EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH ANNOTATIONS

* Asterisks denote books of special distinction.

R Recommended

Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.

M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.

NR Not recommended.

SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.

SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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

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New Titles for Children and Young People


Gorgeously detailed and colored, Lord’s lavish pictures illustrate a menagerie of mythical beasts about whom Aiken has written a series of nonsense poems. The basic idea is that of combining two creatures, so that there is a chimpanzebra, a jaguarmadillo, a rhinocerostrich, etc. Examples: “Imbricately lies each scale / inlaid in the scrumptious tail / of the Guinea-piguana / when he voyages to Havana . . .” or, “O Kangarooster, Kangarooster / why do you hop no more to Brewster / you and the missus and the nippers / all of your gay little clockwork skippers?” Mostly fun, but some of the concepts are labored, and occasionally the nonsense slips into mere padding.


Translated from the Russian, a comic adventure story is told by Alik, who is a mystery buff. He and five others in his class have formed a literary club in honor of a local author, Gleb Borodayev; one of the six is the author’s grandson and namesake and is prevailed on to take the others to visit the cottage where Borodayev wrote. Trapped in a cellar by an inexplicably hostile caretaker, the children escape through Alik’s ingenuity. Some passages are a bit long-winded, but Alik’s solution, based on deduction, is credible, the story has suspense and humor, and the children emerge as vividly distinct characters.


On her first day at a new junior high, Ronnie meets Evelyn Racanelli and Robert Rose. “Rosey.” Ronnie’s biggest problem is sparing Ev’s feelings when the trio changes to Ronnie and Rosey—plus Ev as a third. At least, it’s her biggest problem until her father is killed in a car crash, after which her biggest problem is that, in addition to her own grief, she has to cope with a mother who not only retreats from life but doesn’t want Ronnie to leave her. Ronnie takes her troubles to a sympathetic teacher, who intercedes; Mom at last understands how Ronnie feels, and sends her off on a trip to California. When Ronnie returns, she realizes that everything is going to be better: Mom’s cheerful, Rosey’s still a close friend, and ninth grade will probably be fun. The writing style is sturdy, with Ronnie a convincing narrator; the story effectively gives a message about the young adolescent’s need for independence, but the pace of the action is uneven, making the story line seem overextended.
Ayars, James Sterling. *We Hold These Truths; From Magna Carta to the Bill of Rights.* Viking, 1977. 77-2799. 165p. $8.95.

Where did they come from, these truths that we hold to be self-evident? Ayars investigates the sources of the ideas that were incorporated into the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, not denying the perspicacity or wisdom of the compilers but showing that people draw on the intellectual and political contributors of the past. The author uses, as examples, three men and their philosophies: Stephen Langton, John Lilburne, and George Mason. Although there is evidence of research, and the jacket copy states that Ayars did research in England, no sources are cited. The writing is clear, but it is heavy with facts and sedate in style. An index is appended.


In a fanciful adventure story, fourteen-year-old Dakin sets off to the dread farthest-away mountain where there are strange patches of colored snow. She has an irresistible urge to go there, and feels just as strong a need to meet a gargoyle and wed a prince. Her adventures (complete with enchanted frog, wicked witch, bloodthirsty giant, etc.) bring the downfall of the mountain's evil, the gratitude of the king and queen, and the realization that the prince is a bad-mannered bore. Her ex-frog, on the other hand, is a wise and comely youth, and it's romance at first encounter. Basically, a traditional fairy tale quest, varied only by the fact that the protagonist is a courageous female, this is just enough overwritten to be sporadically tedious.


As a Mormon, Andrew (twelve, an orphan living with a stern uncle) feels no partiality in the Civil War; his personal vendetta is with the Confederate officer who had stolen his horse Sunday. Andrew runs off to find Sunday, travelling with anyone who'll take him east, following the trail of the captain and Sunday. For the last, and longest, part of the journey he travels as apprentice to one of the early photographers, and the story bogs down into a you-were-there view of the war, with special emphasis on Gettysburg. Too many characters, too little characterization mark this historical novel; while it's based on Beatty's usual careful research, it lacks both the cohesion and the vitality that distinguish most of her writing.


Although slightly simplified, the text follows the Biblical version closely. The watercolor illustrations are handsome, particularly those of the turbulent flood waters and of the interior of the ark (these are not unlike Spier's in composition). The book can, of course, be used with younger readers; save for the pictures, however, the book offers no improvement on the sonorous language of the Bible.


Interspersed among three anecdotes about the bear who lives in London with the Brown family, there are various projects (magic tricks, gifts, recipes, etc.). While the three short stories have the blithe humor of other tales about Paddington, who always manages to work his way out of self-imposed dilemmas, this seems a weak combination of not-enough-bear to satisfy his fans, and not-enough-projects for the do-it-yourself contingent. The book is oversize, the pictures more pedestrian than those of the usual illustrator, Peggy Fortnum.

True Mason, fifteen, sends some wood engravings to Isaiah Thomas, to whom he is apprenticed, to show his competency. The text is in the form of a long letter, dated 1827, which purports to describe the pictures; they are done in the style of the period, and are based on buildings in the restoration project, Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts. The format is a bit contrived, but the pictures are quaintly elegant, the details of engravings and text informative, and the whole could be a welcome adjunct to a study of early nineteenth-century attitudes and practices.


