EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED
WITH ANNOTATIONS

* Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R Recommended
Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR Not recommended.
SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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


Jenny tells her own story of her efforts to find something that will impress her father, a scientist, whom she has seen only on Sundays since the divorce. Some fossils she wants are on the property of a Mr. Williams, and they make a pact; Jenny may borrow a fossil clam if she keeps Mr. Williams supplied with cookies she's baked. The story ends with Jenny, injured when she was protecting her treasure, discovering that Daddy doesn't need to be impressed, that he loves her anyway. She does turn up a rare crocodile jawbone, but this seems anticlimatic, and the text is made diffuse by episodes devoted to relations with Mr. Williams and with a new friend, Toby; both Toby and Mr. Williams are black. The characters are believable but not strong, the writing style is adequate, and the story line uneven.


In Bubber’s home, as in the home of every other lemming in the community, there is a great stir; the lemmings are preparing to march to the sea. Why, Bubber wonders? His friend Crow suggests that Bubber might like to try water before heading for the ocean, so Bubber tries a small pond. Well, he knows one thing now: lemmings can't swim. When he questions members of his family, they are horrified by his doubts. Bubber had better pull himself together, they say. Bubber is almost caught in the mad plunge to the sea, but holds back and so lives. The message is clear: don't conform unthinkingly, don't be afraid to confront meaningless custom with logic. What keeps the message from being burdensome is not the plot but the style; Arkin’s lemmings, particularly in their dialogue, are distinctive and differentiated. The humor isn’t easily obvious, in fact it’s rather sophisticated, but it’s there.


A simplified retelling of an African myth about natural phenomena explains how light came to the world. A fly, mouse, a spider make their way to the king of the land above the sky, which was then in darkness, and pass three tests because the fly has eavesdropped on the king’s plans. In the third test, the animals must choose between a box containing darkness and one that contains light. They scamper off with the box of light, open it, and are disappointed to see a rooster; but the rooster crows, the sky grows light, and the rooster has called up the sun “every morning from that day to this,” the story ends. The tale incorporates several familiar folktale elements; it is told in a simple, direct style; it has the appeals of small creatures triumphing over
large ones and of a wish granted. The illustrations are black and white, starkly
dramatic. The very white paper, the large, clear print, and the spacious pages add to
the book’s appropriateness for young independent readers.

Bridwell, Norman. *Clifford's Good Deeds*; story and pictures by Norman Bridwell. Four
Winds, 1976. 75-15463. 43p. $3.95.

The biggest shaggy dog around, Clifford is an amiable giant (about 2 stories high)
whose efforts to help result in comic mishaps: he helps pile dry leaves into a truck,
but undoes all that good work with a giant sneeze; he bends a tree limb down to
rescue a kitten, but he’s so strong that the limb snaps the kitten into the air and he has
to catch it, et cetera. For one deed he gets a hero’s medal, rescuing two children who
are trapped in the attic of a burning house. The illustrations are in cartoon style, the
text is brisk, and both are lightly humorous. There’s nothing pedantic about the
implied lesson in helping others, and there’s plenty of action.


Large print and action photographs will probably attract young baseball fans, but
this is not one of Burchard’s best sports biographies. The text moves abruptly at
times, as when the author describes an incident in which Jackson, then seventeen,
was so angry at an opponent in a football game that he asked for the last play to be
run again. “Reggie ran right over the boy’s chest with his cleats.” That’s it; the next
line goes on, “Sometimes Reggie went looking for trouble.” This is, clearly, not too
laudatory a life story although the focus on Jackson’s prowess as a member of the
A’s team almost ignores team play.


In describing the various kinds of jobs that tugboats in New York harbor do,
Burchard includes both background information and accounts of actual operations by
individual boats: a docking pilot brings a huge containership into port, a tug tows a
hopper barge to a dumping site, tugboat crews rescue survivors in the collision of the
*Sea Witch* and the *Esso Brussels* in 1973, the tugboat *Harriet* takes a hospital ship
down the East River. There’s some personal information about crew members that
seems extraneous: “Ken is a quiet family man. Ron is single. He frowns when he
first gets out of bed.” The photographs are excellent, the text informative but a bit
choppy in style and casually organized. Navigation charts are included but are not
clear enough to serve as a map of places mentioned.

Child Study Association of America, comp. *Courage to Adventure;* Stories of Boys and Girls
Growing Up with America; selected by the Child Study Association of

An anthology that covers the years of national growth from revolutionary war
times to the present consists primarily of excerpts from books, although there are
some short stories from magazines and two sets of lyrics (“The Erie Canal” and
“Oh, Susanna”). The material is chronologically arranged, chosen with discrimina-
tion, and varied; it’s a nice change for the bicentennial year to have a book that
focuses on two hundred years rather than one period that was two hundred years
ago.
This is not a sequential survey of two centuries of weaponry, but a survey of weapons used during three time periods: those typical of 1776, those developed after the Civil War but before 1876, and a selection of today's sophisticated weapons, including nuclear missiles. A prefatory note is followed by a text in a usual Colby format: large photographs on each page accompanied by a long descriptive paragraph, with an occasional full page of photographs. There is a note of patriotism ("... as we have since our history as the greatest nation on the globe began...") and one of militarism as well ("... in a world where our peace-loving America must be the strongest to keep our freedom and protect our liberty, America can never afford to be second-best," or "Constant experimenting and development in weaponry keeps any nation strong...").


