PRODUCTION NOTE

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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


A rambling tale is awkwardly told and ineffectually illustrated. Irrelevancies are introduced and dropped, and the tale—which is presented as a quest, a quest by civilized Charles Bear for a wild bear—is never fulfilled. Charles sees signs of habitation, finally finds Willy Bear, who says he is not wild; then they meet a bear balloonist, but he doesn’t understand their language and they never find out if he’s wild or not. Then Charles decides he’d better leave the forest and go home, since it’s time to go to school. He goes home. There is mild humor in some of the dialogue between Charles and Willy, as they discuss learning arithmetic and the need for civilization, but there isn’t enough to alleviate a diffuse tale.


A noted anthologist has selected poems that celebrate aspects of black life, and that means life itself in its universal applications as well as the special pride of blackness. The book is divided into twelve sections, although there is no table of contents to indicate that poems are grouped under such headings as “The Idea of Ancestry,” “The Southern Road,” “Myself When I Am Real,” or “A Poem for Heroes,” and there is a continuity to the whole. Eighty-five poets are represented; biographical notes are appended, and the author-title index shows both the range from great to less known writers as well as the care and discrimination of the selection process.


In a simplified biography, Aliki gives the high points of Franklin’s life and his achievements; the text serves adequately as an introduction, but it is a bit staccato in its treatment, and the pictures (colorful, framed, and—on some pages—crowded) have captions that are difficult to read because of small print. Occasionally the text-illustration combination may be confusing, as when the text states that “Before long they had two children to help them,” while one of the facing strips shows three children; only upon reading the small handprinted caption below the middle picture does the reader learn that the second son died at the age of four.


Ashe gives a great deal of sensible advice clearly and sequentially, with separate
chapters on forehand, backhand, volley, serve, and footwork as well as chapters on
equipment, tactics, strategy, court conduct, diet, and practice. He begins with such
basics as how to choose a racket and he cautions readers that a beginner should
concentrate on form rather than power. Many of the chapters are followed by ques-
tions and answers, and the text—which includes scoring and rules for play—
concludes with a glossary of terms. A clear and useful how-to book.


Set in the late 19th century, this is a story in which the sea sets the mood, not an
ocean of sparkling waves but an ocean of fog and storm, an enemy. It has taken the
ship *Amaryllis,* and for three decades Geneva Reade, the captain’s widow, has
waited for some sign, some message. When her grandchild Jenny comes to visit, she
too is drawn into Gran’s obsessive searching for the sign, is asked to prowl the beach
at high tide whatever the hour. Only Jenny and her grandmother recognize the
existence of a third watcher, the wraithlike Mr. Seward. The sign, the figurehead of
the *Amaryllis,* is washed up but Gran returns it during a hurricane that she interprets
as a wrathful demand for a return of the “eyes,” the eyes of the figurehead that can
see and guard the wrecked ship. Babbitt does a superb job of establishing mood and
sustaining tension, but there’s a pat note to the ending that weakens the impact of the
story, as Jenny’s father (who hates the sea and hasn’t wanted ever to be near it)
shows up to rescue his mother and daughter, as Gran—who had steadfastly refused
to be away from the sea—capitulates and agrees to live with her son’s family, and as
Jenny (homeward bound in the buggy) preens herself at a boy’s obvious admiration.

Baker, Betty. *Settlers and Strangers; Native Americans of the Desert Southwest and History
As They Saw It.* Macmillan, 1977. 77-4925. 88p. illus. $7.95.

Most of Baker’s excellent historical survey is set in what is now Arizona and New
Mexico, beginning with the first wave of travellers who walked, thousands of years
ago, across the land bridge from Asia. While there are names and dates, this is
primarily a narrative that explores the way people lived, what they believed, how
they responded to changes in the environment, to the resources of their land, and to
each other. And, sadly, to the Spanish and Yankee troops and missionaries who took
their lands. The text is direct and authoritative, dramatic in what it says rather than
how it is written; it concludes with a description of some of the problems native
Americans face today. Top-notch. An index is appended; a map precedes the text.


In a counting book that goes from 1-12, Bayley’s framed, lushly intricate, and
imaginative pictures face phrases that are based on the first letter of each spelled
digit: “o” for one, “t” for two and three, “f” for four and five, et cetera. It will be
the unusual child who can appreciate or relate to “Eight eminent Englishmen eagerly
examining Europe” or “Twelve typographical topographers typically translating
types,” despite the appeal of the animal characters, but any child can enjoy the
beauty of the illustrations.

Berkey, Barry Robert. *The Guilty Book;* by Barry R. Berkey and Velma A. Berkey; illus. by

The authors, one of whom is a doctor, explain some of the things that can make
one feel guilty (sins of omission and commission) and have a guilty conscience; they
rely rather heavily on words like “good,” “bad,” and “nice.” The incidents used to
illustrate concepts are adequately chosen, the writing is stiff but clear, and the illus-
trations in an oversize book are mediocre. Granted that it is not easy to explain
concepts of emotion, the Berkeys have not avoided a didactic note that weakens the book; one of its strengths is that it points out that inappropriate reactions (never feeling guilty or being overwhelmed by irrational guilt feelings) can be adjusted with professional help.