Bulla has combined boy-and-beast and rags-to-riches patterns in a simply written but almost tepid story set in Britain at the time of the Roman invasion. The tale gets off to a slow start with a description of a Roman lad whose father brings him an elephant, then switches to Britain some years later; the elephant escapes from the Roman army and meets an outcast boy, Lud. They travel together, escaping various groups that attempt capture. When they reach Lor, they help people depose cruel rulers, and Lud—who is wearing a jewel given him by a man he'd helped—is acclaimed the new king because he is wearing the "kingstone." Bland, but the adventures of a poor orphan and a huge, gentle elephant should appeal to many readers.


Pen and ink sketches illustrate a realistic story, first published in England, about an extended working-class family. Although there's a thread of plot (the story begins with the death of the family's old dog, and concludes with Billy's joy when his father agrees to get another dog) the book is primarily anecdotal, with Grandma's hospitalization and sister Sandra's baby taking pride of place. The writing style is casual, with convincing dialogue; despite the lack of a strong plot line, this is a pleasant if unexciting family story.


A long-loved nonsense story is told in verse, adapted from the Russian original and illustrated by Lent in dulled colors; although dress and architectural details have Slavic flavor, the pictures have little vitality or humor except that which is inherent in the situation. Not until well along in the story is it made clear by the pictures that the recipient of a series of silly telephone calls is a small boy; the calls come from a polar bear who wants five or six tons of peanut brittle for two young elephants, from a crocodile who wants galoshes to add to goulash, some doves who want gloves, and so on. The appeal of the ridiculous story by Chukovsky is strong, and the adaptation is quite adequate, but the illustrations are not Lent's best work.


Amifika's Daddy was coming home, having finished his military service. How could his Mama make space in their two rooms? He overheard her tell a cousin, "We'll just get rid of something he won't miss. Lot of stuff around here he won't even remember." Amifika didn't remember his Daddy—so would Daddy remember him? Probably not, so Amifika hides lest he be thrown away to make space; he falls
asleep outdoors and wakes to find he is being carried in his father's warm and loving arms. A gentle and moving story is told with conviction and simplicity and is illustrated with black and white pictures that have no hard lines but a soft, rounded quality befitting the circle of warmth that is Amifika's family.


Since Paul already has the reputation of being a hot-headed troublemaker and is also known to be a lover of bagels, it is not surprising that he is suspected of being the culprit when two large bags of bagels (intended as a crafts project) are found scattered and partially eaten in his classroom. He smoulders at the unjust accusation, then spots some raccoons breaking into the school; following them, he traps one and proves he hadn't done the mischief. There are apologies all around, and Paul decides he feels better about school and teachers and will, after all, add his rock collection to the school art show. The writing style is competent, the story believably realistic but forced at some points: the heavy emphasis on Paul's fondness for bagels, the stressing of the proximity of his house to school, the convenience of the open window through which he and the raccoons enter the school.


Type face differentiates the writings of Jack Couffer, an amateur naturalist and a nature photographer, and his adolescent son Mike, in their description of a summer spent in Arizona canyon country. Some of the narrative is personal (clearing a legal problem about ownership of the cabin) but most of the text has to do with the flora and fauna of the region or with the Couffers' interest in native American cultures, past and present, in the area. At the end of the summer there is an effort to live off the land as the old ones, the Anasazi, had done. The descriptions are quite vivid, and—in combination with the photographs—can give the reader a strong impression of the region. The description of the Hopi snake dance is particularly interesting. This isn't quite as cohesive as earlier books (*African Summer, Galapagos Summer*) but it has the same appeals of outdoor life in the wilds and exploring the environment.


Seventeen small creatures, deceptively ferocious in appearance, are shown in large-scale photographs (many in full color) facing pages of text. There are two kinds of bats, several larval forms, some fish, some insects, a chameleon, a lizard, a shell, a star-nosed mole. All fascinating, and the text gives just enough information about structure, habits, and habitat to complement the photographs. An appended note points out that these creatures aren't monsters at all, since they are natural and real, and nothing real is monstrous.


Timon, slave to the old painter Scrofa, is less apprehensive than his master when they come to Pompeii to do some murals; he thinks Scrofa is so fearful that he exaggerates the danger of an earthquake. In the few days they are in the city, Timon meets a pirate who agrees to take Timon back to Greece if he will help rescue the pirate's brother, a slave who is being trained as a gladiator. Timon also wants to rescue the beautiful Cornelia and her sweetheart, since she is being forced to wed an elderly man. It is clear early on that there is going to be a volcanic eruption, yet
Dillon is skilled enough to build in suspense about whether or not Timon and his friends will get away. This doesn’t have the soft charm of Dillon’s Irish stories, but it makes the people of an ancient city come alive; the writing is slow-paced, the story halted somewhat because the author has (albeit adroitly) incorporated so many details about customs, attitudes, and mores.


