. JMD

ANDERSON, JANET S. *Going Through the Gate*. Dutton, 1997 132p
ISBN 0-525-45836-0 \$15.99 R Gr. 4-6

In an isolated rural town, five youngsters prepare to graduate from sixth grade. Their graduation takes the form of shape-changing into an animal of their choice, experiencing part of the life cycle of the chosen animal, and returning to their own forms. All the townspeople have "gone through the gate" (as the shape-changing is called) and returned, some more successfully than others. The children make their peace with their needs and wishes: Becky hopes to conquer her fear, Eddy looks for revelation, Penny wants excitement, Tim grudgingly yearns to belong, and Mary Margaret seeks to escape from unbearable drudgery. When Mary Margaret does not return through the gate, the other children must rescue her, calling her back with knowledge of the things she loves. Anderson takes what could be a cluttered, confusing premise and gives it clarity and form in this gently engaging fantasy. The tightly woven plot moves rapidly to its conclusion, allowing little time or inclination for dissection. The characters of the students are distinctly drawn, and the skill with which Anderson pulls the reader into this alternate reality makes the book subtly compelling. JMD

ANDERSON, WILLIAM *Pioneer Girl: The Story of Laura Ingalls Wilder*; illus. by Dan Andreasen. HarperCollins, 1998 [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027244-9 \$15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027243-0 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-5

No doubt Laura lovers can and will enjoy another picture biography of their pioneer heroine. Large, warm-toned paintings feature scenes from Wilder's life from the Big Woods of Wisconsin to Rocky Ridge Farm, while the text carries readers through her "Little House" experiences in a big, easy-to-read format. Harrowing facts ("The girls could not walk to school anymore because the ground was covered with grasshoppers"), tragic experiences ("Laura and Almanzo's second child, a boy, died soon after he was born"), and tiny triumphs ("One boy told Laura he would rather read her Little House books than eat!") are simply told while the sentimentally idealized but effective pictures create that "back-in-the-olde-days" aura that her books exude. Spark up your next biography booktalk by proffering this rendition with Wallner's *Laura Ingalls Wilder* (BCCB 1/98), and just try to keep Laura on the shelves. PM

AYLESWORTH, JIM, ad. *The Gingerbread Man*; illus. by Barbara McClintock. Scholastic, 1998 [32p]

ISBN 0-590-97219-7 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R* 4-7 yrs

Aylesworth has taken the traditional tale of the ubiquitous roaming cookie and spiced it up with a concisely written text and a jazzy refrain that will make this a readaloud, tellaloud favorite. From the opening pages (where "One day the little old woman said, 'Let's make a gingerbread man!' 'Yes, let's do!' said the old man"), Aylesworth makes it clear that this is a tribute to the old tale, and his language is precise and charming without being cute. McClintock's watercolor and ink illustrations have an old-fashioned sensibility (as compared to Egielski's more modern version, reviewed below) that combines beautifully with Aylesworth's retelling, as the Gingerbread Man in his yellow pants and jaunty blue hat races from the wood-burning stove through the town, through the countryside, and finally to his appointed doom as a wily (and nattily dressed) fox's snack. When the cocky Gingerbread Man says, "No! No! I won't come back! I'd rather run! Than be your snack!", be prepared for listeners to burst out in a chorus of giggles and to join right in. You may have other versions of "The Gingerbread Man" on your shelves—make lots of room for copies of this one. JMD

BANKS, LYNNE REID *Angela and Diabola*. Avon, 1997 163p

ISBN 0-380-97562-9 \$14.00

Ad Gr. 5-7

When Mrs. Cuthbertson-Jones gives birth to twins, she and her husband plan to name them Jane and Jill; the vicar, in a spontaneous and accurate response to their essential natures, christens them Angela and Diabola. Not just naughty and nice, the twins are the embodiment of human good and evil, with Angela adored by all and Diabola a source of escalating destruction, driving Mr. Cuthbertson-Jones from home and reducing their house to rubble. The humor here isn't outrageous enough for the events, and Diabola's disasters tend to pile up without expanding the story at all. The vaguely epistemological ending (Angela and Diabola become one) successfully wraps things up, but it has a didactic overtone that may disenchant readers who've enjoyed the hijinks. The chaos of Dybo's reign (and the satirical touches, such as the headmistress who thinks her evil is actually artistic genius) is enjoyable, however, and her relationship with her twin is intriguingly depicted. Young readers who enjoy slapstick farce with more than a hint of darkness may appreciate this story about the good and bad in each of us. DS

BAUER, JOAN *Rules of the Road*. Putnam, 1998 [208p]

ISBN 0-399-23140-4 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 7-12

"Most people think selling shoes is pretty ho-hum," says sixteen-year-old Jenna, "but when you hang with shoe people long enough you plug into the high drama." Jenna's commitment to quality footwear leads her down an unexpected road—literally—when Mrs. Gladstone, the president of Gladstone Shoes, hires Jenna to be her summer driver and to take her from Illinois to Texas for the company stockholders' meeting, stopping at Gladstone stores all along the way to drum up support for her control of the company. On the way, Jenna learns more about Mrs. Gladstone, whose business opponent is her money-mad, condescending son, and about herself and her own strength. This is an eccentric variant on the classic road

novel, and the additions of the intergenerational female team and the *Solid Gold Cadillac* stockholder-vote plot enhance the verve and momentum. Bauer's energetic particularity and affection for her characters imbue the book with warmth and atmosphere. The shoe-sales component is funny but never silly, proving that good writers can write about anything; watching Jenna's high standards and fierce vocation in action (she gallops into shoe stores like a podiatrist Lone Ranger, saving a dozen customers from shoddy service and inappropriate footwear and blowing on her shoehorn at the finish as if it were a smoking .45) will make immediate partisans of readers. The subplot about Jenna's family life and her struggles with her alcoholic and abandoning father isn't up to the same level of originality, but the book still gallops along. Jubilant, strong, and funny, this is a road trip to remember. DS

BAUER, MARION DANE *Turtle Dreams*; illus. by Diane Dawson Hearn. Holiday House, 1997 48p (A Holiday House Reader)
ISBN 0-8234-1322-5 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 1-2

Turtle doesn't know why her great-great-grandmother has sent her out to gather dreams for winter, but in the next three chapters she gets the information she needs. She meets Otter, who shares his wintry dream of slip-sliding in the ice and snow; Squirrel, who dreams of climbing to the highest branch to nibble nuts; and Bird (a cardinal), who offers the cherished dream of his first winged flight. By Chapter Five, a disappointed Turtle has sadly (and wrongly) concluded that "there are no winter dreams for turtles," so she sinks to the bottom of the pond to snooze. The story goes on a bit too long for such an abstract premise, and the art is capable but uninspired. This beginning reader, featuring a trio of fetching creatures against the earthy panoply of autumn, nonetheless offers young readers an easy, repetitious text and a surprise ending where Turtle incorporates everyone else's dreams into a very turtle-ish one of her own. Read before bedtime . . . and expect sweet dreams. PM

BEDARD, MICHAEL *The Divide*; illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Doubleday, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-385-32124-4 \$16.95 R 5-9 yrs

The nine-year-old Willa, who reluctantly boarded the train to Nebraska with her family and "sat by the window, still as stone, and watched her world slide away," could scarcely foresee that the experiences of her first year on *The Divide* would profoundly influence her novels as the adult author Willa Cather. Bedard wisely relegates comment on Willa's future to an afterword and focuses instead on the adjustment of a nineteenth-century pioneer girl to the silent land that at first she sensed "did not want them there. It wanted to be left alone." Certain they will leave this desolation, Willa refuses to unpack her favorite possessions; but as spring and summer introduce her to a blooming landscape and sympathetic, if far-flung, immigrant neighbors, her books and music box and shells are, one by one, released from storage ("In the long grass she could hear the crickets sing. She felt that her heart hid down here too, with its own song waiting to be sung"). McCully's watercolors convey a strong sense of place, from Willa's empty house on moving day, to the crowded train with its plush seats and spittoons, to the sea of grass that is freshly tinted each season. One can easily believe that Willa, with her deep-set, keenly observant eyes thoughtfully fixed on the landscape, is amassing the images and responses that will color her prose in the years ahead. EB

BELTON, SANDRA *Ernestine & Amanda: Members of the C.L.U.B.* Simon, 1997 168p
ISBN 0-689-81611-1 \$16.00 R Gr. 4-6

Ernestine and Amanda (of *Ernestine & Amanda*, BCCB 1/97, and *Ernestine & Amanda: Summer Camp, Ready or Not!*, 9/97) are going into sixth grade at W.E.B. Du Bois Elementary School. Ernestine is blue because she doesn't have a best friend in her class; Amanda is delighted because she's come up with an idea for a club that Ernestine will never qualify for, the "clever, likable, utterly beautiful" club, C.L.U.B., which membership includes only the cutest girls in their grade. Ernestine makes friends with the regally tall Wilhelmina, however, and Amanda is chagrined to find that her C.L.U.B. is not met with enthusiasm by adults or even all its own members. Relationships are the emotional core of this series, and in this title readers see more of Ernestine's strong family ties and her closeness with her college-student big brother, Marcus. We also get a closer look at the somewhat self-centered Amanda, still reeling from her parents' pending divorce and still trying to shut Ernestine out. Readers of the previous titles about E & A will be familiar with the alternating points of view in the narrative, wherein each girl gives her own impressions of shared experiences. There are some hints that events might be taking a more serious turn as the characters move into the late 1950s: Wilhelmina's parents, active in the NAACP, have moved from New York City to North Carolina and don't want her with them "until they get everything settled," and interest and pride in black history is making itself felt at W.E.B. Du Bois Elementary School. Belton strikes just the right balance between humor and pathos as the two girls find their way through the triumphs and pitfalls of sixth grade society. JMD

BENNETT, CHERIE *Life in the Fat Lane.* Delacorte, 1998 [320p]
ISBN 0-385-32274-7 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 7-10

Popular Homecoming Queen Lara Ardeche finds her life changing when recurrent hives lead to a prescription for prednisone and a ten-pound weight gain; when she goes off the prednisone, her weight continues to soar, until she's finally diagnosed, at 190 pounds, as having a rare metabolic problem that means tremendous weight gain regardless of food intake. Though her boyfriend and her plump friend Molly stick by her, her parents are devastated by her departure from the implicit family standard of attractiveness, and their strained marriage starts to crack. An out-of-state move initially makes things worse for Lara, since she's just the new fat girl, but soon she begins to reexamine her and her family's standards of worth. Bennett is particularly good at the teen viewpoint here, depicting Lara's self-loathing and the cruelty of her former friends (as well as Lara's early condescending kindnesses) with immediacy and credibility. Her underlying message gets confusing, however, since the book spends a great deal of time documenting Lara's (fictional, according to notes) disease, and therefore deliberately setting her apart from other sufferers of obesity; while there's some suggestion at the end that it's not an important difference, the fact that Lara's weight is beginning to melt away magically counters that small impression. Her embattled and superficial parents (and the other mean thin people) are often rather prescriptively drawn; the more complicated portrayals of Molly and of Lara's boyfriend Jett, who really does have

some problems with her weight, are more effective. Less a problem novel than walk-a-mile-in-their-shoes story, this may resonate with teens of many sizes. DS

BERRY, JAMES *First Palm Trees: An Anancy Spiderman Story*; illus. by Greg Couch. Simon, 1997 [40p]

ISBN 0-689-81060-1 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Berry has taken the traditional African and Afro-Caribbean trickster figure of Anancy and constructed an original *pourquoi* tale about the origin of palm trees. The king's priest tells him of a dream in which he saw "new and beautiful trees . . . with branches like a peacock's tail" growing on the land. The king desires that the dream trees become reality and promises a rich reward to the one who makes it so. Anancy Spiderman hears about the offer, and "the hope of a rich reward went to his head instantly, taking charge of him." Anancy goes to Sun Spirit, Water Spirit, Earth Spirit, and Air Spirit, hoping that each alone will be able to accomplish the king's wish, but each spirit says, "My work is not only my work" and "My work makes other works work," so Anancy is forced to accept not one but four partners in his venture. When the palm trees finally grow, many people take credit for them, and the king rewards all with a feast, even though deep down everyone knows it was Anancy. Berry's approach is highly literary, his stylistic complexity and ornate, repetitive language adding a formal stateliness to this tale. The lengthy text is strongly complemented by Couch's involving illustrations, which feature the trickster Anancy as a man with the spidery characteristics of eight eyes and eight arms that fairly whirl from the page. The earthy palette is warmed with gold overtones, achieved with layers of washes, and brightened by touches of purple and yellow. The fantastical nature of the illustrations suits the fantastical nature of the tale, Couch's beautifully expressive visual characterizations melding seamlessly with Berry's poetic descriptions. JMD

BIAL, RAYMOND *Where Lincoln Walked*; written and illus. with photographs by Raymond Bial. Walker, 1998 [48p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8631-6 \$17.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8630-8 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

This pictorial biography captures the essence of greatness of Illinois' favorite son. In a combination of eloquent storytelling and brilliant photography, Bial manages to bring Lincoln not only subliminally into his contemporary photographs of Lincoln's Midwestern haunts but into readers' souls as well. Lincoln memorabilia (in this case, shaving razors lying on a wooden table) breathe with the simple rituals of daily life: "Every morning, square-jawed Abe shaved off his whiskers with a sharp razor. However, when he became president, a girl wrote to Abe and convinced him that he would appear more dignified if he grew a beard." A shadowy photo of the Lincoln children's bedroom in Springfield seems pregnant with a father's footfalls. Events that shaped Abe's life, from his boyhood ("Brokenhearted, Abe helped his father by making pegs and planing boards for his mother's coffin") to his presidency dominate this celebration of Lincoln, with his death receiving only a few lines. This is an attractive alternative to Freedman's *Lincoln: A Photobiography* (BCCB 1/88), and youngsters won't easily forget their walk with Abe. Lists of places to visit and further reading are appended, as is an index. PM