A list of suggestions for remaking old clothing, altering garments, making clothes for children or serviceable objects for the home out of remnants, old linens, rugs, etc. Some of the projects consist primarily of changing trimming or accessories, while others involve some knowledge of sewing intricacies, since they include major alterations. The book has many ideas, it is simply written, and it should be useful, but the illustrations are not labelled and the text does not give step-by-step directions that are adequate for beginners: "If the pants have a center back zipper, take in only the back darts," or "If there is a center back zipper, it must be taken out, and restitched lower in the seam," are not explicit enough for the beginner, and even for the initiate it might be better if these two suggestions were not a page apart, with advice on other alteration problems in between.


This is a slightly different version and more simply written than Dorothy Nathan's The Month Brothers (reviewed in the February, 1968 issue) but both contain the major ingredients of the Slavic folktale. The Month Brothers (Brother January, Brother February, etc.) are used to explain seasons in a story that has Cinderella elements and the familiar folk theme of virtue rewarded. Orphaned, Little Sister is overworked and abused by her stepmother and stepsister. Sent to find violets in midwinter, she appeals to the Month Brothers, who bring a quick and magical springtime flowering; when the stepsister goes off for her violets and is rude to Brother January, she gets lost in a snowstorm and so does her mother when she goes looking for the girl. Neither is ever seen again. Little Sister, on the other hand, has a happy marriage and a fruitful life. The tone is light, nicely geared for younger readers. De Regniers says, for example, "This was once upon a time, in the days when stepmothers were wicked and stepsisters were mean and lazy." The style is casual and colloquial, the illustrations uncluttered, even on the pages where Tomes uses several small pictures with captions: "Cook, cook, cook... spin, spin, spin... stitch, stitch, stitch... knock, knock... Will you marry me? Yes." Delightful.


In the format used so successfully by Alfred Duggan to recreate an historical period, Dillon describes in narrative form four Roman families of 110 A.D., those of a senator, a businessman, a farmer, and a stallholder. The writing is lively and colloquial, the use of present tense adding a sense of immediacy to the text. Histori-
cal personages and imaginary ones mingle and reappear in the four accounts, and the whole gives a vivid evocation of the bustling city, the social life and social classes, the customs and institutions, attitudes toward slavery, and the pervasive awareness of Roman supremacy in the ancient world.


In a moving story set in the Depression Era, adolescent Jess learns to value life in all living creatures. Jess had loved hunting; he was saving money earned by selling pelts to buy back a hunting dog his father had tried and returned. But several things happen to Jess: he falls in love and becomes more sensitive to how other people feel and then to how other creatures feel; he shares the grief of a classmate whose father dies; he finds it more and more difficult to look at an animal he's killed with pride but is instead filled with compassion. And so Jess decides that he won't buy the hunting dog, and that he'll bury the last animal he's killed rather than skin and sell it. This is not a message book; Jess makes his decision for himself and does not condemn his father, who is an ardent hunter, but his change of attitude is gradual and believable, achieved thoughtfully and not without pain. The writing is taut but smooth, serious but not heavy, and the several elements of the story are nicely balanced in treatment.


Crumb is Cindy's pony, and caring for him is so expensive that she's delighted when she gets a part-time job at the Ashford stables. Jan Ashford is relieved to share the work of teaching young riders and caring for the animals; she confides that she's looking forward to the day when Alex, to whose horses she's kindly given stable room after his own establishment burned, leaves and she can expand her business. Cindy doesn't trust Alex; there's his odd way of treating his superb horse, Cat Burglar, and a mysterious incident in which he used a hypodermic needle on some horse, she couldn't see which one. The story ends with a dramatic conclusion to the mystery, and it has good pace and color; its strongest appeal may be more in the authenticity of background than in the suspense, although the latter is maintained well. What Doty conveys is a sure sense of being at home in the fictional world she describes. In a way, she's the child's Dick Francis.


A prose poem of mother love is illustrated by soft black and white drawings that capture the warmth of the text. The young mother describes how, lying with her husband inside her, wrapped close and touching everywhere, "we had too much love yrs. for two / and that was the night we thought of you." Both parents share in the joy of feeling their child move in the womb, the excitement and the labor of birth, the wonder of seeing their infant child. Save for the statement "It didn't hurt," of a delivery at home and apparently without anesthesia, the story flows with smoothness, directly and simply describing the anticipation and satisfaction of having a child. The baby is named Wind Rose because "the wind rose warm and wild on the day that you were born."


Melissa's goal in life is to play for the St. Louis Cardinals, although she'll settle right now for making the school team. She and her owlish younger brother find the "Glad Man" (he used to sell gladiolas and other flowers) living in an old bus near a
dump and decide to rescue him when his home is threatened by municipal authorities. Melissa organizes community support, including her parents and teacher, in a renovation crew. The baseball aspect is almost submerged by the “Glad Man” theme, although Melissa does make the team, but the treatment is well-balanced, with some believable school episodes, warm family relationships, lively dialogue, and writing that has pace and humor, all compensating for a not too impressive plot.


Susan, who tells the story, doesn’t like Crystal when the teacher puts the new girl at the next desk and says he hopes they will learn to be friends. Crystal talks too much and gets Susan in trouble. Crystal says funny things that Susan can’t resist. Susan and Crystal get sent to the principal’s office. The whole account is punctuated by Susan’s daily reports to her mother, and they change from hostility to complete and devoted friendship in amusing fashion. As Crystal goes off for vacation at the end of the term, Susan ends wistfully, “I wish there was school tomorrow.” Cartoon-style illustrations echo the light tone. The story doesn’t have much substance, but it gives a realistic and humorous picture of an irresistible clown.