There’s no moralizing in this book of sensible advice for the young person who wants to live independently, although Dolan points out difficulties that may arise. The first four chapters discuss relations with parents, suggesting some self-scrutiny and some ways to make the preparation for the break, with the goal of having realistic expectations and amicable relationships. Succeeding chapters give practical advice on jobs, roommates, handling money, early marriage, and education. The writing style is direct and informal, the material well-organized; several useful sources of information (hotlines for runaways, sample of a checking account record, a list of marriageable ages, by states) are included.


A survey of old and new knowledge about the structure of matter focuses on particle physics, “called high energy physics because of the kind of experiments needed to find out about particles without seeing them.” (This is made more explicit a dozen pages later.) A discussion of subnuclear particles leads to a description of the ways in which scientists can observe the unobservable through bubble or spark chambers, or can identify types of particles by the manner in which they behave. The text also discusses particle interaction and antiparticles, among other ways of classifying particles, and concludes with some conjecture about unsolved aspects of particle physics, including the tantalizing question of what the fundamental particle really is. The writing style is direct, the explanations clear if not comprehensive. An index is appended.

Farmer, Penelope. *Year King.* Atheneum, 1977. 77-3165. 232p. $6.95.

A subtle and intricate story for sophisticated readers, set in the English countryside, has a compelling sweep and depth as it explores the tenacious struggle of a nineteen-year-old to free himself of the self-doubt engendered by the dominating personalities of his twin brother and his mother. Lew retreats to the family cottage where he lives alone, has an affair with an American girl, and—periodically—has strange spells during which he seems to enter his brother’s body, sharing even intimate tactile sensations. The story, explicit in its descriptions of anger, passion, and fear, ends with a confrontation between Lew and his twin while they are on an underground expedition; it’s a dramatic conclusion to a taut and polished story with deep psychological implications.


The three novellas in this volume are concerned with humanistic and artistic problems in the world of the future, rather than scientific or technological issues. In Richard Frede’s humorous “Oh, Lovelee Appearance of the Lass from the North Countree,” an artist is commissioned to paint a sky as seen when flying upside down, and it revolutionizes his life; “A Glow of Candles, A Unicorn’s Eye,” by Charles
Grant, is more subtle writing, and is a serious look at what might happen if dramatic imagination were stifled and the theater reduced to mechanized art. Barry Malzberg’s “Choral” is overextended, but is still the most interesting of the three tales; in Malzberg’s world of the future, time travelers go back to become historical figures, and the man who becomes Beethoven lives through both the composer’s anguish and genius and his own difficulties in adjusting to the role. A fresh and inventive trio, this should have great appeal for science fiction fans.


Gina, twelve, had looked forward eagerly to her first year in junior high—but she was dismayed to find that there would be no time to participate in the many extracurricular activities. She had to practice four hours a day. Gina loved playing piano, but not to the extent of excluding everything else; then her mother announced she was buying an expensive piano, and Gina felt that meant she couldn’t tell her mother how she really felt. Mother, however, is sensible and kind; she is already prepared by her own father’s intercession on Gina’s behalf, and all is settled satisfactorily and believably. Even Gina’s first squabble with her first boyfriend. While sprinkled with occasional errors (“extracurricula activities”) and some patches of ornate writing (“His hair has some gray, but mostly it remembers being black,”) the story has vitality and pace, and it presents stable family relations; characterization is realistic but with little depth; Gina’s grandfather is pictured as an energetic, independent, and capable man—no ageism here.


Three characters meet en route to the Suicide Mountains, each bent on self-destruction. Chudu the Goat’s Son, a dwarf whose mother had been a goat and whose father was a magic fish, is ugly and humpbacked; he is desolate because all his efforts to live respectably have earned him nothing but fear and contempt. He falls in love with the beautiful, unhappy Armida (Cinderella syndrome) and she falls in love with the melancholy prince, Christopher the Sullen. Taken in by a spuriously kindly abbot, the three outwit the evil man, and all ends with a royal wedding and the dwarf becoming prime minister to the realm. Gardner’s style is witty, sophisticated, occasionally verbose, often intricate. The plot is not intricate, but it develops at an uneven pace, slowed by interpolated tales or poems or by long descriptive passages.


It is not Goodsell’s interpretation, but Inouye’s life that makes his biography read like a Horatio Alger story. Poor, discriminated against because of his Japanese background, the Hawaiian boy who dreamed of being a doctor became a war hero, a lawyer, and the first Japanese-American to be elected to Congress. The book is simply written, candid about race relations and discrimination in Hawaii, just short of adulatory in describing Inouye’s determination, industry, courage, and altruism.

Graham, Margaret Bloy. Benjy’s Boat Trip; written and illus. by Margaret Bloy Graham. Harper, 1977. 77-6893. 30p. Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $6.11 net.

Benjy is a despondent dog when his family goes off on a sea voyage and he’s left behind with Aunt Mary. He runs off to the waterfront and boards a ship that looks like the one his people sailed on; chased by the ship’s cat, he naps below deck and is an unwitting stowaway. The cat makes his life miserable until he rescues her (by barking when she climbs the mast and fears the descent) and then they are friends and
Benjy enjoys the comfort of the mate’s bed and the cook’s favors. Back in port, his family happily welcomes him and vows they’ll never leave him behind again. Although this has an element of conflict/resolution, only the setting gives it some color; it’s a simply told story, but it’s lacking humor or spice.


