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* 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


It has become increasingly popular to bake one's own bread, and Adkins is an enthusiastic advocate of the art. His step-by-step instructions are preceded by an episodic history of bread-making that is mildly interesting but hardly necessary. He speaks with contempt of today's packaged white bread, bleached with dangerous chemicals and containing "ridiculous white powders to make it bright—ash, alum, chalk, yech!" This isn't the most detailed or most comprehensive book on bread-baking that's available, but the brevity of the text and the informal writing style may attract some otherwise-reluctant bakers. The illustrations are not the author-artist's best work.


Una, who is eleven, has been motherless since she was five; she misses her mother and the baby brother who died; she is very attached to her father and deeply hurt when she realizes that he's going to take his vacation with a friend. When the friend proves to be an attractive young woman, all Una's loneliness crystallizes into a determination to take the youngest child of Mrs. Heaven away and keep him safe. The Heaven baby is dirty and, Una is sure, abused and neglected. With her nine-year-old friend Lee and the stolen baby, she hides out in a deserted house for several days, finally giving up; she then acknowledges the seriousness of what she did, becomes aware that her father loves her no less, and even accepts her prospective stepmother. Una is not a believable eleven-year-old, and while it is possible to believe that a child of that age could convince herself that she was "rescuing" an infant when she kidnaps him, her competency in coping with the situation is in awkward contrast to the recurrent conversations she holds with a toy, Grubstreet, a small wooden bear (the book was first published in England under the title *Una and Grubstreet*) who assumes the role of alter ego.


Living in a remote region of Sardinia, the young Grazia had little schooling and lived in a society that was largely ignorant and superstitious. Yet she had her first story published when she was sixteen, and her books were popular throughout Europe in the early years of the twentieth century. Balducci has done a great deal of research, has based much of the text on Deledda's autobiographical material, and has given a strong picture of her subject. The book is marred, however, by often-florid writing ("... dreaming of a perfect lover ... one who would drift with her in a bark along the mirrored surface of the narrow channel which divides Asia from Europe.")) and occasionally by odd use of words ("diaphanous face") but
primarily by very long, detailed, and at times tangential accounts of family matters, for example, Deledda’s father’s business affairs. An extensive divided bibliography is provided, most of the citations being Italian.


There have been many books written for children on the subject of time, and this is one of the best. Simply and clearly, Berger discusses a broad range of subjects: the inner time sense of living things, the natural phenomena that bring night and day and the four seasons of the year, various time-measuring devices, and how to make a shadow-stick clock; he concludes by bringing up some intriguing open-ended questions about time. Only once does the text lapse from natural happenings to one that is created by human beings (in discussing seasonal phenomena, Berger includes “Hay is cut and stored,”) but the rest of the continuous text is consistent and coherent. Nicely illustrated, too.


Intriguing illustrations, but a slight story. The pictures fill the pages solidly but the balance between large masses and small details (a lawn starred with tiny flowers, a geometric print on a tunic) relieves most pages of a sense of busyness, and the vigorous colors are broken by the myriad black dots that are so typical of Laimgruber’s work. Little Giant ("no bigger than you are") and Big Giant live together in Giantland; they go to a Giant’s feast, where a prize is given to the one who can swallow the biggest bit of food. Little Giant swallows an apple seed, and the others laugh at him, but the next year another seed Little Giant has planted has become a small apple tree. This is considered so admirable that Little Giant is made King, not just King of the Feast but “King for a Whole Year.” And, the story ends, years later the tree becomes a Giant Apple Tree.

Bourne, Miriam Anne. *Bright Lights to See By*; illus. by Marilyn Hafner. Coward, 1975. 75-2540. 48p. $4.69.

The Littlefield and Vogel families are rival hotel owners in this period piece. Mr. Vogel scoffs at Mr. Littlefield when he learns that the latter is having electricity brought in. Gaslight’s more romantic, he claims, and nobody who keeps a clean hotel needs to see that well for cleaning purposes. A troupe of actors chooses Littlefield’s because of the better light, but the family’s efforts to impress by turning on every light in the hotel results in blown fuses and a play put on in the gloom while Vogel jeers. However, the fuses are replaced and the light turned on at a crucial moment in the melodrama, and the Littlefields are pleased to let Mr. Vogel think it was done deliberately. Text and illustrations give period details, although the first illustration shows a scene in the postoffice whereas it takes place just outside. The illustrations are attractive, and the text, simply written, gives an effective evocation of the past, but the structure of the story seems padded and somewhat obscured by the effort to recreate the period.


A continuous text, comprising some material that has been treated in separate, shorter Branley books, describes the earth as it might be observed from the mythical extragalactic planet Omega. The author discusses the composition, motion, rotation,
orbit, and precession of Earth, all in his usual direct and lucid style; this is preceded by a brief recapitulation of ancient theories and how it was proved that the world is round. While there is neither table of contents nor index, the book should be valued for the fact that it gives a clear and comprehensive summary of Earth in contrast to, and in relation to, other parts of the solar system. Readers will surely enjoy the credit line given "Professor X2174(YY)" as Chairperson of the Extra-Omegan Studies Group. Professor (YY), it points out, has been a member of a commune for the past ninety-six years.