A fascinating discussion of the magical, superstitious, and religious uses of amulets, fetishes, talismans, etc. from ancient times to today. Gregor writes with polished facility and with broad coverage; although he points out repeatedly the credulity behind the belief in magical objects or rituals, he does not sneer but concludes that belief itself can achieve, at some times and in some measure, the very goal the wearer or practitioner desires. Throughout the text, the author mentions those symbols and practices that persist today: wearing an ankh, carrying a rabbit’s foot, using symbols on flags, using a religious figure in an automobile, wearing birthstone rings. A glossary, a bibliography, and an index are included.

Holman, Felice. *The Drac; French Tales of Dragons and Demons*; by Felice Holman and Nanine Valen; illus. by Stephen Walker. Scribner, 1975. 75-4029. 84p. $6.95.

The authors have deftly synthesized, in five fantastic stories from French folklore, material from all of the versions they found. Although most of the tales get off to a start that is slowed by rather elaborate descriptions (The Drac is described: “‘There in the river some terrified folk might glimpse him occasionally, enormous and lizard-like, naked as a worm, willowy as a lamprey, with two fins of transparent blue lace on his back, webbed feet like the flamingo of the Camargue, and long greenish hair which floated like algae on the waves.’”), they soon move into action and they are told in high style. Each story is followed by notes on its source and by bibliographic references.

Honig, Donald. *Hurry Home*; illus. by Fred Irvin. Addison-Wesley, 1976. 75-9923. 30p. $5.50.

Pleasantly conventional illustrations show some of the action in a baseball game in which Tommy had been reluctant to play. The team’s best hitter, he had planned to tell the coach he couldn’t play (he wanted to be home with his father, who was ill) but never quite got the chance. Tommy doesn’t play well but, at the crucial moment, he scores the winning run and keeps right on running; off the diamond, all the way home he goes and is much relieved when he gets there to find that his father is better. Tommy’s concern is commendable. but it’s a small peg on which to hang a story;
although the story is adequately told, it consists only of Tommy’s worry and one ball
game, a slight plot.

Trade ed. $4.95; Library ed. $4.59 net.

Six-year-old Nora lives in a New York apartment building and wants to know
everybody in the building; most of the people to whom she introduces herself are
friendly, but one woman calls her a busybody. Nora’s dreams of a big, big party are
realized when all the neighbors unite to give one in honor of old Mrs. Wurmbrand.
The big event of the text preceding the party is a neighborly dinner, on a smaller
scale, that begins when Nora’s little brother insists that it’s his turn to choose the
menu and that they will have stone soup, just the way it’s done in the story. The
episodes are linked very slightly, but each is pleasantly positive; the party, the
dinner, Daddy’s birthday celebration, etc., are all mildly humorous and the book is
permeated by the affection within the family and the cordial relationships with neigh-
bors. The book takes a sunnier view of urban life than do many stories for children.

Karen, Ruth. Kingdom of the Sun; The Inca: Empire Builders of the Americas. Four Winds,
1975. 75-9886. 255p. illus. $9.95.

A superb study of the Inca is based on thorough research although this is not
obtrusively evident in the fluid and often witty writing style. The author gives a
historical review of the Inca empire, then devotes chapters to various aspects of the
society: the contributions from conquered peoples that were assimilated into the
massive structure of the Inca civilization; the legal, political, military, and agricul-
tural attainments; the regimented lives of the ordinary citizens, the art and
architecture—and above all, pervading all, the worship of the sun, and of the Inca
ruler who was son of the sun. A second section of the book describes, in narrative
form, the lives of the two people of privilege: a “chosen woman,” Ima, and a Chimú
prince, Huaman, whose paths cross once. And in the stories of Ima Sumac and
Huaman many of the facts that appear earlier in the text are incorporated. Com-
prehensive, detailed, and quite fascinating. A glossary, an index, a list of important
place names, and a list of cities and museums, entitled “Tracking the Inca,” are
appended.


Forever young, forever shrewd, Nancy Drew goes on (and on and on). Here she is
taking flying lessons when a small plane, mysteriously empty and grounded, is
discovered. Also missing: a horse and a man, although the two seem unconnected.
Well. There’s a friend who can’t decide between two suitors, a strange, menacing
cloud that never moves and that causes trouble to planes that get caught in it, a surly
cowboy who makes trouble after he loses his job and who produces a demand for
ransom for the lost man (remember him?) and more. Of course the mystery is solved,
in large part by perspicacious Nancy, and all ends happily if illogically, and there’s a
 teaser for the next book. Active female protagonist notwithstanding, this is poorly
plotted and as badly written as others in the series.

Kent, Jack. There’s No Such Thing as a Dragon; story and pictures by Jack Kent. Western,
1975. 73-93309. 28p. $3.50.

Billy wakes one morning to find a small dragon sitting on his bed and beaming, but
his mother, when informed of the dragon’s appearance, says there is no such thing as
a dragon. The creature wags its tail and cuddles close while Billy is dressing, but
Billy doesn’t pat it as he did at first. “If there’s no such thing as something, it’s silly
to pat it on the head." The dragon grows rapidly, eventually carrying the house along with it when it runs after a bakery truck. The ending? Suffice it to say that the problem is solved, in this nursery tall tale, by affection. The ridiculous situation is just the sort that appeals to young children; the pictures are consistent with the combination of exaggeration and blandness of the text: "Cleaning the downstairs took Mother all morning (yes, Mother is an aproned housewife) what with the dragon in the way... and having to climb in and out of windows to get from room to room," is amusing in itself, but more amusing to children because Mother is still maintaining that there is no such thing as a dragon.