BURGESS, MELVIN *The Earth Giant*. Putnam, 1997 150p
ISBN 0-399-23187-0 \$15.95

Ad Gr. 4-6

When young Amy discovers a giant amongst the roots of a tree uncovered by a raging storm, she keeps the secret to herself until found out by her older brother, ten-year-old Peter. Amy and the giant have a loving relationship in which they empathetically exchange thoughts and emotions; Peter, on the other hand, is bent on discovering the giant's origins, the reason for her presence, and what she can do for him, such as making him rich and famous. Peter's greed and lack of understanding cause the giant to flee, and she takes Amy with her. When Peter confesses to the giant's existence, the adults around him—parents, police, news media—assume the giant is a very tall, mentally unbalanced woman who has kidnapped Amy for nefarious if unknown reasons. Amy is rescued, the giant returns to the earth, and in a contrived dénouement both Peter and Amy help the giant's alien parents (yes, she is an extraterrestrial) retrieve their lost child. The extraterrestrial stranded on earth is something of a sci-fi chestnut, and Burgess does little to revitalize it. While those looking for a unique plot premise won't find it here, they will find an inherent emotionality that is quite involving, presented in almost lyrical language. The relationship between the loving Amy and the nurturing giant is a fascinating and touching one, and readers will be happily relieved when the injured giant is returned to her otherworldly kin. JMD

BURLEIGH, ROBERT *Black Whiteness: Admiral Byrd Alone in the Antarctic*; illus. by Walter Lyon Krudop. Atheneum, 1998 36p
ISBN 0-689-81299-X \$16.00

R Gr. 2-4

Byrd's six months alone and inland during the Antarctic winter of 1934 still stand high in the annals of exploration; Burleigh tells that story succinctly, interweaving description with excerpts from Byrd's own journal. Short paragraphs are left unjustified and separated by spaces, which makes them look like free verse, and the simplicity and focus of the descriptions are occasionally poetic as well ("... pale green beams, called auroras, that wind in great waves through the towering dark"). Krudop's oil paintings emphasize the isolation, the thickness of their brushstrokes conveying the otherworldly distance of extreme cold; steel blue pencil sketches also appear throughout the text. The book sticks to older, more purely heroic views of Byrd's experience (recent examinations have been less flattering), but its emphasis on the concrete renders motivational interpretations largely superfluous anyway. The danger, the cold, and the dark are the story here, and youngsters will appreciate Byrd's braving of implacable nature. DS

CHOCOLATE, DEBBI *The Piano Man*; illus. by Eric Velasquez. Walker, 1998 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8647-2 \$16.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8646-4 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

The narrator tells of her grandfather's musical career: piano player for silent movies, pianist at the Ziegfeld Follies, vaudeville accompanist (where he met his dancer wife), and touring musician. After the birth of his daughter, he returns to piano accompaniments for the silents, often playing with his young daughter by his side; the advent of the talkies puts him out of business, but, years later, his now-grown daughter's gift of a piano means that he can share his talent with his granddaugh-

ter. The specificity of the situation gives this an inherent interest that many retrospective picture books lack. The musical legacy (including hobnobbing with famous figures such as Jelly Roll Morton and Scott Joplin) that passes through three generations of the African-American family is treasured but unsentimentalized, and the changing world of the musical journeyman depicted here is a small but distinctive part of American history. Velasquez' art uses Norman Rockwell hues and drafting, but his compositions are cleaner though the faces tend to be strained and poorly modeled; the jaunty figure of the musician in his bowler and armbanded shirtsleeves is still both ebullient and bittersweetly bygone. Kids generally love grandfathers plenty just for being grandfathers, but this might open their eyes to the fact that Granddad had a pretty interesting life even before the grandkids came along. A note from the author explains some of the family history behind the story. DS

CLEMENT, ROD *Grandpa's Teeth*; written and illus. by Rod Clement. HarperCollins, 1998 [32p]

ISBN 0-06-027671-1 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

The household comes running to Grandpa's shout, "It'sth my teeth—they've been sthtolen." The house is searched, the police are summoned, posters of the errant dentures are plastered all over town, and soon the entire neighborhood is under suspicion. "It seemed the only way to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the teeth in your mouth were your own was to smile broadly at every person you met. Anyone who didn't smile was immediately dragged off to the police station." This artificial amiability scares off the tourists, businesses suffer, and at last the locals happily make donations for a couple of new sets of teeth for Grandpa. He graciously orders a set for Mrs. Carbuncle, who "has such a pretty smile"; romance is in the air, and the good citizens can happily relax their jaws. Clement's toothy cast should get everyone grinning as his caricatured townsfolk, parrots, dolls, teddy bears, and even the fish on ice flash their pearly whites. Just when you think Clement has gone his giddy way and ditched the mystery plot, the solution pops up in the closing vignette—Grandpa's dog Gump (who has the eerie ability to mimic Grandpa's every expression) smiles "for the first time EVER" with a set of choppers that could turn the Cheshire Cat green with envy. Add this as a happily eccentric twist to the lost-tooth picture book collection. EB

COLMAN, PENNY *Corpses, Coffins, and Crypts: A History of Burial*. Holt, 1997 212p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-8050-5066-3 \$17.95

R Gr. 6-12

This is an oddly intriguing, amusingly disconcerting title on the rites and rituals associated with death and dying. The book takes an anecdotal approach to its topic: in the midst of history and information on the fate of corpses, cremation, cemeteries, and rituals and customs, it intersperses personal tales of individuals and how they have dealt with death and loss, grief and tragedy. The author has a compassionate eye, and she manages to endow her topic with both humanity and humor. Without ever writing down to her audience, Colman covers a great deal of ground, relating ancient and modern ideas about death, the burial customs of different cultures, and even a recipe for funeral pie. A concluding chapter on epitaphs is followed by a list of gravestone carvings and their meanings, a chronol-

ogy, a glossary, a bibliography, and notes. Black-and-white photographs and historical illustrations enliven an already weirdly enthralling and highly readable text. JMD

COONEY, CAROLINE *Prisoner of Time*. Delacorte, 1998 [224p]

ISBN 0-385-32244-5 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

Readers of the first two books (*Both Sides of Time*, BCCB 10/95, *Out of Time*, 5/96) will have been looking forward to the third book to see what happens to contemporary Annie and her true love from the past, Hiram Stratton III. Unfortunately, this book doesn't tell them—it instead develops a new plot thread, the story of Strat's little sister, Devonny, who's walking down the aisle to wed a man she doesn't love, and Annie's younger brother Tod, who comes through time to sweep Devonny from the nineteenth century to the present. As Devonny learns with horror and delight about America a century later, she and Tod grow closer; meanwhile, in the nineteenth century, her would-be groom begins to take stock of himself as he searches for his supposedly kidnapped bride. Readers who enjoyed the high-tension gothic romance of the earlier two books will find this a very different and possibly disappointing experience: Annie appears only in an email and Strat not at all, and the younger crop of would-be lovers end up separating in the end as well (a fortified Devonny returns through time and lays down the law to her newly reformed suitor). The subplot of Devonny's friend's attempt at elopement diminishes the focus still further, despite its thematic relevance. What's fun here isn't the gothic glamour but the contemporary details, especially when seen through Devonny's alien viewpoint and phrased in Cooney's snappy style, and Tod's and Devonny's expanding relationship. This isn't quite up to the first two entries for time-travel thrills and it certainly doesn't finish off the trilogy as readers would like, but it's an often witty and serviceably entertaining melodrama. DS

EGIELSKI, RICHARD, ad. *The Gingerbread Boy*; ad. and illus. by Richard Egielski. Geringer/HarperCollins, 1997 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-026031-9 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-026030-0 \$14.95

R 4-7 yrs

Egielski has taken this familiar tale from its usually rural environs and set it in New York City, and (gingerbread) boy, does it cook! The gleeful cookie protagonist runs away from the apartment of his bakers into the streets of Manhattan, past a garbage-picking rat, concrete-pounding construction workers, subway station musicians, and a mounted policeman, meeting his culinary destiny after a run-in with a fox from the Central Park Zoo. Egielski's retelling sticks close to traditional form, and his repeating refrain ("Run run run as fast as you can. You can't catch me! I'm the Gingerbread Man") has all the gusto necessary for a rousing preschool storytime. The illustrations are saturated with muted colors, the combination of subdued primary and gold-toned secondary hues effectively recreating the attractive urban environment. The characters have pizzazz and personality, whether climbing down a fire escape, dancing on a clothesline, or running for the E train. And the Gingerbread Boy? Well, let's just say he makes you want to run run run right to your kitchen to bake some cookies of your own. JMD

ERLBACH, ARLENE *The Kids' Invention Book*. Lerner, 1997 64p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-8225-2414-7 \$14.95 R Gr. 2-5

Science/invention-fair season looms on the horizon, and this quick read could provide some inspiration and direction. At the book's core are a baker's dozen of illustrated double spreads (a bit stodgily composed) on elementary school children who have competed in invention contests with varying degrees of success. Larry Vilella's "Conserve Sprinkler" is being mass-produced by a North Dakota manufacturing firm; Kevin Germino's biodegradable fishing lure lost to a talking measuring cup; Elizabeth Low became the nation's youngest patent holder with her posable "Happy Hand"; Robbie Marcucci gave up on inventing after a product almost identical to his "Crayon Saver" appeared in a local paper. Strategies for scoring well at contests, tips on starting or joining invention clubs, information on applying for patents (including the current costs), and addresses of invention organizations offer budding mad scientists a reality check and a helping hand. EB

FISHMAN, CATHY GOLDBERG *On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*; illus. by Melanie W. Hall. Atheneum, 1997 [32p]
ISBN 0-689-80526-8 \$16.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-8 yrs

"Every year," our narrator says, "people we know send cards to wish me and my family a happy and healthy new year. *La Shana Tova*, they say in Hebrew." The autumn colors, hearty textures, and dreamy compositions that accompany this first-person catalog of holiday activities create almost a greeting-card effect that matches the narrator's seasonal mail. She describes various traditions of the High Holy Days, including fasting, significant foods, and synagogue rituals. The scenario is idyllic—no fighting or whining on this occasion—and the text focuses on description rather than story. Clearly American and non-Orthodox, this will fit into preschool or primary-grade units on multicultural celebrations, as well as into families observing Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with young children. A glossary explains pronunciation and meanings of special terms. BH

FLEMING, CANDACE *Gabriella's Song*; illus. by Giselle Potter. Schwartz/Atheneum, 1997 34p
ISBN 0-689-80973-5 \$16.00 R 5-8 yrs

The Italian city of Venice is the setting for this musical fantasy about a young girl who blends the sounds of the city into a melody that she sings for her mother. The baker hears the song and whistles it to the widow Santucci, who hums the tune to the gondolier, who plays it on the accordion. The song wafts through the window of famous composer Giuseppe Del Pietro, who is inspired to turn the simple melody into a symphony. When the symphony is played in the Piazza San Marco, it is a huge success: "The audience shivered from the music's beauty. In the familiar tune they heard laundry and pigeons, *lire* and church bells. They heard happiness and sadness and love." The composer thanks the unknown singer who inspired him, and the crowd turns to the gondolier, who turns to the widow, who turns to the baker, who turns to Gabriella. "Take a bow, *mio amore*," her mother urged. "Take a bow." This musical fantasia is accompanied by the airy illustrations of Giselle Potter, who uses watercolor, colored pencil, and inks to create a Venice of

the imagination where gondolas cheerfully bump into bridges, stucco buildings lean merrily upon one another, and an entire city is moved by a child's simple melody. Musical notes dance above characters' heads, are spread across sheets hung out to dry, and become the stuff that (musical) dreams are made of in Potter's earth-toned cityscape. This lovely cumulative tale would make a fine readaloud, a fine tellaloud, and oh, heck, a fine singaloud, too. Make up your own melody and see if the kids will hum along. JMD

FOX, MEM *Whoever You Are*; illus. by Leslie Staub. Harcourt, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-15-200787-3 \$16.00 Ad 2-4 yrs

Four children of diverse ethnic backgrounds are whisked off on an aerial tour of the world in the arms of a blue-suited, red-booted narrator, who offers them glimpses of children in far-off lands ("Their lives may be different from yours, and their words may be different from yours. But inside, their hearts are just like yours, whoever they are, wherever they are, all over the world"). Although older listeners may find the text a bit prissy and forced, it might be just the ticket for the littlest tykes, who haven't yet peeked out from behind their community boundaries and who won't stumble over the clichés. But readers and listeners, regardless of age, will be charmed by Staub's luscious oil paintings bordered in golden, jewel-studded, hand-carved wooden frames. Almond-eyed figures seem to pause amid their homely activities to fix the viewer with their steady gazes, and stylized foreign landscapes, rendered in a glowing, saturated palette, are comfortable and welcoming. The guide on this dreamlike tour can just turn off the mike and let the arm-chair travelers enjoy the view. EB

FREEMAN, MARTHA *The Year My Parents Ruined My Life*. Holiday House, 1997 184p
ISBN 0-8234-1324-1 \$15.95 R Gr. 5-8

When her parents move the family from sunny California to freezing Pennsylvania, twelve-year-old Kate is not happy. She plots with her best friend Molly to return to the sun, frolic, and boyfriend of her California life, and in desperation she uses her mother's credit card for a plane ticket. Kate is in California when Molly finally reveals that no, her mother doesn't want to take Kate in, and yes, Molly is dating Kate's old boyfriend. Kate plummets to reality and heads back to Pennsylvania. The slight plot of the unappreciated move is given a big boost by Freeman's energetic characterizations, including the humorously determined Kate, her goody-two-shoes little sister, her somewhat frantic mother (who is having adjustment pains of her own), and her potential new boyfriend Pete, who eats like there's no tomorrow. Freeman gives Kate a strong voice and some realistic (but not overwhelming) adolescent angst that is bound to keep readers chuckling. The dialogue is brisk, and the action (even if snowbound) is quick. Here's some well-written, character-driven light fiction that you can offer without a qualm in place of generic series grindouts. JMD

GAMMELL, STEPHEN *Is That You, Winter?*; written and illus. by Stephen Gammell. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-15-201415-2 \$16.00 R 4-7 yrs