Set in a rural Arkansas community during World War IIul, this is the first-person story of thirteen-year-old Billy Joe, who assumes a large share of the farm work when his older brothers go off to fight. But Billy Joe has wars of his own; one is against the new teacher, a most harsh and peculiar man, and the other is against Ma. Dissatisfied with his portion at meals, Billy Joe vows he'll eschew the family table until Ma invites him to sit down to a man's share of food. Ma is just as stubborn as Billy Joe, but she finally concedes. The teacher is something else again, and Billy Joe discovers that the surly Mr. Marshall is a spy. Despite the fact that the teacher-spy facet of the story is not convincing, the book has the unmistakable authenticity of setting and dialogue that lend credence to any book, and the characters—especially Ma—are strong.


Everything you ever wanted to know about . . . the history of eyeglasses, the way they are made, the way eyes function or malfunction, the way eyes are examined, a description of various kinds of sunglasses, advice on wearing sunglasses, advice on saving eyesight, and even a chapter on telescopes. It's brisk, informative, and capably written, a book that should be very useful. A relative index is appended.


A series of descriptions of major disasters by fire includes the Chicago fire of 1871, another that occurred at the same time in Wisconsin in which four times as many people died but which received far less public attention, the blazing finish of the *Hindenburg* and of the *Morro Castle*, and others, including several fires caused by fireworks in Iowa that led to its being the first state in the nation to ban the sale and use of fireworks. It's exciting stuff, and the anecdotes about individuals add human interest; however, some of these anecdotes are so highly fictionalized—and, occasionally, of so little relevance to the historical material—that they detract from the importance of the text. A final chapter discusses fire-fighting and the major types of fires; an index is appended.


Total text: "There is a baby in our house—The baby makes a mess with its food—We take it for rides in the carriage—Sometimes I help Mummy give the baby a bath—The baby sleeps in a crib—Sometimes I like the baby—Sometimes I don't—It can't play with me yet—I hope the baby grows up soon." Each line faces a mildly humorous drawing, with few background details to distract the viewer's attention. The text is direct and simple, but it's quite slight even for young children. Three
other books in this series by Burningham are *The Rabbit, The School*, and *The Snow*, all in the same format: amusing crayon and line illustrations, and a minimal text in a small, almost square book.


A preface gives a brief synopsis of the conflict that produced the English Civil War, the period in which this story is set. When it begins, Kate is twelve, daughter of a yeoman who has been gone four years, fighting with the Parliament armies against the Royalists. Kate is baffled by the fact that her brother Adam is a King’s man, although she loves his young wife, daughter of a staunchly Royalist family. The stress of divided loyalties, her father’s illness, and the absence of another, favorite brother weigh heavily on Kate, but she is mature enough, two years later, when she is trapped in the siege of a nearby town, to realize that it is possible to be loyal to those one loves even if the cause they espouse is one to which you are antithetical. Burton, as always, brings the historical period vividly to life; her characters are believable and her writing style trenchant. The pace of the book is, however, slow despite the drama of events.


A play based on the summer in which Harriet Tubman worked as a laundress in a New Jersey resort hotel. There is little movement in this one-act drama, but a wealth of poignant dialogue, for the two girls working with Harriet had volunteered at a church meeting to put every penny of their earnings, beyond what they needed for food, toward the antislavery cause. One, Celia, has been plaintive about the hard work, but as Harriet Tubman talks about attaining her own freedom and her vow to dedicate her life to helping other slaves escape bondage, Celia is strengthened and cheered. The title refers to Harriet’s consoling Celia about her fear by saying, “Child, you lookin at a woman who’s been plenty afraid. When the rattlesnake sounds a warnin . . . it’s time to be scared.” Despite the lack of action, the play is moving because of its subject and impressive because of the deftness with which Childress develops characters and background in so brief and static a setting.

Clements, Hanna. *Coming Home to a Place You’ve Never Been Before*; By Hanna and Bruce Clements. Farrar, 1975. 75-26716. 196p. $6.95.

A documentary novel is set in a halfway house, Perception House, and takes place over a twenty-four hour period. Intense, minutely detailed, the book examines the young people (all of whom have committed serious crimes) both in their reactions to each other and to the program of Perception House and, via dialogue, to the problems they have brought with them. The pace is slow, the print woefully small, but the program details are most interesting (the book is based on fact) in delineating the way members of the group support or combat each other, discipline or reward themselves, establish work routines and group therapy sessions.


In a sequel to *Diary of a Frantic Kid Sister* Sarah finds that her first year as a teenager is not a happy one. Her parents squabble with increasing frequency, and her older sister, bent on going off to live with her boyfriend, leaves Sarah carrying the burden of housekeeping when Mom goes off to live in Greenwich Village and find herself. There’s no threat of divorce, but Sarah can’t understand why her parents are
being (to her) so childish. Dad loses his job, and Sarah tries to convince him to leave the city, go to their summer home, and do what he really wants to do—paint. She’s successful in that and also effects a parental reunion, and the story ends on an upbeat; Mom and Dad even invite the older sister and her man for a visit. It’s nice to have a novel dealing with contemporary problems end on a positive note, and the story line is balanced by Sarah’s first relations with a boy (she’s not enthralled), her confidences in her very with-it grandmother, and relations with a best friend. Yet the conversion to a happy family at the close is a bit too rapid to be convincing, and the portrait Colman draws of Mom (aimless, restless, trying to be a liberated woman by wearing dreary clothes and living in a loft) is depressingly negative.

