ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign Library
EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED
WITH ANNOTATIONS

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

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

* * * *

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

Subscription Rates: 1 year, $10.00; $7.20 per year for each additional subscription to the same address; $7.20, student rate. Single copy rate: from vol. 25, $1.25; vols. 17 through 24, 50¢. Complete back volume (11 issues): vols. 17–22, $4.00; vols. 23–24, $5.00. Reprinted volumes 1–16 (1947–1968) available from Kraus Reprint Co., Route 100, Millwood, New York 10546. Volumes available in microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Complete volumes available in microfiche from Johnson Associates, P.O. Box 1017, Greenwich, Conn. 06830. Checks should be made payable to The University of Chicago Press. All notices of change of address should provide both the old and the new address.

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

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

Second-class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois.

© 1978 by the University of Chicago. All rights reserved.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.
New Titles for Children and Young People


A diverting collection of Aiken stories has her usual frothy mix of realism and fantasy, lightly seasoned by whimsy and sentiment. Some of the tales, like “The Man Who Pinched God’s Letter” or “Moonshine in the Mustard Pot,” are realistic and touching, if not always restrained; some, like “The Cat Who Lived in a Drainpipe,” are blandly fanciful; and tales like “Cat’s Cradle,” are wholly fantastic. The style is light and polished, the humor sophisticated.


A blithely silly tale has illustrations in brilliant color; amply spaced on the oversize pages, the pictures have a vitality and humor that brought the book the Greenaway Medal in England. Mishka is an eight-year-old who has learned to play “The Blue Danube” on his fiddle. Seeking work at a circus, Mishka is rejected as a fiddler but accepted as odd-job man, and his jobs are menial. But glory comes at last when the elephant trainer is ill and Mishka offers to take his place; standing on his head—atop the head of a seated elephant—and playing his one tune, Mishka delights the crowd. Naturally, he becomes the star turn and the once-sneering ringmaster is demoted to elephant mucker-out. Improbable as the outcome is, it adds the success of a small person to the lure of the circus background to appeal to a young audience, and the writing style has a bland directness that contrasts nicely with the exuberance of the pictures.


While this does not give as much information as Zim and Bleeker’s *Life and Death*, and while it is not as logically arranged as Bernstein and Gullo’s *When People Die*, it has a forthright and grave tone that does not lapse into sentimentality or evasive sympathy. It gives some facts about burial customs and religious beliefs, but the focus is on attitudes toward and acceptance of death as a part of life. This seems dominated by the photographs; it’s an adequate text, but it seems slight compared to other books intended to help children understand death.


As always, Anno’s draughtsmanship and composition are impressive, his balance of mass and detail wise, and his use of color restrained. Here he moves from an open
landscape to village to town to city, and reverses the procedure, in a wordless book that pictures European settings and inhabitants. The pages are filled with small delights: a bridge that is straight out of a Van Gogh painting, a building marked "Anno 1976," some quirks of perspective, some marvelously comic details in the activities of the people in the streets or on the roofs of buildings. The book is full of wit, action, and beauty.

Asimov, Isaac. *The Key Word and Other Mysteries*; illus. by Rod Burke. Walker, 1978. 77-4597. 54p. Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $5.85 net.

In five short stories, written in first person, the son of a New York City Police detective solves crimes by deductive reasoning. Larry figures out a code system that baffles his father, prevents a bombing by remembering that the Russian Christmas is based on the Julian calendar, expiates a classmate accused of cheating by figuring out the true culprit, finds some rare coins stolen from a museum, and locates a missing diamond. And never accepts a reward, even from the Police Department, because he's only doing his duty. The stories have good logic and some suspense, and they're capably written, but they're too dependent on the unfailing perspicacity of the boy detective who sees clues no adult can, even when they're as obvious as a murdered man in the Museum of Natural History gasping out what sounds like "Try Sarah Tops," as he breathes his last.


In a continuous text, amply illustrated with drawings that show the relations between drifting continental plates and such disasters as earthquakes or volcanic eruption, Berger explains the theory of plate tectonics. Text and illustrations show clearly how the present land masses could have fitted together, and include some of the clues scientists have to corroborate the theory that the earth originally had one giant land mass. The explanation isn't comprehensive, and the material might have been better organized, but the book fills a real need; while there have been some excellent books for older readers, there has been little available on continental drift for the middle grades. A brief index is appended.


In a fairly objective assessment of the occult sciences, Berger covers a wide range of topics adequately if not comprehensively. Separate chapters are devoted to such subjects as astrology, faith healing, parapsychology, witchcraft, and UFOs. Case histories and anecdotes add variety to the text, which includes some exposes and some unexplained, but documented phenomena. Not unlike other books on the supernatural, this does a workmanlike job of introduction. A bibliography, an index, and a list of addresses "For information on parapsychology, and to report high ESP test scores" are appended.


More simplified than Hutton's *Noah and the Great Flood*, this adaptation of the Biblical story of the flood is illustrated by black and white drawings in which the chunky, rounded figures have almost identical faces: round eyes, bulbous noses, slits for mouths. The illustrations have none of the beauty of Hutton's adaptation or the humor of Spier's *Noah's Ark*, both of which can be read aloud to young children.

Of the several biographies of Earhart, this does not stand up well. It gives the facts about her career as a flyer and about her disappearance while on a round-the-world flight, and it makes it clear that she was an intrepid pioneer. However, the text has a rather gushy tone in describing Earhart's childhood; it actually has a sentence that begins, "Little did she know..." and it shows her husband in photographs but does not mention her marriage in the text. Finally it stresses the theory that Earhart was shot by Japanese, a theory tenuous at best.


