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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.

Except for pre-school years, reading range is given for grade rather than for age of child.

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**New Titles for Children and Young People**


A discussion of natural textile fibers is followed by a chronological survey of the origins and uses of textiles from ancient times to the present, with special attention to the industrial revolution and the textile industry today. Other chapters describe types of textiles and textile design. The book is informative, and the addition of a list of textiles (with descriptions of each and the origins of their names), a glossary of industrial terms, an index, a bibliography, and a list of sources of information adds to its usefulness. The writing is, however, compressed at times and quite dry, occasionally reading like an encyclopedia article or an industrial brochure.


With few exceptions, the many books about pollution have dealt with aspects of the problem on a broad basis; here the text, after describing the history of the region and changes of the land over millennia, focuses on the varied causes of pollution in Lake Superior and on a grass-roots effort to make changes. The chief offender, Reserve Mining, dumps into the lake the equivalent of 30,000 automobiles each day (67,000 tons of taconite tailings per day) and insists it cannot afford to change although other companies' plants have on-land waste disposals. Although judgment against Reserve Mining was appealed and has been in litigation for seven years, the governmental agencies and the citizens' groups that spurred investigation are still working to save the world's largest lake. The writing style is straightforward and well-organized; the author is the Librarian of the Environmental Library of Minnesota. Some informative photographs are included, and an annotated bibliography is appended.


Elizabeth and her parents have recently settled in an English village, her father being on a year's leave of absence from an American university. The emphasis at the beginning of the story is on Elizabeth's problems in adjusting to her classmates, but the story moves to fantasy and thereafter (until the realistic ending) focuses on her visits into a past time where she either watches another child (Ann, one of a large, poor peasant family) or actually becomes a part of that child. Her parents remain unaware, although at the close, when she is ill, Elizabeth provokes their curiosity by words she mumbles in her sleep. The fantasy doesn't quite convince, it turns on and
off too easily, but the writing style shows promise and the atmosphere and characterization are adequate.


A little-known episode in American history is made vivid in a fine book that is solidly based on research. In 1851 a group of escaped slaves who had settled in Christiana, Pennsylvania resisted an attempt at capture by a Maryland slave owner, some of his friends, and a deputy United States Marshal. The rebellion was led by one of the slaves, William Parker, who escaped; others (black and white) who were, or were accused of being involved, were put on trial. The first charge was treason, for this was a test of the compromise legislation, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. The verdict was a victory for the antislavery forces. Bacon’s account of the rebellion and the trial is fully detailed; parts of the events are told again in excerpts from William Parker’s autobiography. A stirring story. A divided bibliography and an index are appended.


Bright, precise pictures in Erik Blegvad’s distinctive and appealing style illustrate a mini-anthology of cat poems for the very young. Some of the selections are about cats, like “Pussy cat, pussy cat, where have you been?” or “I love little pussy, her coat is so warm,” while others simply mention a cat or a kitten among other things or animals. The quality of the verses is variable; something like “Didrum drum/ Three threads and a thrum/ Thrum gray, thrum gray,” (the entire poem entitled “The Purring Song”) leaves something to be desired as a poem, and perhaps leaves something to be explained to the listener.


In a first-person story set during World War II in a small Pennsylvania town, Ellis Carpenter describes her friends and classmates, events at school, activities to support the war effort, the illness and death of her German-born grandmother, her awareness that some of her friends have become interested in the opposite sex, etc. Period details are rather too carefully cited, and the dialogue is occasionally burdened by being used to give information; there are plot threads rather than a story line: this is a period piece, and it can give readers some feeling for life in a small town in 1945. The characterization is variable in quality, the writing style self-conscious.


Newly illustrated by Evaline Ness, the fanciful story of “The Steamroller” was first published in 1938 in a collection of stories entitled *The Fish with the Deep Sea Smile*. “No dolls. No candy. No new clothes. No books. No sugar plums. No baby carriages. No!” Those are the things that Daisy didn’t get for Christmas; what she did get was a big, big steamroller that crunched flat everything in its path. It squashed animals and people and two cars and a truck and a streetcar. And the policeman who tried to stop Daisy. And Daisy’s teacher. When she saw her friends coming toward her, Daisy veered off into a field and jumped out, while the steamroller kept going until it rolled into the ocean. When she got home, there was another present, a giant steam shovel; so Daisy scooped up everything and everybody she’d flattened and they all were unharmed, and Daisy gave all her friends a ride, and then she went

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home to Christmas dinner. The breezy style and illustrations, and the fun of a great adventure make a most appealing story.


Spiral bound, board pages are cut across the middle horizontally so that the upper and lower halves can be matched. In the color book, each of the top halves has a solid block of color; the bottom halves have pictures of familiar objects: a red fire truck, a brown shoe, a green tree. Of the four books in the set (see also below) this is the weakest, flawed by the fact that some pictures have colors that don’t quite match: the deep purple umbrella doesn’t fit the almost-magenta square or the black one, the turquoise background for a picture of a snowman is neither the blue nor the green shown. It’s a sound concept, however, and the illustrations are lovely; the book about shapes is even more intriguing, with solid black shapes on one set of pages, and bright matching pictures on the other: a diamond-shaped kite, a triangular wigwam, a half-circle of watermelon.