Crotchety Old Man Winter wakes up in a bad mood and climbs into his pickup truck to spread some cold, snow, and freezing air. Old Man Winter, in his green

down vest, red overalls, and rubber boots, blasts the earth with white snow showers against a dark blue sky. "But sometimes Old Man Winter is puzzled. 'Who do I make it snow for?'" he wonders. Climbing up to his mountaintop cabin, "the snow is too deep . . . and he tumbles to the ground. Some children are playing in the backyard. One little girl hears him land." The child runs to pick up Old Man Winter, now "a ratty old doll," exclaiming "'He's Old Man Winter, my friend . . . you make it snow for me.' . . . And, once more, Old Man Winter is in a good mood." This easygoing tale of the origin of wintry weather is illustrated in Gammell's signature style: pastels, pencil, and watercolors combine to create a wildly vibrant, textured landscape (both before and after snow) with the big-headed, red-nosed, sour Old Man Winter and his rickety truck as its focal point. Gusts of wind and snow swoop through the air as the scarf-bedecked youngsters frolic in the winter weather. Grownup readers may seek a more logical connection between Old Man Winter the doll and Old Man Winter the weathermaker, but child listeners probably won't mind the disjunction. Add this little fantasy to a storytime about weather and the seasons, and your listeners, though shivering, will thank you. JMD

GIBLIN, JAMES CROSS *Charles A. Lindbergh: A Human Hero*. Clarion, 1997. 212p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-395-63389-3 \$20.00

R Gr. 5-9

If all a young reader knows about Lucky Lindy is his transatlantic flight on the *Spirit of St. Louis*, and possibly the tragedy of his baby son's kidnapping, Giblin fills in the details of an event-filled life in this smoothly narrated account. Early on he introduces the theme that unifies Lindbergh's life—that he was the first American media-generated celebrity, and a reluctant one at that. It was this hounding by a news-hungry press that not only confounded and embarrassed the intensely private man but precipitated his not-all-that-romantic secret wedding with Anne Morrow and their temporary resettlement in England. But Giblin certainly doesn't let a victimized Lindbergh entirely off the hook for his cordial and controversial relationship with the rising Nazi leadership, nor for the blatantly racist commentary that often peppered his public addresses, and readers will certainly realize that the aviation hero had feet of clay. Plenty of carefully selected photographs are included, and a bibliographic essay and chapter notes even remark on the varied reliability of sources. EB

GLASS, TOM *Even A Little Is Something: Stories of Nong*; illus. by Elena Gerard. Linnet, 1997. [119p]
ISBN 0-208-02457-3 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-7

Set in a Thai village surrounded by rice fields, these twenty-three short stories are sketchy in plot but vivid in character. Eleven-year-old Nong, her beautiful older sister Oi, and their widowed mother struggle to make ends meet in a tightknit community. The child's-eye view is consistent and frequently focused on food, from the icicle cream of strange Mr. Pu, whose nonsense somehow makes sense; to the rice cakes Nong tries to sell to the Buffalo Woman, who cannot afford them; to the irresistibly successful soup pot of Aunt Oom. We also get quick studies of the local bully, abused by his father, and of a teacher whose obsession with scorpions instills fear in his students. Nong watches her sister resist the advances of a police-

man and the condescension of an upper-class employer for whom she irons. These situations are understated enough to leave young readers dangling occasionally, but the subtle dynamics may make up for the lack of cohesive action. BH

GORMLEY, BEATRICE *C. S. Lewis: Christian and Storyteller.* Eerdmans, 1997 [190p] illus. with photographs
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8028-5121-5 \$15.00
Paper ed. ISBN 0-8028-5069-3 \$8.00
Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-9

Young devotees of *The Chronicles of Narnia* will enthusiastically sink their literary teeth into this biography about writer C. S. Lewis. Here is a clearly written, solidly researched, and insightful picture of the popular author. Gormley weaves human texture into the book by layering the threads of Lewis' life whether trivial, tragic, literary, or spiritual into a highly readable exposition of a warm, amiable, and brilliant man. His difficult relationships with his father and with Mrs. Moore (the mother of a friend killed in World War I), his closeness to older brother, Warnie, his surrender to the God of Christianity, and his brief but happy marriage to Joy Davidman are carefully elucidated. Narnia aficionados and budding authors will relish learning how Lewis's books often included characters, places, or things from his own experience, among them the magic wardrobe (in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*) and Puddleglum (in *The Silver Chair*). This is a far better choice than the recent biography by Michael Coren (*The Man Who Created Narnia*, BCCB 3/97), and it will not only fill that Lewis-sized gap on the biography shelves but may lead fans to his other works. Suggestions for further reading are appended. PM

GRAHAM, BOB *Queenie, One of The Family;* written and illus. by Bob Graham. Candlewick, 1997 24p
ISBN 0-7636-0359-7 \$15.99

R 4-7 yrs

Caitlin's dad rescues a hen from certain drowning in the opening pages of this perilous page-turner. Queenie, as the hen is christened, takes up residence in dog Bruno's sleeping basket and witnesses Caitlin's first steps. Mom, however, knows that the hen belongs to the farm on the other side of the city, and home to the farm she goes. Queenie must be part homing pigeon, though, because back she comes to Caitlin's house, through the doggie door, and into Bruno's basket: "And in Bruno's basket, Queenie laid a single, perfect egg." Queenie comes every day to lay an egg in Bruno's basket, but in the hubbub created by the arrival of Caitlin's new baby brother, Caitlin forgets to collect the eggs, Bruno reclaims his basket, warms up the eggs, and voila! baby chicks. The chicks—all but one—go back to the farm, and "Bruno made room for yet another addition to the family. One day the chick will be full-grown and will see Caitlin's brother take his first steps. But that's another story." This may be unlikely (as anyone who has ever tried to hatch baby chicks can tell you), but Graham's cheerfully chipper watercolor and ink illustrations make this lightly suspenseful soufflé easy to swallow. From the pony-tailed daddy to the long-suffering Bruno, Graham's characters are raffishly appealing. The layout of the book is nicely diverse, with a variety of full-, quarter-, and half-page illustrations sharing space in full and double-page spreads. This is a progressively more enjoyable tale with visual details and homey touches that will make it a lapsit readaloud pleasure. JMD

GRIFFIN, ADELE *Sons of Liberty*. Hyperion, 1997 230p

Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2292-9 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0351-7 \$14.95

Ad Gr. 5-8

Rock Kindle tries really hard to please his demanding father. He forces himself awake to nail shingles to the roof during "interrupted nights," when Dad hauls his sons from their sleep just to test their fortitude, and he accepts with little complaint the emotional badgering as Dad pits his sons against each other. Older brother Cliff, though, is on to Dad's mind games and struggles to make Rock understand just how dysfunctional their family actually is. Only when the boys become involved in helping their physically abused friend Liza run away does Rock begin to admit to his own craving to be free of Dad's tyranny, and he ultimately joins Mom, Cliff, and little sister Brontie as they pack into the station wagon for a midnight escape to relatives in Arizona. The manipulative father and his defeated and withdrawn wife are chillingly portrayed; close consideration of the Kindle family would have provided sufficient melodrama without the added plot burden of Liza's problems, however, and the psychological morasses of the novel's many victims are often too blatantly defined. Fans of the family-trauma genre, however, will probably want to eavesdrop on this clan. EB

GROVER, MAX *Max's Wacky Taxi Day*; written and illus. by Max Grover. Browndeer/Harcourt, 1997 32p

ISBN 0-15-200989-2 \$15.00

Ad 5-8 yrs

Max the taxi driver seems to take his day in stride, passing through spring showers, turning at a fork in the road, enjoying a strawberry float, and trying to avoid a traffic jam. The illustrations, however, show that these happenings are rather out of our ordinary world: the spring shower is a shower of metal springs, the fork in the road is a huge eating utensil in the middle of the street, the strawberry float a large entry in a parade, and the traffic jam a big jar of cherry preserves at a crossroads. Along with those visual jokes on dual meaning are some plays on homonyms, such as a big toe truck, a creek in the stairs, and a tooth ferry. It's an amusing conceit, and one that might well inspire young listeners to add their own entries. The blend of homonyms and reinterpretations is a little confusing, however, and the jokes generally keep to the obvious. The acrylic illustrations have a sharp-edged cut-paper quality; the childlike drawing and the reliance on primary colors provide energy and help focus the sometimes overbusy compositions. Kids not ready for more sophisticated riddle books or even Amelia Bedelia may enjoy the conceptual play here. DS

HALL, KATY *Puppy Riddles*; by Katy Hall and Lisa Eisenberg; illus. by Thor Wickstrom. Dial, 1998 48p (Dial Easy-to-Read)

Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-2129-3 \$13.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-2126-9 \$13.99

R Gr. 1-3

"Where do little dogs sleep on camp-outs? In pup tents" is one of the no-brainer riddles in this crazy salute to pooches. Other entries in this latest Easy-to-Read offering are for the more savvy riddlers: "Which little sheepdog can't find her sheep? Little Bo Pup!" Most are goofy enough to produce the attendant groans ("What kind of soap should you use on your puppy's fur? Sham-poodle") and the cartoonish, doggone-good humor on every page (note the "Hound and Shoulers" shampoo bottle in an "old shoe scent") will aid the unenlightened so they too

can get in on the joke. The more obscure puns will probably need some explanation, but is there a more kidproof way to delve into word meanings? Here are forty-two goofy jokes accessorized with plenty of visual silliness to match, so open your next canine storyhour with two or three of these. What will *Puppy Riddles* become? Very pup-ular. PM

HANSEN, BROOKS *Caesar's Antlers*; written and illus. by Brooks Hansen. Farrar, 1997 218p
ISBN 0-374-31024-6 \$16.00 Ad Gr. 4-6

Caesar, a reindeer pulling a package-laden sled, hooks a sparrow family's nest to his antlers to aid them in their search for father and husband Piorello, who has inadvertently become the pet of a young girl. The rest of the story involves the quest of the separated sparrow couple to be reunited while autumn turns to winter. Uninspired dialogue often interrupts the story's flow; even lovey-dovey sparrows deserve better lines than "The two of us, Bette—we are one now." "Yes, we are one, the two of us." "One forever—Bette and I." "And I and Piorello," she'd reply." The combination of talking-animal fantasy and nature study jars, and the human characters' actions and motivations are, at times, ambiguous. Still, readers may enjoy the parallel adventures of bird and beast: Piorello's ill-fated attempt to fly with the geese is especially poignant, a sniggering wolf pack's encounter with Caesar's entourage will produce some shivers, and no doubt there will be sighs of relief when Bette and Piorello are finally reunited: "Bette!" "Piorello!" Sigh. PM

HASKINS, JIM *Black, Blue, & Gray: African Americans in the Civil War*. Simon, 1998 [160p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-689-80655-8 \$16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-10

Briefly discussing the role of black soldiers in the American Revolution and the slavery issue from colonial times in general, Haskins quickly moves to a political history of black men at arms on both sides of the Civil War—privately organized militia, army and navy enlistees, and slave laborers. Haskins deals candidly with such frequently overlooked issues as the Union's reluctance to arm black soldiers, Frederick Douglass' tendency to mislead black recruits concerning their certain inequality within the Union ranks, General Sherman's rejection of slaves seeking Union protection, and General Lee's insistence on recruiting slaves into the Confederate army toward the end of the war. There are few of the stirring battle scenes here that readers might expect from the volume's title; rather, this is a well-organized account of the gradual, grudging acceptance of blacks as an integral component of each side's fighting machine. Haskins concludes by considering how black participation in the Civil War was largely written out of the history books after Reconstruction. Source notes, a bibliography, a chronology, an index, and several period illustrations are included. EB

HAYES, ANN *Onstage & Backstage*; illus. by Karmen Thompson. Harcourt, 1997 40p
ISBN 0-15-200782-2 \$15.00 R 5-8 yrs

Hayes and Thompson, co-creators of *Meet the Orchestra* (BCCB 3/91), here introduce youngsters to the basics of a theatrical production (in this case, *Cinderella*). With its multispecies dramatis personae, the book depicts the process from casting

to readthroughs to blocking to promotion to curtain calls, making clear that there's a lot of backstage work that the audience doesn't see. While it's sometimes difficult to tell who's who (or, from a species point of view, what's what) and the term explanations in the glossary will be necessary to understand the main text, the information is intriguing and the momentum effective. The line-and-watercolor illustrations are busily theatrical, with the colors sufficiently muted to make the variety lively rather than garish; the foldout spread depicting the actual performance is a fitting culmination. There's not much in the way of seriously introductory theatrical material available for the early years, and this is a useful peek behind the curtain. DS

HEST, AMY *Gabby Growing Up*; illus. by Amy Schwartz. Simon, 1998 32p
ISBN 0-689-80573-X \$16.00 R 5-8 yrs

Gabby is off to the city with Mama again, only this time they are not only running errands but also meeting Grampa for his birthday, and Gabby's knitted a pair of orange mittens for him. It's not just the mittens that need to meet with Grampa's approval, though. Entering King's department store, Gabby, with her *Purple Coat* (BCCB 2/87) resolve still firmly in place, insists, "I want short hair. Really short, to my ears." Once again Hest uses a family occasion to highlight the warm relationships while layering the story with gentle conflict and a delightful little surprise ending (Mama has a cake, not a hat, in her hat box). Grampa with perfect grandfatherly diplomacy handles both the haircut ("I certainly liked those braids, Gabrielle. . . . On the other hand, I think . . . well . . . I think your haircut is . . . splendid. Really, really fine") and the mittens ("I love them . . . Such a splendid shade of orange!"). The brightly patterned apparel of the characters enliven scene after scene of nostalgic city life where department store splendors, a mirrored barber shop, a curvy luncheon counter complete with a crabby waitress, and a shimmering ice rink act as a perfect background for almost grownup Gabby. PM

HOBBIE, HOLLY *Toot & Puddle*; written and illus. by Holly Hobbie. Little, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-316-36552-1 \$12.95 R 4-7 yrs

This two-piglet character study focuses on the title piggies, Toot and Puddle. Best friends, the two live together but have very different personalities: Puddle is a homebody and Toot a wannabe world traveler. When Toot decides to make his dream a reality with "his biggest trip ever," he invites Puddle to come along, but Puddle declines. As Toot travels, the reader sees his activities on one side of the double page spreads, with Puddle's happy homebody activities on the other: in Africa, Toot swims with some hippos, while on the opposite page, Puddle does delighted double axels on frozen Pocket Pond; as Toot scuba dives in the Solomon Islands, "Puddle was having mud season. Yay!" Toot sends postcards with pithy little messages like "Dearest Pudsio, Italy is heaven—it's one big treat! Your friend, Tootsio." Toot finally decides to come home, and the two friends rejoice in their reunion. Admittedly, this is amazingly cute, but Hobbie somehow manages not to fall into the treacle, pulling off this little travel tour de force with aplomb. Toot and Puddle are porcine enough that the anthropomorphism isn't cloying, and the clever visual details (the mountain goat staring balefully at a mountain-climbing Toot, for example, or the classical pig sculptures at the Louvre) add personality

and charm. The watercolors are deftly done, and the piggy personalities glow from the various compositions. This story of friendship is engagingly presented through postcards and visual vignettes, and if you're not reading it aloud to younger children, let the beginning readers read it for themselves. JMD