A Moroccan folktale is nicely retold and is illustrated with clean-lined drawings that are distinctive for their restrained use of color, their humor, and their geometrically patterned frames that use motifs typical of the region. Since all his neighbors and fellow vendors, disliking Kassim’s tattered shoes, buy him a new pair, he tries diligently to get rid of his comfortable, loved old shoes. Each time he throws or puts them somewhere, a minor disaster occurs to one or more of the donors. Example: hidden in a tall palm tree, the shoes blow down in a wind and hit a donkey carrying melons, the melons bounce around, and all the market wares are tossed about or broken. So—out go the tight new shoes, and everybody’s happy.


Everybody comes dressed as Santa for a Christmas party, but there’s one big Santa who industriously trims the tree while children yell and try to control their “reindeer” (their dogs) and then he disappears. Outside, there are sleigh tracks. The children decide it was the real Santa Claus, and a faint voice calls that he will pick up his best-costume prize next year. Succeeding chapters describe the children’s thwarted plans to zip up to the North Pole and deliver the prize, a box containing a dozen chocolate bells, and the subsequent inroads on the candy. There’s a great deal of entertaining squabbling (“You are not a nice person,” Wilma tells Norman, who is greedy). On Christmas Eve, Santa sees the sleeping children and is pleased, since he *is* a nice person. “Merry Christmas, Santa Claus, Merry Christmas, everyone,” the story ends. Not substantial, but it’s a merry tale, nicely illustrated, and beginning independent readers will doubtless appreciate having a new Christmas story they can read alone.


Dowden’s exquisite flower paintings and small black and white drawings of flora and a few fauna illustrate a dozen nature essays in which Borland comments with knowledgeable affection on the changes and distinguishing features of each month—at least as such changes occur in some parts of our countryside. While the text will probably appeal to lovers of the outdoors, it may well be limited to such readers, since the author is speaking—and speaking almost rhapsodically—to the converted rather than to the general reader.


Writing for older readers than he usually does, and doing it very well indeed, Burch tells the story of Alan’s last two years of high school through Alan. Newly inducted into the army, Alan remembers . . . he and Amanda had been friends since sixth grade, sharing a love of poetry, and they were just beginning to become physically aware of each other in their junior year. Amanda’s socially ambitious mother ruled that her daughter must stop seeing Alan; in part she considered him personally undesirable, in part she disdained him because—as the whole town knew—his mother had gone off and had been living with another man. When trying to outwit
Amanda's mother by setting up an arranged double date, Alan loses his love, for she briefly falls for the other boy. The affair is soon over, but Amanda is pregnant. When she comes to Alan for a friend's comfort, he rejects her. Bitterly she points out that his weakness is in never being able to forgive, and he remembers this when his mother returns; at first hostile, he relents in time to save the relationship. And in time, he thinks of Amanda with love. Forgiving, he stops en route to the induction center to send her a fine copy of *Leaves of Grass* in memory of their shared love of Whitman's poetry. The love story is nicely balanced with family relationships, the characterization and dialogue are excellent, and the book gives a poignant, credible picture of adolescence and of a small Georgia community in the 1940's.


In *A Room Made of Windows*, Julia was older than she is here; in fact, the story—which begins with Julia's eleventh birthday—focuses on Julia's, and her mother's, dissatisfaction with their accommodations and concludes with their delight in finding a new home and its room "made of windows." For Julia, her brother, and their widowed mother live with crotchety, critical Gramma, who dotes on brother Greg and carps at Julia. Cameron is adroit at weaving plot and subplots together, and Julia's story emerges as a perceptive family story as well as an excellent piece of period fiction, highlighted by the excitement and drama of the raging fire that sweeps Berkeley. Characterization and relationships are drawn with depth and consistency, and the book has a compelling narrative flow.


Eleven cookie recipes are included in a book that has good safety and hygiene advice, and that recommends adult help for difficult or potentially dangerous tasks. The instructions are clear; many of the recipes call for an electric beater, which is not necessarily available to all children. Illustrations are static. The tips on technique are useful, but the usefulness of the book is limited by the fact that it doesn't easily lie flat. A "List of Words with Which Younger Children May Need Help" is appended; if this is for readers who can't read "oat," "oven," or "soda," it may be that the audience that can understand the words in the recipes could just as well use a more extensive text.


Greg comes home from his mainland school to the Australian island where his father practices farming methods that Greg feels threaten the environment and the wildlife. Quarrels about such methods and about Greg's desire to go on to college result in a rupture. Greg leaves home and does illegal work for a friend, illegal since Greg isn't licensed to dive for abalone. In love with Jenny, who shares his concern for ecological balance, Greg decides to risk her affection when he joins a bird-catching crew. His mother braves her husband's wrath, asks Greg's grandmother for help, and makes it possible for Greg to go off to the only Australian college that offers the Environmental Science course he's wanted to take. The author demonstrates a concern for the environment and creates the island atmosphere convincingly; despite this, despite the competent writing style, the book is weakened by the fact that the message overburdens the medium; both the family situation and the love affair become subsidiary to information about and concern for the environment.

Mac (the Great McGoniggle) and his friend Ken help a young man who's stalled his car, then accept a ride with him. He explains that his name is Harvey, that he's picking up valuable papers from a branch of the bank for which he works. After he's made the pickup, Harvey is followed by three suspicious-looking men in another car; they get away, stop at a gas station, and the two boys take the package to the ladies' room to evade the pursuers. A mother and son come into the room, then the men break in and take the package. But McGoniggle has foiled them; they are carrying an envelope stuffed with paper towels, for Mac has guessed that Harvey is an accomplice and hidden the valuable government bonds. The woman drives them safely back to deliver the bonds, and they all wave cheerily to the frustrated thieves on the other side of the highway's center rail. The writing style is pleasantly breezy, but the plot is neither convincing enough to be believable nor fantastic enough to be considered a spoof.