In the same format as the books above, and with the small appeal to a child’s detective instinct and curiosity, these two books are for slightly older children. The numbers book uses no digits, but has small solid black blocks on the upper pages, in order from one to ten. The bottom pages are not in order, but have six lemons, one pineapple, nine cherries, et cetera, giving the child a concept of sets. The book of words is even more advanced, requiring children to be able to identify the letter symbols before matching them to the pictures of cat, boy, girl, car, fish, and so on. All in all, a very attractive way to learn.


How to intrigue without even trying: use as a subtitle, “True stories from the files of the Smithsonian Institution’s Center for Short-Lived Phenomena.” A volcano erupts in Iceland and the lava is used to heat water pipes—fish in New Jersey die of thermal shock—a pit suddenly yawns in a Welsh road—boulders pop out of the ground in an Oklahoma pasture—the fatal blooming of Japanese bamboo kills the bamboo crop. The short articles on natural phenomena are written in a breezy journalese and are illustrated by cartoon-style drawings. Arrangement is random, so that the material has no reference use, but the book is excellent for browsing and the brevity and drama of the selections may encourage the slow or reluctant reader.


Although Cresswell states, in a prefatory note, that her adaptations of familiar fairy and folk tales are intended for reading aloud to children of four to six, the book seems—even with its limitations—more suitable for the independent reader, with reading aloud to younger children as a secondary use. The language is simplified, the violence in some stories abridged (Snow White’s stepmother’s heart breaks of passion, dancing in red-hot shoes being omitted; the wolf in “Little Red Riding Hood” is killed by the Green Archer’s arrow as he springs malevolently out of bed—and there’s a little lecture on disobedient girls that causes L. R. R. to blush). This doesn’t
really seem much more suitable for very young children than the standard versions, it’s just a little easier to read. The writing style and illustrations are adequate.


Well, it’s certainly different. Whether this will intrigue the child who’s fascinated by words or confuse children who have spelling difficulties is a moot point. There’s a page for each letter, but this is not an alphabet book; a hand-lettered text (on some pages, a sentence, on others a long rhyming) comprises words in which a letter is silent. The book uses red letters, the examples here substitute italics: “Wednesday the handsome adjutant adjusted his handkerchief,” “Jack packs a stack of black socks . . .,” “I guess I’ll buy my aunt an antique guitar . . .” At times the choice is dubious (what happens to the word “sign,” on the “g” page, without the “g”?) and occasionally the rhyme falters, as in “Too few Sioux enjoy St. Croix,” which is the entire text on the “x” page.


alphabetically arranged, two dozen full-page color illustrations of sea creatures have only their identifying label as text; this is followed by pages on which—in the same arrangement—a few lines of print give some facts about each creature, with a reduced picture at the side of each paragraph of text. The selection of creatures and the type of information given about each is random; the information is often inadequate: for example, there is no explanation for the differences between bivalves and gastropods, although they are listed and pictured separately; a further weakness is the fact that the listing for “blue whale” and “killer whale” are under “b” and “k” so that the two are separated; another is that there is no way for the reader to judge relative size.


A sequel to the other stories of Tom, the great brain, told by his younger brother with a mixture of admiration and resentment. Like the earlier books, this is episodic, with Tom’s mercenary cunning the binding theme; here too, Tom occasionally gets his comeuppance but most of the time executes his ploys with no retribution. In the last episode, Tom has his thirteenth birthday, is taken on as an apprentice by his father, and falls in love—and his brother admits that he misses the excitement of coping with the great brain. The episodes have variety, the breezy style is just right for the times and the teller, and the setting—a Mormon community of the past in which Tom’s family are among the Catholic minority—has good period flavor.


Ten trials in American history that were landmarks in influencing our judicial system are described in a book that is objective in approach and is written in a straightforward style that makes the drama of the events the more vivid by contrast. Fleming begins with the Boston Massacre trial, emphasizing John Adams’ strong sense of justice in defending the men his cousin, Samuel Adams, was agitating against; she concludes with the efforts toward scrupulous impartiality at the Nuremberg trial. Other trials discussed are “The President vs. the Press,” a libel trial of the Jeffersonian era, the Amistad case, the trials of John Brown, the Haymarket riot and Triangle fire cases, Andrew Johnson’s impeachment trial, the Scopes case, and the Sweet trial. A bibliography is appended.
A detailed discussion of kinesics is illustrated with photographs that are well placed and captioned; the writing style is casual and informal, not effusive but rather verbose. Some chapters describe the universality and comprehensibility of body language in general, and the fact that one can control it; others examine specific aspects, such as use of the eyes, conventional signs, private space and the cultural differences that may affect individual conception of it, et cetera. There is probably little here that young readers are not aware of, but the book spells out very clearly the myriad ways in which we speak by gestures, position, walking, touching or not touching, eye movements, and so on. A questionnaire that enables the readers to assess their own body talk is included.

A very simplified retelling of a favorite noodlehead story is printed in a running foot across the pages of a picture book version first published in Switzerland. Hans, given a lump of gold when he leaves his master after a seven-year apprenticeship, trades it for a horse, the horse for a cow, and so on until he has nothing at all; the happy simpleton comes home with nothing to show for his labors. The illustrations are distinctive: poster-simple, with clear colors, ample space, and skilled draughtsmanship; they have action and humor; the style and brevity of the adaptation are eminently suitable for the picture book audience.

