ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign Library
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.

* * *

BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN’S BOOKS is published monthly except August by The University of Chicago Press for The University of Chicago, Graduate Library School. Mrs. Zena Sutherland, Editor. An advisory committee meets weekly to discuss books and reviews, which are written by the editor. The members are Yolanda Federici, Sara Fenwick, Isabel McCaul, Charlemæ Rollins, Robert Strang and Peggy Sullivan.

Subscription Rates: 1 year, $10.00; $7.20 per year for each additional subscription to the same address; $7.20, student rate. Single copy rate: from vol. 25, $1.25; vols. 17 through 24, 50¢. Complete back volume (11 issues): vols. 17-22, $4.00; vols. 23-24, $5.00. Reprinted volumes 1–16 (1947–1963) available from Kraus Reprint Co., Route 100, Millwood, New York 10546. Volumes available in microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Complete volumes available in microfiche from Johnson Associates, P.O. Box 1017, Greenwich, Conn. 06830. Checks should be made payable to The University of Chicago Press. All notices of change of address should provide both the old and the new address.

Subscription Correspondence. Address all inquiries about subscriptions to The University of Chicago Press, 5801 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

Editorial Correspondence. Review copies and all correspondence about reviews should be sent to Mrs. Zena Sutherland, 1100 East 57th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

Second-class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois.

© 1977 by the University of Chicago. All rights reserved.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

It wasn’t his real father Tim missed, but his stepfather, Max. Max had just walked out, and Tim was angry because his mother was so unhappy, angry because Max had been fun as well as a good father and a sharer of responsibility. Now Tim worries about money; his mother, Margot, seems convinced that her work as a realtor is adequate and she is perturbed by Tim’s constant nagging about saving. When Margot announces she’s going to take a California vacation, Tim refuses to go along; he’s convinced she’ll come back with Max and even prepares a welcoming ceremony—but she returns alone. And so both face the truth: Max isn’t coming back. Woven through this major aspect of a year in Tim’s life are his concern for a friend with hemophilia and a severe crush on a girl older than he, Melanie, who’s been his buddy and who complains to her mother (who takes it very calmly) that Tim has caressed her breasts. The several parts of the story remain fairly isolated, but it’s written with perception and verve, and it gives a realistic picture of a year of adjustment in a boy’s life and of his acceptance of changes: his friend Joey faces the possibility of death, Melanie is interested only in boys her own age or older, and his mother (in a warmly depicted relationship) and he will survive without Max.


Profusely illustrated with photographs of good quality, this examines the major industries and crafts of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The writing is direct and clear; in some cases the author describes processes step by step (the cooperatives’ production and shipping of butter in Denmark, for example) and in other cases gives an idea of the range of products (the many items manufactured from the wood of Scandinavian forests) with facts about processing. A useful book, this not only supplies information about the economy of the countries but also makes it clear that industrial success depends in part on natural resources and in part on the initiative and diligence of the inhabitants.

Barth, Edna, ad. *Cupid and Psyche; A Love Story*; pictures by Ati Forberg. Seabury, 1976. 76-8821. 64p. $6.95.

Beautifully illustrated with wash drawings (black, white, and rust) that incorporate Grecian motifs and that are handsomely arranged on the pages, this version of the mythical love story (its first written version attributed to Apuleis, the author’s note states, and “said to represent the progress of the human soul toward perfection,”) is polished and moving. It describes the love of Cupid for the lovely mortal, Psyche, whom he weds, and the vengeful jealousy of his mother Venus; it contains the device that so frequently appears in myth and folktale: the wife who loses her husband if she
looks at him; it continues the tale to describe Psyche's despair, Cupid's contrition, and the reunion in which Venus forgives all and Psyche becomes a goddess.


Stories from several Native American tribes are grouped under the headings “Why Animals Are That Way,” “Why Our World Is Like It Is,” “Great Troubles and Great Heroes,” “People Can Turn Into Anything,” “Brother Coyote,” and “There Is Magic All Around Us.” The stories were told the compiler by children in Arizona, and their names and tribes are provided. All the stories are simply told, some with the abrupt directness of a young child, others with a true sense of the storyteller's cadence, and together they make a good cross-section of folktale types.


An adventure story is set on the Scottish coast, where thirteen-year-old Lesley is convalescing from pneumonia and therefore has time to follow her inclination to pursue a mystery: how did the diamond button she found on the beach get there? She meets a small boy, Torquil Lockhart, whose father is a professor hunting for evidence of the fact that an indomitable Spanish woman had taken part in the Armada and had perhaps been shipwrecked on the bay beach. When other artifacts turn up, newspaper publicity brings Josefa (underwater explorer and television personality) to the scene, claiming that the historic Dona Filomena was her ancestress. The story, which has an interesting setting, adequate characterization, and believable events up to this point, degenerates thenceforward into a lurid adventure tale, as the beautiful but evil Josefa takes the children, holding Torquil hostage on a ship anchored in the bay. Lesley is sent to tell his father, goes back to the ship, and rescues Torquil. The book is also weakened by the rather substantial amount of historical and pseudo-historical information that is given, particularly in conversation between Professor Lockhart and Lesley.


Kilroy, a young killer whale, is caught and brought to a Marineland aquarium, where he watches a dolphin do tricks in a training program. Bored and restless, irritated by the hostility of the dolphin, missing his friend Morris the seagull, Kilroy decides he can do any trick the dolphin can do. He's a bit baffled by the humans, since all his efforts to communicate with them fail, although they are apparently intelligent beings. Kilroy's pleased when Morris shows up and, with the seagull's help, he tricks the humans into letting him go back to sea. There Kilroy discovers that it isn't as easy to operate alone as it was while he was a member of a pod. The book ends with a marvelous chapter in which a group of scientists jeers at one of their number who is convinced the whales are trying to establish communication—and then they are all convinced, capering madly as the whales leap in formation. “Gulls,” Morris says enviously, “could never get people to do tricks like that.” There is humor in the story, but the whales' behavior is based on research, even the whale-seagull friendship, and the book has many provocative ideas that are deftly blended with the brisk narrative.