In a multiethnic book, young children are reassured about their potential for accomplishing tasks that are difficult or impossible at some stages of growth. The text is arranged in facing pages and is very simple: One side, "Today," and the other, "Tomorrow," or one side, "Today you can't," and the other, "Tomorrow you can." At the end, there are more specific comments about being bigger and stronger. The pictures show such familiar activities as drawing, putting clothes on, or swinging alone. This doesn't have the smooth progression of the author's *You Go Away*, but it can be equally useful in helping young children adjust to a universal problem.


Their parents on vacation, their grandfather off doing research on ghosts in the north, two English boys are on their own. Martin is seventeen, depressed because he's failed his exams; twelve-year-old Jake is worried because they haven't heard from Granpa for two weeks. Martin decides to buy a motorcycle and the two take off to find their grandfather. They stumble into the operational headquarters of a protest group, the Green Revolutionaries, a group that Martin had been supporting. But he is horrified to find that the leaders are planning violence and that they've imprisoned Granpa in an abandoned mine, Annerton Pit, because he'd been prowling about looking for a rumored ghost. Jake, who is blind, becomes convinced that there really is a ghost when he and his brother are also captured. There are some days of suspense and danger before the two boys get Granpa, who has become ill, out through a forgotten passage of Annerton Pit. Their escape is plausible, but it is slowed by long descriptions of Jake's terror; otherwise the story is as deftly constructed and as well written as earlier Dickinson tales.


An outstanding player as a child, Navratilova has a volatile personality and a quick temper; she has had to subdue the latter and repress her appetite to maintain prowess and please the fans. Dolan and Lyttle describe her childhood and her tennis career in fulsome fashion, with many game sequences included. The book is easy to read and can be used by slow older readers, but it is weakened considerably by the writing, which tends toward gushiness and, occasionally, unsupported statements. For
example, “Martina Navratilova the skiing champion? It almost happened.” The text goes on to say that by the time she was five, Martina “gave promise of being a great skier.” Since the family left their mountain home, took up tennis, and later the text states that Martina was six when she had tennis idols, and “waited impatiently until she was eight years old” to be big enough to enter a tournament, claim for her skiing potential seems unsubstantiated. Her defection from her country (in order to be more free to play when and where she wished) is covered in extended fashion.


It is the owl who speaks in this picture book, addressing a boy who is, unrealistically, its night companion. Although the author achieves a poetic note of tenderness in the bird’s monologue, the text—it is hardly a story—is not convincing, and the softly colored pictures, uncluttered and quiet, just miss having the quality of dream/fantasy that might lift the text. It begins, “On a dark night when there is no moon, you are lonely,” and explains, “I am a predatory bird . . . I fly to you because I can feel under my sleek feathers that you need me.” The boy leaves his house, and runs while the owl flies; he walks, the owl on his arm, through the darkened streets of the town; in the winter they watch the snow together, but the boy returns home “long before dawn,” and the owl flies off to hunt its prey. The text ends, “And under my sleek feathers I wasn’t lonely, and loved you, and knew when you needed me, I’d fly across the world to you again.”


Seven stories, contributed by Lloyd Alexander, Scott Corbett, Sidney Offit, Alfa-Betty Olsen and Marshall Efron, Marilyn Sachs, Marjorie Sharmat, and Jovial Bob Stine, are varied in subject, style, and kinds of humor. Alexander, as always, is polished and witty in telling why cats purr; Sachs writes a realistic story of sibling competition for attention; Offit posits an invisible dog; Olsen and Efron do a sophisticated variant, “Jack and the Bean Futures,” on the beanstalk story. Sharmat’s humor, in a realistic story, is based on exaggerated but believable depiction of a garrulous mother and an ever-cheerful school nurse. Corbett’s story of a boy’s luck is nicely constructed and credible but not very funny, while Stine’s “Elephant Crackers,” in which elephants are awarded as a contest prize, is contrived slapstick. On the whole, a diverse collection, and, although the quality is uneven, enjoyable.


All other animals at the Sweetpeas’ farm were proud of the ferocious appearance of their friend Crocus, the alligator. Crocus took some pleasure, too, in the imposing appearance of his many sharp teeth, and he was dismayed when a toothache necessitated a visit to a dentist. With all his teeth pulled, Crocus was harmless, and his erstwhile friends lost their fear of him; some even stole his food, and many of them boasted about the fact that they were now the most powerful beasts on the farm. Mr. Sweetpeas took a thin, sad Crocus to the dentist, the dentist made him a set of false teeth, and it wasn’t long before the other animals were again exceedingly courteous to the alligator. The last word comes from a toothless duck, who says, “Don’t we all need something that makes us feel important? For Crocus it’s his teeth.” But what emerges as the message is that there’s little loyalty among friends; however, the animal subjects have appeal, the story is simply told, and the bright, fresh colors of the illustrations are delightful.
Faulkner, William J. *The Days When the Animals Talked; Black American Folktales and How They Came to Be*; illus. by Troy Howell. Follett, 1977. 76-50315. 190p. Trade ed. $7.95; Library ed. $7.98 net.