A professor of art education, Hiller discusses the basic tenets of each of the major religions of the world in a page or two, describes the building in which their congregations worship in an equivalent amount of space, and devotes the remainder of each chapter to a series of photographs with identifying captions and a brief comment on site, use, architectural detail, or some other feature notable in the picture. The photographs are interesting, although some are repetitive; the text gives less information about the religions themselves than do books like the standard texts by Haskins, Rice, or Savage. What is disappointing is that the text does not live up to the promise of the jacket statement, that the author shows "how these beliefs—along with time and place—have influenced the kinds of building that were used for worship." He does do this, but not consistently. There also seems inadequate explanation of architectural features, and since the book does not (indeed, is not meant to) serve as a text on the religions and fails to give full treatment either to the buildings as architecture or as reflections of their culture, it fails to achieve its stated purpose. There are no diagrams of interiors, although there are photographs. An illustrated glossary, a divided bibliography, and an index are appended.

Illustrated by Bjorklund's black and white drawings and by full color, double-page reproductions of famous paintings like Leutze's "Washington Crossing the Delaware," this is a text that devotes separate chapters to the participation of individual citizens in various aspects of the war. Save for the last, an account of the Yorktown battle in which Sergeant Joseph Plumb Martin participated, the central figures and their contributions to the war effort are familiar: Samuel and Abigail Adams, Nathan Hale, Thomas Paine, etc. There is little that is new here, but the accounts are lively
and the illustrations imposing. No sources are cited; the absence of a bibliography and an index, plus the fact that chapter titles are uninformative ("Son of Liberty," "Maker of Heroes," "Fighter in the Night,") lessen the usefulness of the book.


Six tales of the Elizabethan theater are written in a sedate style; despite the fact that many have action, the expository passages tend to be long-winded. However, the stories are about such eminent figures as Burbage, Shakespeare, and Jonson; they are full of authentic details and language, they are historically based, and they are written by an authority on the subject. And the author-artist's sketches are lively and humorous, so the book's strength far outbalances its weakness of writing style. The most entertaining of the six tales describes the legal battle between the Burbage family and Giles Allen, who owned the land on which the first of the theaters was built and who refused to renew the lease—so the Burbages cunningly dismantled "The Theatre," the original building, and put it up again on the south bank of the Thames. They called it "The Globe."

Horn, Axel. *You Can Be Taller*; written and illus. by Axel Horn; photographs by Myron Ehrenberg. Little, 1974. 32p. $5.50.

If you lie on the floor you can see all your toys, you can see under the table, you can see an ant walking; if you stand up, you can be taller and see what's in the oven, what's in the bathtub, what's on the table. To see what is on the desk you have to be taller. "You can be taller. You can get up on your stool." Next stages: mother picks you up, Dad takes you up on the roof, you ride in an airplane. The pictures are sharp and varied, the concept of changing view appealing, but the book is weakened by the confusing use of the word "taller" and by some minor inconsistencies such as the ant (on the living room rug?), the crowding on some pages, of two pictures that are out of scale, and the just slightly coy tone of the writing.


In a picture book first published in Japan, a varied and skillful use of color in boldly composed pictures that have touches of humor in the animals' expressions shows why Kozo Kakimoto has won the highest Japanese award for children's books illustration. The story has a twist that should amuse children, but it is weak in ending. Rabbit robbers are stealing the household belongings of a sleeping family of rabbits; a friendly but hardly intelligent bear comes by and believes their story: the possessions are to be fixed up as a surprise for the residents. The bear helps move the objects, spends the night repairing them, and brings everything back. Spotted, the bear is invited to the children's birthday party, as are the sheepish robbers; the intended crime is never suspected, and bear and robbers go off, each carrying a gift from the happy family.

Lamarque, Colette. *Lots of Fun to Paint*. Collins/World, 1974. 29p. illus. Trade ed. $2.95; Library ed. $3.91 net.

A translation of a French how-to-do-it book has oversize pages with one project or technique on each page, occasionally with a double-page spread devoted to one idea. The suggestions include many media and techniques (gouache, watercolor, ink blots, potato printing, "floating" color in water, oil paint, etc.) but tell very little about each medium. There are neither table of contents nor index; there are no listings of equipment. While this is not a particularly instructive book or one conducive to
originality, it is bright with color, varied, and an adequate introduction to a range of painting tools and styles.

McCord, David Thompson Watson. Away and Ago; illus. by Leslie Morrill, Little, 1975. 83p. $5.95.

McCord’s playfulness never becomes cute or whimsical; he rejoices in words, he savors them, he teases them—and he is a master craftsman. That’s why this, like his earlier collections of poems, is delightful to read aloud or alone. The occasional serious poems are never heavy, and even those speak to a child’s concerns, but most of the selections in Away and Ago are light in tone whether they are nonsensical or witty. And all of them have a quality of sunny affection, as though the poet were sharing his fun with a friend. Here there are poems for Christmas and for Hallowe’en and Easter, poems about balloons and baseball, parties and pumpkins and people, and—of course—words themselves.