HOLUB, JOSEF *The Robber and Me*; tr. from the German by Elizabeth D. Crawford. Holt, 1997 212p
ISBN 0-8050-5599-1 \$16.95 Ad Gr. 6-9

In nineteenth-century Germany, a young orphan is sent to live with his unknown uncle, mayor of the village of Graab. Eleven-year-old Boniface is somewhat confused by the change, but he is managing to cope, finding a sympathetic ear in the guise of housekeeper Frederika and possibly making a new friend in Christian Knapp, son of the title's Robber. When Robber Knapp cannot be apprehended after being accused of two enormous thefts, his children are taken from their mother and she is put into the village jail. Only Boniface realizes that Robber Knapp has been accused unjustly (at least this time), and he finally finds the courage to face his formidable mayor uncle with his knowledge. Holub gives a detailed picture of daily life in a nineteenth-century German farming community, including details about harvest, marriage laws, and public schooling. The text is formal and dense, with description clearly taking the lead over action. Characterization is minimal, with the good guys all good and bad guys all bad, and the change in Boniface's uncle from cold fish to warm father figure is just barely credible. Still, readers seeking some unusual historical fiction may be happy finding their way through this title. A glossary of unfamiliar terms in German and English is included. JMD

HURWITZ, JOHANNA *Ever-Clever Elisa*; illus. by Lillian Hoban. Morrow, 1997 84p
ISBN 0-688-15189-2 \$15.00 R Gr. 2-4

Elisa, star of *Elisa in the Middle* (BCCB 10/95) and little sister of the famous Russell, is six and one-half years old and a full-fledged first-grader. Her adventures here include lending her mother's diamond engagement ring (without permission) to her adored teacher, going with her father to vote, serving her mother breakfast in bed, and buying a raffle ticket. Hurwitz is particularly good at balancing the seeming completeness of a first-grader's world with the awareness of things not yet known; Elisa's personality is certain even as her ability to tell time, for instance (leading to a very early Mother's Day), is not. It's particularly nice to have a glimpse into the process of voting (though Mr. Michaels' mistaken yank of a lever nullifies his vote), which is an adult mystery that few children's books explain. Whether read alone or read aloud, the account of Elisa's struggles will evoke sympathy from youngsters. Hoban's large, friendly pencil illustrations have a slightly geeky real-world charm. DS

HYPOLITE, JOANNE *Ola Shakes It Up*; illus. by Warren Chang. Delacorte, 1998 [128p]
ISBN 0-385-32235-6 \$14.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-6

When nine-year-old Ola's parents land more prestigious jobs, the family moves from familiar turf in a Boston neighborhood to a "cooperative" development several hours away. Not only are the rules regulating community life restrictive, but

the Bensons are the first black family in the neighborhood. Ola is determined not to go calmly into this "cookie cutter" development, and when her plans to sabotage the move fail, her next mission is to shake up her stodgy surroundings as much as possible. Aiding her efforts are Lillian, their Haitian housekeeper with some adjustment problems of her own, an eccentric senior citizen, and the mayor's sulky daughter. There's plenty of promise to the plot, as Dad struggles to balance his job and family, bookish older sister Aeisha gets her first poor grades from an apparently bigoted teacher, brother Khatib ditches the basketball team in favor of dance lessons on the sly, and Lillian takes her first faltering steps toward assimilation. No plot line is sufficiently developed, however, and a facile, feel-good ending ties all the loose ends in a snug little knot that defies credibility. Mischievous, mouthy Ola will garner some fans, though, and readers will certainly wish this close-knit family well. EB

IN DADDY'S ARMS I AM TALL: AFRICAN AMERICANS CELEBRATING FATHERS; illus. by Javaka Steptoe. Lee & Low, 1997 [32p]
ISBN 1-880000-31-8 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

A dozen poems are linked by theme and anchored by Javaka Steptoe's arresting collages. All except Dakari Hru's merry, musical "Tickle Tickle" are reverent celebrations of the "Black Father Man," as Lenard D. Moore calls "the supreme earth dweller." They vary in quality but adhere to mythic tone, from Carole Boston Weatherford's "The Farmer" ("His backbone is forged/ of African iron/ and red Georgia clay") to Sonia Sanchez' "My Father's Eyes" ("I have looked into/ my father's eyes and seen an/ african sunset"). Some are surprising ("The Things in Black Men's Closets" by E. Ethelbert Miller) and others predictable (Dinah Johnson's "My Granddaddy Is My Daddy Too," a title that older children will probably enjoy misinterpreting). For the most part, Steptoe has given the poetry room to breathe despite the highly textured, vigorously hued images alongside or backing the text. David Anderson's "Promises" appears in one of the simplest and best double spreads, with the poem set against a plain deep red that's reflective of the repentance expressed by a son and the blood bond sworn by his father; the accompanying torn-paper collage in brown tones shows the boy in his father's arms. Though occasionally busy, the overlaid shapes that comprise these compositions are controlled to good effect. Put this parent-pleaser up front in your Father's Day display. BH

JIANG, JI LI *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*. HarperCollins, 1997 285p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027586-3 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027585-5 \$14.95

R Gr. 7-12

This is an autobiographical account of growing up during Mao's Cultural Revolution in China in 1966. Ji Li Jiang, daughter of a wealthy family and an outstanding student, had a bright future. But with the coming of the revolution, all that changed. Because her grandfather was a landlord, her family were considered traitors to the new China, her scholastic achievements were devalued as being the result of her "relationships" with her teachers, and her class status made her anathema to those who used to be her friends. Jiang describes in terrifying detail the ordeals of her family and those like them, including unauthorized search and sei-

zure, persecution, arrest and torture, hunger, and public humiliation. And just as suddenly as it began, it ended: a new political regime took over, political prisoners were released, and Jiang's life returned to some vague semblance of normalcy. Jiang's autobiography successfully conveys what it is like to live under a totalitarian regime in which the individual has no rights and information is tightly controlled. Her voice is that of an intelligent, confused adolescent, and her focus on the effects of the revolution on herself, her family, and her friends provides an emotional focal point for the book, and will allow even those with limited knowledge of Chinese history to access the text. An epilogue tells readers about Jiang's discovery of the political power struggle that led to her family's downfall and of her subsequent emigration to the United States. JMD

JONES, J. SYDNEY *Frankie*. Lodestar, 1997 [192p]
ISBN 0-525-67574-4 \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

Neither Luke Hayes nor his younger sister Beth approves of the attention the stray waif Francine (call her Frankie) is getting from their parents, who seem to know more of the girl's background than they are willing to share. Luke's inevitable fascination with her changeable nature, street smarts, and ill-concealed interest in the Ludlow, Colorado coal strike gradually turns to love, but Beth remains so jealous and hostile toward the newcomer that she is sent away to an aunt in Denver. As the strike reaches a climax with the imprisonment of Mother Jones and the withdrawal of National Guardsmen sympathetic to the strikers, it seems likely that Frankie has been using the Hayes' hospitality as a cover in a selfish, dangerous, and ultimately fatal game of espionage between the mine owner and worker interests. Jones allows the reader to know only as much about Frankie as Luke does, using Beth's rumors and outright lies, as well as Frankie's own deceits, to keep her true loyalties ever in doubt. And yet, along with Luke, readers finally come to accept the girl for what she is—a street-hardened survivor who, in the last hours of her life, throws her support to the strikers. A brief epilogue comments on the 1913 strike and on the unidentified body that provided the inspiration for the fictional Frankie. EB

JOYCE, WILLIAM *The World of William Joyce Scrapbook*; written and illus. by William Joyce and illus. with photographs by Philip Gould. Geringer/HarperCollins, 1997 48p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027433-6 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027432-8 \$16.95

R* Gr. 2-5

"Every author," says Joyce, "has his own way of doing a book. For the next few dozen pages, I'll try to answer the questions about how I do mine." The author/illustrator definitely fulfills his pledge in a series of spreads that encompass the formation of his drawing style from age four through twenty-two, the genesis of ideas for individual books, his family and their caricatured appearances in his work, and even some ideas currently on the drawing board. In a text that is perfectly suited to the age span of his picture-book audience, Joyce encourages viewers to look closely for changes between preliminary and final drawings and for the favorite toys and movies that influence his work. Glimpses of the decidedly eccentric Joyce household's merrymaking at Halloween ("I take the whole month of October off to decorate the house"), the Fourth of July (he and his friends build a

Styrofoam fort full of toys and blow it up), and Christmas (a tree in every bedroom, five in the living room) should set readers aching to be invited over. Given Joyce's manic approach to story, art, and apparently, to life, the busy melange of snapshots, photo vignettes, and drawings is completely appropriate. EB

KING-SMITH, DICK *Puppy Love*; illus. by Anita Jeram. Candlewick, 1997 34p
ISBN 0-7636-0116-0 \$15.99 R 4-8 yrs

Featuring some of the puppies King-Smith has known over the last fifty years, this is a parade of prize-deserving canines described in relaxed, friendly prose. From Humphrey the Great Dane to Dodo the dachshund to a German shepherd puppy named Fly, King-Smith lovingly details his lifelong attack of puppy love, with some judicious advice about puppy training, health care, and the simple things that will make a puppy happy thrown in for good measure. Although the chronology is a bit confusing (King-Smith never mentions the aging, departure, and replacement of his pets), there is an explanation in the liner notes that helps clarify things. Illustrator Jeram notes that dogs are her favorite animals, and that's easy to believe when looking at her watercolors of lovingly scruffy mutts, roly-poly pups, and cutely rendered canines. Depicted in clean, unmuddy colors the puppies frolic in a place where the sun always shines, the grass is always green, and the kids are always smiling. And that's how it should be, at least in puppy dreams. JMD

KIRK, DANIEL *Breakfast at the Liberty Diner*; written and illus. by Daniel Kirk. Hyperion, 1997 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2243-0 \$14.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0303-7 \$14.95 M 4-8 yrs

Bobby Potter, his little brother George, and his mother alight from the train and head to the Liberty Diner to meet Uncle Angelo. As the boys fidget, whine, and cause a little mischief, a rumor circulates among the customers that President Roosevelt is coming to town to address factory workers about their jobs. Wouldn't you know it, FDR stops at the Liberty Diner for his breakfast and, during a photo opportunity with Bobby and George, he admires Bobby's toy plane and extols him, "Don't just fly in an airplane, be the pilot. I know a boy like you can do anything he puts his mind to!" It is doubtful that the picture-book audience will independently make the intended poignant connection between Bobby, who wears a leg brace, and the president, who "gets around pretty good for a guy with polio." Nor are children likely to associate the angular, monumental (yet sweetsy and overbland) paintings with the WPA mural art of the period. Of more interest are the tipped salt shakers, spilled milk, and short-order lingo that rush by in a disjointed blur. A concluding author's note serves up tidbits of information on diners, Roosevelt, and Kirk's personal admiration for FDR, but by then listeners will probably have had their fill and may ask to skip the final course. EB

KLASS, SHEILA SOLOMON *The Uncivil War*. Holiday House, 1997 [160p]
ISBN 0-8234-1329-2 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-7

Asa (named for a medieval Scandinavian queen) was a sickly child, but now she's a hearty sixth-grader and her mother doesn't seem to recognize that overprotectiveness and overfeeding aren't useful any more. When the cute new boy in class, Robert Lee, starts giving her a hard time about her weight and her name, Asa decides she

has had enough and takes drastic measures—a hunger strike—to gain her mother’s understanding. The several strands of the story don’t always fit together as well as they might and the solutions are pretty easy, but the charm and credibility of the characters pull things together. Asa’s quandary is understandable on several different levels (not only does her mother love her dearly, the elaborate breakfasts in bed are delicious), and the drama of her premature baby brother’s hanging by a thread in the ICU makes Asa’s mother’s overprotectiveness understandable and sympathetic—to Asa as well as to the reader. The battle with Robert Lee is only a small part of the funny and credible story of Asa’s maturation. DS

KRACH, MAYWAN SHEN *D is for Doufu: An Alphabet Book of Chinese Culture*; illus. by Hongbin Zhang. Shen’s, 1997 32p
ISBN 1-885008-06-6 \$17.95 R Gr. 4-8

While this elegantly illustrated volume will hardly launch readers on the road to fluency, it does cogently explain the “construction” of Chinese pictograms and interpret how their component symbols combine to make a word with a meaning larger than the sum of its parts. As Krach explains, the pictogram for *en*, or grace, is formed as follows: “A person resting [symbol] upon a square mat [symbol] means to rely upon. It is combined with the heart [symbol] below. Whoever relies on his heart achieves grace.” Not all terms are so ethereal—*dou fu* (tofu), *guo* (China), and *ma jiang* (mahjongg) are among the more worldly entries—and a paragraph or two sets each term into its cultural context. A concluding page offers Mandarin pronunciation keys and a guide to tonal changes. Readers who may have abandoned Ed Young’s recent work on pictograms (*Voices of the Heart*, BCCB 4/97) when they discovered it was more about art than Chinese language will probably find this is the book they were looking for. EB

KRISHER, TRUDY *Kinship*. Delacorte, 1997 [304p]
ISBN 0-385-32272-0 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-12