Although the title gives no indication of it, the book contains not only animal tales but, in a separate section, a series of anecdotes about his days of slavery told by Simon Brown to Faulkner, an eminent black folklorist. The several forewords and introductions are addressed, clearly, to adult readers, while the reminiscences and the folktales (the chief character is Brer Rabbit) are scaled for younger audiences. Whether Faulkner has a flair for folklore or fidelity in retelling the versions of those from which he heard the tales is immaterial; they are richly dramatic and compellingly told.


Like Burch's story, this is set before and during World War II, and concerns the problems of an adolescent in a small town. This is Michigan, though, and sixteen-year-old Lukie discovers, as did Amanda in the Burch book, that she has romantic feelings about her life-long friend. Billy is black, an outstanding and popular student at Zebron High, and it is he who gentle points out to Lukie the problems they would have as a couple. So Billy, like Alan, goes off to war. Here, too, the author gives a vivid picture of a small town and laces into the story a family problem: the hostility between Lukie's father and his brother, and the resentment that Lukie often feels her father is expressing toward her. The last few pages are a bit of a letdown, as there is a graduation night sequence with saccharine overtones, but the rest of the book is sturdy, well-paced and competently written.


Illustrated by soft pencil drawings, meticulously detailed, a simple, lucid text moves logically from those features of bird anatomy that contribute to the ability to fly, to general principles of flight, and then—in brief chapters—to separate aspects of birds' flight: getting lift, gliding or flapping, taking off or landing, etc. Freedman also discusses the differences between different kinds of birds and their flying speeds. A glossary and an index are appended.

Gersting, Judith L. *Yes-No; Stop-Go*; by Judith L. Gersting and Joseph E. Kuczkowski; illus. by Don Madden. T. Y. Crowell, 1977. 76-46376. 33p. $5.95.

Cartoon-style illustrations include some clear diagrams that extend an equally clear text that introduces the concept, in mathematical logic, that there is a distinction between "and" and "or" situations. The authors also include suggestions for building models of the examples they've given, using easily available materials to build a set of train switches that can be manipulated by hand to simulate alternative situations and their solutions. In only one instance is the text susceptible to misinterpretation, and that is when the authors use the word "statement" for both a simple and a compound statement.


Christy, eleven, as punishment for having stolen a pair of pantyhose, is sent to her maternal grandmother's home for a week. Tough and shrewd, Grandmother (a truck driver) gives Christy some unusual treatment and some frank talk. Christy learns that her grandmother, who's not so tough after all, was an orphan who adopted Christy's mother. Herself adopted, Christy begins to understand the influences that have
shaped her, and to realize how much love and understanding her adoptive parents have given her. There’s some tough talk, some tender moments; Grandmother is a ‘with it’ character but slightly overdrawn, and Christy—who tells the story—is more a vehicle for depicting Grandmother than a developed character. Green’s style has enough vitality to indicate future potential and to hold the reader, but she needs to develop more balanced and moderate treatment than this story has.


Unlike his younger brother Tony, Mark cannot accept Pat, his stepmother. However she tries to be reasonable or friendly, Mark rejects her overtures; his bitterness and a rancor that emerges in harsh expletives and sarcasm spread to his relationships with his father and brother. Mark is fourteen, just the age to feel a burning shame when some other boys trick him into going to a nonexistent party. After an accident in which Tony is hurt, having gone with Mark and a friend for a stolen ride in Pat’s new car, it is Pat who defends Mark and shows understanding. He overhears Pat and his father quarreling about him and realizes that, although he has tried to foment a rift between them in the past, there is no satisfaction in it. He’s been getting nowhere, and the only way to change it is to change his own attitudes. A very perceptive and honest book is written with vitality; it has strong characterization and relationships, and an even narrative flow.


Gross describes Lindbergh’s longing to be a flier when he was a child, the dangers of flight in the earliest planes, and Lindbergh’s first jobs as a young aviator, barnstorming or delivering mail. The preparation for the flight in the Spirit of St. Louis and the trans-oceanic trip, the first solo flight across the Atlantic, are adequately pictured, capturing the uncertainty and tension of the feat. The first part of the book has several flaws that weaken it; for example, with all the discussion of early planes and the achievement of that first crossing, there is no date mentioned to place the period for the reader; not until page 18 does one learn the year. Another example: In describing early aircraft, Gross says “The propeller was in back. The pilot sat outside, in the front,” but makes no mention of alternate design, even when (seven pages later) an illustration shows Lindbergh doing stunts on the wing of a plane with propeller at the front and the pilot in the cockpit back of it.


A fanciful animal story for beginning independent readers is illustrated with humorous pictures that have strong line and weak composition. The setting is the Claws and Paws newspaper office where Theodore Cat is the bumbling and grouchy editor. When their forecaster, a groundhog, leaves, Caroline Porcupine (who has had a course in meteorology) asks for the job; she is given it on the condition that she make correct weather predictions for five consecutive days. Caroline brings in her instruments, making predictions that conclude with a day of snow—in midsummer. Two friends try feather-dumping to help her out, but it isn’t necessary, because it does snow. The story ends, weakly, with a snowball-and-sledding jamboree for all. The story is lightweight, but the animal subjects, the achievement of a goal, and the rather corny humor (groundhogs know whether or not spring is coming, that’s why they make good weathermen) should appeal to beginning readers.