While this doesn’t have the dramatic impact of *Summer of My German Soldier*, to which it is a sequel, it has the same authenticity; the jacket copy explains that Greene wrote the book because “I needed to explain my life to myself.” Patty, on graduating from high school, uses gift money to go to Europe despite her parents’ objections. Her sadistic father, in fact, objects to the extent that he cuts her out of his will and says the Jewish prayers for the dead for her. Patty’s love affair in Paris and her search for the mother of her German soldier are interesting enough to hold the reader, the writing style has vitality and conviction, and there is perceptive depth in characterization, but the book is weakened somewhat by the extensive referrals to events of the earlier story and by the fact that the narrative breaks rather sharply between events before and after the ocean voyage.


Greenfeld, in his usual meticulous fashion, explores Gypsy life in a book that contains both well-researched background and objective commentary about contemporary Gypsies. Persecuted, romanticized, tenaciously keeping themselves aloof from the Gaje, non-gypsies, for whom they feel mistrust and contempt, the wandering people have clung to their own mores and traditions, their own code of ethics. Greenfeld describes the Gypsy way of life: birth, marriage, and death; superstitions and health practices; occupations; the system of justice; sex roles, and many other aspects. He closes with a chapter that discusses the Gypsies today, focusing on the efforts in many countries to integrate them, often by restrictive legislation, into the community. Greenfeld is a serious writer; his style, while sober and direct, is not stiff, and it is neither lightened by humor nor colored by personal comment. A bibliography and an index are appended.


“Mama can’t stand me, and you know it! Nothin’ I do ever pleases her,” Pumpkin (Yolanda) had said, and her gentle, loving father had assured Pump that Mama loved her just as much as he did. Then Daddy was killed in a car accident, and Pump had to live with Mama’s scolding and, when they moved, go to a new school. Although Pump’s relationship with her mother is the binding factor in this story, it’s chiefly an episodic account of a black girl’s childhood, her friendship with Jim Jim, and the growing sensitivity and understanding that burgeon in preadolescence. The writing style is competent, the story has warmth, but the characters, although believable, have little depth.


A teacher and an artist, Harrison illustrates his descriptions of life in the Yukon with poster-simple paintings that have clean, solid shapes usually heavily outlined; the colors are clear and strong, the people’s faces without feature. The text gives some historical material about the Yukon and the gold rush, but most of it is devoted to descriptions of everyday life or special events of the year. There are also facts
about the region and its peoples, and a brief comment on the conflict between the
native peoples' traditional way of life and the demands imposed on them by authori-
ty's pressure for oil and minerals. The text does not give a comprehensive picture; it
is weakened by the fact that such comments as "Running on snowshoes is difficult
but fun. Even beginners laugh at themselves as they trip and tumble, and struggle to
get back upright," used in conjunction with a painting, and "Today it is a ghost town
just rebuilding with many reminders of that brief heyday when women walked the
streets in the latest Paris fashions, gold dust was weighed as money, and honky-tonk
piano filled the night with revelry," seem discrepant.


A geologist explains the causes of climatic conditions and the factors that cause
changes in them, in a meticulously organized and lucid text. Hays describes first the
major influences on earth's temperature and then proceeds to those factors that affect
local variations; he also discusses the Ice Ages and theories of future world con-
ditions at length, concluding with separate chapters on man's impact on climate and
on the impact of climatic change on man. Skilled at making complicated scientific
phenomena clear to the layman, Hays moves from the broad issues to specific mat-
ters in exemplary fashion. An index is appended.

Heide, Florence Parry. *Mystery of the Midnight Message.* by Florence Parry Heide and
Trade ed. $4.75; Library ed. $3.56 net.

Jay and Cindy Temple are on a bus that is marooned by a heavy snow and stops at
a motel. They receive a telephone call, clearly intended for another occupant of their
room, that gives a message indicating a burglary is being planned—but it's also clear
that a second thief has the other half of the instructions. Pursued by one of the gang,
the next day, who knows the children have found the message passed on by the call,
Jay and Cindy escape, but the man tracks them down, takes the message, and locks
them into a barn. With two friends who have rescued them, they go to the house
where the robbery's to take place, getting in touch with the police only at the last
moment. The story has action, but it isn't credible, weakening what element of
suspense there is. There is little or no characterization; the writing style is adequate.
Nancy Drew, move over.

$6.79 net.