In this follow-up to *Spite Fences* (BCCB 1/95), Pert Wilson (a secondary character in the previous book) is sixteen years old in 1961, when her daddy shows up at her family’s trailer door. Pert, desperate for her father to be all she has imagined him to be during the years of his absence, ignores warning signs easily picked up by her mother, her grandmother, and her older brother that indicate her scalawag father is not to be trusted. Sure enough, he cons Pert into loving him and cons the trailer park residents out of some hard-earned cash before he disappears again. The story of Pert and her father has enough emotional bite to carry a novel on its own, but a disconcerting number of plot threads weave their tangled way through this title, including an unclaimed inheritance, an unwanted pregnancy, and an effort by the town council to close down the trailer park. Krisher tells Pert’s story in a sort of narrative chorale, with residents of the trailer park adding their observations to Pert’s first-person narration, and the alternating points of view are sometimes difficult to follow. Even if the sixties were a more innocent age, Pert’s voice seems much too young for a sixteen-year-old, especially a sixteen-year-old who has lived (and is living) through hard times. Plot overload aside, Krisher has a nice way with her characters, giving even the least of them a specificity resulting from strong verbal imagery and concrete visual cues, from their physical descriptions to their very names (in describing Pert’s home economics teacher, Nymphag Claggett, Pert

says, "her tiny eyes scurried like mice into every corner of the front room"). While readers may have a hard time weaving the numerous plot threads into a consistent whole, the characterizations are lively and touching enough to keep them trying. JMD

KWAN, MICHELLE *Michelle Kwan: Heart of a Champion: An Autobiography*; as told to Laura James. Scholastic, 1997 151p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-590-76340-7 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 4-7

It's all here, the detail that championship figure skater Kwan's adoring fans crave. From the sacrifices her family made to put her under the finest tutelage and coaching to the frustration of getting accustomed to new boots, from Kwan's perspective on the Kerrigan/Harding debacle to her own very public fall at the 1997 Nationals, Kwan revisits the landmarks along her route to becoming a world class competitor. The text is readily accessible to the middle-grade audience, and reluctant readers who aren't daunted by length should find this an easy go. It is difficult to determine, however, where Kwan's voice ends and James' begins, and readers may wonder whether the pervasive follow-your-dreams preachiness has been added for their edification, or if Kwan is actually inclined to sound so worldly-wise: "If there's one thing I know about life, it's that everything is changing all the time. . . . If you don't like being fourteen, don't worry. In a year you'll turn fifteen, like I did in 1995." A chronologically arranged color photo section offers an intriguing visual record of Kwan's maturation. EB

LAMSTEIN, SARAH MARWIL *Annie's Shabbat*; illus. by Cecily Lang. Whitman, 1997 [40p]
ISBN 0-8075-0376-2 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

Six mini-stories celebrate the Sabbath, the event that highlights every traditional Jewish week. A young narrator recounts her family's preparation for dinner, the prayers they say and food they eat, her father's and grandmother's storytelling, the synagogue service, and the three stars that mark the end of Shabbat. What distinguishes this book from other descriptions of cultural experience is the clear sense of episode and the fact that individual characters replace the more usual generic representation. The illustrations, which are dominated by a deep and pleasing blue, offer clean contrasts of light and dark, shape and pattern. The simple text avoids the simplistic in projecting a child's voice. The father and grandmother both begin their tales (one about God's gift of manna to the Israelites, one about a child who must conceal her Shabbat celebration during the Spanish Inquisition) with "Wump upon a time"—clearly a one-family tradition. BH

LASKY, KATHRYN *Marven of the Great North Woods*; illus. by Kevin Hawkes. Harcourt, 1997 48p
ISBN 0-15-200104-2 \$16.00 R 6-9 yrs

Ten-year-old Marven is sent away from 1918 Duluth to keep him safe from the deadly influenza epidemic. He takes the train to a family friend's Minnesota logging camp, where he is to keep the payroll books since "he's got a head for numbers." The camp is full of French Canadian loggers, "immense men, with long beards and heads of wild hair." Marven makes friends with one of the biggest, Jean Louis, after he mistakes the logger for a grizzly bear. With the coming of

spring, Marven returns home to find his family has survived the epidemic unharmed (“‘You’re not dead!’ Marven said. His sisters, Mama, Papa, Aunt Ghisa, and Uncle Moishe crowded around him in a tight circle. He turned slowly to look at each face. ‘Nobody’s dead,’ Marven repeated softly”). Based on the childhood of author Lasky’s father, Marven, this family story has a wide range of appeal. The child being sent from home to escape danger is an inherently riveting plot, and the rambunctious setting of the logging camp is an exotic one for picture books. Lasky does not short her characters for the sake of the plot. Indeed, it is the relationships, so cleanly and lovingly delineated, that give this story its warm, delightful heart. The acrylic paintings make the most of the contrasts between the blue-white winter landscape, the golden, firelit interiors of the logging camp buildings, and the scenes of family in early twentieth-century Duluth. A concluding author’s note about Lasky’s father (who at more than ninety years old still has a good head for figures) explains why only son Marven was sent to safety and not any of his four sisters. JMD

LAYDEN, JOE *NBA Game Day*; by Joe Layden and James Preller. Scholastic, 1997 64p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-590-76742-9 \$10.95

R Gr. 2-6

The authors have charged twenty-six professional sports photographers with the “open-ended, though daunting, task: *Show us what it is really like to play in the NBA.*” And here’s the scoop. Long before the tip-off come the travel, the training, the therapy, the press conferences, the school visits, the warm-ups, the focusing, all captured in a glossy, flashy gallery of candid and action shots. The photoessay—long on photo and short on essay—should hit the I-hate-to-read set right on the numbers with dramatic photos of Dennis Rodman horizontally airborne, Charles Barkley wincing in pain, Kevin Garnet stoking up on an enormous breakfast, Stephon Marbury practicing a “long-distance-backwards-over-the-head-from-the-base-line bomb.” There are precious few “real” sports books out there for the youngest b-ball fans, and even those who aren’t quite ready for Creative Education’s *NBA Today* series can tackle Layden and Preller’s brief and breezy text. One copy won’t be enough—you can make book on that. EB

LESTER, JULIUS *From Slave Ship to Freedom Road*; illus. by Rod Brown. Dial, 1998 40p
ISBN 0-8037-1893-4 \$17.99

Ad Gr. 8-12

Lester uses empathy-provoking exercises, open-ended questions, and the paintings of Rod Brown to help readers understand the experience of African-American slaves. Brown’s paintings tell a brutal narrative of slave experience, showing the middle passage, scenes of plantation labor, life in the slave quarters, punishment and torture, murder, escape, the contribution of black Civil War soldiers, and, finally, freedom. The paintings are grim, disturbing, and captivating; no romanticized icons of black beauty, his slaves are not pretty, and the juxtaposition of the bloody body of a whipped slave with the picture of an apparent lynching turns viewers into grim witnesses. His use of color tells a subliminal story: the green of freedom or hope touches the knees of an escaping slave or surrounds a group of runaways; the transitional colors of fall express loss or change. Lester’s text uses Brown’s paintings to invoke introspection, urging readers to place themselves in the slave’s or master’s position. The “Imagination Exercises” which Lester provides are explicitly addressed to either white or black readers, involving assumptions that may

confuse some readers and that may raise questions: Is the dialogue about slavery only for blacks and whites? What of readers from other ethnicities or mixed races or of new immigrants? Though sometimes abstruse and disjointed, Lester's writing can be direct and vivid. What is new to juvenile titles dealing with these issues is the book's visceral nature, which will touch even media-conditioned and information-numbered readers. JH

LINDBERGH, REEVE *The Awful Aardvarks Go to School*; illus. by Tracey Campbell Pearson. Viking, 1997 [32p]
ISBN 0-670-85920-6 \$14.99
Reviewed from galleys

R 4-7 yrs

"The day that the Aardvarks came into our school was Alphabet Awful—they broke every rule!" Breaking "every rule" certainly has its appeal in any juvenile setting, and these aardvarks are good at it, too: "They Angered the Anteater, Ate All the Ants,/ And Bullied the Bunny (they pulled down his pants)." As the alphabetical aardvark antics play out their schoolhouse rampage below, the alphabet itself, sitting primly across the top of the double-page spread like those bulletin-board charts of old, is dislodged letter by letter by one of the errant aardvarks. Though there are some weak moments in the rhyme schemes (E and U-V-W, notably), and the compositions are somewhat disorganized, the visual hijinks and verbal silliness are still entertaining. You gotta love those "Quail Quints" who "Quit Quarreling Quickly and stared." (They're pretty cute.) As the aardvarks are "eXpelled" and zoom on to the zoo, your audience will definitely want to go along ("And there what did they do?! I don't even dare to imagine—do you?"). You bet. PM

McDERMOTT, GERALD, ad. *Musicians of the Sun*; ad. and illus. by Gerald McDermott. Simon, 1997 40p
ISBN 0-689-80706-6 \$17.00

R 5-8 yrs

Based on an Aztec myth, this story explains the origin of music and happiness. Wanting to bring joy and music to the earth's people, Night sends Wind to rescue four musicians held captive by the Sun. Armed with three weapons and assisted by three female animal helpers, Wind overcomes his self-doubt and the Sun's power to help the four musicians escape. McDermott's palette moves from Night's brooding blues, Earth's ashen grays, Sun's powerful orange reds, through the black of conflict and transition, to Earth's multicolored transformation. Vibrant cover illustrations lead immediately into inky darkness, this loss of light and brightness underscoring Earth's lack of music, color, and beauty. The story relies on dialogue and poetic language, with the traditional folktale sequence of three evident throughout the text ("Out of the starry night he came, invisible, untouchable. Lord of the Night. King of the Gods. Soul of the World"). This work bears the hallmarks of McDermott's style: vivid colors, illustrations informed by cultural iconography and mythology, an engaging story, and complete source notes. JH

McKISSACK, PATRICIA C. *Run Away Home*. Scholastic, 1997 160p
ISBN 0-590-46751-4 \$14.95

Ad Gr. 6-9

In this fictionalized account of a McKissack family story, eleven-year-old Sarah Crossman sees a young Apache escape from a train carrying him and others of his tribe to confinement on a reservation. She discovers he is hiding in their barn but does not tell her parents. It is not until the Apache, fifteen-year-old Sky, becomes

ill that Sarah's parents are admitted to the secret. The remainder of the story is a disjointed account of Sky's adjustment to and acceptance by the Crossman family and their community, of the local African-American families' standing up to the Ku Klux Klan, and of Sarah's father's saving his farm by building desks for Tuskegee Institute. There is a lot going on here, but it is unfortunately not connected by any strong, emotionally engaging plot thread, and plot contrivances strain credibility. Sky escapes from a train headed for a reservation, he travels in the company of Geronimo, and he is recognized as a dangerous warrior and leader of his people. It is highly unlikely that federal agents would have allowed Sky to remain with the Crossmans, and it's even more unlikely he would have been allowed to remain in the community, as torn by racial division as it is depicted. Characterization is flat and somewhat stereotypical, with people being either saints or demons. Still, Sarah has a strong voice, even when relating a questionable plot, and young historical-fiction fans may find her point of view involving. JMD

MARKLE, SANDRA *Discovering Graph Secrets: Experiments, Puzzles, and Games Exploring Graphs*. Atheneum, 1997 36p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-689-31942-8 \$17.00 R Gr. 3-6

Despite its somewhat dry title, this slim volume could be a dream come true for students looking for math projects or teachers looking for enrichment activities. Markle introduces four types of graphs—bar, picto-, line, and circle—and then presents a variety of games and puzzles that guide students to interpret graphs and to produce their own. Most challenges begin with a story scenario and an accompanying graph, with specific questions to be answered; for example, readers must identify the gender of bottlenose dolphin calves by applying information in the text to spectrograms of the calves' whistles. Solutions are provided at the back of the book, along with an explanation of the correct answer. Color illustrations and overall design are little more than serviceable, but there are enough visual clues to help readers tackle the games with minimal adult intervention. This will be a particularly good investment for the math classroom library. EB

NAPOLI, DONNA JO *Stones in Water*. Dutton, 1997 [154p]
ISBN 0-525-45842-5 \$15.99
Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

Since very little World War II literature for children has dealt with the experience of the Italians, this account of two Venetian boys abducted by their ostensible allies, the Germans, for slave labor provides an unusual look at the war. Roberto and his Jewish friend Samuele are rounded up in a theater, forced onto a train, and transported to German territory where they are overworked, starved, frozen, and beaten. Although the friends do their best to protect each other, Samuele is ultimately killed by his fellow captives for his boots. More unlikely but also more intriguing is Roberto's subsequent escape by foot and boat through Soviet territory to the Caspian Sea, where he falls in with a Roman deserter on his way to the Mediterranean to join the partisans. Despite the realistic depiction of victims shot and imprisoned, the reader is kept at an emotional distance by quickly developed scenes and flat characterization (plus an overly swift, unsatisfying conclusion). Still, this has the tone of an adventure story and it depicts some dramatic events, so it may capture some readers. In an introductory section of acknowledgments, the author describes the story as "based loosely (very, very loosely) on experiences of Guido Fullin" and discusses her research. BH

NORMAN, HOWARD, ad. *The Girl Who Dreamed Only Geese and Other Tales of the Far North*; illus. by Leo and Diane Dillon. Gulliver/Harcourt, 1997 147p
ISBN 0-15-230979-9 \$22.00 R* Gr. 4-7

Ten dramatic stories, styled with understated humor, reflect Inuit lore as adapted by a collector who knows and respects the tellers' traditions. In a very funny Biblical variant, Noah not only shows rudeness in refusing to cook and share the tasty animals on his Ark, but also proves inept at spear-throwing when a woolly mammoth charges him (even the animal is insulted by such a poor show of hunting). Children—and adults—will reverberate to the dilemmas presented by “the not-invited guest” in “Why the Rude Visitor Was Flung by Walrus” and to the quiet tension in “The Girl Who Watched in the Nighttime.” Tragedy and comedy fit naturally together in stories such as “Home Among the Giants,” in which a lost child whose parents have gone down in a kayak makes a home in the giants' village. Haunting tales such as “How the Narwhal Got Its Tusk” find satisfying resolution without straying into a false happily-ever-after mode: “They talked and laughed, and then his mother and father fell asleep. But the boy stayed awake all night, looking at their faces.” Family bonds overcome even death as strong emotions are cast into folkloric motifs. Norman's clear notes on culture and sources are a credit to his knowledge and to the genre of children's literature as a vehicle for folklore. The Dillons' art also projects action into symbolic form, with small, black, almost pictogrammatic scenes inspired by Inuit art carvings heading many pages and a snowflake imprinted on each verso facing a new story. Occasional full-page acrylic paintings use eerie perspectives and proportions to effect a surreal suspension of time and space. The stylized figures and rhythmic designs add sheen without overstepping into glamour. Overall, this is stone-polished in text, art, and book design. BH

OLDER, JULES *Cow*; illus. by Lyn Severance. Charlesbridge, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-88106-957-4 \$15.95 R Gr. 2-4

The Ben & Jerry's connection (writer and illustrator have worked on B&J books and the B&J container typeface is, apparently, named after the illustrator) is evident as cheerful simplified graphics and ebullient text devote themselves to the source of ice cream: the milk cow. Amid the flash is some genuine information, such as the date of the first cow's arrival in the U.S. (1611), origins of six major breeds, the processes of bovine digestion and lactation, and a variety of random tidbits (including recipes for sundaes and sodas, as well as the statistic for the average daily manure output for a cow). There's too much deliberate wackiness to the tone and a bit too much jumping around, but underneath it all is some real dairy information. The illustrations are designer cartoon style, energetic and clear in portraits and diagrams. This trips a little on the line between edu- and -tainment, but it's a lively introduction to the trendy but little-chronicled filler of cartons. DS

ORAM, HIAWYN, ad. *Baba Yaga and the Wise Doll*; illus. by Ruth Brown. Dutton, 1998 [30p]
ISBN 0-525-45947-2 \$15.99
Reviewed from galleries R 4-7 yrs

See this month's Big Picture, p. 189, for review.