Some fragments of Emily Dickinson's poetry are used to make more explicit the photographic commentary on the seasons of the year. The pictures are in color, they
are beautifully evocative of the seasons, from spring to winter, and they are tied
together by having—along with other pictures—two sets of shots, one a bend in a
river and the other a row of sugar maples, that are taken from the same spot in each
season. A fine book to use when discussing seasonal changes with young children,
and a pleasant visual experience at any age.

76-3633. 32p. $4.99.

Illustrated in cartoon style, this story of an unhappy snake leans heavily on a
one-gag situation and on sibilance for humor. Unable to slither, Simon is a big,
healthy, rigid snake who can't keep up with the play of the other young snakes; he
repeatedly gets hurt when he tries to imitate his sinuous friends. Chased by hunters,
Simon forms a bridge across a river by stiffly extending from tree to tree; the other
snakes slither across, and then Simon finds that the exertion has stretched and
loosened him. Now he can slither. Not quite effective, even in the fantasy
framework, since Simon has been exerting and stretching all through the book.
However, there is some humor in the situation, and the read-aloud audience may
enjoy both Simon's achievement of his goal and the hissing language. Samples: "One
sunny Saturday in September, some sneaky poachers came stalking snakes," or,"
"Astounded, the snakes saw a slithering Simon circle them ecstatically, showing off
his skill."


It was a Yankee player, Whitey Ford, who first called Pete Rose "Charlie Hustle,"
and if the Cincinnati star is known for his prowess as a hitter he is just as famous
for the aggressive enthusiasm with which he plays and talks baseball. Burchard gives
a brief but adequate account of Rose's boyhood, concentrating on his professional
career and including some lively game sequences. The book is illustrated by some
action photographs; the level of the writing, the large print, and the ample leading are
nicely geared for younger readers.

Chace, G. Earl. Wonders of Prairie Dogs; written and photographed by G. Earl Chace.
Dodd, 1976. 76-12510. 76p. $4.95.

Unlike Eberle's Prairie Dogs in Prairie Dog Town (reviewed in the March, 1975
issue) which has a narrative form, this has no fictionalization; it covers much of the
same material in describing habitat, group and individual habits, diet, predators, and
burrows. Chace gives more information, however, about the problems prairie dogs
cause ranchers and farmers and about the opposing viewpoints in the controversy
about the prairie dog's usefulness or damage in the prairie ecology. While the test
has, occasionally, awkward use of language ("... the hair is thicker, longer, and
some grayer...") the writing is for the most part lucid, and the material, written by
the curator of a South Dakota "reptile garden" is authoritative. A bibliography and
an index are appended.

76-28453. 169p. $5.95.

A seafarer's yarn, full of piracy, buried treasure, and an evil ghost, is embedded in
a brisk little realistic story in which Corbett achieves the maximum in evocation of
setting, sound characterization and dialogue, and an exciting conclusion. Eleven-
year-old George, who tells the story, has come with his family to visit old, salty Aunt
Fanny for an island summer. Fly in the ointment: pompous, hostile cousin Leo, now
fourteen and just as unfriendly as he was the last time he was at Aunt Fanny's. But
the story of Captain Butcher, found in a book Leo had been reading, draws the two together; they look forward to the centennial occasion on which the ghost is due to reappear—but it doesn’t. Some days later, the cousins realize that the calendar has changed in two centuries; alone on the beach, they share a ghostly, ghastly vision.


A wordless picture book is illustrated with pictures in dulled colors that are compensated for by the mild humor of the situation and by the appeal of the animal characters and the party setting. While tasting cake frosting, the alligator gets a severe toothache, and he greets his guests with a bandage on his jaws. When his friends send for the dentist (yes, a house call) the alligator hides and refuses to see him; his friends trick their host and get the dentist in. Tooth removed, the alligator is immediately happy and the party proceeds. There’s enough action for so brief a tale, a hint of didacticism, and a story clearly told by the pictures—if one assumes that small children will recognize the depiction of dental anguish and the significance of the bandaged jaw.


First translated in a British edition, this is a story set in Amsterdam during World War II, at the time of Nazi occupation. Dirk, who is eleven and tells the story, is frustrated because his older brother is clearly involved in some kind of undercover activity but spurns Dirk’s urgent suggestions that he, too, might help. In an incident that occurs at the end of the story, Dirk rescues a small Jewish girl he meets and safely places her with a sympathetic aunt. Like other stories of occupied countries, this gives a clear picture of the oppression and persecution by the German forces, but the book is weakened by the slow buildup before Dirk’s rescue of Hadassa, with little plot development (save for his secret attempt to distribute newspapers taken from his brother’s room), and repeated listings of German strictures about Dutch citizens—and particularly of Jewish citizens—from his brother’s room, and repeated listings of German strictures about Dutch citizens—and particularly of Jewish citizens”—daily life.