The story of an elderly German woman and her relationship with a small grandson, who comes to live with her when his parents are killed, won the 1976 German Children’s Book Award. The writing is direct and rather bland, with interpolated musings (in italics) by Oma, stressing her viewpoint; in dialogue and exposition her viewpoint is subordinated to that of young Kalle. The two cope with the differences and conflicts imposed by poverty as well as by a situation that has brought striking changes in the lifestyle of each. The book gives a realistic picture of a resilient, courageous older person; while the story line isn’t strong, the establishment of milieu and the development of the grandparent-child relationship are.


Anpao (the Dawn) and his twin brother Oapna jointly begin a quest to the Sun, for the beautiful Ko-ko-mik-e-is has agreed to be Anpao’s wife if the Sun will give permission. If the Sun removes the mysterious scars from the twins’ faces, that will be a sign. Thus begins the long odyssey through many lands and dangers, to encounters with mythic creatures and white people, and even to the place of the Drowned Ones. And in the end, as the lovers sink into the “great water,” Anpao whispers, “There is no end of us . . . our lives are like the rings of an ancient tree . . .” Magic, myths, and symbols are woven together in a fluent—at times portentous—writing style; Highwater does not quite achieve the synthesis and continuity that Garfield and Blishen do in *The God Beneath the Sea*, which links Greek myths together, but he does succeed in conveying the richness and beauty of the native American heritage. It is a lovely collage, but it remains a collage rather than continuous frieze. Notes on sources and a bibliography are appended.


Based on the true and dramatic ordeal of an Eskimo boy in the 1960’s, this adventure story is set—as are other books by Houston, a Canadian who lived with Artic Eskimos for many years—in the far north. Kayak, a classmate of Matthew Morgan’s in their Baffin Island school, suggests to his new friend Mattoosie (Matthew) that they take a snowmobile and go to the rescue of Mattoosie’s father when the latter, a prospector, disappears. The spare can of gasoline leaks, and the two boys face a homeward trek through seventy-five miles of whirling snow and bitter cold. While the characterization has little depth and the dialogue is rather stiff, the combination of suspense, danger, vivid setting, and the appeal of man against the elements triumphs.


A picture book version of the lovely poem from Jarrell’s *The Bat-Poet* is illustrated with drawings in black, white and deep blue; some of the pages (double-page spreads integrate text and illustrations in flowing patterns) have black print on dark blue background and are therefore difficult to read. While the original context enhances the tenderness of the poem, it is nicely set off here and the picture book version may make it more accessible for some readers.


In a refreshing fantasy from England, the hypothesis is that with every historic
event, there are alternative outcomes, so that divergent worlds exist simultaneously. In Eric (Cat) Chant’s world, witches and wizards and warlocks are quite accepted; children with natural talent take lessons in witchcraft. Cat’s sister Gwendolen, for example, is ready for a course in Advanced Magic. But when the two orphaned Chant children are taken in by a wealthy enchanter, everything goes wrong. Selfish and spoiled, Gwendolen antagonizes the entire household and is deprived of her magic powers as punishment. She sends a “double” from an alternate world to take her place, and poor Janet tries to pretend she is Cat’s sister. The ending is rather complex; suffice it to say that it proves to be Eric who has the true potential for greatness as an enchanter, and that it is not without a great deal of magical turmoil that his affairs are settled. Nothing macabre here; it’s a good-natured romp.


This is not, the author states firmly, a book intended to teach readers to play hockey, but a compilation of advice on individual aspects of the game (skating forward, skating backward, passing, shooting, and the most common mistakes in all of these) so that the reader can be a better player. This is written more simply than *Hockey Talk for Beginners* by Liss or *Be a Winner in Ice Hockey* by Coombs, and it doesn’t give game rules, but it does discuss equipment, it gives sensible advice, and it fills a need for a book about ice hockey techniques for readers in the middle grades. The text states that “The teacher won’t mind” if you wear your hockey skates during figure skating lessons. Some might. It would be slightly more useful were there an index or a table of contents—but perhaps all young players will want to read it cover-to-cover anyway.


With his usual penchant for a straight-faced tall tale, Kellogg describes the problems Louis has in finding accommodations for his tadpole Alphonse. Sent by Uncle McAlister, Alphonse has grown gargantuan. Not until he uses his ability as a retriever (Louis has shown him a picture of a pirate treasure ship) and dives for loot in a sunken ship, can Alphonse have a suitable home; Louis builds him a large swimming pool. The illustrations, line and watercolor, are bright and amusing, especially when they extend the text; “Louis hid Alphonse under a rug . . .” is paired with a picture of a huge beast with head and striped tail protruding from his cover, an enormous carpet. Alphonse, by the way, has been caught by Uncle McAlister in Loch Ness.


A sampling for the indoor gardener discusses choosing and caring for plants, sources, soil, potting, coping with insects, and plant names before moving on to describe about forty house plants. For each, the author gives some facts about temperature, light, water, and soil conditions most beneficial for the plant. The arrangement is random; the facts are given, often in more detail, in many other books about house plants; and the writing style is often coy: “Even if you don’t say your prayers, here’s a plant that will do it for you,” or, “No child wants a tiger in their bedroom, but you might want this orchid . . . You may not think you like orchids or tigers, but when this plant blooms and grows with color, it’s quite nice.” Some plant suppliers are cited at the end of the book, as are some tips (six) on symptoms and probable causes of illness, and an index.