Kraus, Robert. *I'm a Monkey*; illus. by Hilary Knight. Windmill/Dutton, 1975. 75-6516. 30p. $5.95.

The text is minimal: each double-page spread carries a brief sentence, "I'm a monkey," "My mother is a monkey," "My father is a monkey," and so on, listing various relatives and a best friend next door. Save for faces and tails, the monkeys look and behave like people; what gives the book vitality and humor are the illustrations, which have that kick-up-your-heels exuberance that's uniquely Hilary Knight's. Young children should especially enjoy some of the visual jokes: a couple dancing, their tails tenderly entwined; a child threading a needle, his eyes crossed in concentration; a doll with demure, old-fashioned clothing and a monkey's face and tail.


A description of an island summer is given through the monologue of a parent who occasionally addresses the child (him or her) who is the sole companion of the parent (him or her). It is never made clear whether parent or child is male or female. There's the ferry to the island, a ride to the family's tepee, long days of quiet and beach and sun, one hectic night when the sailors of a small boat need help, and finally the end of summer and the ride on the ferry back to the Pacific mainland. There are moments of action, and the author builds up an atmosphere of contentment and peace in the setting of the island's beauty and isolation, but neither seems quite strong enough to give the book real impact. However, it is effective, the monologue is varied by quoted dialogue, and the illustrations—cool blue with black and white—are clean, deft, and nicely composed, with Turkle's usual competence in depicting, in particular, vivid faces and the play of light.


Set in Boston in 1773, this is a novel about a fourteen-year-old orphan, Abigail, who desperately wants to become a pewterer, and applies to Mr. Butler for apprenticeship. But Nabby is a girl, and girls don't do such things; Mr. Butler offers to take her on as a servant and a companion to his invalid daughter Emily. Nabby becomes involved in political activities, helping to distract the attention of British soldiers so that Paul Revere can reach the Charlestown shore; she invents a wheelchair so that Emily can go on excursions; and she proves her ability at pewtering to the extent that she is taken on as an apprentice. It's a lively story, it is of particular use in the Bicentennial Year, and it has a staunch protagonist, but it's just a bit too busy.


"Little though I be," said Tim of his much taller brothers, "yet I've twice the brains..." and he dreamed of showing his father what he could do, for his father
disparaged him. Tim had found he could talk to animals, so he went off on a quest that he hoped would bring his father’s approval. After many trials in his travels, always pulling through by virtue of his wit and help from animal friends, Tim returned home with a golden bird on a golden nest. And his father said, “Didn’t I always tell you others this lad carried a great weight of brain above his shoulders? And isn’t that the best muscle of all?” The story is in a familiar folktale pattern: three brothers, the separation of the youngest, the quest, the talking animals, et cetera; it’s hardly original, but it’s told in an adequate style. The illustrations contrast open space and Low’s dashing use of line in curlicues and small ornamental details.


Mary Curlew McJunkie comes from Baltimore to Nashville determined, like so many others, to make good, but it’s slow going. She acquires an admirer, a local yokel with a kind heart, she gets a part-time job with a peculiar bookseller (a neurotic prude who tries to knife her in his anger at her behavior) and she falls in love with an older man, a disc jockey who becomes her lover and who gives her a first chance to perform on radio. Mary Curlew’s dream is to perform on Grand Ole Opry, but the man who could get her a spot (a stellar artist she has admired because of his singing and his publicity image as clean and wholesome) proves to be a lecherous casting couch artist and she refuses to let sex be her ticket to fame. She does a network job, although it’s not a solo spot, and she decides that the disc jockey and she will be friends only. So there she is, on the golden shores. Nashville afficionados will be intrigued by such details as there are about the industry, but the book really doesn’t give too much information. Although the writing style is competent and the characters believable, the story has too many elements for impact; there are, in addition to the major characters mentioned, all of the local boy’s family and friends and the devoutly religious couple in the next apartment who insist that Mary Curlew visit their church, the Latter Day Calvary Church of Jesus the Nazarene.

Marx, Robert F. *The Underwater Dig; An Introduction to Marine Archaeology*. Walck, 1975. 74-25976. 250p. illus. $9.95.

There are historical records of divers as early as 4500 B.C.; through the centuries that followed, most salvage diving was either for personal gain or was instigated by official bodies. Marine archeology is a comparatively new science, and one of its greatest obstacles is the predatory amateur. After giving some historical background, Marx discusses underwater archeology as a science, with separate chapters on such subjects as searching, excavation, dating, identification, and preservation. Solid pages of very small print and the scope and detail of the text indicate a probability that the book will be of more interest to the prospective or practicing diver than to the general reader. As an experienced diver and a magazine editor, Marx has professional knowledge that serves to make his text both authoritative and readable. An extensive, divided bibliography and an equally full index are appended.

Miles, Miska. *Swim, Little Duck*; illus. by Jim Arnosky. Little, 1976. 75-30700. 32p. $5.95.