Using the question and answer format of her earlier books, McGovern gives a multifaceted picture of Sioux life in the 1880’s. The text describes buffalo hunting, marriage customs, housing and tools, clothing, recreation, battles, travel, and food; it goes into considerable detail about the care and training of children and the ritual ceremonies at which they were accepted as adults. The book is profusely illustrated, very informative, and sympathetic toward the Indians in their relationship with white people; both the vocabulary and the concepts are appropriate for the primary grades reader. A brief glossary is appended.


Some of the tales in this collection are based on Indian legends, some on material collected by Charles Skinner in Myths and Legends of our Own land; many have been written by the author but incorporate elements from Indian legends or tales told by early settlers, tales that often were variations on European sources. The typeface is small, the pages often heavy with solid passages of print, and the illustrations—one for each story—quite attractive. The writing style has little of the cadence of folk material. “‘Tjerck,’” for example, begins with, “Some men are born into the world with an evident tenacity for life, like the mud turtle emerging menacingly from its shell,” and occasionally a jarringly contemporary use of words checks a story’s flow, as in “Then it is a date.” However, the tales are varied, they contain many bits of historical material or local color, and while they are written in a style too florid for reading aloud, they can be adapted for storytelling.


First published in England, a book by a British cartoonist has vigorous, amusing drawings in bright colors; the fanciful story is enlivened with quips, puns, and flagrant nonsense that seem more appropriate for independent readers than for the preschool audience suggested by the publishers. Sandy, a garrulous, inquisitive child who seems to function as houseboy for the impatient grandfather with whom he lives, is relegated to the attic to do a massive cleaning job when his questions get on grumpy Grandad’s nerves. The huge attic is filled with oddments, and Sandy stops first to look at a book; seeing a picture of a parrot, he wonders if parrots can really talk. “Properly perspicacious parrots prattle perfectly,” the bird begins—and from
there on nonsense reigns, with the army and the fire brigade called in, and total chaos
until Sandy turns to the book again and under "M" finds a magician. A moment
later, when Grandad walks in, there is a beautifully furnished room in perfect order.
It's a little slapstick, with little variation of the intense pace, but the lively illustra-
tions and word play should amuse.

Mayer, Mercer. One Monster After Another; story and pictures by Mercer Mayer. Golden

A little girl mails a letter to her friend, it is stolen by the Stamp-Collecting Trol-
lusk, taken from him (or it) by the Letter-Eating Bombanat, who is snatched by the
K-2 Bombanat-Munching Grumley, etc. etc. The letter finally reaches its destination
after those and other way stations, and it says "Nothing exciting ever happens
around here. Please come and visit." So the friend packs the letter and a suitcase and
goes off to visit. The oversize pages afford Mayer a big canvas for a series
of monsters in the Sendak tradition, and the illustrations have some nice touches of
nonsense, but the story proliferates into rather tedious absurdity, with too many
variations on the same theme.

Meltzer, Milton. Remember the Days; A Short History of the Jewish American; illus. by

Although no bibliography of sources is included, there is little doubt that this
judicious and balanced survey of Jewish participation in American history is based
on thorough research. Meltzer's writing is serious but not dry, his material well-
organized, and his viewpoint broad, so that the problems of Jewish immigrants are
seen as part of the whole immigrant problem, his account of Jewish activism in the
labor movement seen against the background of the whole labor movement. The text
discusses Jewish cultural life, discrimination, the life the immigrants fled and the
conditions they found in the United States, Jewish contributions to causes and to
public life, and support of Zionism in this country. An index is appended.

$7.95.

A serious, almost scholarly book based on thorough research gives a detailed and
comprehensive picture of Jewish life in Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century.
Meltzer gives historical background but focuses on the problems and concerns of
Jews, rural and urban, up to the period of heavy migration to the United States. The
text describes both the common people and the leaders; the pervasive motifs are
persecution, which affected Jews politically, economically, and personally, and the
tenacious courage that was bolstered by religious conviction (even when there were
dogmatic differences) and family unity. The rabbis, the radicals, the writers, the
Zionists, the peasants, the students, all are included in a broad and vivid canvas. A
glossary, a bibliography of sources, and a relative index are appended.

113p. $7.95.

A wide-ranging compendium of advice is written in a brisk, informal style; save for
some discussion of skin care and of hair styling and care, most of the sensible
suggestions in the text can be used by all adolescent girls, black or not. Miller
describes basic health rules (diet, sleep, exercise, cleanliness, etc.) and care during
menstruation, gives advice on care of skin, hands and feet, makeup, and the care and
styling of hair. She also discusses ways in which style and color in dress can
minimize figure faults and gives advice on purchasing and caring for clothes. The illustrations are drawings, some merely decorative and others informative, and some photographs are bound into the section on exercise to make more clear the set of basic exercises the author suggests.


An oversize book has many photographs, some showing the beauty of the snowy countryside, others showing (tediously) the children who ride the bus. The print is large, and the pages have ample space, so that the intended use, as stated in the book, of easy supplemental reading, is fulfilled. However, the text does little more; it can be used as a starting point for a discussion of weather or transportation, but it is flatly descriptive rather than narrative, giving neither enough information to be valuable for its usefulness nor enough of a story to make interesting reading.


First published in Great Britain, this is one of a series of texts in biology. The book is accurate, informative, and is divided into chapters on the three subjects of the title plus a fourth called "Salamanders and others." The illustrations are in color and can be used for identification; the text is dry and stolid, focusing on description of each creature’s physical appearance and on patterns of reproduction and gestation. An index is appended.