An account of Adolf Hitler’s life from his mother’s death in 1907, when he was eighteen, to the time of the Munich putsch, 1923. The biography is highly fictionalized, not unsympathetic, and marred by florid writing. Forman spends several pages describing, in melodramatic style, the terminal stages of Klara Hitler’s illness, Hitler’s feelings about her Jewish doctor, and the funeral, all of which is described in the Kleins’ *Hitler’s Hang-Ups* (reviewed below) in two sentences. The writing style is exemplified by a paragraph about Hitler’s troubled night; one sentence reads, “When he did sleep, his dreams arose like waking thoughts, only speeded up, given color: a wild dance of horned and hooded shapes with beetling brows and the glint of malignant eyes, spidery forms that stooped in the shadows of the mind.” Given the biographer’s privilege of choosing facts to include, Forman has depended less on fact than on imagination for much of his text. No sources are cited.


Told by the circus ringmaster that his unicycle riding act is stale, Bearymore prepares for his hibernation in a depressed state. Worried, he tosses and turns, gets up to try new stunts but remembers that his friends the performing seals already did them, and gives up, setting his alarm clock for April. The bear wakes to an April shower and recalls that his unicycle is still outdoors. It’s muddy out, so Bearymore
crosses the yard via laundry line, using the umbrella for balance and protection. On the way back it occurs to him that he can ride the unicycle—and there's his new act: a unicycle on a tightrope! Brief and blithe, with uncluttered pictures of appealing circus scenes, the story—one of Freeman's best in a long time—is nicely told and has the appeals of a wish granted and of achievement.


A life-cycle story is illustrated with black and white drawings, large scale and carefully placed. The print is good size and the text is straightforward despite the narrative format. There is no personification; the turkey buzzards are neither named nor invested with personality. The author describes the bird's appearance, nesting and feeding habits, and timid behavior. She explains the usefulness of its role as a scavenger, and incorporates into the text incidents (an egg that doesn't hatch, a bird shot by a hunter) that make the inclusion of her views on pesticides and human predators a natural part of the narrative flow. While the name "turkey buzzard" is still common usage, it might have been preferable if the author had used correct terminology; the "turkey buzzard" is a vulture, "buzzard" is a European bird, and ornithological reference books have not used "turkey buzzard" for many years.


In the sixth and last volume of her series of retellings of Greek myths, Gates begins with the oath required by Tyndareus of his daughter Helen's suitors and concludes with the fall of Troy. Her style is competent, direct and clear, although at times so detailed as to slow the narrative pace, and—less frequently—marred by explanations that give background but interrupt the flow of the story. The illustrations are in tones of grey, beautifully modulated, strong in composition and dramatic in effect.


An addition to Glubok's useful series of books about the arts and crafts of Native American cultures focuses on the forest dwellers of the eastern United States and Canada. As in other Glubok books, the illustrations of art objects, articles of clothing, weapons, musical instruments, et cetera, are carefully placed in relation to the text which describes them and relates them to the tribal cultures from which they emanate. The photographs and reproductions are of good quality, the format dignified, the writing style direct, a bit dry, and unassuming.


Lisa, in junior high school, has several problems. One is that she's jealous of her best friend, Annie, although she loves her, because Carl Richardson seems to prefer Annie. Another is that she feels her parents make too heavy demands on her because her twin brother is retarded. Lisa is studying for her Bat Mitzvah, the Jewish rite of confirmation into adult status; she also is burdened because Carl's stepfather has painted a swastika on his house. (Eventually she secretly covers it with paint.) She's also occupied with several projects stemming from volunteer work instigated by the youth group at the Jewish community center. In fact, the novel seems almost a vehicle for the information given about the center and about religious rites and customs. The book is weakened by a plethora of sub-plots and activities, and by the florid writing style, which occasionally is really awkward: "... when he stood next..."
to Lisa he towered slightly over her . . .” The person who “towers slightly” over Lisa is her retarded twin, who has been secretly coached at Lisa’s behest by his teacher so that he can surprise their parents and participate in the ceremony, in a final scene that is as mawkish as those old nurse stories with a candlelight capping and a happy tear in every eye.


Bob and Lucy Carter have been warned by the real estate agent that the attic of their rented summer home is off limits; they’ve also been warned that there is a dangerous undertow in the ocean and that a girl of Lucy’s age had once died. Their parents are not really worried, but the doctor who examines Lucy, after she is frightened by a “sea-woman” who tries to drown her, advises the Carters to leave. The children investigate the attic and find an old diary kept by Victoria Sykes, mother of the drowned Lucinda; Lucy is convinced she is being haunted by Victoria, and subsequent supernatural events affect Bob (who tells the story) also. Then a murdered girl is found on the beach, and the realtor is murdered. Mr. Carter buys a rifle to protect his family. The doctor is murdered. Bob sees a ghost with a knife, and Lucy recognizes it as the sea-woman. The author at this point describes, in an italicized insert, the grandniece of Victoria, respectable Priscilla Sykes, gazing into a crystal ball at Lucy’s image and saying, “You shall be mine,” and pondering over the necessity of having murdered and the fact that Bob would have to be punished for keeping Lucy-Lucinda from her. Back to Bob, then, as he sees two male ghosts who call him “Master Oliver.” Then Lucinda’s diary turns up, and makes it clear that she had tried to kill her brother Oliver. Dad sees, and tries to shoot, the ghost; he goes to a medium. Lucy goes to the hospital, where she evinces hyperkinetic powers. They all go to the medium, and the evil Lucinda who has taken Lucy over is exorcised. Priscilla commits suicide; the authorities discover evidence of her guilt. The Carters go home. The combination of violence and the supernatural is given in a massive overdose in a story that is so unconvincing it robs the book of the suspense or credibility that might have made it a passable mystery-adventure story.