Soft illustrations in brown, black, and white are framed and face each page of text; the book has a quiet, spacious look that fits the mood of the story, which adds to the appeals of the animal characters with repetition in the pattern of the events. A little duck goes out to see the world and is joined by a frog, a pig, and a rabbit. The pig and the rabbit offer to show her the best places in the world; the pigpen is nice, the little duck decides, but she doesn’t dare get underfoot to approach the feed box, and rabbit’s field has lots of rabbits but nothing to drink. The frog’s similar offer is something else, again. Cool and wet, his place, with lots of frogs but also filled with
ducks. . . “a little duck here and big duck there. Little ducks, big ducks everywhere.” (Same pattern as the pigs and rabbits.) The little duck happily swims, plays, eats, and then tucks her weary head under her wing and sleeps.


Daughter of a widowed nurse, Anne is familiar with the hospital where her mother works, and she prowls about in order to see the man she is sure her mother’s beginning to care about, Dr. Abrams. She meets Laurie, a thin and attractive patient her own age and they become friends; Anne is horrified to learn that Laurie has an incurable illness and knows it, and she’s impressed by her friend’s courage. Laurie dies, and Anne adjusts to that and to the fact that Dr. Abrams is really a very nice person, one she can accept as a stepfather. The title refers to Laurie’s passion for pickles and Anne’s prune diet, two of the many irrelevancies that are stressed to the detriment of the book’s construction. The story is candid about death, and the hospital setting will appeal to some readers, but the book is weak in writing style, dialogue, and characterization.


A dozen stories set in a New York tenement neighborhood are of variable quality. “Mr. Mendelsohn” is touching, a rather sentimental tale of an old man whose family are less protective than the Suarez family, his neighbors. The novella, “Herman and Alice” is the story of a pregnant girl who marries an older man, a homosexual, with an expectably unhappy conclusion; this tale seems overextended. But most of the stories, while they have some awkward construction, bring the barrio people to vivid life. There’s humor in “A Very Special Pet,” and perceptive sympathy for young people’s problems in accepting death in “A New Window Display,” the window being that of a funeral chapel. “Princess” shows the pathos of a childless couple grieving about the death of a beloved pet, and “Shoes for Hector” reflects the self-conscious agony of a boy who is forced to wear an ugly pair of borrowed shoes on graduation day. Mohr’s writing style is uneven, but her characters ring true, having both universality and the special quality of the vitality and warmth of the Puerto Rican community.

Monjo, Ferdinand N. *Gettysburg; Tad Lincoln’s Story*; illus. by Douglas Gorsline. Windmill/Dutton, 1976. 75-6695. 48p. $7.95.

Tad describes his father’s weary anguish, the progress of the war, the battle at Gettysburg, and the decision to dedicate a National Cemetery there. The report on the dedication includes the text of the President’s address and concludes with Tad’s musing about his father’s meaning of “a new birth of freedom.” This isn’t quite up to Monjo’s usual sparkling and vivid evocations of an historical event or personage, in part because the monologue is little relieved by quoted dialogue, in part because there are some rather lengthy descriptions, and in part because Tad himself has no role in the action although he is often present when an incident occurs. The research is solid, and the illustrations, which resemble faded daguerreotypes or lithographs, are most suitable for the text. A bibliography is appended.


In a third story about Ox, the large (6 feet 8 inch, 250 pounds), indolent, very, very rich boy whose parents accept neither him nor each other, Ox goes from his Palm Beach home to Long Island. Ox is now seventeen, and his father has decided that
what he needs is a tutor; the tutor bores him, but he meets a girl on the next estate who is most unusual. Arabella's life has been equally devoid of affection, but she has suffered personality damage, while Ox has adjusted to the emptiness of their social stratum. To help Arabella, Ox drops his lassitude and dares the wrath of her hapless father and the elderly tyrant for whom he works. In a brief period of rapport, his father helps, too, and recognizes Ox as a person. But Arabella, who has been put in an institution, decides that, although she loves Ox, she wants to stay until she has really solved her own problems. So Ox goes back to Palm Beach and the aimless, drifting life he's always led. The characterization is good, save for the rather heavy hand with which Ney depicts some minor characters, and this is true also of the dialogue. The writing style is first person, smooth and consistent; while the story has depth in its social commentary, it slows down often (as in a long passage between Ox and another prisoner when Ox is being held in jail overnight for trespassing and assault) and breaks the flow of the action.

Norman, James. Ancestral Voices; Decoding Ancient Languages. Four Winds, 1975. 75-14426. 242p. illus. $7.95.

There have been many fine books about the major finds of archeologists, and most of them give information about objects like the Rosetta Stone or the carvings on the Behistun Rock, but not often do they focus on the extinct writing systems of the ancient world. This does, and it describes in lucid detail the problems that literary archeologists, amateur and professional, have and had in deciphering and interpreting ancient languages lost for centuries. Complicated as some of the material is, the author clarifies the problems facing those who have attempted to decode the records, and he gives due credit to those who failed but contributed some clues as well as to those who, like Champollion or Rawlinson, succeeded in spectacular fashion. A divided bibliography and an extensive index are appended.


Jenny, just before she and her parents left for a trip to London, had come across a diary in her aunt's apartment while Aunt Trudl was out. Ashamed of prying, she was so fascinated by the details of the young Trudl's stay with an English family as a refugee from Austria during World War II that she read almost all the entries. Trudl had been so convinced that her emerald ring had magical, evil powers that she had hidden it. By a chain of believable circumstances, Jenny tracked down a member of the host family and found the ring, bringing it back to Trudl and confessing her own guilt about the diary. Both Jenny's story and the diary narrative are vigorous and effective; the two are nicely knit, and the book is notable for its natural dialogue and for the warmth and spontaneity of Jenny's relationship with her parents and her aunt.