This doesn't have quite the affectionate humor of *Leo the Late Bloomer* or *Owliver*, but it tackles just as deftly a problem that many children share. As always, the characters are animals; although the Aruego-Dewey drawings are colorful and vigorous, they don't quite reveal what sort of animal Noel is. However, both he and his father are cowards, and they decide to take lessons in self-defense even though Mother, comforting them, says, “Better a live coward than a dead hero.” They study boxing, wrestling, kung fu, karate, judo, and dirty fighting, graduating with honors. When the bullies punch and tease Noel, he simply evades them and walks off, so they stop their bullying and never punch or tease Noel again. Or his father. Mother says, beaming, “My heroes!” Many adults will be pleased by the fact that the story doesn't end in carnage, and young children should be pleased by the triumph of the timid, and by the fact that father and son share a weakness.


As they did in *Joi Bangla: The Children of Bangladesh*, the Laurés have combined photographs and interviews to produce a survey of young people in a troubled time. Nine adolescents, chosen to provide a cross-section of the population, speak of their own lives and their reactions to the revolution, in 1974, that ended half a century of dictatorship. While there is variety, with one subject a Communist convert, another who seems totally unaffected by the political shift, a third who has had to come back to Portugal from her Angolan home, this lacks the intensity and depth of the earlier book. It does give a broad picture, however, of social and economic strata and of political attitudes, or apolitical apathy.


A story based on an animated film has cartoon characters in solid, bright colors relieved only by the white of eyes and teeth, or by black hair; some have human shapes, some are distorted blobs. When the people of their town went to protest the fact, long ago, that winter was cold and dreary, Small and Tender joined the march (“Steppidy, steppidy step . . .”) but lagged behind and were lost. With the help of Spruce and other trees, they caught up; at the Ministry of Winter, the group became snarled in bureaucracy, but it was little Tender and Small who made an impression after the adults failed. Chastened, Winter wept, the tears became snow, the snow made everybody happy, and Winter said, “It's good to laugh . . . it's ever so good to be me.” It may have been a lively cartoon film, but the translation into print has achieved a puerile and unconvincing story written in mediocre style.


Photographs of the work in seven factories show the assembling of seven familiar products: a chair, a football, an umbrella, a flashlight, a bicycle, a jump rope, and some candy. Each sequence ends with a child examining or using the object; there is no text. The pictures are not in discernible order, the pages are crowded, and the photographs do not explain how these manufactured objects are made; at most, they can give children an idea of some of the processes.

How nice to have all the poems of McCord's seven collections of children's poetry all in one place. The encomia have already been pronounced, so there is little to add save that the volume is illustrated with small, deft line drawings, it has a subject index, the pages are spacious in layout, and it's all the nicer that the book should appear in a year when McCord has been the first person to win the award for poetry for children, just established by the National Council of Teachers of English.


A facile illustrator in the grotesque tradition, O'Brien includes puns, limericks, and doggerel in a brief collection of quasi-humorous material. There are also some cartoon-strip situation gags, wordless save for balloon captions like "oow" or "lay off" or "cut that out." The calibre of the limericks is exemplified by such beginnings as, "There once was a big-eared dragoon / Who had a collection of moons," and, "A dreamer who sat by the sea / Didn't budge for two months plus three . . ." (Faulty rhymes, contrived rhymes) and the puns: "Spot, get off my tie!" (Tiny dog clinging to a man's tie) or "But, your honor, he's lion." (A lion in a witness box). O'Brien's inventive drawings are not served by his weak text.


In an English story of family relationships, adolescent Hugo decides that, as a desperate measure to reunite his parents, he'll run away and pretend to be kidnapped. He takes refuge in the family's trailer, kept at its summer campsite. His plans are upset by the hovering presence of a man who calls himself Cutts, prowls and questions in suspicious fashion, and finally calls Hugo's mother, who appears to take him home. By that time, a frightened Hugo is ready to go back. Parker's writing style is adept, he makes a clear point about parent-child communication and the rights of each, and he builds suspense well in the depiction of Hugo's fear of Cutts. Alas, he never explains who Cutts is, a relevant matter since Hugo has discovered at one point (having done some counter-snooping) that "Cutts" has a passport in the name of Schneider, and both his and Hugo's trailer are near a military installation. Unlike Parker's other books, this has more structure than story.


Parks, a geologist, describes his experiences as a guest on a marine submersible, *Deep Quest*, in a day's probe of the sea floor. While the book has some interesting details of the equipment and functioning (and, occasionally, malfunctioning) of the craft, and gives many facts about descent and ascent, construction, and techniques of exploration, it is weakened by the fact that the author often gives unimportant procedures or personal actions (details of entering the hatch, going to the head, having breakfast on the mother ship) in as much detail as he gives to operational procedures. A glossary, an index, and a supplementary reading list are included.


The scruffy mop of a dog who investigated bugs in *A Dog's Book of Bugs* trots, swims, and climbs about investigating birds in this agreeable companion volume. Parnall's pictures are clean, uncluttered, meticulously detailed, and here they have an antic note that adds to the reader's enjoyment and detracts not a whit from the
accuracy of comments and illustrations. One double-page spread shows crows in various positions; the text reads, "The Crow is a rascal. He makes a lot of noise ... and steals things. He can even learn to talk." What the crows are stealing is the dog, held aloft by ears and tails.