Large-scale, cartoon style drawings illustrate a rather repetitive text in verse: “Yes, a friend is the best one to hop, skip, or run with . . . for playing some catch . . . or just having fun with,” or, “And for watching TV, a friend is the best / for cheering cartoons with, and booing the rest.” Some readers-aloud may object to the idea that all television fare save for cartoons is to be booed, or that one of a friend’s functions is to protect you, in play, from an “injun attack.” Slight, not highly original, and pedestrian in writing and illustration, the book has the minimal appeals of the friendship theme and the familiar activities described and pictured.


Most of the insects in the elegantly gruesome drawings by Chess are amusing, but they do have look-alike faces; Hoberman’s poems have more variety but little flair. She writes as lightly as she did in *The Raucous Auk*, but with less wit and originality; the poems here tend to be quasi-humorous complaints about, or descriptions of, various bugs.


Roger and Stephen, two English boys who have just finished school, go to Yugoslavia to join Stephen’s father and become embroiled in high adventure, in a suspense
M 7-9 story that has plenty of action and local color but is weakened by rather heavy doses of historical information and by the frenetic plot. The madonna of the title is a rare icon that has been hidden in a cave, is found by Roger, and is stolen by two Swiss art thieves. The Swiss drive off with the icon and a local boy, Scotch-Yugoslavian, who rescues the icon by what he is convinced is the icon’s miraculous power. Joey, the English boys have called him, but they have misheard. It is “Zoë,” and she is a girl. The book has some interesting facts about, and a great deal of enthusiasm for, icons and medieval art, but they—like the historical facts—are laboriously incorporated.


In an explosion of fantasy, the eminent British poet envisions the creatures, the customs, and the landscape of a lunatic world; his icy, eerie imagery is echoed by the grotesque, adroit pen and ink drawings of Baskin. The title poem begins, “They plough through the moon stuff/Just under the surface/Lifting the moon’s skin/Like a muscle...” Here, and in some others of the poems, there is a sonorous felicity of phrase and conception. There is, however, a less familiar playfulness in some selections, an extravagance of concepts that almost leads to a suspicion that Hughes is having one on. It’s not an even collection, but it is ebullient in a mood that is often macabre. Intriguing, at times wonderfully splendid.


First published in London, a hymn to friendship that is illustrated in the style of Boutet de Monvel, with muted colors and precise, old-fashioned drawings. The text consists of a series of activities shared by friends. “We need friends to play with, for jumping over, and bumping over, and making mean ugly faces—or beautiful smiling faces,” is used for six full-page illustrations. The book has, like Halliman’s That’s What a Friend Is (reviewed above), the appeal of familiar activities, and the illustrations are of far better quality, but it, too, may find a limited audience because of the subdued tone.

Jahn, Mike. How To Make a Hit Record. Bradbury, 1976. 76-9939. 118p. $7.95.

Radio commentator and newspaper critic of rock music, Jahn uses, in addition to his own advice, the comments of ten other professionals in the music business to add validity to the account of the career of an imaginary singer. The book, written in easy, informal style, follows the career of the singer-composer from an amateur interest in guitar playing, to a part-time job in a small restaurant, to a concentration on making a living by his music, with a move to New York, the services of an agent, and eventually making a hit record. Through the comments of a disc jockey, a sound engineer, a composer, the owner of a restaurant-club, a producer, and other specialists in the music business, Jahn gives a full picture of the usually-tedious route to success. The book does not give easy access to its information, but almost any fact a hopeful performer might want to know is answered at some point in the text.


Soft, precisely drawn pictures in brown, black and white show a small black girl finding a solution to an everyday predicament. The front door had been open, and Sara had come in and closed it behind her, unfortunately catching her jacket in the door. Nobody came when she called, but Sara finally realized that if she unbuttoned her jacket, she could walk away. And she did. Young children can empathize with
Sara's apprehension and with her sense of achievement in a story that is slight but nicely told and pertinent to the concerns and skills of the preschooler.


A jaunty rhyming text suggests all the activities that you may be able to do but (refrain) "you can't catch me." The illustrations show three lively children, a boy and two beruffled girls, playing. Example: "You can hammer nails in / thump thump thump / You can sit your way down stairs / bump bump bump / You can jump around a room / as fast as any flea / and bite the nearest person / but you can't catch me." Over the pages on which these lines appear, the children are hammering nails into boxes, bumping down stairs, and hopping about like fleas. Not too substantial, but the text has rhyme and rhythm and the free play, with nary an adult in sight, should appeal to the read-aloud audience.


Kaufmann's carefully authentic illustrations, some of which show structural details, add to the information given by a clearly written text that is nicely geared in scope, print size, and reading difficulty for the intended audience. He describes the fossils that led to an understanding of how the first birds developed from some prehistoric reptiles, the changes that took place in body structure over millenia, and theories about how the earliest birds began to fly.


Given to throwing tantrums, Dover tries a fine specimen when he's told he must stay with his grandmother while his mother is in the hospital having a baby. It doesn't work; his father takes him to grandmother's house anyway. He hates it: no T.V., no dishwasher, old furniture, nothing to do. He throws a tantrum. Grandmother not only ignores it, she outdoes him in kicking (a door that's stuck), hammering (a loose floorboard) and other behavior that looks like a tantrum. And she isn't even having one! Dover's impressed. He also finds there are plenty of things to do, and is not anxious to go home when his father shows up. But he's learned something—he doesn't lose his temper; he goes home and even adjusts to a baby sister. The text moves from prose to rhyme during the temper sequences, a device that is not effective because, in contrast to the light tone and realistic events of the rest of the story, the tantrum episodes are exaggerated. The return home and acceptance of the baby are realistic but seem extraneous. However, there is a great deal of humor in the book, and the lesson is given without any minatory air.