Josie, eleven, tells the story. She's come from high suburbia to Jerusalem with her
divorced mother, who emerges as one of the more unpleasant maternal figures of
contemporary fiction. Mom avers love, but she gives Josie neither her time nor her
understanding, being too busy with her current love affair. Josie has communication
problems, since she can't speak Hebrew; she has no friends except an elderly Rus-
sian emigrée, who thwarts Josie's plans for them to run away to the U.S. together
when she marries. Mom finally decides to go back, but it seems less in response to
Josie's need than because she's wearied of her Boris. There's some tough talk, some
acid remarks about Daddy ("Mom says the kids are bastards because she and Dad
never got a divorce,"') and his present ménage, and some variety given by Josie's
involvement in puppet shows, but the book's story line is overshadowed by informa-
tion about Jerusalem; the local color is, however, vividly evoked, as is the frustration
and isolation of a lonely only child.
Margot, who's just finished fifth grade, tells of her summer project. Assigned by the teacher to describe something new she's learned or accomplished by the time school starts, Margot decides she's going to change her mother's living pattern. Mom does have a peculiar habit: she never goes downstairs, staying four flights up in the apartment or gardening on the roof. Margot gives a lively account of her plans (what goes up must come down—some day) and her activities. The story ends with a possibility that Margot's goal will be achieved, but she's spent a more profitable summer than she expected: she and Mom can talk openly, she's made a new, stimulating friend (in one of the nicest boy-girl friendships to come along in many a book) and she's learned something very important. She's learned that she loves Mom just the way she is, that Mom's idiosyncrasy is superficial, and that it isn't her (Margot's) job to change her mother. That's up to her mother.


Buddy's mother would have nothing to do with her father; he had ignored her and her mother all her life, and just because he had moved to the United States and lived nearby in Montauk she wasn't about to forgive him. Therefore it was odd that Buddy should take Skye, the very rich girl he had just begun dating, to his grandfather's. She was truly impressed; like Buddy, she didn't believe Grandfather Trenker was the same Trenker that the newspaper article called "Gentlehands." Gentlehands, because in the concentration camp where he'd been in charge, the Italian Jews had called him that; he'd played the opera aria "O dolci mani" to taunt them. And there were other accusations under the heading "Montauk Man Accused of Being Nazi." By the time the situation reaches crisis, Buddy has quarreled with his parents, left home, and been living with his grandfather, whom he knows as a gentle, cultured man devoted to taking care of stray animals. Can a person have changed so completely? Buddy's grief and dismay are not alleviated by the fact that all the summer he's been so smitten by Skye, he's known it would end by autumn and he's learned that she's biased, snobbish and self-indulgent. In fact, Buddy has learned that people are complex and that one can love despite faults. Characterization and dialogue are first-rate, the story moves at a good pace, and the book is remarkable for the percipience of its relationships.


A compilation of projects includes making an ecology notebook, a laundry bag, a "stained glass" window picture, and a grocery store garden, learning how to use the library's resources, recognizing constellations, making up secret codes or treasure maps, et cetera. The book offers variety, but the illustrations are often general rather than specific, and the illustrations do not always compensate for the lack of step-by-step advice. The instructions that are given are accurate and the activities are varied, however; a divided bibliography gives some suggestions for books that may help with the projects listed, but some of the books (Margaret Mead's People and Places, Heyerdahl's Kon Tiki, Baumann's In the Land of Ur) are inappropriately chosen for a middle-grades reader.

The three Grant children, who had come to vacation near their French grandparents every summer, had always wondered about the empty house surrounded by sunflowers. Now, seeing a boy on the premises, they are curious; when they learn the boy is German, and that his widowed father is the owner and has come to sell the house, they are even more curious. They know their grandfather wants them to have nothing to do with Germans, but they cultivate an acquaintance with the boy. It develops (slowly) that there had once been a love affair between the German man and their Aunt Nicole and that Grand-père had shot the man. When Nicole comes from Paris to visit, the love affair is resumed; the old man has a heart attack, and the lovers must decide whether to go ahead with their plans to marry or give them up for Grand-père's sake. With the enthusiastic support of all the children, Nicole and Otto decide they will wed. Although the story has some suspense and conveys a message about forgetting the past, it is primarily a love story, albeit a love story seen from the viewpoint of the juvenile protagonists. It doesn’t quite match, in cohesion or vitality, Lingard's Irish and British stories although it is—like them—written with skill. It is also a drawback that the print is very small.


McDermott retells the story of Set's persecution of his brother Osiris, whose wife Isis rescues her husband; first she enables him to escape the coffin in which the evil Set had sealed the Pharaoh, then she binds together the pieces of his body when Set cuts him to bits. Given life a third time, Osiris becomes Lord of the Underworld. This story of ancient Egypt is told in present tense, its vocabulary making it less than appropriate for the picture book audience: "He sends ibis-headed Thoth, Keeper of Wisdom, and jackal-headed Anubis, Guardian of the Dead, to help." Although the artist uses some familiar motifs (ankh, lotus, papyrus, etc.) the brilliant color and geometric abstractions don't convey the distinctive quality of Egyptian art.


Each page carries a drawing and a few lines of print in a book that has no discernible arrangement or table of contents; access is possible through an index, but this is primarily a book for browsing. Demanding little of its readers, it is suitable for slow older readers as well as for children in the middle grades, and it has the appeal of all the Guinness record books: a series of feats and oddities. Some of those included are as impressive as Edward White's first walk in space, some as inconsequential as balancing five golf balls, one on top of the other. There are sports records, speed records, marathon fiddling or ironing sessions. The captions are jaunty: "She's Nadia just another pretty face!" (Nadia Comaneci) or, "Their business is going under," for a pair that set scuba diving records.