From Aalu, the Egyptian land of departed spirits in which their ancient people believed, to the Celtic city of Y's that sleeps under the sea, this interesting book with reference use describes those imaginary places that have become familiar through legend or—like Bunyan's Delectable Mountains—through fiction. Each entry is fully explanatory and there are cross-references throughout the book. Good style, handsome illustrations.

Reeves, Martha Emilie. The Total Turtle; illus. by Peter Zallinger. T. Y. Crowell, 1975. 74-5351. 115p. $6.50.

A description of the evolution and varieties of turtles and tortoises is followed by
chapters on turtle ecology, on the ways in which people have exploited many species and thereby threatened them with extinction, on turtles in art and legend, and on turtles as pets, with explicit instructions for their care and breeding. The writing style is serious but not formal, the material adequately organized, and the text goes into less detail about species than do most books devoted to a single animal form. Few of the illustrations give any idea of size, and they cannot be easily used for identification, since they are black and white. The index, while quite full, lacks entries for such terms as "plastron" or "carapace." Included in the appended material are a list of turtle and tortoise societies, a list of equipment needed for pet turtles, a list of poisonous plants to avoid and a chart of food values, a bibliography, and a compilation of legal restrictions on collecting, owning, importing, selling, and transporting turtles.


Clear, simple pictures with no clutter and plenty of white space illustrate the activities described by a small girl who, delivered by father and picked up by mother, spends a happy morning. She speaks of her teachers and of the other nine children in the class, what she and they best like to do, of the plants and pets, playground activities, classroom equipment, marching and singing, and she closes with, "Now it is time to go home. But I will come again tomorrow." A good soft-sell for the pre-nursery set, since the setting is alluring, the attitude positive, and the sense of achievement pervasive.


Set in 1848 in a town in New York, this story of a lively, independent fourteen-year-old emphasizes the women’s rights movement, then in its formative stages. Josie works in town because she can’t get along with a surly, domineering stepfather. She is appalled at the fact that her mother has given up the rights to her farm and even the right to make decisions about her children. In a man’s world, Josie has seen and overheard enough to know that things are changing, that perhaps she can realize her dream of becoming a naturalist. This is tied to (and at times overwhelms) the anecdotes about Josie: a steamboat ride on her day off, a meeting with a young man who admires her on that happy day, the subsequent and unmerited censure of her conduct, the loss of her job as a domestic servant, and her decision to work for the militant milk-wagon driver, Mrs. Abbott. Plenty of action and good period details.

Schick, Eleanor. *Neighborhood Knight.* Greenwillow, 1976. 75-5920. 64p. illus. Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $5.11 net.

Greyed pictures with precise details of urban scenes have excellent perspective; the indoor scenes show a single-parent family: mother, daughter, and son. The latter is the youngest and the speaker, an imaginative child who sees castles in tall buildings, and who sees himself as guardian of the queen and princess with whom he lives. One day at school another child topples the boy’s castle of blocks; they squabble and are sent to the sidelines by the teacher. The knight is cross when he comes home, and sulks, but he fights a mock battle alone in his room and emerges ready to find life sunny again. As in other Schick books, the illustrations give a realistic picture of a heterogeneous urban neighborhood, while the indoor scenes and school scenes are softer; both have a quiet, almost static quality. The simple writing style shares this quality, and the book may therefore have limited appeal for some readers. Until the classroom episode the story moves slowly.

Camelot is a residential development with homes called the Lancelot, the Excalibur, and the Guinevere, and Abby, who tells the story, is prevailed on by her friend Hutch to sneak in and spend the night at the model "Lancelot" home. Abby leaves; Hutch stays the night. Abby has a guilty conscience when a break-in is reported, and she decides to confess to the development owner. Surprise! The ploy is considered so daring that she finds several members of her class have already "confessed." The dialogue between the two girls is brisk and often funny, as is Abby's view of Hutch's family's passionate addiction to natural foods, but the latter is stressed a bit too much for believability, and the break-in (which Hutch refers to as "running away") is a slight episode that seems prolonged.


Set in the vaguely feudal era (to judge by the illustrations) this is the story of a dwarf at the Spanish court who functioned as a jester. Teased and humiliated, Ricky's role was to make the king and the courtiers laugh; one night he played the flute so beautifully that it touched all hearts. But the king had lost a wager at chess while playing with his guest, the French king, and the latter asked for Ricky in payment of the debt. So Ricky left, and the story ends, . . . "He thought of the clouds racing across the sky . . . and the tears of the princess while he played. Farewell, Princess! Farewell, Spain!" This has none of the bittersweetness of Wilde's "Birthday of the Infanta," and it comes to a wavering halt after less construction than description. The style is adequate, the plot thin; the illustrations are in black and white, with short strokes that are not joined outlining the figures, and with only an occasional solid line or hatching in the details, so that some pages seem busy even though there is plenty of white space.


Written in a straightforward but informal style laced with humor, logically organized, comprehensive, and illustrated with meticulously detailed colored pictures of many species, this excellent book is more enjoyable reading than most books with comparable reference use. The first chapter gives general information about the evolution, morphology, and physiology of toads and frogs; succeeding chapters describe various varieties of each, and a final chapter discusses unusual breeding habits. A bibliography; a list of species illustrated, giving common and scientific names; and an index are appended.

Smith, Doris Buchanan. *Kelly's Creek*; illus. by Alan Tiegreen. T. Y. Crowell, 1975. 75-6761. 71p. $5.95.