ORMEROD, JAN *Peek-a-Boo!*; written and illus. by Jan Ormerod. Dutton, 1998 12p
ISBN 0-525-45936-7 \$6.99 R 6-24 months

Five spreads follow roughly the same pattern: the left side asks, "Where is the baby?" while the right shows a little one hiding its face; lift the flap and s/he smiles out, saying "Peek-a-boo!" Adults will appreciate the slight variation in the responses ("I see you!" "Boo-baby-boo!"), but the teeny audience will enjoy both the repetition and the chance to play this classic infant game with fellow babies, albeit fictional ones. Ormerod's multicultural cast is generalized yet recognizable, and the peek-a-boo details (one baby pulls her blouse up over her face, for instance) provide a lively charm. The book's glossy cardboard pages (with rounded corners) are sturdy, and the liftable flaps are sufficiently securely attached to survive being used as handles. The final spread sends baby off to sleep, but adults may have to go through the book another time or two before *their* babies finally doze off. DS

PARKER, DAVID L. *Stolen Dreams: Portraits of Working Children*; by David L. Parker with Lee Engfer and Robert Conrow; illus. with photographs by David L. Parker. Lerner, 1998 112p
ISBN 0-8225-2960-2 \$14.95 R Gr. 5-9

Opening with the gripping story of Iqbal Masih—bonded laborer in a Pakistani carpet factory at age four, activist at age ten, and murdered at age twelve—Parker draws readers into the worldwide plight of child laborers. Carefully distinguishing between working children and exploited children, he considers the cultural and economic forces that drive some children into part-time work for spending money and others into exhausting, demeaning, and even crippling work for their families' survival. Haunting black-and-white photo portraits of street vendors, brick makers, prostitutes, scavengers, weavers, and farm workers, most of whom are the same age or even younger than the book's readership, are as provocative as the text; unexpected portraits of a St. Paul carnival worker and a Chicago newsboy should startle American viewers into considering the rigors of child labor much closer to home. A concluding chapter suggests ways in which American children can help combat this problem; if the suggestions seem slim and even ineffectual, they ably serve to demonstrate the enormity and complexity of the international child labor system. EB

PATERSON, KATHERINE *Marvin's Best Christmas Present Ever*; illus. by Jane Clark Brown. HarperCollins, 1997 48p (I Can Read Books)
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027160-4 \$14.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027159-0 \$14.95 R Gr. 1-3

Paterson, whose last beginning reader was *The Smallest Cow in the World* (BCCB 1/92), here takes a more seasonal approach. Young Marvin is initially frustrated by his inability to make a nice Christmas present, but with the aid of his sister, May, he creates a lovely Christmas wreath. The boy begins to experience the sorrow of transient art, however, when Christmas passes and people start hinting it's time for the wreath to go. Unable to part with his work, Marvin is rewarded come spring when a nesting bird lays her eggs in the browning wreath. Paterson's right on the money about the trauma of post-holiday discarding, which many kids feel keenly but few books depict. There's an additional pleasure here in the matter-of-fact rural setting, with Marvin's family living in a trailer on a dairy farm and

farm chores threaded naturally through the book. Brown's colored pencil and watercolor artwork is casual and unassuming, allowing Marvin's expressive features and body language to convey his emotions. There aren't many good post-Christmas stories; use this as an antidote to New Year letdown. DS

PERKINS, LYNNE RAE *Clouds for Dinner*; written and illus. by Lynne Rae Perkins. Greenwillow, 1997 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-14904-9 \$14.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-14903-0 \$15.00 R 5-8 yrs

Janet's family is poetic and haphazard; "dinner was not always easy to recognize at Janet's house," and "clouds came up a lot where Janet lived, and when they did, Janet's mother and father always had something to say about them." Janet casts a covetous eye at the more traditional household of her aunt and uncle, where "dinner was unmistakably dinner . . . where the beds were always made, the dishes were always washed." She revels in her visit there, until she wakes up alone early in the morning and has a lyrical moment watching the leaves on the trees prove to be birds and fly away—and no one at her aunt and uncle's house understands. This is a tender and personable book about the uniqueness of families; it's honest about how alluring and also how alien differences can be. Perkins, author/illustrator of *Home Lovely* (BCCB 9/95), is deft at dialogue (the routine exchange about the large number of steps leading to Janet's front door has a time-honored feeling) and at details (Janet's cousins "let her play with them, even though they were older and even though they were boys"). Her distinctive line-and-watercolor art provides vivid impressions of both lifestyles and the pleasures thereof, but the scudding clouds in their twilight palette make their appeal inarguable. Kids will sympathize with the pull of there as well as the wonders of here. DS

ROHMER, HARRIET, ed. *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists*. Children's Book Press, 1997 32p illus. and with photographs
ISBN 0-89239-149-9 \$15.95 R Gr. 4-8

For this involving, accessible collective biography, Rohmer approached fourteen visual artists (seven men and seven women) and asked for a self-portrait and a description of how they first became involved with art. The artists represent a wide range of cultural backgrounds—from Mexican-American Enrique Chagoya to Plains Cree Indian George Littlechild to African-American Michele Wood—and styles—from paintings to printmaking to collage and mixed media. Each artist is represented on a double page spread, one side of which is a full-page self-portrait, and the other side of which is a narrative about the artist's art and life, with small photographs of the subject as a child and as an adult. The text is involving and friendly, each individual artist giving a tiny gift of self as they relate his or her "why I make art" story: Mira Reisberg tells how her mother, a Holocaust survivor, gave her her first art supplies, saying "I can't give you a beautiful world, but you can make one for yourself"; Stephen Von Mason talks about drawing horses and cowboys and having his work exhibited in school; Carmen Lomas Garza remembers her mother as the first person she ever saw paint, the one "who inspired me to become an artist." The artwork is fascinating not only in terms of the media used, but in the ways that each of the artists chose to represent themselves. This has broad application across curriculum lines, as well as a large amount of appeal for those readers who may be artistically inclined themselves. JMD

SEABROOKE, BRENDA *Under the Pear Tree*; illus. by Roger Essley. Cobblehill, 1997 93p
ISBN 0-525-65213-2 \$13.99 R Gr. 5-8

This sequel to *Judy Scuppernon* (BCCB 10/90) picks up a year after the previous volume left off, but the world of small-town Georgia in the 1950s and the trio of Deanna, Stacy, and Lala are much the same. As the sequence of poems shows, however, the cast is changing both collectively (Deanna's cousin Rusty comes from the city for the summer, bringing resentment and insecurity with him, and a neighbor brings back a glamorous new wife) and individually (Stacy is growing up into teenagerhood faster than the other two). Seabrooke's ability to combine simple words into penetrating and unforced observation is evident in this book as well ("Stacy had crossed a line/ that we hadn't even known/ was there"), and that ability brings the scene and the changes to vivid life. As well as an approachable poetic read, this would make an effective readaloud for—or by—middle-graders. Soft-focus black-and-white illustrations teeter too often into undifferentiated grayness but have a moody sensibility appropriate to the text. DS

SEIDLER, TOR *Mean Margaret*; illus. by Jon Agee. di Capua/HarperCollins, 1997 165p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-205091-5 \$14.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-205090-7 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 3-5

Fred is a worthy if slightly prissy woodchuck, whose life changes when he falls in love with the delightful Phoebe and they set up housekeeping together. His idyllic new existence is rudely interrupted when the motherly Phoebe takes in a stray—a stray human, in fact, who was dumped by her brothers and sisters (she's the loud and demanding ninth child of the family). Margaret, as Phoebe names her, is a huge, unkempt, and demanding burrowful of trouble. Helped by friendly neighbors (a skunk, a squirrel, a pair of bats, and a crusty snake), the woodchucks struggle through as parents despite Margaret's penchant for stepping on animal tails and flinging solid objects at her benefactors. Eventually Margaret is returned to her human family, but not before one last visit to put the old woodchuck burrow right. The tonal control here is uneven, with the book often heading towards broad comedy without quite getting there, as with Margaret's overweight human parents and Phoebe's sister Babette. The lighthearted silliness of the enterprise will appeal to kids, however, especially those whose understanding has expanded to recognize the satire on human youth (likelier to be realized from an acquaintance with a younger sibling than through self-knowledge). Agee's vigorous line-and-wash drawings provide the woodchucks and their cohorts with a matter-of-factly anthropomorphic charm, while Margaret has a Matilda-esque air that bodes ill for those near her. Short chapters make for comfortable readalone or readaloud pacing. DS

SHANGE, NTOZAKE *White Wash*; illus. by Michael Sporn. Walker, 1997 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8491-7 \$16.85
Trade ed. ISBN 0-80270-8490-9 \$15.95 R Gr. 2-4

On their way home from school, Helene-Angel, a young African-American girl, and her brother are assaulted by a gang of white hoodlums who sprays paint her face white. Her brother, beaten but not painted, carries her home, where their grandmother ministers to the two children. Helene-Angel is traumatized, and she hides

in her room, afraid to come out, afraid to walk to school. After a week, her grandmother says, "Helene-Angel, I don't care who did what to you. Today you are going to open this door and be strong." When Helene-Angel opens the door of her room, her teacher and classmates are right there; one classmate says, "If we all stick together, no one will dare bother you or anybody else, right?" Illustrated with cels from the Carnegie-Medal-winning animated video of the same name, the book suffers from the lack of animation, the illustrated players more cartoony caricatures than well-articulated characters. While the lesson/message will require some context and clarifications, this is a strongly plotted and emotionally told story that may do more to effectively educate unaware youngsters about the horrors of racism than any number of optimistic picture books containing well-meaning, rainbow-colored platitudes. JMD

SHREVE, SUSAN *Joshua T. Bates in Trouble Again*; illus. by Roberta Smith. Knopf, 1997 90p

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-98520-4 \$18.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-88520-X \$17.00

R Gr. 4-6

After intensive tutoring, Joshua (of *The Flunking of Joshua T. Bates*, BCCB 5/89, and in events that are happening before *Joshua Bates Takes Charge*, 7/93) is ready to join up with his classmates who have moved on to fourth grade. He's worried about his place in fourth-grade society, however, especially with its domination by the intimidating Tommy Wilhelm. His fears lead him to seek status through foolish actions, most notably bringing his father's Swiss Army knife to school, losing it, and getting in serious school and home trouble as a result. Shreve is the expert chronicler of kids with the weight of the world on their shoulders, kids who can't take anything easy, ever: the erosion of Joshua's confidence is painful and believable, as are his resultant actions. It's also clear, however, that doing a bad thing doesn't mean he's not a good kid, and the book's restraint, absence of caricature, and inclusion of sympathetic adults emphasizes the fact that he himself is his only real enemy. This is an uncondescending and understanding look at the social stresses of grade school; many uneasy young readers will appreciate the sympathetic account. Occasional pencil drawings are on the unobtrusive side, but they have their touching moments. DS

SIERRA, JUDY *Counting Crocodiles*; illus. by Will Hillenbrand. Gulliver/Harcourt, 1997 [40p]

ISBN 0-15-200192-1 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

A monkey dwelling on a tiny island tires of the lemons that are her sole food there. When she spies a banana tree across the Sillabobble Sea, she develops a plan: soon she's convinced the crocodiles to line up to be counted (in order to prove that there are more of them than there are of the monkeys), and they become a stepping-stone bridge to the banana island and back—twice. Sierra confuses things, however, by telling the story in uneven verse and by adding enumerative details ("She counted one crocodile with a great big smile./ Two crocks resting on rocks./ Three crocs rocking in a box, four crocs building with blocks . . .") unrelated to the rest of the story. Hillenbrand's illustrations display smirking golden-eyed crocodiles and offer some entertaining humor (the sea waves contain a multitude of croc eyes, the reptiles are reading all manner of books related to the current situation,

and a fox and a snail silently assist the monkey while a starfish beckons them to the banana isle). Unfortunately, the cheerfully ludicrous crocodiles decorated in fair-ground colors are usually bobbing around in a way that makes their use as a foot-bridge sufficiently implausible that the audience is bound to inquire about it. Overall, in fact, there's a lack of consistency (where do all the accoutrements, including the big rocks, go in the other pictures?) and flow that makes spreads individually successful but overall out of place, since the point of all this—the monkey's journey—is lost in the crocodilian splendor. Kids who can overlook the storytelling rule-bending will enjoy finding the visual jokes and will, once they divine what's going on, applaud the resourceful monkey. DS

SIGERMAN, HARRIET *Land of Many Hands: Women in the American West*. Oxford, 1998 188p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-19-509942-7 \$24.95 Ad Gr. 7-10

Sigerman covers a lot of ground in this whirlwind survey of women's Western settlement—so much, in fact, that she seldom has the luxury of lingering in one place long enough for close examination. Opening discussion considers women's roles in early Spanish settlements and among a smattering of Native American peoples, and then shifts to the experiences of those homesteaders and Pacific-bound pioneers who are generally associated with pushing the boundary of the American frontier. A serious report writer may find many leads for further research among Sigerman's hodgepodge of observations concerning everything from how the homestead laws promoted women's independence, to the relative ease of civil divorce and Catholic annulment in the West, to the asylums for women broken by the strains and solitude of prairie life. However, stories of individual women pass by too fast for readers to form an acquaintance with any of the myriad personalities on Sigerman's extensive roster. An impressive thematic list for further reading and plenty of period photos are included. EB