Corbett, Scott. The Great McGoniggle’s Gray Ghost; illus. by Bill Ogden. Little, 1975. 75-17722. 59p. $4.95.

The “Gray Ghost” of the title is a $50 certificate tied to a balloon (part of a shopping mall publicity scheme) and the enterprising McGoniggle and his friend Ken have been watching for it through binoculars. They meet a sad little man who has spotted it—but the limp gray balloon is caught in the high gutter of a mansion. Sorry for old Mr. Swanson, McGoniggle conceives a daring plan to retrieve the certificate—daring because it is necessary to enter the grounds via a cemetery at night and because the surly owners of the mansion have a ferocious dog. The plan works, and the boys mail the certificate to their new acquaintance. The charitable act is commendable, the story has action and some suspense, and there’s some humor in the dialogue, but there’s a slightly frenetic air to the whole.


An Australian author whose staccato style is reminiscent of Ivan Southall’s, Couper has written for adults and adolescents in previous novels. Here his story takes college-age Mark on a restless hunt for action as he goes off to hitch rides along a coastal highway, looking for a wave. In a series of incidents, he becomes involved with an older woman; the girl he falls in love with, Lin; and a young man his age with whom he suffers the penalty inflicted by a motorcycle gang when Mark breaks up a gang bang. The group is held together by tender pity for the deformed, illegitimate child of Lin’s younger sister Corrie; Lin and Mark, especially, are determined to rescue the infant from the irresponsible Corrie and see that she has corrective surgery. The book ends with the prospect of marriage, both Lin and Mark finding that they are more conventional and more mature than they had thought at the start of their free-wheeling summer. The story has awkward dialogue and a few characters that affect the story only slightly, but the characterization is on the whole convincing, and the rough talk is appropriate for the milieu. The strongest facet of the book is its intense vitality.


Her family background was more of an influence than the ambience of an upper-middle class, conservative WASP community, and Rachel Cowan, with her husband Paul, had worked in the Civil Rights movement before joining the Peace Corps. What she learned in that organization was little that was not depressing: the lack of understanding of peoples with whom it worked, the carping and superiority, and the internal bickering. But she and Paul learned a great deal from the families with whom they lived and worked in Mexico and Ecuador, and they are concerned critics of our country’s policies and practices in Latin America. Sympathetic toward Latin America and the Cuban Revolution, a personal documentary that is intense and

Although some of the material in this excellent survey of Chicano history and the Chicano movement of today is covered in Coy's earlier book *The Mexicans,* the format is different (the first book was in epistolary form) and the emphasis here is on Mexican-American relations in the past and the problems of Chicanos in the United States. The author uses several generations of a Mexican-American family to reflect both Mexican history and Chicano cultural heritage, and his text is comprehensive, knowledgeable, and sympathetic. A glossary of Chicano expressions, an impressive divided bibliography, and a relative index are appended.


The author's aim, according to the dust jacket, is "to capture young 'poorer' readers and to encourage them to read more," yet the publisher assigns the book for grades K-4. The level of the fanciful story seems younger in format and appeal than in subject: a boy wakes one morning to find an iron gate in place of the front door and, beyond that, a drawbridge and moat. The family then calls in architects who turn the house into a castle; the neighbors object, so the family pulls up the bridge and withdraws. End of story, which is abrupt. The illustrations hint (boy in bed, book about knighthood on the floor) that it is all a dream, but the structure is slight and the story unconvincing. A glossary of "castle words" and instructions for building a model of a castle are included—or rather than instructions, there is a drawing with parts labelled "ladder—popsicle sticks and toothpicks, portcullis—wagon wheels pasta (glued)" et cetera.


A serious and candidly written biography that is illustrated by many reproductions of the artist's work, some of them in full color, is marred slightly by the placement of illustrations, i.e., some are not referred to in the text, or appear facing pages that describe other works that are not reproduced. However, Dobrin has fulfilled the major obligations of a biographer: balanced treatment, accuracy, almost no fictionalization, and a text that conveys the essence of the subject's personality. A brief bibliography, a list of the locations of originals of the book's illustrations, and an index are appended.


A companion volume to the compiler's *The Nonsense Book* and *The Hodgepodge Book,* this is another compendium of jokes, riddles, games, camp songs, wishes and beliefs, teases and autograph album rhymes, etc. In this book, however, all of the contributions have either been submitted by children or (primarily the games) submitted by adults for use by children. Each selection is, therefore, signed. The quality of the selections is variable, some funny, some intriguing, some puerile. Much of the material was collected from Emrich's students at American University, and it
doesn't quite measure up to the quality of that in his earlier books—although such collections always have an audience. The book is handsomely printed, and the raffish line drawings have humor and vitality.


Oversize pages give the author-illustrator scope for impressive double-page spreads of his distinctively styled scratchboard drawings in a patriotic pastiche that may have more value as a source of material for the Bicentennial Year than as a literary-artistic entity. Pages, pictures, and print are all red, white, and blue; the material consists of quoted sayings, poetry, some songs, excerpts from historic documents, and reproductions of such artifacts as coins, flags, and engravings of the Revolutionary War period. Notes on the material are included.

Fort, John. *June the Tiger*; illus. by Bernice Loewenstein. Little, 1975. 75-12603. 59p. $4.95.