Kelly O'Brien is nine, and he has a physiological malfunction that inhibits coordination. Adults think he isn't trying; his classmates tease him; only the friend he has met while poking about the tidal marshes seems to take Kelly on his own terms. Phillip is a biology student at a nearby college, and he shares with Kelly all the fascinating discoveries he has made while studying marsh life. Although his parents forbid Kelly to waste time in the marshes, it is this very pursuit that enables him to gain status in the classroom—and thus he gains enough confidence to try some of the physical tasks that had before seemed impossible. A bit slow-moving, the story is perceptive without being at all sentimental about Kelly's handicap. Dialogue and characterization are believable, and the story is nicely structured.
No sweetness here, but a little light filters through at the end. Daughter of a divorced, alcoholic mother, Cindy is torn between pity and despair, surges of hope that her mother has quit drinking and bouts of anger at being forced to protect her mother’s reputation. While this is a message book, and the message is join Alateens, it’s also a convincing story capably told. Cindy has the usual young adolescent’s assortment of joys (the lead in a school play, winning the admiration of an attractive boy) and woes (alienating her best friend, being taunted by a more popular girl who’s jealous) and she resists the Alateen program until she reaches the point of utter misery after her mother has embarrassed her in public. When she does unburden herself at a meeting, it is (realistically) only to reach the next step: adjusting to her mother’s illness, realizing that she cannot change that but can change her own behavior and attitude.

In the second volume of an intricately conceived fantasy, the pending conflict of Below the Root (reviewed in the July, 1975 issue) becomes confrontation. Snyder uses an interesting overlap of events, picking up the story from the viewpoint of Teera, the Erdling child who lives in the cavern community below ground, a people cast out from the ordered, peaceful life of the planet Green-Sky. Teera’s people have been lied about and portrayed as evil by the ruling group on Green-Sky, and when she escapes from Erda and is taken in by a family whose daughter Pomma is the same age, both girls learn about each other’s cultures. Some of the ruling council also learn, having been duped by their leaders, that there is no difference between themselves and the Erdlings, and they instigate a move for rapprochement, a move that is fought bitterly by some of the council, who kidnap Teera and Pomma and hold them hostage. Like the first book, this has some passages that move slowly, long monologues or explanatory passages, but they are compensated for by the imaginatively detailed conception of the light and dark worlds of Green-Sky and its deported citizens who live below the magic, ice-cold Root and by the suspense of the conflict that seems resolved by the end of the book. The two children have united their Spirit-power, and the weapon that the malevolent leader has planned to use, the single weapon left from the days before the hegira to Green-Sky from the home planet, falls to the ground: evil has been conquered by good.

First published in England under the title The Magic Bridle and Other Folk Tales from Great Britain and Ireland, this comprises thirteen tales of magic and the supernatural. There’s a Scottish tale in the Rip Van Winkle tradition; “John O’Hara’s Lantern,” a variant of the familiar tale of the man too mean for the devil, and others. While the book should be useful for storytelling, the style lacks the cadence of the oral tradition and the tales would need adaptation. For reading alone or aloud, the writing is a bit ponderous: “He loved her greatly, and believed he saw his adoration reflected in her sea-green eyes, but there was a restraint in their togetherness—a calmness—for although she respected and admired him, her deeper love lay elsewhere, far below the surface of the sea.”

Each chapter in a book about a small New Zealand child is a brief story, so that the
book is excellent for reading aloud in installments as well as for independent readers in grades two and three. Karen's activities are small, familiar ones: playing with a friend, speaking on the telephone, going on an errand, et cetera. There are a few unfamiliar terms ("gumboots") but not so many as to make the book difficult for children in America to understand. Hemi, Karen's friend, is a Maori, and this is discussed very casually and realistically by the two children. There is an occasional note of didacticism, but the book has a pleasantly affectionate tone, the episodes are brief, and added to the appeal of everyday activities is the recurrence of a closing line to each chapter: "And she did."


A revision of the 1957 publication has been brought up to date within the eleven biographies that have been retained; that of Stan Kenton has been dropped, and biographies of Charlie Parker and John Coltrane have been added. A final chapter, "Jazz is the Music of Many," discusses some of the other jazz greats, the ways individual musicians influenced others, and the jazz scene today. The subjects were chosen either for their influence or their mastery of a particular instrument or style; the writing is informed and informal. An excellent divided discography and an index are appended.

Udry, Janice May. How I Faded Away; pictures by Monica De Bruyn. Whitman, 1976. 75-30863. 27p. Trade ed. $3.95; Library ed. $2.96 net.

"Do you know what it's like to be invisible? . . . I know because I'm invisible at school," says third-grader Robbie. Teased by children or rebuked by teachers in the first and second grade, Robbie had learned not to answer questions, not even to ask them. He didn't want to be a monitor, he didn't want to join playground games. "The teacher could barely make me out . . . the principal never saw me at all . . . the other kids didn't see me anymore." (sic) But Robbie is perfectly visible at home, where he's loved and accepted. When the class gets recorders to play, Robbie is left out because there's one instrument too few; he buys his own, practices, is noticed in class and complimented, and "The teacher and all the kids suddenly saw me clearly." The message of rejection and withdrawal may not be clear to all readers; those who see it will feel the pathos of Robbie's plight, but for those who don't, the book may be confusing, especially because the illustrations show a transparent figure, outlined by dots, whenever Robbie speaks of being invisible. The illustrations have a hard quality that seems ill-suited to the subtlety of the story, and the device of using dots for showing Robbie as transparent does not make it clear whether he really is (i.e. that this is a fantasy) or whether this is his feeling about himself.