Betsy, whose father disappeared while exploring years before and has been declared legally dead, whose mother and stepfather have been killed in an accident, has come to live with an aunt and uncle. Too tall, she thinks, insecure and a misfit: Betsy tells her story with a bit of adolescent gushiness and intensity as she goes through a year of falling in love with Nick (firmly attached to the class belle) and with the school drama club. The text mixes script-style dialogues and narration with staccato effect, and Betsy occasionally sounds too young for her age (seventeen) but her preoccupation with Nick, her growing interest in acting, and her integration into a second family and a new school group are convincing and are balanced by a genuine interest in other people and their problems.

The Kleins have divided their text into two parts: in the first, titled “The Surface,” they record the events of Hitler’s life, and in the second, “The Depths,” they discuss unofficial reports and comments, with analyses (their own and those of scientists) of the causes, motivations, aberrations, and inadequacies of Hitler’s personality. There is, of necessity, a certain amount of repetition in the second section, but it is not burdensome, and the book as a whole succeeds in being as objective and as moderate in tone as could be expected, given the subject. The authors’ stated purpose is to arm readers against the blandishments or threats of other political figures by exposing the weaknesses in, and the growing legendry about, one dictator whose reputation (they say) as a political and military genius has grown since his death. The writing style is competent, the material sequential, the research evident. A list of suggested additional reading and an index are appended.


In the first story about Zan (Suzanne) Hagen, *Zanballer,* she convinced the coach to let the girls’ football team, of which she was the moving spirit, to play the boys’ team. Here Zan is into basketball, angry at the girls’ gym teacher (a caricature rather than a character) who doesn’t want her little ladies to be rough, and angry at the inadequacy of the program and facilities for girls’ sports. Part of the book is from the journal of Zan’s buddy, private coach and supporter, Arthur Rinehart; the major portion is in first person. This has plenty of action, some humor, a great deal of repetition in game or practice sequences, and a wishes-granted conclusion. But, as in the first book, the diary entries are not convincing; the characters are often lampoons; and much as sports stories with female protagonists are welcome, this one has a long, formal trial sequence that is unbelievable, as Rinehart serves as Zan’s counsel against the school’s attorney and wins for her—with the last-minute help of the boys’ coach—the right to play on the boys’ team.

Lapp, Eleanor J. *The Mice Came In Early This Year;* pictures by David Cunningham. Whitman, 1976. 76-45629. 29p. (A Self-Starter Book). Trade ed. $4.00; Library ed. $3.00 net.

The small child who tells the story explains that Grandmother’s remark about the mice coming in early meant that winter was near. The text consists of a listing of all the seasonal changes they observe, and of tasks they and neighbors did: taking a boat out of the water, picking and storing apples, gathering potatoes. Preparing, as the mice did, for the cold season ahead. The writing is spare and direct, the water color illustrations effective in composition and in use of color, and the pages spacious in format. A very nice story indeed to help reinforce environmental concepts or an understanding of seasonal change, or to stimulate interest in nature study. Simple enough for beginning readers, this may also interest the read-aloud audience.


The development of a number system is told as fiction, with the struggles of an ingenious shepherd of times past adding humor to the account. As bags of markers and records on stone were outgrown, the decimal system and the use of the zero were “invented” by the spurious shepherd, who crowned his work by concocting a slide rule. The first pages are numbered in the style of the text they carry, with rows of the word “page” (and “page, page” for two; “page, page, page” for three), then a
notched stick, etc. Once we get to conventional digits the pages are numbered in conventional fashion. All of this may capture readers’ interest and amuse them, but they will certainly have some misconceptions (the shepherd is visited by the Emperor, driven in a coach with footmen in attendance) about the time and place of number development. Instructions for making a cardboard slide rule, with metric markings, are given at the end of the book.


In their first collaborative book, the Lobels have produced a tale in the folk genre, the story of a clever rooster who outwits a thief. Captured by a robber who plans to kill him so that, without the crowing that starts the day, there will be no light (and better working conditions for the robber), the cock protests that he is deaf. His reasons are so ludicrous that the robber is overcome with laughter: the cock cannot crow because he moos or quacks (he says) having been so much with cows or ducks. To show what he means, the robber loudly imitates a cock-crow . . . and the sun comes up. The writing style is light, humorous and graceful; it reads aloud well. However, readers and listeners may wonder why the cock didn’t just crow and walk off, since he wasn’t being held and the robber simply took off with the light of dawn. The illustrations, in soft tones of red and yellow, formally framed and beautifully detailed, have a high sense of design and composition.


Scheherezade lives again! Caught by a weasel who plans to make soup of him, a wily mouse convinces his captor that the soup would taste better with stories in it. He tells a few tales: a clever mouse gets away from doting bees, a rosebush grows out of a chair, two rocks wonder what’s on the other side of the mountain, a mouse and some crickets have trouble communicating. Fine, says the weasel, how does he get the stories into the soup? The mouse sends the noodlehead off to catch bees, crickets, et cetera, and quietly goes home. Robust little tales-within-a-tale are nicely framed by the soup story, with its satisfying ending. The deft pictures echo in color and mood the smooth understatement of the stories, simply told for beginning readers, but also suitable for reading aloud to younger children.


A story set in a small Florida town is told by Mary Frances Allen, whose family couldn’t resist any stray dog and always had a few around. Mary Frances’ two best friends are Alison, who is black, and Ronnie; the three welcome a new girl in town, Stella, and their joint efforts to help the members of Stella’s shiftless family parallel the Allen’s concern for their strays. The group even helps Stella’s older brother Billy steal money. The cash is in the store of a curmudgeon whose daughter Emily (older than the quartet, and the beloved of Billy) has been forced to drop out of school; Emily’s mother has died and her lazy, bullying father insists she run the store—while he drinks. The money is to be stolen so that Stella and Billy can elope. Billy is sent to jail for ten days, insisting on going even though he admits he turned away from the intended crime at the last moment; he is doing it to “show these kids that it isn’t a joke to break the law.” The story has warm relationships and adequate characterization, but it is marred by didacticism and the rather sugary all-ends-tied ending.