Deft pencil drawings illustrate a folksy story of the South, set in the past. June the Tiger is a small, scrappy dog whose worst enemy is a bear, Old Scratch, and whose dearest human is gentle, loving old Mrs. Pinckney. The bear gets into Mrs. Pinckney’s house while she and June are away on a trip and does considerable damage; Old Scratch is then shot by a friend, Billy the Bull, although June the Tiger (who has been actively attacking the bear) seems convinced that he’s the hero. The story line is really of little consequence; the strongest appeal of the book is in the evocation of rural setting and the humor of the language, although it is often a bit cute and just as often a bit florid. An example of the latter: “It was one of those strange visitations from the tropics which, spawned at sea, will often attack the coastal regions with an unnatural vengeance,” and of the former, “I once saw a rowdy who had been rude to a lady get shook so hard that both his teeth and his pants fell off at the same time.”

Freeman, Don. *Will’s Quill*; story and pictures by Don Freeman. Viking, 1975. 74-32382. 28p. $6.95.

The story of Willoughby Waddle, a country goose who goes to Elizabethan London, is one of the nicest Freeman books in a long time. Soft, bright paintings have intriguing details of costume and architecture, and they are full of action. After several mishaps typical of the newcomer to any city, Willoughby is befriended by a bearded gentleman who proves to be an actor; when the goose sees his friend attacked on stage, he rushes to the man’s defense, disrupting the play. Later he plucks one of his own quills to help the man write, and with the fine new quill the play is finished and, with a flourish, signed “William Shakespeare.” The dialogue is a bit heavy with “Gadzooks” and “Forsooths” but the plot is adequately structured, and both text and illustrations have plenty of humor and action.


An old man who has lost his socks traps a piece of the West Wind to hold as hostage; the West Wind then finds a woodchopper wearing socks for gloves and demands the socks—but the man chops off a piece of the West Wind as hostage for his lost gloves. Et cetera. The pattern reverses in the second part of the story until the West Wind is strong and whole again. Adequately constructed, with the appeal of cumulation, the story has a stiffness of writing style that is a handicap. The illustrations, beautifully detailed and softly colored, show the wind as diaphanous, pale blue
swirls with a suggestion of an angry face; they are repetitive but deftly drawn and romantic in mood.


A Russian folktale is adapted "for the picture-book audience," the jacket states, but the length, vocabulary, and complexity of the story indicate rather that it is appropriate for older, independent readers. It is illustrated with woodcuts that have strong composition and fittingly bucolic flavor but that are, on some pages, crowded with distracting details. The story: to escape marriage with the Master of the Waters who had threatened her father, beautiful young Pampalche disguises herself and runs off to her older sister's home. Pursued by her unwelcome suitor, she meets a series of peasant groups, each of them singing a song about hunting for the bride Pampalche; they do not recognize her, but an old crone does (she's a witch in disguise) and tries repeatedly to trap her. The girl outwits the witch, reaches her sister's mountaintop home, and rejoices that she is safe from that hateful monster, the Master of the Waters. While the security of the ending and the hunt-and-escape pattern of the story are satisfying, the ending seems oddly incomplete, since neither the father nor the Master of the Waters appears again—they have simply dropped out of the story.


As are all of the books in this series, this is handsomely designed, with restrained use of color (appropriately, earth colors) as backgrounds for some pages. In discussing the arts and crafts of the Plains Indians, the author relates creative expression to the rituals and beliefs of the tribes from which the objects illustrated came. Each illustration carries a label denoting source, and the objects are not only impressive in themselves but give, in conjunction with the text, a great deal of information about the way the tribes lived: what they ate, how they dressed, how they worshipped. Glubok also gives, simply and sympathetically, some of the sad history of the relationships between the Plains Indians and white settlers.


Little Cloud and his sister wander away from the tribe during berry-picking and get lost; they shelter in a wolf's den and then beg him to help them find their way home. The wolf agrees to help them, even lets little Bright Eyes ride on his back, and brings them close enough so that they can see the home tepees. The tribe, in gratitude, walks to the hilltop and brings their gifts and their friendship to the wolf—and the wolf has been their friend to this day. The story is not unusual in theme nor is it told with grace, but it is adequately told. The strength of the book lies in the illustrations, handsome in design and composition, and incorporating authentic and beautiful art motifs of the Plains Indians. Goble uses a great deal of color but not too many different colors in any one of the double-page spreads, so that the small details (each tiny leaf, each red berry) are not obscured.


Remember Graham's touching *Every Man Heart Lay Down?* In this story there is the same cadence and structure of language, the poetic English of African tribesmen:

"Flumbo look him small boy. He say, 'The road I walk be long. It be long past the
legs of my small boy." But his small son, Momolu, not only keeps the pace, but helps his father find just the right tree for making a boat that will replace the canoe broken by an alligator. Both the story and the style are beguiling, and the finely detailed illustrations, based on the style of African woodcuts, are strong and dramatic, bold in composition but intricate within the masses of figures.

Haas, Irene. The Maggie B. Atheneum, 1975. 74-18183. 27p. illust. $7.95.