Walsh, Gillian Paton. The Island Sunrise; Prehistoric Culture in the British Isles. Seabury, 1976. 75-4666. 128p. illus. $8.95.

A serious study of the wanderers and settlers of British prehistory covers the millennia from the earliest migrants of interglacial times to the end of the Iron Age and the coming of the Romans. The author smoothly integrates the ebb and flow of influences and cross-cultural diffusion in discussing the artifacts and art of the early peoples, the archeological evidence of their increased skill at making and using tools, the growing agricultural stability and diversification of labor that laid the groundwork for a civilization possible only because of a food surplus. A well organized, informative, and competently written book, this has a base of solid research. It has good illustrations, but some of the plates are far removed from textual reference; for example, Plate 11 faces page 49 but is referred to on page 102 (not by name, but there...
is a mention of mirrors as part of the metalworker's art, and there are photographs of
two mirrors on pages 102 and 103, while the color plate—a third mirror—is fifty pages
away). A bibliography and an index are appended.

75-9999. 29p. $5.95.

Paul and Ann decide that they can take care of themselves and Mother too, on a
day when she stays in bed because she's caught a cold. The story describes the small
chores the children do, and it's also used as a lesson in observation, with each
task one mistake is made or one object unseen, and the reader is asked "Do you
know what Paul and Ann should do to help the flowers stay fresh?" or, "Can you
look at the hands on the clock and see who is right?" The questions obtrude on the
story, which is imbued with a sense of achievement but has no story line. The style is
gauged for easy reading, so that it doesn't read aloud well: "Mother looked. She saw
the clean house. She saw the salad. She saw the flowers," and while the book is
apparently not intended for the read-aloud audience, some of the questions seem
more appropriate for them than for the beginning independent reader.

74-15294. 31p. Trade ed. $4.95; Library ed. $5.99 net.

Clean lines, plenty of white space, and the bright colors of children's clothing or
background details give strength to the pleasantly realistic drawings that illustrate a
story of kindergarten children's play. Although Joshua and Jenny are best friends,
they each play alone with Max at times and often participate in group play; they
agree that they will be married "in the spring" when the flower seed Joshua's planted
blooms. When they find a blue flower emerging from the snow they are in the midst of
a class party—but there is, despite the title and the plan for a spring wedding, no
reference in the text to the fact that the party is a wedding. While the children's
behavior and interests are natural and the writing direct, the story line is slight and
the ending weak: the children see the flower, Joshua says, "I planted a flower there,"
and Jenny adds, "And it grew," and the book ends, "Then they all sat down and ate
and drank together."


The details of life in a Bantu village are remembered from the author's childhood,
hers parents having come to Africa to work in a clinic and a mission school. In the
story a white girl the Kimbuti villagers call Luti is caught by circumstance (her
widowed father is in another part of Portugese Angola on business) and stays with
the people of her wounded guardian, Nduku. It is a time of drought, tension is high,
and Luti is at first reviled by some of the tribe; because a chameleon that is regarded
as sacred comes to her, Luti is soon looked on with awe and respect. The writing
style is adequate, the characterization minimal, although there is variety in the
characterization. There's a touch of complacency in Luti's role, as she modestly (the
story is told by her) enacts the patient, understanding, and forgiving outsider, and the
pace of the story is uneven, but the details of village life, the rumblings of cultural
conflict in a culture that has been under the colonial yoke, and the obvious respect
and affection the author feels for a people with a rich heritage are strengths in the
book.

Trade ed. $4.95; Library ed. $4.79 net.

Erik Blegvad's precise, blithe drawings capture nicely the direct simplicity and
warmth of a quiet, engaging story of family love. A small girl is intrigued by the difference in her older sister, now married, who has come home for a visit. The sister doesn’t leave a mess in the bathroom the way she used to, and she doesn’t say “Oh Mother!” the way she used to. The little girl asks her mother if she may come back to visit when she’s grown if she doesn’t use good stationery to draw on, or leave Magic Marker marks on the bedspread, or try on her mother’s jewelry? Yes, says her mother, and it will be fun, “... just as it is now!” And there’s a loving hug.


The pictures of Alfred benign, Alfred wistful, Alfred mysterious, are delightful; the text has an ingenuous blandness; the two are a happy union, each standing alone but complementing the other. Alfred, his boy says, likes dogs (Alfred told him so) and soulful communion with his tree. Alfred likes shrimps and ice cream; they are cat food, he insists, anything a cat eats is cat food. “It wouldn’t surprise me,” the boy says, “if you smiled that smile for Leonardo. It wouldn’t surprise me ...” and the author lists a series of historical events in which Alfred is shown as a participant, concluding with taking “that step” with Neil Armstrong. Why should it, Alfred asks, when a cat has nine lives? It’s nice of Alfred, the boy concludes, to spend one of them with him. Although there is no plot, this has humor and variety enough to appeal to readers. For cat lovers, of course, it’s shrimps and ice cream.
READING FOR TEACHERS

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


English Journal, October, 1975. A special section of articles on the teaching of poetry.


CHILDREN’S BOOK AWARDS

Hans Christian Andersen Medals 1976. Cecil Bødker, of Denmark, for her writing, and Tatjana Mawrina, of Russia, for her illustration. Highly commended authors, Agnia Barto (U.S.S.R.) and E. B. White (U.S.A.); highly commended illustrators, Ludovit Fulla (Czechoslovakia) and Svend Otto (Denmark).