Soft brown and white pictures illustrate a fluid, poetic text that highlights the events of a Navajo girl's eleventh year. Alice Yazzie lives in a hogan with her grandfather, and in her life there is room for both the traditional beauty and order of the Navajo way of life and the new things she learns from the white culture. She may make an Evonne Goolagong tennis dress for her Hallowe'en costume, but she com-
ments to the principal "We'd be glad to see Columbus sail away," when she thinks about white men claiming a land her people already lived in. There is a poem for each month, and the sequence creates a believable Alice who thinks, as her twelfth birthday approaches, that beauty is indeed before her and around her. This is a positive picture of a native American child; references to Navajo beliefs and symbols are explained in some appended notes.


Alexander is a small, budding inventor, and this non-story is told in a series of paired comments. Example: "Once he invented a way to save his mother a lot of washing... But she made him get dressed," or "Once he invented a way not to eat any spinach... But his father found it and he had to eat some anyway." The joke is usually in the illustrations, which show, in these cases, first an unclothed Alexander and, next, an infuriated father reaching into his golf bag. Some of the pages are rather flat, but the humorous treatment should appeal to the read-aloud audience. The illustrations are slightly cartoonish, slightly cute.


As she did in *Amish People*, Meyer postulates a year with an imaginary family, the Koonuks, and gives a vivid and perceptive picture of the cultural patterns of Eskimos living near the Bering Sea through this literary device. Torn by cultural conflict, suffering from the less attractive aspects of the economy and the mores imposed on their simpler life style, and beset by poverty, the Alaskan Eskimos are struggling to keep their tradition and adjust to new demands. The children and young people are particularly affected; they feel keenly the generation gap, many are bored and drop out of school, most feel pessimistic about their futures. Because the text lets the characters bring an immediacy to this overview of the Eskimos' problems, as Jenness did in *Dwellers of the Tundra*, it has a vitality that invites reader-involvement; because Larsen lived in a community like the mythical Chaputnuak, it has the authenticity of observed events and people.


Set in 1865, this brisk and eventful novel brings Johnny from New York City to stay at his aunt's farm. Dreading the dullness of country life, Johnny is cheered when one of his father's friends (Captain Grey is in the Secret Service) enlists him as a colleague. Indeed, Johnny finds nothing dull: he and his cousin Sam become involved in spying on evil men who are hunting the buried gold from a robbed train, men who are also Southern sympathizers. Johnny tells the story, and he's completely convincing despite the lurid drama of the plot. Characterization is adequate, and the dialogue is appropriate for the setting and period. What will appeal most to readers, however, are the pace and suspense of a cracking good adventure story.


This adds little to earlier biographies of Maria Mitchell; although it covers all important aspects of her life and work, it is weakened by careless writing that includes non sequiturs, shifts of pace, stilted dialogue, and—particularly—the repeated...
inclusion of irrelevant information. Nevertheless, Mitchell is a redoubtable figure: the first woman to discover a comet and have it named for her, the first woman to be elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a teacher at the newly-formed Vassar College, an early champion of women's rights and higher education for women. A list of Mitchell's honors, a bibliography, and an index are appended.


One of a series of books designed for slow older readers, this science fantasy is written at a primary level, with very short sentences and spacious printing, but with concepts and subject appeal for older readers. It is set in the year 2076, when a series of storms causes people who are outdoors to revert to an infantile state. Suspecting intervention from another planet, a spaceship manned by adolescents is sent to the planet Suffes. The crew—all but a few of whom are killed or become infantile—discovers that the planet is run by computers, its people mindless. They take drastic and dangerous means to demolish the giant computers, then the crew turns with relief to the flight back to earth. The story has action and the science fiction apparatus will appeal to many readers, but the writing is staccato and the plot moves in spurts.


Most of the gang Dean prattles about are black: timid Wayne, sensible Kitty, articulate Kwami, Leslie, Anthony, and Judy, who is white. They're about eleven, they live on the upper west side of New York, and they engage in a series of ploys that are often ridiculous but always funny. Suspicious about the Russian men who visit their friend Willie, they lay elaborate plans to trap them; their plans are confused by the fact that Willie's woman, Drusilla, has them all convinced that she can—and probably will—wreak Mojo (occult) vengeance on Dean because he knocked her down while cycling. The plot is far-fetched, but the gang is marvelous: they tease each other and squabble, but they present a united front to the adult world, and there's a great deal of affection and loyalty and humor in their relationships with each other.


Orphaned Wilber Quackenbush, Quacky, runs away from an orphanage and is in New York, at the office of a welfare agency, when he runs off again. Twelve, Quacky is trying to get to the town where his kleptomaniac Aunt Maggie, in her 70's, lives. He gets into a network studio, is mistaken for another child, and appears on television, disrupting the show, then sneaks a ride on a bus, then pretends to be hit by a car, so that he can get an ambulance ride to a hospital near Aunt Maggie's. The pace of the action may be judged by the fact that he reaches her house on page 24; she proves to be in jail, he takes in two bank robbers and makes them welcome, and there's more. Much more. Too much happens and none of it is believable; characterization and dialogue are equally unconvincing, and the writing style is pedestrian. The story does have action, but it has too much, and even that becomes cloying.