SNYDER, ZILPHA KEATLEY *Gib Rides Home*. Delacorte, 1998 [256p]
ISBN 0-385-32267-4 \$15.95 R Gr. 4-7
Reviewed from galleys

This story begins in 1909 when Gib Whittaker returns to the orphan home whence he'd been farmed out several months ago, then tells in flashback of Gib's early life at the orphanage and his move to the Thorntons' ranch. There he begins to settle in, reveling in the closeness to the horses he loves and he handles so capably as well as in the gentle attention of some of the ranch residents; he's puzzled, however, by Mr. Thornton's coldness towards him and by the hints of a past household mystery. Both problems come together when Mr. Thornton discovers his daughter on the horse that paralyzed his wife, and Gib is hustled back to the orphan home that resents his presence as a failure, hoping that something will change so that he can return to the ranch life he loved. There's nothing in this book that couldn't have been written forty years ago: the child's taming of the dangerous black horse and the shadowy secret that clouds the ranch are traditional components, but Snyder keeps their melodramatic notes to a minimum. The equestrian aspects of the book keep pretty well to real-life rules (the dangerous horse is merely spooky, unfortunately resulting in a bad riding accident); the orphan story (based, according to Snyder's note, on her father's childhood experience) is plainly told and involving, and Gib is an appealingly resilient character. Readers looking for a less fancy alternative to *A Little Princess* will enjoy this orphan's final homecoming. DS

SOUHAMI, JESSICA, ad. *Rama and the Demon King: An Ancient Tale from India*; ad. and illus. by Jessica Souhami. DK Ink, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-7894-2450-9 \$14.95 Ad 5-8 yrs

The Indian epic Ramayana recounts the exile of Prince Rama, with his wife Sita and brother Lakshman, to a forest full of demons; the kidnapping of Sita by the king of demons, Ravana; and her rescue by the two brothers together with the leader of the monkey army, Hanuman. Enormously complex in style and episode, this saga seems an unlikely candidate for a picture book, and indeed the text here is perforce flattened: "The demons hated anyone good and they were looking for a fight." Equally planed is the designerly art with its stylized effect of cut-paper profiled figures in sharp color contrasts against a stark white background. With illustration and narrative reduced to a basic common denominator, this is nevertheless a dramatic version to read aloud and show a group of young children, who may have little access to the story cycle. BH

SPEED, TOBY *Water Voices*; illus. by Julie Downing. Putnam, 1998 [32p]
ISBN 0-399-22631-1 \$12.99
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

These poetic riddles in lyrical language take a little girl from dawn to evening—from morning mist to ocean wave to bedtime bath. Delicate watercolors drench these seven watery puzzlers with a pleasing balance of word and picture followed by the solution depicted across the next double-page spread. The combination of adroit textual clues ("When the slide's so hot it burns your legs . . . and fans do a slow dance on tabletops, I whirl like a string of pearls in the yard. Who am I?" "I am Sprinklerspray. Want to play?") and winsome visual allusions won't do anything to dampen young imaginations. While the art tips into the sweet, clever metrical vignettes, an uncluttered composition, and experiences dripping with kid-recognition provide a solid bridge to these riddle one-liners. PM

STOLZ, MARY *A Ballad of the Civil War*; illus. by Sergio Martinez. HarperCollins, 1997 [64p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027363-1 \$13.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027362-3 \$13.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-6

Stolz supplies an extended storyline for lyrics sung by members of her family since the Civil War—the ballad of brothers on opposing sides of the war who accidentally meet as one lies dying: "Did you think I would/ leave you dying,/ when there's room on my horse for two?" Twenty-one-year-old Union soldier Tom Rigby discovers a wounded Confederate by the roadside and whispers, "Jack? Is it you, Jack?" The tale then flashes back to Tom's childhood, when he and his twin brother, Jack, first part company over the issue of slavery. Their "personal" house slave, Aaron, has been sent to the fields on the boys' ninth birthday, and although Tom is grief-stricken to lose his friend, Jack seems to understand this is the natural order of life. As rumors of war circulate among their plantation neighbors, Jack only hopes the war will wait for him to grow up. It does; the young men enlist on separate sides, and Tom incurs Jack's "changeless enmity." Stolz' spare prose skirts much of the blatant romanticism of the ballad, but she does not entirely avoid the sentimentality inherent in little Tom's broken hobby horse ("Come on, Jack. There's room on Pompey. He'll go just as well with two") or in Tom's saintliness

("When Mama and Daddy have gone for their siestas, I'm going to take some toys down to the children in the quarter"). This slim novella could see service as a springboard for discussion on the romanticization of war; more likely, though, it will simply be read as a maudlin two-hanky weeper. EB

THESMAN, JEAN *The Storyteller's Daughter*. Houghton, 1997 180p
ISBN 0-395-80978-9 \$16.00 Ad Gr. 6-9

It is 1933. The Depression is taking its toll, and Prohibition is still on the books. Fifteen-year-old Quinn discovers that her beloved father, desperate to support his family and unable to find a legitimate job, has been smuggling bootleg liquor. When her father, Beau John, doesn't come home as expected, Quinn investigates, and she discovers a somewhat seedy side of her neighborhood as she peers inside a pool hall and pays a visit to a shanty town. The conclusion is anticlimactic and something of a stretch—Beau John, on the run from Federal Agents, sees Quinn briefly to give her a letter for her mother, then disappears; he figures he's such a little fish that the Feds'll drop the chase when Prohibition is repealed, which is due to happen any day. The pacing in this novel is uneven, as the introspective Quinn slows down even the most anxiety-fraught situations with an enormous amount of situational and self-analysis. Smuggling, secret romances, and handsome gangsters should make for a pretty riveting plot, but in spite of these elements there is no suspense. Although Quinn tells the reader a lot about Beau John, Thesman doesn't show us, and the relationship between father and daughter, so pivotal to the plot, never clarifies enough to have any emotional impact. Depression-era Seattle is depicted with a utilitarian solidity, and most of the supporting characters are nicely realized, so this may still work for diehard historical fiction fans. JMD

TOMLINSON, THERESA *Dancing Through the Shadows*. DK Ink, 1997 120p
ISBN 0-7894-2459-2 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 7-12

Ellen is full of plans—for the family vacation, for her dance recital, for recruiting boys for the dance troupe—until her mother is diagnosed with breast cancer. The family's reactions are realistically if somewhat programmatically depicted as Ellen's mother undergoes surgery, chemotherapy, and counseling. A subplot in which Ellen and a friend assist a teacher (another breast-cancer survivor) in uncovering an ancient well has charm, even if the notion that such an archaeological find would be left to the amateur digging of some teenagers is a bit farfetched. Tomlinson's language is casual without being careless, and American readers should have no trouble with the occasional Britishism. Although the plot seems contrived to fit around the clinical aspects of the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer and the character development is minimal, this may still strike a chord in readers seeking some bibliotherapeutic comfort. JMD

WILDSMITH, BRIAN, ad. *Joseph*; ad. and illus. by Brian Wildsmith. Eerdmans, 1997 34p
ISBN 0-8028-5161-4 \$20.00 R 5-8 yrs

The biblical Joseph has been basking in Broadway notoriety for some time, but this gorgeous piece of bookmaking may rightly enjoy some basking of its own. Shimmering watercolors with fine pen detailing illumine every exquisite, double-page spread while gold-trimmed pages exude the aura of Egyptian opulence and the story's royal overtones. There is a panoramic distancing throughout the book

and the painstaking detailing of Egypt's finest (whether people or pillar) will provide hours of visual feasting. Faithfully retold, this is the dramatic saga of Jacob's sons and the rise of Joseph as a prophet—a parable of jealousy, betrayal, compassion, and the redemptive silver cup of restoration. At times readers are kept at arms' length from any emotional involvement (Joseph's languishing in prison is never shown), but the solid storytelling never falters. Though more sedate than its dreamcoat cousin, it is every bit as amazing. PM

WILLIAMS, CAROL LYNCH *If I Forget, You Remember*. Delacorte, 1998 [160p]
ISBN 0-385-32534-7 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

It's the summer after sixth grade, and Elyse isn't happy; she doesn't have any real friends, she's at odds with her older sister Jordyn, and she's the target of neighborhood bullies. Her grandmother has been her greatest solace, but now Elyse realizes that Granny is suffering from Alzheimer's disease and it's getting worse. It becomes clear just how serious the problem can be when Granny moves in, changing in the blink of an eye from Elyse's loving grandmother to a suspicious little girl among strangers and back again; come fall, the family, including Granny, decides that it's time for her to be in a secure care facility. Williams is particularly good at depicting the day-to-day reality of Alzheimer's and the possibly untenable burden it can place upon a sufferer's family. Elyse's realistic unreasonableness and tantrums are counterbalanced by the warmth of her gradual friendship with two fellow writers (which suffers a setback when Bruce A., who'd been interested in Elyse, is caught embracing Anna-Leigh) and her increasing willingness to ease up on the world. This is a believable portrait of a family facing inexorable change. DS

WILLNER-PARDO, GINA *Spider Storch's Carpool Catastrophe*; illus. by Nick Sharratt. Whitman, 1997 60p

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8075-7575-5 \$11.95

Paper ed. ISBN 0-8075-7576-3 \$3.95

R Gr. 2-4

Spider—real name Joey—knows that third grade will never be the same again. His mother is on the verge of becoming friends with the mother of a classmate, and as luck would have it that classmate is prissy, officious, unbearable Mary Grace Brennerman. This means carpools with Mary Grace, visits from Mary Grace, and embarrassing childhood anecdotes about Spider told to Mary Grace's mother (and by extension Mary Grace). Spider decides this has to be nipped in the bud and begins to sabotage his mother's friendship (describing his mother unflatteringly to Mrs. Brennerman and altering her passed-on recipe into a disaster), then escalates to a school prank in order to prove that he does *not* love Mary Grace Brennerman. This is one of the few children's books to acknowledge that adults aren't automatically equipped with friends and that friendship isn't an instant process at any age, which makes for an unusual slant on the irritating-classmate dilemma. The book never loses sight of the kid's side of things, however, making Mary Grace realistically and genuinely annoying and Spider's quandary credible. Willner-Pardo sensibly understates the slapstick (the boys put a goeey mess adorned with fake spiders in the girls' desks) so that the book doesn't get lost in the special effects but instead keeps its focus on the people. Compact chapters adorned with streamlined near-cartoons make the book undaunting; it might also, with its accurate primary-school humor, make a nice chapter readaloud. DS

WILSON, JACQUELINE *Double Act*. Delacorte, 1998 [192p]

ISBN 0-385-32312-3 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-7

Ruby and Garnet are identical twins, and they take great pride in their togetherness and their similarity—or at least Ruby does, and Garnet generally goes along with her more forceful sister. The girls take turns narrating, with Ruby in Roman type and Garnet in italics, telling of their widowed father's new romantic interest (Rose, whom they can't stand), their move to a little village where Rose and their father open a bookstore, their attempts to audition for a TV series featuring twins, and finally their application to a classic girls' boarding school—which admits Garnet and not Ruby, whose idea it was in the first place. The relationship between the girls is realistically conflicted and uneven, and their anger at change is believable. Some of the episodes are a little contrived, however, and Ruby's voice, which dominates, tends to stay annoyingly on the same note, lacking the depth of the characterizations in Wilson's earlier *The Suitcase Kid* (BCCB 7/97). This is still going to intrigue youngsters who wonder what twinship would be like, and there are enough down and dirty double details here to satisfy them. DS

WILSON, NANCY HOPE *Old People, Frogs, and Albert*; illus. by Marcy D.

Ramsey. Farrar, 1997 58p

ISBN 0-374-35625-4 \$14.00

Ad Gr. 2-4

Albert is in the fourth grade. He loves frogs, enjoys a relationship with the elderly Mr. Spear, who is helping him with reading ("Pretty soon, I bet, you'll read without even noticing the words"), has a with-it traveling Grammy, and hates walking past the Pine Manor Nursing Home as he goes home from school. These story components are resolved with unlikely rapidity. When Mr. Spear suffers a stroke, he ends up in the dreaded nursing home; in the meantime Grammy sends Albert a book about a bullfrog, which so intrigues him that he reads it without noticing the words. This first-ever feat empowers Albert to overcome his fear of Pine Manor, visit Mr. Spear, and read the story aloud to him and the other residents. The story does have its touching moments, and there is a certain sense of honesty in the portrayal of the mostly unfounded fears that young people face when confronted with the aged. Unfortunately, Wilson's dialogue often lacks authenticity, and her well-meaning attempt at resolving Albert's conflict only results in an overly neat package with scant emotional contents. Youngsters facing fears of their own may nonetheless find this reassuring. Copious black-and-white illustrations keep things appropriately unthreatening. PM

WINSLOW, VICKI *Follow the Leader*; illus. by Colin Bootman. Delacorte,

1997 215p

ISBN 0-385-32285-2 \$14.95

Ad Gr. 5-8

Sixth-grader Amanda is participating in the desegregation of her school district in 1971 North Carolina. She is unworried at first—she and the other white students will be bused across town, it's true, but as long as her best friend, Jackie, is going with her, she's happy. But then Jackie's parents decide to send her to private school, and Amanda is left to deal with the situation on her own. Her parents, both liberals strongly in favor of desegregation, feed her platitudes about being a pioneer, but they have no idea of the problems inherent in this massive change. Amanda is a sympathetic character, and her dilemma is one not often seen in

books for youth—desegregation from the point of view of the white student instead of the black. The players surrounding her, however, are much less developed, and as a result suffer from flat characterization. The classroom situations are somewhat contrived (the sixth grade is reading Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* aloud, and no one will say the word "nigger") and the speeches given by her well-meaning but apparently clueless parents are boring and rote with little emotional impact. The book does have its dramatic moments—the unlikely alliance between Amanda and classmate Henry Bailey, Amanda's own jealousy-inspired, nastily racist remark to a little girl, and Amanda's rejection of the revealed-to-be-a-racist Jackie—and that may be enough to put this well-intentioned book over the top. JMD

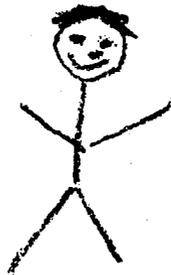
ZEMACH, KAETHE *The Character in the Book*; written and illus. by Kaethe Zemach. di Capua/HarperCollins, 1998 [32p]

ISBN 0-06-205060-5 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

M 4-7 yrs

Our hero is the Character in the Book, who "had a nice life on the smooth, white pages." The Character enjoys his existence both in stories and out of them, and when he gets a letter from his Auntie, "who was a character in a *different* book," he's eager to visit her. After a few false starts, he realizes that the way out of his Book is to go forward, and forward he goes, through mountains, over rivers, across page after page, until he jumps out of the book. This kind of self-referentiality isn't original any more, but this treatment's gentle cheer and streamlining makes it more suitable than many for younger children. Unfortunately, this reads like backstory rather than story, and the absence of plot and payoff is going to disappoint most listeners old enough to understand the joke—when you've got a book so metafictional that it's essentially about turning the pages, there needs to be a bigger finish than just running out of paper. The Character is a perky jester-like figure, bouncing across the white space in rainbow hues of line-and-watercolor; it's a pity his actions don't carry much of a story. DS



PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

Barchers, Suzanne I. *Fifty Fabulous Fables: Beginning Reader's Theatre*. Teacher Ideas Press, 1997. illus. ISBN 1-56308-553-4. Paper ed. \$21.50.