A turn-of-the-century story has softly drawn pictures that add a dimension of humor to a slight but gentle story of mild sibling rivalry. Annabelle is a year younger than her sister Nellie; Great Aunt Bessie, with whom they live (at least, no parents are mentioned) dresses the two girls alike and, since they look alike, they are often taken for twins. But there are differences. Even though Aunt Bessie gives equal praise, Annabelle feels that her garden isn’t quite as bright as Nellie’s or her cake quite as light and fluffy. The pictures show a scraggly garden next to a lush, lavish one, and a sadly flat cake next to a high-rise beauty. Even at their joint birthday party, Annabelle’s in the shade—until she finds one present, a paint box. Nellie, after that, never wants to paint, painting is dumb she says. So when each girl makes a surprise present for Aunt Bessie’s birthday, Annabelle’s painting is just as nice as Nellie’s birthday cake, and she knows it. The satisfaction of achievement can be shared by readers, especially by those who can identify with the plight of the younger child, and the story, simply told and nicely illustrated, can be read aloud to younger children as well.


Two boys share an ice cream cone bought with a found coin, chase each other, climb a tree, and are afraid to come down because of a growling dog. A small girl claims the dog, her mother offers the boys ice cream for having found the animal. The text is all in dialogue, adequate but not enthralling; after the cone is dropped, for example, "You held it too hard." "No, I didn’t. You licked it too hard." "No, I didn’t." "Yes, you did." However, the story has action and familiar activities; the illustrations have black children with Prather’s usual doleful faces and a tidily detailed background that is reminiscent of Eleanor Schick’s urban scenes.

Photographs of a litter of four appealing kittens are nicely integrated with a simply written text that is straightforward in describing the stages of the kitten's growth. There's no sentimentalizing or cuteness (who needs it, with pictures?) but a crisp record of the gradual acquisition of full use of the senses, developing motor skills, training by the mother cat, and acquisition of permanent teeth. And there they are, eight weeks old, affectionate and playful at the age when, the text ends, it is "the best time to get a kitten."


An amusing story, pleasantly illustrated with bright pictures of a young wolf who learns to walk the middle of the road. Walter is perfect, a fact acknowledged by all, especially his mother. He has two perfectly matched fangs but never bites, he practices violin assiduously and writes poetry, he takes singing lessons and he likes peace. Under the malevolent influence of a sly fox, Walter sets himself up as a professional biter, but he encounters resistance and gives up his career. He decides, however, that he is no more perfect than he is a biter. "That's all right," says his mother, "Nobody's perfect forever. You lasted a long time." The pacific message is not belabored, and it's lightened by the yeasty style and humor; for example, after Walter has his first experience of being bitten for his own good (by Naomi the beaver, who has just fed him cake) his hostess sighs, as he scampers off, "Eat and run, eat and run."


Valentina Tereshkova didn't dream of space flight as a youngster, didn't even dream of being a pilot. One of the three children of a war widow, she worked in a factory and attended night school; she was twenty when a school friend urged her to join a parachuting club. The details of her training as a parachutist and later as an astronaut are most interesting, and those of the historic flight are fascinating. The biography goes on to describe her marriage to astronaut Andrian Nikolayev, her further training as an aerospace engineer, her travels about the globe. While some segments of the text (a visit to Leningrad, for example, in the year before she became a parachutist) read like a travel brochure, most of it is capably written, giving a good picture of Tereshkova's personality and a considerable amount of information about the history of space science in the U.S.S.R. as well as about the subject's training and her mission. A bibliography, a list of references, and an index are appended.


A pleasant mini-anthology of poems, stories, a prayer, and a fable about birds is illustrated with nineteen illustrations (some in black and white, some in color) each by a different artist. The selections are varied and of good quality, most of them poetry, and the pictures, equally varied, are attractive in themselves and also interesting as a demonstration of how wide is the range of artistic conception and interpretation.


A variant of the extended family story has as its fulcrum a small girl's problems in getting along with her great-aunt when her mother goes to the hospital to have a
second child. Tante Toba, who had been an adolescent immigrant, doesn’t tell
Mindy, when she wakes on Thanksgiving morning, that her mother’s at the hospital
but says she’s “gone to stuff the turkey” and when Mindy gets to Aunt Rose’s house
for dinner she resents having been lied to. Old fashioned about such things, strict in
her ways, Tante Toba arouses the child’s resentment—but they kiss and make up
just before Mommy gets home. There’s the substance of a story here, but it is made
so diffuse by aimless scenes of Mindy playing with her cousins that the structure is
buried. Occasionally the dialogue seems contrived, and what strength the book has
lies in the picture of the larger family and in the fact that it eschews the too-familiar
handling of adjustment to a new baby.

$4.95.

Both the text and the illustrations cumulate in a picture book that can give children
support for concepts of place and space. “This is a bird’s egg—this is the nest that
nobody sees that was made to hold the bird’s egg—this is the branch that swings in
the breeze that cradles the nest that nobody sees that was made to hold the bird’s egg
. . .” and so on, from garden to town to state to country to the whole earth, with sun
and stars shining down. The end is a bit abrupt, but the verse is bouncy and both the
concept and the cumulation are appealing; the pictures build in the same way, from a
single oval egg to nest, nest in leafy branch, branch hidden by flowering vine, etc.