A small girl wishes on a star and her wish comes true: on a ship named after her, she can "sail for a day," alone and free "with someone nice for company." The company is her brother, a "dear baby," and the ship The Maggie B. is festooned with plants, a tiny farm on the poop deck, and various animals. Margaret cleans house, catches seafood, tends the baby, and rides out a storm in the cozy cabin. She plays the violin, rocks James to sleep, and pops off to bed, the day on The Maggie B. over. The dream adventure gives Margaret an active role, yet her activities are almost entirely apron-bound. Still, there's a cozy feeling to the story and it's echoed in the interior scenes; illustrations for the outdoor scenes are particularly flowery and romantic. The writing is on the sentimental side, but it's imbued with sensuous images: the soft warmth of the breeze, the comfort of a velvet pillow, the silvery gleam of a fish, the fragrance of a sea stew cooking.

Hanlon, Emily. What If a Lion Eats Me and I Fall into a Hippopotamus' Mud Hole? pictures by Leigh Grant. Delacorte, 1975. 75-8007. 27p. Trade. ed. $4.95; Library ed. $4.58 net.

Barney proposes to his friend Stuart that they go to the zoo, Stuart expresses a series of fears, Barney reassures him on each count: if the lion does get out of his cage, Barney will shoot him with a magic dart gun; if the sea lion wants to bounce Stuart in the air like a ball, Barney will throw him a fish, and so on. Both boys manage to work themselves into a state of apprehension. Then Stuart asks if Barney is afraid. "Of course not," and Barney suggests that his father will take them and provide refreshments. The pictures, full of action, have touches of sly whimsy, and if the story doesn't get anywhere, it does give an accurate representation of children's dialogue both in their penchant for imaginative excesses and in their ambivalent feelings of pleasure and apprehension about being close to large, possibly dangerous creatures.


The boy detective and his friends again solve a mystery. Appealed to by a boy whose cat has been accused of killing a dove, The McGurk Organization sets out to save the cat from being put away. After a certain amount of to-ing and fro-ing, they conclude that the culprit is an elderly neighbor. He confesses that he'd killed the dove by accident and then decided to make it look as though a cat had killed the pet bird. While the story has a problem and a solution, the mechanics seem contrived; while it has a fair amount of action, not much of it is substantial. The writing style is just a bit on the cute side, with an exclamation point (or several) on almost every page.


A survey of the problems that can arise when alien fauna and flora are introduced into a stable ecology. Although the cactus and the water hyacinth are imported pests,
most of the creatures described are animals, and they have caused damage to buildings, livestock, food crops, industries, and human beings. Hopf also discusses a few imports that have been benign: pheasants, brown trout, and striped bass. In each case there is an explanation of breeding habits and of the methods of control that have been tried with varying degrees of success. The text is written in crisp but not oppressively dry style; the print is somewhat crowded. A substantial bibliography and an index are appended.


Horatio Alger never invented a better rags-to-riches plot than the life of Charles Spencer Chaplin: deserted by an alcoholic father, the two Chaplin boys were taken to a workhouse by their indigent mother (Charlie was six) who later suffered a nervous breakdown from which she never really recovered. At nine, the boy joined a vaudeville troupe. Oscar winner, millionaire, recipient of a knighthood, Charlie the Tramp is enthralling a new generation of film fans today. His biography is as much a tribute to his skill as a director and innovator in film-making as to his creativity as a performer. There is an occasional note of adulation, but the book is remarkable for the detailed information it gives about the early days of the film industry as well as for the revealing picture of a lonely, shy comic genius. The style is vigorous, the treatment balanced. A list of all the films made by Chaplin, divided by the studios that produced them, precedes the index.

Jenness, Aylette. *A Life of Their Own; An Indian Family in Latin America*; text and photographs by Aylette Jenness and Lisa W. Kroeber; drawings by Susan Votaw. T. Y. Crowell, 1975. 75-15964. 133p. $8.95.

Profusely illustrated with well-chosen photographs, this is—like the earlier books by Jenness—a documentary based on personal and sympathetic observation of a way of life. The authors spent a great deal of time with one family but also explored the health clinic, the school, the market, and the government of a Guatemalan town. Although the native language of the Hernandez family was Cakchiquel, they spoke some Spanish, as did the authors, and were able to communicate without too much difficulty. The book is informative and well-written, but it is even more distinguished for two qualities inherent in the writing; one is the attitude of interested respect—nothing in the Hernandez home is deemed odd, quaint, or inferior—and the other is a warmth that clearly permeates the relationships between the authors and those they interviewed, a warmth that does not preclude objectivity. The last section of the book is called a “Workshop” and gives instructions for weaving, cooking, making festival figures, running a market (with Spanish words for numbers and often-used phrases) and other projects that can enable the reader to learn exactly how the Hernandez family and their neighbors live. A vocabulary and a relative index are appended.