A sequel to Dragonsong (reviewed in the July, 1976 issue), a science fantasy in
which young Menolly, who yearns to be a harpist, is roughly treated by her sexist father and runs away to another community of the planet. Her identity as the composer of music that has excited the Master Harper is unmasked, and in this novel Menolly comes to Harper Hall as an apprentice. Her talent and her brood of nine fire lizards stir admiration in some and envy in others, as she struggles through her first term and becomes a journeyman. McCaffrey has constructed a believable fantasy world; the characterization is excellent, the writing style fluent and vigorous, and the plot soundly constructed and briskly paced.


In a companion volume to World of Our Fathers: The Jews of Eastern Europe (reviewed in the June, 1975 issue) Meltzer examines the lives of those Eastern European Jews who came to the United States between the 1880’s and the 1920’s. Describing the pogroms, poverty, and prejudice that they fled, the author uses source material to corroborate and color his account of the difficulties of the passage and the adjustment to a new life. He is comprehensive in scope and serious in tone, surveying every aspect of the immigrant experience: the sweatshops and child labor, education and cultural life, involvement in the labor unions, problems of housing, etcetera. Well-researched, the book has an impressive bibliography and an extensive index.


Koral was pregnant, in despair because Ron had rejected her and his baby, resentful because her parents had refused to agree to an abortion, unhappy because her younger brother refused to speak to her, and worried about whether or not her pony Gusty was receiving adequate care while she was at Haven House awaiting the birth of her child. The book conveys a sense of the comradeship that grows among the girls at Haven House, and it gives a view of the range of attitudes among those girls, but the author overcrowds her canvas. Too many characters, too many sub-plots, and too much guilt and anguish as Koral thinks of what she has done to make her beloved brother reject her, of how happy she had been with Ron, of how cold she is toward her parents, and so on. There are many comparisons between Koral’s desire for freedom and Gusty’s, and it seems anticlimactic when a book that deals with love, trust, betrayal, cruelty, and other serious aspects of a serious situation should have as its denouement the news of the death of the pony (perhaps symbolizing the dangers of freedom, since the pony had run into near accidents many times before when running away, and had this time been killed), an event that finally brings Koral to the point of showing her family the love she felt. The fate of Koral’s baby remains unresolved. The writing style is mediocre, the plot muddled, the characterization minimal, and the print woefully small.


In a wordless picture book illustrated with cartoon drawings set amid stunningly colored painted backgrounds, a cowboy goes on a vehicular spree. He leaps from a mountaintop to an ancient velocipede; climbs a ladder to mount a sway-backed nag and carries it across a suspension bridge when it balks; he goes from covered wagon to stage coach to train to car to airplane to balloon. There is zany humor in the drawings: the wagon’s horse team stops when it sees a stop sign, the Indians chasing the stagecoach fall back when the cowboy pulls his pants down to expose a rump painted with staring eyes, the stores of a village street bear names like W. C. Fields,
Ben Turpin, and the Marx Brothers as proprietors. It is unfortunate that the Native American stereotype is perpetuated, even in such a spoof of Westerns, but the color, vigor, and humor should appeal to children.


First published in Japan, a direct and simple picture book is illustrated with uncluttered, softly colored paintings. A small boy describes his visit to the farm; all his attention is given to the cows, sheep, goats, and pigs as they play, rest, and eat on a summer day. Slight, but the brevity and the subject should appeal to young children. The text is easy to remember and "read," once the book has been read aloud: "In the next field there were some sheep and three goats. I gave them armfuls of grass to eat. Then I took some vegetables to the pigs." Static but realistic.


*The Metric System Is* is the introductory volume in a set of five; it gives some background information about the use of the metric system throughout most of the world, the resistance to its use in this country, the fact that 1975 legislation will be implemented to achieve that use, and some basic facts about terminology in the metric system. The book is adequate as an introduction, although it gives less background information than most of the books published for children in the last few years that deal with the metric system. The other four books are *The Liter Is*, *The Gram Is*, *The Celsius Thermometer Is* and the *The Meter Is*; the latter gives facts about the terms used for measurement of distance and about their relationship to each other, and provides many examples: children measure a garden and find it 5 x 7 meters, soccer fields are about 110 x 68 meters, etc. The books are illustrated with photographs, most of which add no information; the writing is simple and direct; there is some advantage in having separate volumes that deal with metric measurement of distance, weight or mass, temperature, and liquid volume, but there is little here that is not in other books on the subject, and some of them give more information and, through indexes, better access to that information.