Blossom Culp, the doughty and persistent ghost’s companion of *The Ghost Belonged to Me*, now fourteen, tells her own story here, and she’s completely convincing. As the daughter of a shabby spiritualist, Blossom not unnaturally thinks of pretending to have second sight when she can use it for retribution against a snobbish, vindictive classmate. Surprise! She can’t always summon the power when she needs it, but Blossom actually does have psychic power; she sees the future. She gets involved in strange dramatic situations, becomes famous when her prescience is proven accurate, and takes it all in her stride. Somehow, in this melange of eccentric characters and dramatic, fantastic events, Peck instills in Blossom and her story a sturdy, lively believability.

Pringle, Laurence P. *Animals and Their Niches; How Species Share Resources*; illus. by Leslie Morrill. Morrow, 1977. 77-3636. 64p. Trade ed. $4.95; Library ed. $4.59 net.

Pringle discusses the knowledge scientists have gained about “resource partitioning,” the sharing of food and space within an ecological community by related species, through descriptions of individual research projects. Some answers (division of space, variation in nesting and breeding times, selection of prey) have been found about animal niches, although there is no proof that competition for resources causes niches. Despite the use of “parameciums” rather than “paramecia,” the text is lucid and accurate; Pringle shows, more clearly than if he had made a statement on the subject, how painstaking and objective the scientific method is and how a body of knowledge grows through a diversity of research findings. The print is large, the realistic wash drawings are adequately captioned, and a relative index is appended.


Martin Luther King’s birthday has been added to the usual list of commemorative occasions in a book arranged by the calendar year. Some information about each holiday precedes each group of songs; simple piano and guitar accompaniments are provided along with the melodic lines. Most of the material is available in other song collections, and, while the book is useful, there are some selections that seem arbitrary choices in their holiday slots: “Mary” for Mother’s Day, for example, or the nursery counting rhyme, “This Ol’ Man” for April Fools’ Day.


Nicely detailed black and white drawings by an artist who specializes in wildlife paintings and museum exhibits accompany brief textual descriptions of the biggest, or fastest, or smallest fish, land animals, or insects, or descriptions of creatures with the biggest eyes, plants with the smallest seeds, plants with the biggest leaves, etc. There is an occasional note of coyness in the writing (“Do you know what animal has more legs than any other?” . . . “Can you guess what the smartest one is? You are!”) but most of the writing is direct and informative. There is an index, and it includes the feature which makes the plant or animal a record holder. Measurements
are given (metric measurements are not provided) but pictures are not drawn to scale. This has browsing use, but it's not really substantial or comprehensive.


Beeky and Joe daydream about being a great football combination, but they don't play, they just talk through game sequences. Taunted by Jan, who claims she knows more about football than they do, they practice; eventually they get into an organized game, and Joe's forward pass results in a game-winning touchdown by Beeky. The play has been called by Jan, also in the game. It doesn't seem likely that two football-mad little boys who prattle on about blocking kicks, huddles, and pockets would really not know that you can't make a touchdown on the 50-yard line, or that Joe would have a football he's never played with, but the story recovers from these improbabilities and, save for the formula save-the-game ending, is satisfying, having a brisk pace, a realistic emphasis on practice-makes-possible, and a commendable inclusion of a girl in contact sports.


Photographs of dollhouse suites or accessories are followed by instructions for making furniture, lamps, clocks, et cetera. The writing is direct, the instructions are clear, and the diagrams are explicit and well-placed. The instructions are preceded by some general suggestions and by lists of “‘Basic Tools and Materials’” and “‘Things to Save.’” Roche encourages creative experimentation and occasionally suggests adult supervision; she concludes with some suggestions for adapting found objects to use as dollhouses or rooms for dolls: bookcase shelves, cardboard boxes, sturdy gift boxes. Nothing really unusual here, but it's useful, lucid, and attractively packaged, and most of the materials that would have to be purchased are inexpensive.


The story of a Belgian Jewish refugee during World War II is based on the author's experiences although not told in autobiographical form, but as a narrative, through diary entries, letters, and items from newspapers. Elke, age twelve, writes in 1939 about the antisemitism in Antwerp and about her friends in the socialist group; Elke receives permission from the American Consulate to come to the United States, her parents do not. Living with an aunt and uncle in New York, Elke adjusts to her new home and school, is visited by a friend from home, follows the progress of the war and is joined by her parents in 1943. In 1945, she visits Antwerp and learns the fate of friends and relatives. The format of the book prevents the narrative from developing smoothly, and the story is weakened by the inclusion of minor details and by some florid writing, especially at the close; nevertheless, the bitter poignancy of the war years comes through.

Selsam, Millicent (Ellis). *The Amazing Dandelion*; by Millicent E. Selsam and Jerome Wexler. Morrow, 1977. 77-9029. 46p. illus. Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $5.49 net.

Wexler's superb photographs and Selsam's wonderfully explicit text have, again, produced a superlative science book for younger readers. The material is sequentially organized, the writing is clear and authoritative, and the text and pictures are coordinated in exemplary fashion. Selsam describes the dandelion's structure and life cycle, stressing the many ways of reproduction that make the plant so tenacious a weed, a pest to most people but a source of food to many. And, after all of the black
and white photographs throughout the book, there’s last page in full color to remind readers of the beauty of a field of dandelions.