After Mama said it was the devil that put snarls into one's hair, Nana began to see the devil everywhere, and to be suspected of having perpetrated every bit of mischief that the small imp was really responsible for. Only Grandma believed in Nana's imp, and she gave her an oddly shaped bottle that she said was a devil-catcher. The devil was a nuisance but Nana got used to him, even played with him, and eventually lost him, because it was no fun for him to be there once he couldn't tease or frighten her. So Nana gave the devil-catcher back to Grandma. The lively, silly line drawings are engaging; the story has originality and humor but the plot—despite its inclusion of problem and solution—seems a bit overextended.
Joanna is nine; she lives in affluence in London, neglected by her busy parents and at the mercy of a dour and deceitful French live-in sitter. Naive and babyish, she has made a friend of a ragged boy, Toby, and through him she becomes involved in an odd escapade. Her parents have gone away, Yvette goes off on a date and leaves Joanna alone, and so she joins Toby and his hippyish parents and their friends in camping in the deserted house next door. They climb to the roof, the police are called, Joanna does her dancing-class solo on the roof (“I said you weren’t really clumsy, didn’t I?” her Mummy had said when Joanna reported a successful performance Mummy was too busy to look at,) and evades the police. She finds that the family has left a baby behind and takes the child into her Wendy-house (a luxurious garden play-house) and is disappointed when she has to give little Topaz up. Mummy and Daddy turn up, having heard on radio of the break-in next door, Yvette’s negligence is discovered, Mummy reveals that they are going to have a baby of their own, and there’s a new air of parental concern and affection as the story ends. Perhaps the most appealing aspect of the story is the contrast between Joanna’s naive primness and Toby’s casual way of life and his contemporary speech patterns (“... a real gas ... that was real far out ... you’re so untogether, man ...”) of which Joanna picks up. The next-door adventure would have been enough without the repeated conversations that show Yvette’s irresponsibility, or the parental brush-off, or the new-baby note; together, they crowd the story. The writing style is smooth; the characters seem overdrawn although they are well differentiated, but the plot isn’t quite convincing.


A series of women working in a broad range of jobs in the television industry discuss their jobs, first describing the work and then, in subsequent chapters, discussing the ways in which they obtained those jobs and became successful. A final chapter is devoted to the “Superpros,” women like Pauline Frederick and Joan Cooney. In all, thirty-seven women were interviewed for their comments, which are candid and diverse, giving a solidly informational text to readers who may be interested in television careers. A glossary and an index are appended.


Riding through the desert at night, a track coach and two of his college stars see a barefoot girl running beautifully, running hard, and clearly running away from them when they chase her. The girl is Fox Running, a Mescalero Apache Indian, and she is almost shanghaied by the others; silent at first, she eventually tells them she is an orphan. They take over her life, train her for the Olympics, help her conquer her problems, etc. In the end she wins two gold medals. Some of the details of events seem inaccurate (the lap signal at an Olympics meet is usually a bell, not a gun) but the training details are the strongest part of the book, especially the author’s success in conveying the exhilaration that accompanies arduous training. The story starts very slowly with a long, unconvincing first scene; the story line is frail, the characters drawn with little depth.


A British author explains various systems for writing secret messages, using letters, colors, pinpricks, numbers, and symbols as well as invisible ink. He describes some famous ciphers of the past and suggests ways to break and read encoded messages, giving practice activities in a last section. The material covered in the
book is substantially the same as that of Martin Gardner’s *Codes, Ciphers and Secret Writing*; this is more formally written although equally lucid. The print here is more spacious, the illustrations rather less informative than in the Gardner book.


The calf Temba Dawn is Rob’s tenth birthday present in a contemporary story set in Scotland. Rob gives her the good care he’s promised when she was born, he’s dismayed when he learns that his father must sell the farm, and relieved when he learns that he may take his pet with him. A simple story, really, but the book is filled with small incidents that attest to the author’s familiarity with farm life, the story of the calf is balanced by Rob’s growing interest in a girl who periodically comes to visit the family, and the treatment is realistic and sympathetic without ever becoming sentimental. The characters are firmly drawn, although the characterization is less important than the writing style, which is smoothly colloquial, with a good balance between dialogue and exposition.


A selection of poems for younger children comprises some chosen from earlier volumes of McCord poetry and some that have been previously published in magazines or newspapers. The illustrations are Simont at his best: humorous or scary or delicate as befits the selection they accompany, but always full of action and color. The poems are not always McCord’s best, but even McCord’s second-best is pretty good, and—while the better poems are available in older collections—it’s useful to have a book in which there are no poems McCord deems inappropriate for the very young child.


So much happened in so short a time that, given the complexities of the events disclosed and the numbers of people and institutions involved, it would not be possible to describe the Watergate break-in and its aftermath without (in a brief text) having pages crammed with names and facts. McKown has done this as well as possible: her writing is calm, candid, and sequential, her only departure from objectivity in occasional adjectives expressing public reaction or in pointing out that Nixon’s conduct and his public comments were in conflict. The text concludes with Ford’s pardon of Nixon, the resultant impossibility of prosecution or full disclosure of facts, and a hope that—with the reminder of Watergate—young citizens may be more aware than Nixon’s contemporaries that the price of liberty is indeed eternal vigilance. A list of sources and an index are appended.


Although told in narrative form, this has but a miniscule plot: Harriet looks for her friend, finally finds her. Harriet’s an elephant, the friend a mouse. The writing is simple enough to be read by beginning independent readers, with large print and one short sentence on each double-page spread: “Harriet was looking for her friend,” “She climbed up a tree,” “She came down again,” “Harriet looked between two trees,” and so on. The letters italicized here are in heavier type, not italicized, on the pages. The illustrations are bright, poster-simple, spacious, and stylized in elementary fashion, so that they do not take attention away from the print. This achieves
nicely its purpose, stressing words that can give young children concepts of position and direction.