This is identified on the dust jacket as a "musical comedy-fantasy" that can be adapted for performance. A cowpuncher has a purple cow that runs away because it is tired of being punched; a sweet young thing is discovered in a pool of her own tears because she is a plumber who cannot find a sink; the two join forces with a drummer who's lost his drum. A ghost who has been helped by them gives them a magic kazoo, a tiny knight takes them to the Peppermint Palace; the King of Kazoo shows them his collections of kazoos and purple animals. All ends with the King and his touchy Queen on good terms, the cowpuncher and cow reunited, and the plumber and drummer having found not only a drum to drum and a leak to fix, but each other. The writing is heavily slangy, often in western style, and sprinkled with word play: the King points out that he really ought to call his guests' chambers their "thirds" rather than their "quarters" since there are only three of them. The musical notation for the songs, melodic line only, is given at the back of the book, the lyrics being included there and also in the text. The illustrations are pedestrian, the text a contrived patchwork, barely redeemed by heavy-handed humor.
A nice, if not wholly new, concept (a monster afraid of monsters) is so poorly illustrated that the book is vitiated. Frightened by monsters in his room who refuse to leave, Fred trots off to his parents' bedroom. "There are no monsters here," says Daddy, "Get into bed with us." Parental comforting is certainly in order, but the inference (if not the implication) may be that it's safe in Mommy's and Daddy's room, but not in one's own. Otherwise the story is succinctly told. The pictures do not show the cowering child's face until the end, so that his parents' faces come as a surprise; however, the awkwardness and mediocrity of the drawings are those of an inferior cartoon.


A child psychologist and an educator, Richards and Willis have produced a sensible, candid book that explores the problems of marital unhappiness, parents who have severe emotional troubles, separation and divorce, and adjustment after the family has broken up. The preface is, unfortunately, addressed to adults, and there is an occasional generalization, but the book is otherwise a potential help to adolescents who are trying to cope with their own reactions of guilt, anger, confusion, or apprehension about the future. It gives specific examples of different kinds of situations as well as specific suggestions and alternatives for dealing with them, and the writing style is forthright and informal.


Sharmat and Chorao are both at their best in a story that is as endearing as it is amusing. Jason, a bear cub, thinks he's marvelous. He does all the things he should do, complacently awards himself gold stars, and is not averse to telling other small bears how terrific he is. The other bears somehow do not find this an attractive trait, and Jason decides that he'll have to change if he wants friends. So he tries being nasty. That doesn't work either. Conclusion: Jason gives away his gold stars, announces that he'll be himself (with no boasting) and is quickly accepted by the other cubs. The relationship between Jason and his mother is exemplary: Mrs. Bear is loving, moderate, wise, and patient, encouraging Jason's independence and supportive toward his experiments. The pictures are softly drawn and amusing, and the text is written with bland humor.

Shearer, John. *Billy Jo Jive Super Private Eye; The Case of the Missing Ten Speed Bike*; pictures by Ted Shearer. Delacorte, 1976. 75-43563. 47p. Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $5.47 net.

Mixed-media cartoon style drawings illustrate a slangy urban story of achievement, told in first person. Jive announces he's the best, the bravest, the smartest Private Eye in the world. So when he spies Susie Sunset weeping because her brother's bike is lost (he's due back from camp; she had borrowed it), Jive gets to work. After following some false leads, he decides that the thief must be Dynamite Jones because he knew without being told that it was a ten speed bike. The two catch Dynamite red-handed, tie him up with the help of some hastily-summoned friends, and greet Susie's brother with discreet silence. The illustrations are of average cartoon quality and the story line is pedestrian, but the action, vitality, and successful conclusion should appeal to primary grades readers.

In a story set in a rain forest, Henri hippopotamus plays hide-and-seek with his friend Pierre rhinoceros. At first Henri is easy to find, but on the third try he is so successfully hidden that Pierre, hunting him, gets diverted repeatedly into other pursuits. Henri gets bored, goes home and to bed, and is there discovered. The two friends decide it would be more fun to do something active together, rather than be separated all day by one of them hiding. So they go swimming. There’s always some appeal in animal stories, and there’s a modicum of action in Pierre’s activities, but the plot is quite slight, albeit adequately written; Shecter’s bright, moderately fanciful pictures are pleasant but not impressive.

Silverstein, Alvin. *Heart Disease*; by Alvin and Virginia B. Silverstein. Follett, 1976. 76-5319. 122p. illus. Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $5.97 net.

A comprehensive survey of cardiovascular disease is soberly written but not dry, gives authoritative information, and is logically organized and amply illustrated. The authors describe the structure and functioning of the heart and the rest of the circulatory system, the various malfunctions or defects that are popularly grouped under the term “heart disease” and the devices and techniques used in heart surgery. Subsequent chapters discuss heart attacks and what to do if one has or sees such an attack, the relationship between heart ailments and exercise, diet, and the pressures of modern living, and research and preventive measures. A most useful book, not alarmist but candid and sensible. An index is appended.


Mixed media drawings (watercolor and pen-and-ink) illustrate a lively and nonsensical story about a frog detective. Alphonse le Flic has been commissioned by the indigent Duke (sic) de Buffo Buffo to find treasure buried in a “large house” in England. Disguised as an onion seller, Alphonse ties his bicycle to his submarine, and emerges in Winklesea, where he disrupts a lorry-load (the picture shows what looks like an ancient touring car) of frogs. The frogs give chase, Alphonse goes to the monastery (the “large house”) and finds the treasure. Back in France, the casket proves to contain rubbish; it and Alphonse are tossed out the window; to the joy of the Duke (“We’re rich! . . . We can live happily ever after!”) the casket splits and out come twenty gold coins. The pictures are not too cluttered but they fill the pages, text being at top or bottom, so that the facing pages meet jarringly at the center. The plot has action and humor, but it jumps about at uneven pace.


Set in 1780, this is a frontier story that is as convincing in its recreation of place and time as are other books by Steele, but it may be limited in appeal to readers because of the slow pace. It is the story of Talatu, a young Cherokee who obeys his great-uncle and goes off to live with a white man, Shinn, even though he hates the whites for what they have done to his people. Shinn is a Quaker, and his more militant neighbors disapprove of this as much as they do Shinn’s harboring a Cherokee. Talatu slowly loses his distrust of Shinn, and he is touched when the man, against his pacific principles, kills an attacker to save Talatu’s life. Only when Shinn is dying does he divulge the fact that he is Talatu’s father; the boy is horrified to learn he is half white, but he accepts it as a fact and turns happily toward the Cherokee home he has longed for.