This is a handy collection of fifty reader's theatre scripts based on traditional fables and compiled (using the Flesch-Kincaid readability scale) for use by Grades 1-4. Barchers' introduction gives some background on her methodology and offers tips for getting started, along with ideas for presentation, props, and delivery. The fifty fables (mostly from Aesop) are laid out in photocopiable scripts, with a large typeface and a generous amount of white space for easy reading. Barchers includes such well-known fables as "Belling the Cat," "The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs," "The Boy Who Cried Wolf," and "The Ant and the Grasshoppers," among others. The necessity of sticking to a readability scale may account for the somewhat lackluster scripts but, as Barchers points out, many child actors will spontaneously ad lib so that should help make things lively. The appendix includes a unit on fables with background information and history, as well as suggestions for activities and additional reading. An index is included. JMD

Brady, Martha. *Dancing Hearts: Creative Arts with Books Kids Love*. Fulcrum Publishing, 1997. illus. ISBN 1-55591-947-2. Paper ed. \$17.95.

In this information-packed title, Brady uses twenty fairly well-known picture books as the catalyst for arts activities in the classroom. From Lane Smith's *The Big Pets* to Kevin Henkes' *Chrysanthemum* to Pam Conrad's *The Tub People*, she employs story and pictures as a springboard to activities that include song, dance, creative drama, visual arts, poetry, and creative writing. Brady includes her own scripts for plays, song music and lyrics, and poetry as part of the recommended activities. Each chapter opens with a background section that explains the author's personal responses to each book, which is followed by a "hook" activity to get a group interested. The suggested reading is complemented by a variety of activities, each of which is followed by brief paragraphs on personal learning capacities and possible points for evaluation. Brady packs a lot into the two columns of text per page, and while her assumption of available resources is a bit optimistic, her enthusiasm comes through loud and clear. Brief lists of related books and music conclude each chapter; an index is also included. JMD

Flack, Jerry D. *From the Land of Enchantment: Creative Teaching with Fairy Tales*; illus. by Gay Graeber. Teacher Ideas Press, 1997. ISBN 1-56308-540-2. Paper ed. \$23.50. (Gifted Treasury Series).

In nine chapters built around nine well-known folk and fairy tales, Flack, a professor of gifted education at the University of Colorado, discusses various theories of learning and their implications for and impact on classroom activities. Each chap-

ter uses a familiar tale to provide structure for discussion of a variety of educational issues: the Cinderella chapter focuses on Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences; the Three Bears chapter focuses on creative problem-solving; the Frog Prince chapter discusses thinking and problem solving with art; the Beauty and the Beast chapter revolves around the creation of classroom museums, etc. Each chapter is replete with a discussion of a particular theory, annotated bibliographies of additional resources, "Happily Ever Afters" (which contain additional activities for students), and suggested readings and references. The black-and-white line drawings break up the text; some charts and tables are included. Flack's text is blessedly clear and as jargon-free as possible given his topic; both the bibliographies and the activities are eminently usable, and the activities are easily adapted to a library or other non-classroom setting. JMD

Gillespie, John and Corinne J. Naden. *Characters in Young Adult Literature*. Gale, 1997. 535p. ISBN 0-7876-0401. illus. with photographs

Jones, Raymond E. *Characters in Children's Literature*. Gale, 1997. 529p. ISBN 0-7876-0400-3. \$60.00. illus. with photographs.

These are arranged rather differently than one might expect: alphabetical author listings subdivide into titles and from there into plot and character summaries. Included authors generally lean towards the classic or nearly so (the editors reluctantly precluded folklore and legend, however), with lots of nineteenth-century writers and only a few (such as Mary Hoffman) whose work debuted in this decade. Double-columned pages allow for surprisingly substantial entries on each work and the characters within, and they're personal and evaluative, not simply descriptive. With the authorially divided arrangement, the index becomes of major importance: each book contains an index for both volumes, avoiding the frustration of index-swapping, and where names duplicate, title references or epithets are provided; there's a puzzling stinginess in the cross-references, though, since few characters are listed by last name at all but rather under honorifics or first names (Miss Rumphius, for example, is under M but not R). These are really encyclopedias with a character emphasis, and they'll be useful as in-depth companions to the more traditional reference works—with browsing a pleasurable extra. DS

Haven, Kendall. *Stepping Stones to Science: True Tales and Awesome Activities*. Teacher Ideas Press, 1997. ISBN 1-56308-516-X. Paper ed. \$22.00.

Fourteen readable, tellable stories are used to introduce concepts in the physical, biological, and earth sciences in this lively compilation. Haven has written stories about the lives of such notables as Robert Goddard, the Wright Brothers, Shirley Jackson, Archimedes, and Eugenie Clark, using them as a springboard to discussions of flight, gravity, electricity, evolution, genetics, etc. Each of the fourteen chapters contains points to ponder, curriculum links, definitions of unfamiliar words (with questions and information designed to make them memorable), the story itself, and follow-up activities. Haven has a gift for concrete, specific language that makes each concept clear, even to the unscientific, and he uses humor whenever possible to make ideas even more accessible. Sample student worksheets and an index are included. 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.

- Adoption-fiction: Seidler
ADVENTURE STORIES: Napoli
 African Americans: Haskins
 African Americans-fiction: Belton;
 Hyppolite; McKissack; Shange
 African Americans-poetry: *In
 Daddy's Arms*
 African Americans-stories:
 Chocolate
ALPHABET BOOKS: Krach;
 Lindbergh
 American Indians-fiction:
 McKissack
 Animals-fiction: Anderson, J.;
 Hansen; Seidler
 Animals-stories: Bauer, M.
 Antarctica: Burleigh
 Art and artists: Joyce; Rohmer
 Aviation: Giblin
 Basketball: Layden
BIBLE STORIES: Wildsmith
BIOGRAPHIES: Anderson, W.;
 Bedard; Bial; Giblin; Gormley;
 Jiang; Joyce; Kwan; Rohmer
 Books and reading-fiction:
 Wilson, N.
 Books and reading-stories:
 Zemach
 Brothers and sisters-fiction:
 Burgess; Hyppolite; Krisher
 Brothers-fiction: Griffin; Stolz
 Bullies-fiction: Shreve
 Cancer-fiction: Tomlinson
 Chickens-stories: Graham
 Child abuse: Parker
 Child abuse-fiction: Griffin
Children's literature: Anderson,
 W.; Gormley; Joyce
 China: Jiang; Krach
 Christmas-fiction: Paterson
 Civil War-fiction: Stolz
Commerce: Parker
CONCEPT BOOKS: Lindbergh;
 Ormerod; Sierra
COUNTING BOOKS: Sierra
 Cows: Older
 Crime and criminals-fiction:
 Alford; Holub
 Death and dying: Colman
 Depression, the-fiction: Thesman
 Desegregation-fiction: Winslow
 Dogs: Hall; King-Smith
 Dogs-stories: Graham
 Dolls-stories: Gammell; Oram
Ethics and values: Fox; Lester;
 Shange; Stolz; Winslow
 Explorers and exploring: Burleigh
 Families-fiction: Belton
 Families-stories: Graham; Perkins
FANTASY: Anderson, J.; Banks;
 Burgess; Cooney; Hansen;
 Seidler
 Farms-fiction: Paterson
 Farms-stories: Graham
 Fathers and daughters-fiction:
 Krisher; Thesman
 Fathers and sons-fiction: Griffin
 Fathers-poetry: *In Daddy's Arms*
**FOLKTALES AND FAIRY
 TALES:** Aylesworth; Berry;
 Egielski; McDermott; Norman;
 Oram; Souhami
 Food and eating-fiction: Klass

- Food and eating—stories:
 Aylesworth; Egielski
 Food and eating: Older
 Friendship—fiction: Alford;
 Anderson, J.; Belton; Bennett;
 Freeman; Seabrooke; Shreve;
 Willner-Pardo
 Friendship—stories: Hobbie; Lasky
 FUNNY STORIES: Clement
 GAME BOOKS: Ormerod
 Giants—fiction: Burgess
 Grandfathers—stories: Chocolate;
 Clement; Hest
 Grandmothers—fiction: Williams;
 Wilson, N.
 HISTORICAL FICTION:
 Belton; Holub; Jones; Kirk;
 Lasky; McKissack; Napoli;
 Seabrooke; Snyder; Thesman;
 Winslow
 History, U.S.: Bedard; Bial;
 Haskins; Lester; Sigerman
 Holidays: Fishman
 Horses—fiction: Snyder
 Ice skating: Kwan
 India—folklore: Souhami
 Inuit—folklore: Norman
 Inventors and inventions: Erlbach
 Italy—fiction: Napoli
 Italy—stories: Fleming
 Judaism: Lamstein
 Labor unions—fiction: Jones
 Language arts: Grover; Krach
 LOVE STORIES: Cooney
 Mathematics: Markle
 Mexico—folklore: McDermott
 Military history: Haskins
 Mothers and daughters—fiction:
 Freeman; Hurwitz; Klass;
 Krisher; Tomlinson
 Mothers and daughters—stories:
 Hest
 Mothers and sons—fiction:
 Willner-Pardo
 Moving—fiction: Freeman;
 Hyppolite
 Music and musicians—stories:
 Chocolate; Fleming;
 McDermott
 Orphans—fiction: Snyder
 Pigs—stories: Hobbie
 Plays: Hayes
 POETRY: *In Daddy's Arms*; Seabrooke;
 Speed
 Presidents—stories: Kirk
 Racism—fiction: Shange
 Rain—poetry: Speed
 Reading aloud: Belton; Berry; Hurwitz;
 Joyce; Norman; Older
 Reading, beginning: Paterson
 Reading, easy: Bauer, M.; Willner-Pardo
 Reading, reluctant: Kwan
 Religious education: Fishman; Gormley;
 Lamstein
 RHYMING STORIES: Sierra
 Riddles: Hall; Speed
 Russia—folklore: Oram
 School—fiction: Alford; Bennett; Hurwitz;
 Klass; Shreve; Winslow
 Science fair: Erlbach
 SCIENCE FICTION: Burgess
 Self-image—fiction: Bennett
 SHORT STORIES: Glass
 Sisters—fiction: Banks; Glass; Wilson, J.
 Slavery—fiction: Stolz
 Slavery: Lester
 Social studies: Colman
 Sports: Kwan; Layden
 Storytelling: Aylesworth; Egielski;
 Norman
 Storytime: Aylesworth; Egielski; Fleming;
 Fox; Hobbie; Speed
 Teeth—stories: Clement
 Thailand—fiction: Glass
 Theater arts: Hayes
 Time travel: Cooney
 Twins—fiction: Wilson, J.
 Voyages and travel: Giblin
 Voyages and travel—fiction: Bauer, J.
 Voyages and travel—stories: Hobbie
 Weather—stories: Gammell
 Women's studies: Sigerman
 World War II—fiction: Napoli
 Writers and writing—fiction: Williams
 Writers and writing—stories: Bedard
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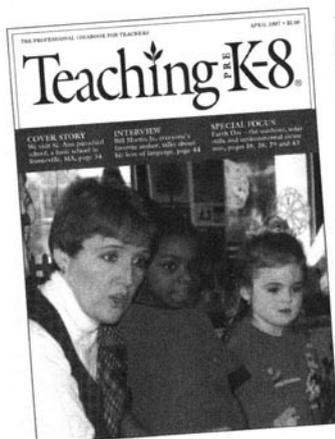
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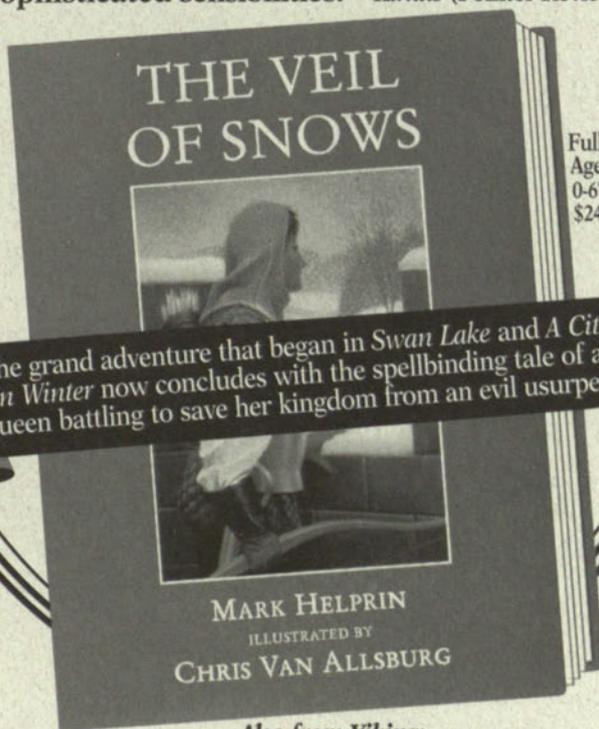
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