Just short of a dozen science fiction stories are included in an anthology that rings
some changes on a favorite theme of the genre, mutation. Some of the mutants are
human as is the terrifying three-year-old of Bixby’s “It’s a Good Life,” or the
editor’s “The Man Who NeverForgot,” a sad creature burdened by total recall;
others vary from the intelligent ooze of Farley’s “Liquid Life” to the seal-creature of
Blish’s “Watershed.” “Hothouse,” by Brian Aldiss, is elaborately fantastic and not
his best writing, but the other tales are sturdy fare, a varied selection that should
satisfy the science fiction fan.

Silverstein, Alvin. *Hamsters; All About Them*. by Alvin and Virginia Silverstein; with photo-
graphs by Frederick Breda. Lothrop, 1974. 126p. Trade ed. $5.50; Library ed. $4.81
net.

Everything you ever wanted to know about hamsters is detailed in a text that is
direct and informal in style, well-organized, and illustrated with many photographs of
engaging hamsters and the proper equipment for those who want hamsters as pets.
The Silversteins describe the various breeds of hamsters, with some discussion of
mutant varieties, habits and habitat, but most of the book is devoted to careful,
detailed advice on caring for pet hamsters. The print is large and clear, and the
authors’ attitude of affectionate respect exemplary. An index is appended.


All of Slote’s baseball stories have clear, colorful game sequences and believable
characters with real, soluble problems. As in earlier books, the two are nicely
meshed in a book that is sturdily structured and smoothly written. Danny is the best
pitcher in his league, proud of being the son of a major league player, and convinced
that when Matt Gargan retires he’ll come home and remarry Danny’s mother.
Danny is doubly disturbed when his mother’s new supervisor turns up as her escort
at a game and when it develops that the man’s daughter wants to be on the team.
When the girl makes it, he quits. Then he learns that his father is to be married to the divorcee and he nervously shows up at the ball park, aware that the team needs him but not sure that they want him. The ending is low-keyed, logical, and satisfying—a sports story with real substance.


Although the text suggests a wide range of hobbies, some for enjoyment and some for profit, there is often inadequate information about a hobby; for example, a page and a half on watercolors. Another weakness of the book is in the inclusion of such statements as, "Modestly priced, they will sell readily," in reference to maps of a new housing development (under "Mapmaking") or, "If you learn to be a good mime, you will be welcomed everywhere . . ." The hobbies range from keeping a diary to making jewelry and running a doll hospital; one set of hobbies is listed in the table of contents as "mainly masculine" and another as "mainly feminine." For some hobbies, the authors suggest three or four books that are helpful, for some they suggest one or none. An index is appended.


Even before boarding for a two-week guided tour to England and Europe (a high school graduation gift) Holly knew that elderly Emily Fortsaker was odd. It turned out that some of Mrs. Fortsaker's peculiar behavior was due to her guilt; she'd stolen a vial of moon dust. She then persuaded Holly to send it back—but there was a postal strike. Holly bought a size 38 brassiere to conceal the tube of moon dust, a startling change from her usual 29A. There's a great deal of fuss about the bra and her changed appearance, and Holly stumbles about suspecting the man she should trust and vice-versa; one's a crackpot and the other an FBI man. There's lots of action and the writing style is passable, but the characters are stock figures, the plot contrived, and the bits of travelogue contribute little but a note of parochialism.

Sullivan, George. Queens of the Court; illus. with photographs. Dodd, 1974. 111p. $4.95.

After an introduction that describes the recent changes in women's tennis (prize money, publicity, status, attendance) Sullivan goes on to the "queens," Court, King, Evert, Goolagong, Casals, and Wade. The biographical sketches focus on each player's career and include highlights of major matches, but they also give quite vivid impressions of the personalities of the players. The writing style is brisk, informal, and smooth, and the book concludes with a backward look at some of the important women tennis players of the past. Action photographs are included; a list of each woman's championship record follows her biography; an explanation of scoring terms, a glossary, and an index are appended.


A retelling of the Biblical story of the flight from Egypt and the long years in the wilderness takes some liberties with the Biblical version of the Exodus, but preserves the strength of Moses' conviction and the tested endurance of the tribes he led. Only at the end of the book does an old woman, a child when the story began, wonder if the dead Moses might have been a Jewish foundling; here he is presented as an autocratic Egyptian who becomes a convert, the Prince Ra-Mose who takes the name of Moses. Some of the miraculous incidents are given logical interpretations, and some are retained. Despite the fact that the story sags during the wilderness years, when the hardships and dissension become repetitive, the book achieves a vigorous sense of drama and a fresh perspective that is due to its emphasis on the
concerns of the little people, the ways in which they faced or fought bondage, exulted in freedom or feared the unknown, maintained their faith in the One God and in the leader, or wavered and rebelled against them.