Ad

Adolescent Thorvarthur is a dreamer, an aspiring writer, one of three young men in a farming family in a story set in Iceland. He works for some months on another farm, where he falls in love with a visitor; it is partly to see the lovely Frøken Stockmann and partly to try to get his work published that he leaves home to go to Reykjavik. His one chance encounter with Frøken Stockmann is a blow, since she cuts him; he has trouble finding work, but is encouraged when one of his poems is accepted for publication. Knowing his family needs his help, Thorvarthur considers going back to the farm, but decides that he must remain independent, must continue his writing. While the stately pace and the setting may intrigue some readers, or the flavor of the prose appeal to others, this is a static novel. Autobiographical, it was first published in Denmark, where it won an award (referred to on the front jacket flap as the Hans Christian Anderson Award, on the back flap as the Hans Christian Andersen Award, and in neither case to be confused with the award of that name conferred by the International Board on Books for Young People on a children's author) and was translated into English by the author, in a style reminiscent of Knut Hamsun's.


R

K-3 First published in Switzerland, this engaging reversal of the familiar theme of the creature who wants to be another sort of animal is nicely told and is illustrated with amusing, sophisticated color pictures in pencil and airbrush. A bear wakes from his winter sleep to find that a factory has been built over his den; when he appears and insists he is a bear, not a man, he is scoffed at. Other bears will corroborate his claim, he says—but the zoo bears reject him (bears don't sit in the audience, they dance), so the bewildered, docile bear dons work clothes and joins a button-pushing crew. Time passes, autumn comes, the bear is sleepy; he is fired for laziness. Turned down by a motel proprietor who says that bears cannot be accommodated, the bear is satisfied to find, at last, someone who acknowledges that he's a bear. He goes off into the snowy forest, and there is a den. Last picture: a heap of clothes outside the den, and paw prints leading to it. The illustrations are handsome, especially one of the snow scenes with a harsh, acrylic blue neon sign, "'Motel,'" and the story has a message about conformity that's a bonus for the child who sees it but that does not lessen the appeal or cohesion of the book for the child who misses it.


Ad

5- While a few of the twenty-two full color paintings show scenes in the countryside outside Montreal, most of the pictures show the color and vigor of the cosmopolitan city and the vitality of its ethnic neighborhoods. Tanobe's text—partly descriptive and partly biographical—extends the information given by the paintings; printed in twin columns (French and English), it is a bit too florid and too personal to make interesting reading, but it can be browsed through fairly painlessly. The painting, however, is wonderfully robust.


R

5-7 Thiele is adept at creating a convincing, dramatic setting for his stories of Australia; here the characters move against a background of a small town intent on preserving the old, abandoned lighthouse that is on a spit of land dangerously battered by winter storms. Two of the most ardent defenders of the condemned light-
house are twelve-year-old Tessa and her friend and mentor Alex Jorgenson, who is in his seventies and who shares with the child his love for, and knowledge of, all natural beauty—especially of the wild bird for whom he has carved a plastic leg. When his own shack blows down, Alex moves to the lighthouse; thus it happens that he and Tessa are able to operate the light and help guide Tessa’s father home when there is a storm at sea. There’s no pat ending: the lighthouse collapses and old Alex, much to Tessa’s anguish, is sent from the hospital to a residential home. The structure is taut, the characterization perciipient, but the two strong points of the story are the evocation of atmosphere and the deep friendship between the girl and the old man.


A story of the conquistadores in the New World is told from the viewpoint of a captive Indian boy, White Falcon, who had been taken, with others of his village, and marched to Mexico City. Some of them became integrated into the Spanish culture; others, like White Falcon, learned Spanish and made some friends in the city but longed always for their old homes and the Indian way of life. Sent on the search for Cibola along with the Moor Esteban and two friars, White Falcon plans to go back to his own people, but he has many unhappy experiences seeing the plight of the Indians under Spanish subjugation before he does it. The author uses repeatedly an annoying conversational device: one Spaniard says to another “Es tarde,” or “¿Qué pasa aquí? What goes on here?” and the book is slow-paced, but the author does give a full and convincing picture of the impact of the Spanish on Native American peoples.


In a fascinating exploration of the early cultures of Asia, Vlahos brings together the findings and theories of archeologists, anthropologists, and other scientists. She distinguishes between concrete clues, recorded or visible, and those that are legendary or conjectural, taking into account differences or similarities in language, rites, customs, diet, et cetera. From the book one can get both a broad picture of cultural diffusion and detailed pictures of individual cultures. Her catholic approach, historical and sociological, is based on solid research, but her fluency of style and objectivity fuse the mass of facts into a readable whole. An extensive bibliography of sources, divided by chapter, and an equally detailed index are appended.


The small boy who tells the story describes the summer when his grandfather brought a Native American friend home for a visit. They had a bet on something—and it proves, anticlimactically, at the close of the book, to be that nobody would know who Clarence Bubbling Water was if he weren’t dressed up. He has just been ignored at the depot, whereas all through the visit Clarence had been stared at and run from. Why the townspeople were frightened is not explained; why they stared is obvious, since he and Grandpa had put up a tepee on the front lawn and sat outside it in full ceremonial rig. The pictures, nicely drawn, reflect the 1930’s setting, but they often decorate rather than illustrate (townspeople looking aghast—but no Clarence in the picture) and they are occasionally removed from the textual reference they illustrate.
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.