The life story of a slave is based on Kate Pickard’s The Kidnapped and the Redeemed, published in 1856, in which the author told Peter Still’s biography as he had told it to her. It is a remarkable story and it is nicely retold here in smoothly fictionalized form. Peter was six when he and his brother were kidnapped and sold; he firmly (and erroneously) believed he came from a free family and he was determined to gain his freedom even if it took most of his life to earn the money. In the end he did; without knowing any more than his parents’ first names, not even where he had lived when he was stolen, Peter Still walked into an Anti-Slavery Office in Cincinnati and met his brother. The details of his life and the abuses they reveal among even “good” slave owners are grim—but the authors never reach for sensationalism; they let the facts speak. An extensive list of sources is appended.

Millard, Adele. Plants for Kids to Grow Indoors; photographs by Glenn Lewis and Bud Millard; drawings by Gregory Thompson. Sterling, 1975. 75-14509. 124p. Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $5.69 net.

Illustrated with drawings and photographs, this succinct guide to growing house plants strikes a nice balance between the carrot-top/sweet potato books for beginners and the complete books of house plant care that are published for adults. There are some projects as simple as carrot-tops, but the author also includes terrarium, bottle, and deep-dish planting as well as the more usual potted plants, window boxes, and water plants. Directions are simple, and although the book does not contain comprehensive advice on such topics as propagating and fertilizing plants, it is quite adequate. An index is appended.

O’Connell, Jean S. The Dollhouse Caper; illus. by Erik Blegvad. T. Y. Crowell, 1976. 75-25501. 84p. $5.95.

A deft fanciful story by a new children’s writer has the appeal of the miniature in a family of dolls that come to life when there are no people about. They are almost caught by some thieves who are, as the boy doll Todd explains, “casing the joint.” The dolls are worried by the fact that the three brothers who own them are getting along in years and may discard them; they’re also worried by the imminent robbery and try to leave clues for their humans. This book has it all: humor in dialogue, a convincing blend of realism and fantasy, good characterization, smooth writing style, a sturdy plot and satisfying ending, and the merest touch of sentiment. AND Blegvad’s wonderfully detailed, brisk drawings.


A history of witchcraft stresses its relation to historical events and to religion, emphasizes the role of women, and discusses both the beneficent and the malevolent practices of witches. With the current interest in the occult, the final chapter, “Spin Your Own Spell,” may be of greatest appeal to readers. The coverage is thorough and the presentation of the topic within the context of historical events and with reference to pagan or religious practices gives the book more depth than is usual in books on witchcraft, but the floridity of the writing style may lessen its appeal to
some readers. A list of suggested readings, a selected bibliography, and a relative index are appended.


While the oversize format and illustrations suggest a read-aloud audience, the subject and vocabulary—as well as the pace—of this story about the effects of a rural snowstorm indicate its appropriateness for independent readers. Only a few details suggest the Swedish setting. Ollie describes his grandmother’s prediction of a bad storm, the peddler who is followed by wolves, the hasty loading of firewood, the bringing into the warm kitchen of a newborn calf. Direct, simple, and evocative, but not really a story in its structure, the book is illustrated with handsome paintings, particularly those of the outdoors, with trees towering dark in the grey-white twilight.


A model how-to-do-it book is illustrated with impeccably drawn stop-action figures of bowlers and is preceded by a history of the development of the game from ancient times to today. Ravielli gives a clear step-by-step explanation of how the game should be played, and describes the correct way to hold the ball, the way the game is scored, and rules for play, as well as the correct equipment and standards for bowling alleys.

Resch, George T. *Super 8 Filmmaking*; illus. by Lesley Logue. Watts, 1975. 75-9604. 61p. $4.33.

The text, illustrated—with few exceptions—with diagrams rather than film clips, is divided into three sections: “Making a Film,” “Showing Films,” and “What Does Your Equipment Do?” The author writes in an informal, occasionally jocular style, and he plunges immediately into instructional details. Since the discussion of equipment is last, the first part of the text may well raise unanswered questions; otherwise the text is well-organized. However, it seems much too complex for the beginner, and explanations are not always full, nor are diagrams always clear or adequately labelled. The print is small. A glossary, a brief bibliography, and an index are appended.


The extensive and bitter student uprising in Mexico in 1968 is seen from the viewpoint of fifteen-year-old Rafa, who tells the story. Son of a conservative, wealthy family in Mexico City, Rafa is drawn into the movement when his older cousin Nicolás comes to visit. Disobeying his uncle (Rafa’s father) Nicolás persists as an activist and is killed; the story ends with Rafa’s letters to a friend (written between 1969-1973) in which it is made clear that he has been receiving therapy after an emotional breakdown. The writing is at times turgid, but the book gives both an authoritative (and rare) picture of the intricacies of political and philosophical conflict in modern Mexico and a sympathetic picture of the tradition and dignity of family life and customs with which the rebellious young are often in conflict.

Waber, Bernard. *I Was All Thumbs*. Houghton, 1975. 75-11689. 48p. illus. $6.95.

Legs is a small octopus who has never known any home except a laboratory tank. He’s told he will be happy in the sea, and Legs is apprehensive. “Why complain, I thought. Why make waves. Leave well-enough alone.” So Legs is taken to the sea
and sent crashing down into a new, strange world. Everyone stares, and poor befuddled Legs does all the wrong things, like squirting ink in the wrong direction. He finds a hiding place but suspects it might be better to be sociable and join a group. (Somehow he doesn’t fit into a school of fish, a “very fast crowd.”) Life improves, however, with the advent of a friend and the conviction that the sea offers more action and variety than the dear old tank. The illustrations have color, movement, and a merry quality; the story has a felicitous blend of bland treatment of a silly situation and a witty use of cliché phrases when they are delightfully inappropriate to the situation.