A rangy college freshman with a deep voice, Sandy boasts to her roommates, who share her interest in hockey, that she could do better than members of the local professional team. She coaxes a male friend into taking her physical examination, and joins the team, using the name "Steve." The rest of the story is the usual rookie-marches-to-the-top formula sports fiction, with Sandy's worries about detection and her grades as minor themes. The author depends to an extreme extent on contrivance; for example, Sandy figures out a way to avoid dressing and undressing in the locker room through a whole hockey season. Even when she's injured and examined by a doctor, nobody discovers she's a girl, although she tells one team member who keeps her secret. There are several unbelievable aspects to the story, one being that she's taken on the team on speculation, without a scout's recommendation—although it later develops that one new member comes up from one of the team's farm teams. For this is, it seems, the National Hockey League. Naturally, Sandy's team wins the Stanley Cup. Plays are sometimes explained, at other times not. Occasionally the author interjects herself into the story: "However, before I go any further, I must tell you . . ." and often she is ungrammatical. The writing is pedestrian, the characterization shallow, the plot unbelievable.


Softly drawn pictures of street scenes are a background for small, weary Billy Jenkins as he resists big sister Nina's attempts to coax him to walk home. Nina pretends she has a boat, a plane, and a train; she describes the delights of their imaginary travel with shining eyes. Billy Jenkins soberly absorbs these enticements—up to a point, when he jumps up and calls, "Here I come, Nina. Nina, wait for me!" The relationship, the simplicity of the story, and the appeal of imaginative play may be dimmed for some readers because of the lack of action.


Written in first person, the fictional account of a high school drug addict and pusher is in uncohesive and unconvincing style, despite the fact that this junior novel is based, according to the jacket copy, on the "childhood experiences" of the author. Graham is the older of two children in a middle class family with no financial problems. He resents and resists his parents, is irked by his baby sister, is not interested in school although his academic potential is high. Graham's interested in hanging around with his girl and his buddy, in getting high, in getting away from home. Put on probation after being caught by the police, he turns to alcohol, finds another girl who really cares for him but can't put up with his addiction; and the book ends with Graham having nothing. He finishes his pint and yearns for the old friend who was sent away when they both were busted. The characters are universally hostile, and the story has no note of hope in any aspect of Graham's wasted life.


A picture book with attractive, spacious composition describes the fantasizing of a small boy, Jonathan James, who loves being messy and dirty. He envisions a land of
superslobs (brown, doughy creatures) who welcome him to their way of life and put him through a trial when he tires of it and wants to go home. He must swim across a lake. The lake proves to be warm and pleasant, and on the other side is his mother, whose hair smells "nicer than dirt, even." There's no minatory note about Jonathan's dirtiness. But the plot is slight and the writing presents some problems for listeners: "Liking dirt, especially at bathtime, he dreamed of joining the Superslobs/who, he'd heard, lived happily in mud," is rather sophisticated construction; at one point in the story, the text states, "That was the trouble, and he began to remember . . ." but doesn't say what he remembers.

Vining, Elizabeth (Gray). Mr. Whittier. Viking, 1974. 169p. illus. $7.95.

Written in a subdued style that is curiously appropriate for the subject of this well-researched and moderately fictionalized biography, Mr. Whittier will perhaps be of more interest for its historical than its literary aspects. Quiet and often sickly, the Quaker poet best known for his "Snowbound" devoted most of his adult life in working and writing for the abolition of slavery; the book is filled with Whittier's relationships with Garrison, Sumner, Mott, Childs, and other abolitionist leaders, but it also describes some minor, less-familiar figures, American and British. There is some discussion of the poet's work (some of which is included) but the florid conventions of the time may make the poetry less interesting to readers than Whittier's correspondence. A partial bibliography and an extensive index are appended.


The mystery of who is trapping wild creatures in the refuge set up by a conservation-conscious school is rather belabored but the story's emphasis on the care and protection of animal life is a strong asset. The protagonist, Corky Downs, is particularly interested in snakes, and the book has a considerable amount of information about them; he's also concerned about the fact that someone's been killing animals and suspects (wrongly) an unpopular classmate, a character whose inclusion in the plot seems contrived. The writing style is adequate, the story line rather cluttered, and the chief appeal of the book will probably be more to the animal lover than to the mystery fan.


Energetic, scrawly illustrations accompany an Easter story that gives a fanciful provenance for the tradition of rabbits bringing candy-filled eggs. A doubting child dreams that a big bunny tells him the story of the bad witch Gundula, annoyed by cheeping nestlings, who turns them into baby bunnies. They pursue her until she flies away, leaving the bunnies in possession of her large store of candy. They remember that they came from eggs and conceive the idea of filling eggs with candy. The boy wakes. There's always a demand for new Easter stories, and there's a sure appeal in baby animals and candy and presents, but the plot is labored; the vigor of the pictures carries the story adequately.


A series of pictures of softly rounded baby animals, always seen with a child in the background, is followed by pictures of the child himself; like the other young, he is leaving his mother and going off to a new experience. "A kitten goes creeping away from the rug. Goodbye Mother . . ." (page turn) "Hello bug." "A puppy goes
sniffing down the road. Goodbye Mother . . ." (page turn) "Hello toad." At the end, "A child is watching each little creature. Goodbye Mother . . . Hello teacher."

Gentle, and limited to the very small child's interest, this is definitely a read-it-again book.

Wells, Rosemary. *Abdul*. Dial, 1975. 34p. illus. Trade ed. $4.95; Library ed. $4.58 net.