Although designed for adults, the double appeals of an adventurous quest and the Bigfoot mystery as subject should attract many adolescent readers. Page posits a dying race of large, subhuman creatures who have probably suffered genetic mutation; one of them is pursued indefatigably by two men: Jason is a middle-aged man
who has seen three companions killed on a camping trip, and John Moon is a native American who has come back from Vietnam a very disturbed man who has decided to go on a spirit quest although he is not the proper age to see his vision. There are narrow escapes and dangerous encounters as the paths of the two men cross, each separately pursuing the giant creature. Raymond Jason is logical and scientific, John Moon is irrational and passionate, and in the end one is hunting the other. The writing style is polished, the structure taut, the characters and their obsessions convincingly drawn; the story is weakened by an uneven pace and by the penultimate catastrophe, when Bigfoot and his mate attack a resort lodge.


In a series designed for slow older readers, this simply written book on a subject of increasing popularity serves its purpose very well. The story concerns a girl gymnast who loses scoring points because she is too tense; participating in a meet, she becomes rattled by the applause for another player and falls, but given another chance (because of the disruptive applause) she takes first place. Full color photographs face each page of text, but the pictures often relate only slightly to the text (Caption: "The judges watch the competitors closely." ) and some of the pages are broken by terms and definitions, which are later repeated verbatim in the glossary and arranged in the same order in which they occur in the text rather than in alphabetical order.


Two English girls cope with a range of problems and relationships in a slice-of-life novel. Bobbie and Fanny are fifteen. Shy and unassertive, Bobbie is the only child of an alcoholic and unhappy woman who makes even more demands on her child after her husband's death. Fanny, self-confident and outgoing, gets over a crush on an older man who is important in the theater group she works with. There's a spirited aura of the girls in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* about Fanny, and the author is perceptive in depicting characters and in the relationships among them; the writing is casual and brisk, sophisticated in its candor; the girls' problems reflect perennial adolescent concerns. Nevertheless, the appeal of the book may be limited by the lack of a strong story line, just as the success of the book as a literary entity is limited by the fact that it is filled with too many events and relationships, too many problems occurring in too short a time.


In an exploration of the North American Desert system, Pringle discusses the Chihuahuan, Sonoran, Mohave, and Great Basin Deserts of the United States and Mexico. He describes the ecosystems within deserts: arroyos, dunes, saguaro cactus forests, sagebrush, playas, and others, discussing the plants and animals of each and how they interrelate, and how all of them are affected by temperature and other climatic and geological variations. Written in a clear, direct style, the book has good photographs and maps, a glossary, an index, and a reading list in which the more simply written titles are indicated by an asterisk.


Taborin has selected paintings by Rockwell, many of them covers of issues of *Saturday Evening Post,* to illustrate numbers 1–20, and has added three find-the-
mistakes pictures that were used for April 1 issues; the mistakes are listed on the
Ad last page. Although the pictures have a nostalgic charm and Rockwell’s usual realistic
3-6 fidelity and homespun humor, the objects are not always as easy to find as they are
yrs. in books that have been designed as counting books. However, this adds an element
of play that will appeal to many children.


Tired of being dominated by his older brothers, nine-year-old Tim is delighted
3-5 when Dwayne, who’s just moved into the neighborhood, becomes his friend. He’s
never invited to Dwayne’s house, but Dwayne shows up at Tim’s almost every day. Then Tim’s brothers announce that some of their belongings are missing . . . his mother’s purse is rifled . . . some of his savings disappear. Tim is already being punished because he—under Dwayne’s pressure—has entered an old man’s house and done some destructive mischief; he agrees when his mother announces that Dwayne must stay out of their house. Rockwell draws a believable enough picture of a young delinquent, giving clues as to the contributing factors in Dwayne’s home environment, but the story seems to reach no conclusion; Tim ponders the problem, wonders why nobody has taken any action to help or to discipline Dwayne. The only result, for Tim, is that he has become interested in setting animal traps as Dwayne’s father does—and there the story ends. The writing style is adequate, the characterization slight.


In the same style as *Tell Me a Mitzie*, three stories told to a child focus on family
M foibles, with pictures by Wells that have humor and action but miss the engaging
3-5 quality of her more usual animal characters. Grandma outwits the obstreperous
Trudy and her small brother Jacob after their frustrated parents fail; Trudy intervenes when her father squabbles with his sister; and Daddy tells a tale of Superman, who spends a cozy evening with the family and evicts some Martians (he says) from the bathroom. Mildly funny, this lacks the refreshingly tart tone of *Tell Me a Mitzie*; the three Trudy stories amble along with moments of humor but no punch.


The authors cover many aspects of the subject: myths and legends about the moon, scientific theories of the past, phases and eclipses of the moon, tidal effects, and—primarily—the planning, execution, and subsequent study of moon exploration. One chapter, “Man-made Satellites,” seems extraneous, but otherwise Shuttlesworth and her daughter do a competent job; however, save for the information scientists have gained from studying materials brought back from the moon by astronauts or recorded by their instruments, there is little new here, and the chapters on man-made satellites and on myths and legends seem to over-extend the text. A table of information about Apollo missions, a glossary, and an index (in very small print) are appended.