Jill Paton Walsh’s historical fiction has previously been more broad and sweeping, but here she shows her versatility by creating a cameo, for *The Huffler* is a Victorian adventure, the story of a properly beruffled English miss who escapes to pose as a servant so that she can better fit into the life of a canal boat family. Or, rather, part of a family, for young Bess and Ned Jebb are making a cargo delivery alone because of a family crisis. The characters and dialogue have vitality but it is the setting that especially delights: the lore of the canal, the intricacies of the locks, the conviviality of the canal travelers.


Comprehensive treatment and good organization of material are the strong points of a book that describes the formation and variety of the oceans’ continental shelves and the slopes and canyons that extend or divide them. The writing style is straightforward and clear but the solidity of print on the pages is a bit overwhelming. Separate chapters discuss such subjects as mining, fishing, gathering (Irish moss, kelp, etc.), and the continental shelves in relation to man: creatures that furnish medicine, sponges, glue, or opportunities for research. One chapter deals with the ways in which ocean exploration is carried on; the final chapter is on the very important topic of offshore gas and oil. A bibliography and an index are appended.


A veterinarian discusses the ways in which one should handle, feed, and house abandoned or injured wild baby mammals and birds. The advice is detailed and specific for each kind of creature, permeated with a sense of respect and affection for the animals, but with no trace of sentimentality. Weber is very firm about the rights of wild creatures, about making the needed effort to provide them with exactly the right foods and medication, keeping them clean, and handling them gently. An informative and useful book, and the photographs are beguiling. Several lists are appended (kinds of migratory birds, regional offices of the Fish and Wildlife Service, etc.) as are a bibliography and an index.


Jenny, whose family has come to Haunted Mesa Ranch because her father is lecturing at a conference there, is puzzled by Charlie, the Zuni boy who is stealing small objects and also by the moving figure she has seen on top of the mesa. She makes friends with a local resident who agrees to take her and another camp visitor to the top of the mesa, and there they find Charlie, who admits he has taken things but
states firmly that he has stolen nothing, that all will be returned. The explanation, it
seems, lies in the reactions of Charlie to some of the problems of today’s native
Americans and in the confusion of the boy’s grandfather, convinced that he is raiding
Spaniards when he takes things from the ranch. The author is sympathetic to the
difficulties of the Indians, but the revealing of their motives and problems is not
tantamount to a solution to a genuine mystery, since the denouement is fairly obvi-
ous. The book has a second plot, Jenny’s resentment of the fact that her beautiful
older sister, a nationally known entertainer, gets more attention. Jenny is pleased
that she’s involved in the “mystery,” but the two aspects hardly mesh, and the book
seems cluttered by this, and other, minor plot threads and characters.


This has a more substantial story line than most of Wildsmith’s recent books, but it
sags somewhat through overextension, and the book is of interest chiefly because of
the appeal of the animals and the beauty of the illustrations. The paintings combine
stylized floral backgrounds and handsome representational drawings of animals, all
done in vibrant color. Python, hungry but foiled by the wariness of other beasts, uses
a ruse. He gives a party at which guests are invited to do tricks, and several perform;
Python then does his own trick, swallowing all of his guests whole. The clamor from
within is heard by Elephant, who stands on Python’s tail until all the animals are
released. They tie a knot in Python’s tail, as a reminder of the fact that they should
never play with a Python.

Williamson, Jane. *The Trouble With Alaric;* story and pictures by Jane Williamson. Farrar,
1975. 75-17772. 26p. $4.95.

A familiar pattern, this: the animal that tries being something other than himself
and learns that it’s not always best. In this case, Alaric the dog tries to act like a
human being. His best friend—a girl—says, “Since you’re so sure you’re a person,
I’ll just let you be a person from now on . . .” But Alaric has to do everything a
person does: housework, a hard day at the office, working at an adding machine,
home via subway, grocery shopping, cooking, utter fatigue. So Alaric is glad to go
back to being a dog. An adequate variant on the pattern, the book is much weakened
as a total product by the drawings, which appear to have been drawn by a young
child.

Wills, Jonathan. *The Travels of Magnus Pole;* written and illus. by Jonathan Wills. Houghton,
1975. 75-17025. 44p. $6.95.

A tale of a long voyage, intended as a “playful takeoff on Marco Polo,” states the
jacket, takes Magnus from his Scottish island of Yell to—eventually—Tibet. The
story is set in Viking times, and Magnus, whose small boat has been blown to
Norway, is later taken prisoner by a Swedish crew, goes to Russia and then Tibet,
where he learns how a water-mill works in the winter he spends there. He builds a
mill and starts off home with it; all but the paddle-wheel and millstone are washed
ashore in a storm. Back at Yell, Magnus is laughed at when he builds a mill, but (you
guessed it) he gets the last laugh. Although the book looks too much like a small
child’s picture book to appeal to the audience old enough to read it, it has good pace
and plenty of action, and it describes cultural diffusion without belaboring the point.
The illustrations are colorful, but crowded with harsh colors; the print is large but
insufficiently leaded for easy (visual) reading.
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