Delightful drawings reinforce the humor of the text in a small book that has a punch-line message. Abdul dotes on Gilda, his camel, and is proud of the three babies she produces each year. Then—disaster! Gilda gives birth to a peculiar-looking child; she won't leave him, and her owner won't leave her, so they're all trapped by a sandstorm. The deformed baby camel is lost and is found at a strange settlement, and there the people laugh at Gilda as much as Abdul's tribe laughed at her baby. They've never seen such a funny-looking horse. (The reader has, of course, seen the joke pages ago.) If one can accept a camel giving birth to a horse, it's a merry tale with action and suspense; if one can't, it's an implausible tale with action and suspense.


Framed by the curtains of a puppet stage, the ingredients that season a Christmas pie are presented as characters, each speaking a rhyme and introducing the next.

"Here I come, Good Master Clove / my true love lives behind your stove / and if you don't believe what I say / here comes Ginger to clear the way / ." "Here I come, the Ginger Man / I comb my hair with a pudding pan / and if you don't believe what I say / here comes Pepper to clear the way."

The illustrations have traditional or medieval costumes and humorous touches that are appealing, but the text has no story line to engage the interest of the audience. Recipes for Christmas pie and Christmas soup, taken from a seventeenth century cookbook, are appended.


Raffish figures in old-fashioned garb have as their contrasting background scrolled and flowery pastel scenes. The plot is not substantial, but it's pleasantly fresh; the style is casual and jaunty. Tip, taking a walk with his father, finds an empty bag; since they had just been discussing magic, he suggests that it might be a magic brown bag? "It's a bag full of nothing," his father says. But Tip is a child, his imagination is more fertile: he pulls it over his head, fills it with blackberries, blows it up to make a popping noise. So it hasn't been at all a bag full of nothing. Just as in the fairy tales, it had been three different things. Magical, Tip's father admits. Will Tip have to marry a princess now? His father suggests they settle for an ice cream cone and living happily ever after until dinner.


There are picture books that convey the pleasure small children have in making noise, such as *Noisy Nora* by Rosemary Wells or *Noisy Nancy Norris* by LouAnn Gaeddert. This doesn't, it's simply a reiteration of doing things noisily. Mr. and Mrs. Bang Bang slam out of bed, bang around the kitchen joined by their children, Marie Bang Bang and Vernon Bang Bang. Father bangs off to work, the children slam off to school, Mrs. Bang Bang thunders about doing housework, et cetera, ad infinitum. It's broken only twice, once when a weary teacher says, "Thank goodness that's all over for another day," and again when a mouse creeps out to feast on cheese kept in
the Bang Bang cupboard after the family's retired. Some children may find the idea of a noisy family funny, but—for how long?


A delightful song book for home use and library collections, and a valuable resource for group leaders, this can be used independently by older children and adults and can be used with younger children. The illustrations are amusing, the arrangements are simple, and the songs offer entertainment and participation in varied forms. There are cumulative songs, songs to which phrases or verses can be added on an impromptu basis, parodies, rounds, songs that are narrative or mock-grotesque, songs for action or (joy for the youngest) making funny noises.


A recording of some of the comments by older members of the Taos Indians is illustrated by strong, realistic portraits, some in color, and some in black and white, of the dignity and beauty of these Anasazi, the "old people." Some of the statements are measured prose, some are poetry; while there is an accent on recollection and remembrance that does not speak directly to the experience of young readers, many of the selections are timeless and universal. "There is a Time for Believing Nothing/So that you do not speak/What you have already heard/There is a Time for Keeping Quiet..." one poem begins. Another: "Brother, you fight against me/Brother, you do not see we cannot live/Except as we are/Brother, you have listened to a different song/Brother, how can I hold you to me now/When I do not know your face?"


Historically based, this fragment of a story about a young New Hampshire farm family in 1775 is meant to show readers the contribution made by the ordinary citizen in that troubled time. Jess and Jonas have three small children; they give up their horse and steer, they learn to make tea out of mint or blueberry leaves, and when Jonas is called to bear arms, Jess stoically manages the farm work as well as her usual household tasks. Nicely illustrated, the book is capably written but has a static quality despite the inherent drama of events. The print is, unfortunately, very small.


A four-part fantasy in which the sequential segments can stand alone. The writing is fluent, the mood romantic in the fairytale tradition, and many of the typical elements of the genre are included: the struggle between forces of good and evil, the bestowing of a magical object; wizard's spells that cast people in animal forms, a quest, and the love between a mortal and a superhuman being. The three magic buttons save the situation at crucial moments in the lives of Sianna, the wise and beautiful woman who has learned the magic of a sea creature, and of her son Lann, who uses the magic and his minstrelsy to save the life of an old man and gain the love of a bird-girl whom he rescues from the evil spell of a wizard-king.
READING FOR PARENTS

To order any of the items listed here, please write directly to the publisher of the item, not to the BULLETIN of the Center for Children’s Books.


Chan, Julie M. T. *Why Read Aloud to Children?* $0.50 for single copies (nonmembers) or $0.35 (for International Reading Association members). Purchases of more than 100 copies can be made at $0.20 a copy. From the International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Rd., Newark, DE. 19711.


Cleveland Public Library. *Children’s Books for Holiday Giving and Year ’Round Reading, 1974*. Descriptive list of 145 books arranged according to age group and special interests.” Cleveland Public Library Children’s Department. Single copy free with self-addressed, 6 x 9 stamped (10c) envelope. Additional copies, $0.25 each. From The Mailing Distribution Center, Cleveland Public Library, 325 Superior Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. 44114.