Silverstein, Alvin. *Itch, Sniffle & Sneeze; All About Asthma, Hay Fever and Other Allergies*; by Alvin Silverstein and Virginia B. Silverstein; illus. by Roy Doty. Four Winds, 1978. 77-20791. 45p. $6.95.

A continuous text describes the causes and effects of allergens, gives advice on obtaining medical help, and discusses both the many substances or objects that can
cause allergic reactions and the specific reactions. The text is written in a casual, conversational tone and the explanations it gives for biochemical functioning are fairly clear; the occasional use of "antigen" in the cartoon-style illustrations may confuse readers, since the word is not used in the text, although it is listed in the one-page glossary.


Julilly (June Lilly) is a tall, strong twelve-year-old who has been separated from her mother, Mammy Sally, and sold to the owner of a cotton plantation in the deep south. She's heard of Canada, heard of freedom, and now she hears from another slave of the possibility of following the North Star to Canada. Spurred by an abolitionist conductor on the Underground Railway, Julilly runs away with three other slaves; the two men are captured and Julilly becomes the leader, for the other girl, Liza, is crippled. They are helped by black people and white, and they reach Canada to find Mammy Sally already there. It's a story that's been told before in many books about the Underground Railway, but it's always appalling to read of plantation conditions, always exciting to read of escape from them. There are some historical characters included in the novel, and there's evidence of solid research; what weakens the book is the writing style, which not infrequently becomes florid: "Her lips pinched firm and her eyes flamed with angry courage . . ."


Leroy "Encyclopedia" Brown, fifth grade whiz kid, solves the minor mysteries of his peer group as well as outthinking his father, the town's police chief. In the usual format of this series, there are brief bafflers (each a separate mystery) and answers given at the back of the book. Sometimes the clues are ones the readers might have spotted; at other times, the answers seem contrived, as in "The Case of the Red Sweater," where a boy who has claimed to be wearing a girl friend's sweater is spotted as the culprit because "Encyclopedia realized that Bugs was wearing his sweater inside out!" That is, the sweater was reversible. However, the brisk, brief presentation of the cases plus the infallible, if incredible, perspicacity of the ten-year-old detective will appeal to many readers.


Orphaned Stark had been born, seventeen years earlier, on the night the beloved king of Katoren died; Stark's doting uncle, the palace butler, dreamed that his dear Stark would become the new king. Cheerful, intelligent, and self-confident, Stark offered himself to the ministers who had ruled the land for seventeen years, and to appease the public they set the lad seven impossible tasks. Ho-hum quest story? Not a bit. Terlouw uses wit and satire, he has a vigorous style, his seven tasks are conceived and solved with high originality, and his hero looms engagingly just as large as life, in a book that won prizes as the best book of the year in Holland and in Austria.


A behind-the-scenes view of the Smithsonian Institution is based on interviews with historians, exhibits people, technicians, curators, film-makers, collectors, and many others who collect, conserve, record, and mount the exhibits seen by the
The book is divided into three sections: the places, the people, and the work, and includes a glossary, bibliography, and index. The author makes it clear in her preface that she is not attempting to give all the facts about the Smithsonian staff nor to give career guidance, but the book serves fairly well in both areas; the writing is informal, the material varied and interesting.


Illustrated with pictures that are reminiscent of Norman Rockwell's magazine cover art, both in technique and in old-fashioned flavor (what boy, in the television age, wears a tasselled nightcap?). The title is deceptive, since the text covers only one day, Mother's first day on the job. She has gone back to work because Daddy's decided to go back to school. Mark describes the day from the time Daddy wakes him until the time Mother gets home—including a bit about school, a bit more about squabbles with sister Vickie, and quite a bit about specific household chores assigned by Daddy, a firm taskmaster. The book presents a contemporary lifestyle and a divergence from sex-role stereotyping, but it's not a strong or conclusive story.


The last Przhevalsky horse, small and stocky, was caught in the 1960's in its Asian homeland and has not been seen there since. All Przhevalsky horses known today are those in zoos or being bred on one of five breeding stations, one of which is in the United States. Detailed discussion of wild horses and their ancestry is provided, as is an account of the domestication of some equine species. This first section, "The Horse," is interesting, and the final section of the book, "The Rescuers," which describes conservationists', breeders', and zoo staffs' work, is equally pertinent. The middle section of the book, "The Explorer," is an account of Nicolai Przhevalsky that is almost a full biography and gives detailed descriptions of all his explorations; it's far too much for a book that's really about one equine species, colorful though the explorer was. In addition to its appeal to animal lovers and conservationists, the book's strength is in its engagingly casual style, although that is not consistently in evidence. A bibliography is included.


The basic idea is a familiar one: a child adopts an orphaned wild creature (in this case, a squirrel) and realizes, when it matures, that he must let it go. Despite the patterned plot, the story gives information about caring for wild pets and can give the reader an understanding of the fact that wild creatures' behavior may not be appropriate indoors but is natural to them. Bony, for example, gnaws and destroys Kim's model boat, and Mom explains to him that squirrels must gnaw wood to keep their teeth from growing too long. Darrow's cartoon-style pictures are perky and humorous, adding vivacity to a simply written story for beginning independent readers.
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