Caleb and Kate love each other, but they often quarrel; after one spat, Caleb storms off to the forest, where a witch puts a spell on him and turns him into a dog. He goes home and tries to comfort Kate; although she accepts him as a pet, she cannot recognize him as her Caleb. And then . . . thieves invade the house, one of them slashes at the menacing dog, and cuts the very spot the witch had touched to effect her foul enchantment. So the dog turns into Caleb, Kate is overjoyed, and the frightened thieves run away. Steig’s vigorous, broken lines and the humor of his characters’ faces are droll as ever; although the advent of magic seems fortuitous (the witch just happens by and snickers, “How timely! Here’s my chance to test that new spell Cousin Iggdrazil just taught me.”). Steig carries it off by combining a bland acceptance of the impossible and a witty writing style that makes few concessions to its audience: if “pondering” seems just right to the author, he doesn’t simplify it to “thinking.”


Bennett’s softly tinted scenes add vitality to a modest story about a group of animals playing games or exercising during gym periods. All the others enjoy gym; Pig dreads it, because he’s not swift or agile. After a few bad days, Pig captures the flag during a game (teams compete to capture the flag) and—an instant convert—wants to play the game again during the next gym period. Slight as the tale is, it’s adequately told, and the message of maybe-you-can-if-you-try isn’t pushed too hard.

Vangheli, Spiridon. *Meet Guguze*; tr. by Miriam Morton; illus. by Trina Schart Hyman. Addison-Wesley, 1977. 76-50034. 43p. Trade ed. $3.95; Library ed. $4.46 net.

Guguze, a small Moldavian boy, has some of Pippi Longstocking’s blithe spirit as he steers his independent way through a series of small adventures. Morton’s translation, as always, is capable; Hyman’s black and white pictures have vitality and humor, with both the sturdy peasant figures and the decorative frames picking up authentic details of costume and of folk art. Guguze, disappointed when told he is too small to go to school, persuades his father to make him a desk, and he solemnly sits down alone to study when he hears the school bell ring. Other episodes are more fanciful (Guguze’s magical hat becomes an infinitely expandable umbrella for sheltering homebound schoolchildren; he creates a family of Snowpeople who come to life . . .) and both the realistic and the fanciful chapters have an ingenuous quality engendered by the combination of affectionate tone and bland, simple writing style.


Veglahn gives a quietly dramatic picture of the long years of patient research that led Marie Curie to the tracing and isolation of radium. Illustrated by black and white drawings that are competent, distinctive only in the evocation of light and shadow, the text stresses the dedication of both Curies, the poverty in which they lived, and the sad toll their work took: the element they discovered was too new for them to realize that it was mortally hazardous. Despite a tendency to give too much background information about Marie Curie’s earlier life in the form of reminiscence, the text is written with care and accuracy, evoking a sense of taut suspense as the scientists moved toward their goal. Appended matter includes an epilogue, a glos-

In a sequel to *Hello, Aurora,* Vestly explores further the small problems of a child of a nuclear family in an urban setting. Aurora’s mother is a lawyer; father, who has been taking care of the household, is a student who, in the course of the story, successfully defends his doctoral dissertation. His last weeks of intensive study make it necessary to bring in friends to look after Aurora and little Socrates, and there are many quasi-comic mishaps that spring from the adjustment of sitters and children. Vestly deals smoothly with such common problems as separation anxiety, peer jealousy, a friend’s moving away, and a child’s reaction to parental quarrels, incorporating all of them in an easy, anecdotal flow. The book, capably translated from the Norwegian, is also a good choice for reading aloud to younger children.


Sprout and his friend Raymond, in one of a series first published in England, become intrigued by the magician hired to perform at a birthday party for Sprout’s little sister. When her rabbit disappears, Sprout becomes convinced that the magician has stolen it; he tracks down the man’s home and steals a white rabbit. Then little Tilly’s rabbit turns up. The magician and Sprout’s parents are irate, but Sprout is forgiven, and is even invited to a special magic show. The plot is rather labored, but the writing style has vitality and humor; the line drawings are deft and amusing.


Williams creates a wholly believable world in what appears to be historical fiction seeded with fantastic animals until the exciting ending of the story, when his Norse characters prove to be descendants of Icelandic refugees who had escaped from a polluted land to the north. Thorgeir Redhair, sent by his father on a secret mission to make peace with a neighboring tribe, becomes an outcast in a world where each settlement is suspicious of its neighbors. With several companions, he seeks the legendary home of the goddess Arveid and slays the dreaded beast that can devastate the land, the kraken. Fantasy and realism are deftly meshed, the pace is brisk, the writing both smooth and vigorous in an excellent science fiction novel.


Zemach’s ebullient illustrations lend verve to a story of sibling squabbling. Hilda, who appears to be the middle child in a family of three girls, has been given a “medal” by her father: a tin-can top, fastened with a safety pin, that says “To Hilda for helping.” Hilda wears it constantly, which doesn’t bother little Rose, but infuriates Gladys. Gladys insists that the medal will be lost, damaged, and forgotten; she predicts that Hilda will find it when she’s old and not recognize it. No, says Hilda, she may lose it but if she does, and if she finds it when she’s old, it will have been buried under a tree that will grow medals on its branches. The picture shows an elderly woman complacently examining all the medals that say, “To Hilda for Helping.” Except one, which says “Heidi.” Maybe a mother-daughter joke, since Zemach has a daughter named Heidi. The story goes nowhere, but it does so with enough gusto and enough resemblance to real-life competition to be engaging.
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