First published by the Cambridge University Press, this is one of a series called the "history of mankind." The text is printed in two columns on most pages, although there are pages on which a paragraph of print may be in three different places, the other spaces filled by illustrations. After a section that describes, in some detail, ships of the 14th and 15th centuries, there are sections on Magellan's two voyages. The text is adequately written and highly informative but is arranged in blocks, so that the account of a voyage may be broken by a section on weighing and catting the anchor and by another section on food before going back to an account of the voyage. Given small print, crowded pages, and poor arrangement of the text, the book is difficult to read; it's a pity, since the facts have been well-researched and the diagrams are generally informative. An inadequate index is appended.


Large print and ample spacing are used for the text of a first science book for beginning independent readers. The illustrations effectively contrast turquoise and red with drawings of black and white swans; the tone is simply written but not always smooth or consistent in tone—as when the direct narrative gives way to, "The happy family swims around in safety," just after three of the four cygnets are killed by gulls. The book gives facts about mating, nesting, and disputing territorial rights.


Carle's story is about a ladybug, but he also manages to get across the idea of bullies being cowardly (if one stands up to them) and to introduce the concept of comparative size. The story line is simple: a grouchy ladybug refuses to share the aphids on a leaf with another ladybug, then offers to fight a series of creatures ranging from a yellow jacket to a whale. Each time her pugnacious offer to fight is accepted, the grouchy ladybug says, "Oh, you're not big enough," and flies off. Tired and hungry, she eventually accepts the other ladybug's leavings. The pages are set back, graduated in size, and the concept of time is also introduced, with a nice twist at the end; whereas other creatures were encountered on the hour, it takes almost an hour just to fly past the whale. A fresh approach is developed with ingenuity, and the bold, colorful paintings are particularly effective, with larger and larger print used as the size of the pages increases.

Rosie Gold is in fifth grade, the youngest of three children who live in the hotel run by their mother and staffed by adults who are always willing to give Rosie attention and sympathy. She feels the need of both, since her mother is too busy to make a fuss over her children's small problems; Rosie, who tells the tale, is also desperately eager to have a dog—a goal achieved on her birthday when Mom also gives her a surprise party. The story is real, warm, nicely set, and adequately characterized; it is not strengthened by the several very long episodes that Rosie and an adult friend spin out together, despite the fact that the make-believe land they invent (with a heroine called Rosalie) has an engaging reflection of Rosie's real-life concerns. Shorter inserts might have worked; as it is, the realistic story and the invented sequences are each long and solid enough to break the narrative flow of the other.


Contentedly solitary, nine-year-old Harold (an only child whose parents both work) watches birds, indulges in hours of dreamy, imaginative play, and longs to be a hero. He doesn't really need friends, he feels, but he'd like his parents to stop worrying about him and he'd like his classmates to have a higher opinion of him. On a class outing, alas, it is Harold who falls into the river and another boy rescues him and becomes a hero. But Harold has his turn; he's so angry at a man who is shooting the ducks he's loved to watch quietly, that he trips the man and runs off with his gun. What brings Harold satisfaction, however, is not being a bona fide hero, but a secondary result: visited by the boy who'd rescued him from the river, Harold discovers that sustained imaginative play is more than twice as much fun with two. He's found a friend who likes to pretend as much as he does. Harold's heroic act is believable, his concern for the environment laudable, and his acceptance of being different a strong appeal in a smoothly written story.


A review of the beginnings of the game in England and then in the United States is followed by a series of one-page accounts of individual players, each faced by a full-page picture. It is difficult to see how some of the players discussed can be thought of as "famous firsts." John Newcombe, for example, is not described as having won any combination of titles not already achieved by others. However, the book will undoubtedly appeal to tennis buffs; the game is increasingly popular as a spectator sport; the accounts include some information about individual players' styles or special abilities. The writing style is adequate; an index is appended.


"Rachel knew exactly how her father felt. Smothered." She also knew that she was being sent to visit her grandparents because her parents were having bitter quarrels. Sixteen, she arrives at a modest Palm Springs motel to find that the residents are all, like her grandparents, elderly people. The one friend she makes is the beautiful Ariadne, staying at another motel with a fashion-plate mother. Rachel hasn't expected to be so involved with all her grandparents' friends, but she's deeply concerned about them and about Ariadne, who proves to be emotionally disturbed. So she learns about caring—and by the time her dependent mother is in Reno, Rachel volunteers to be with her. She still judges her parents, but she can accept them and
accept the responsibility that love entails. A familiar theme, but Corcoran has given it a fresh slant. The characters are strongly drawn, the narrative smooth, and Rachel's reactions and fears emerge naturally via letters to an only brother in Europe.


It started as an amusing ploy. Chad, who tells the story, had agreed with Toad and B.J. that it would be fun to plan—but not commit—the perfect crime. Each would do a series of practice runs, all harmless, to show the others he had been able to follow someone unobserved, or pull some prank in school without being detected. But it went wrong; the letter addressed to their English teacher, Mr. Patterson, was only meant to be Chad's proof that he'd shadowed the man. He hadn't meant to read it, felt uncomfortable when B.J. and Toad insisted they could use it for blackmail, since it proved that Patterson had once had a nervous breakdown. The story ends with Patterson leaving; Chad, who had confessed to him, found that his dear friends turned on him. The end of a friendship, and the beginning of ethical maturity for Chad. The story is convincing save for the fact that Patterson steps in, at the last, and claims that the reefers in front of Chad's locker are his; he and Chad know that B.J. and Toad are trying to frame Chad as a retaliatory measure—but it isn't consistent with Patterson's satiric toughness. Nevertheless, the book deals honestly with concepts of integrity and peer loyalty, and it is both well-paced and briskly written.


Cummings has created some strong characters in a novel that, while written in a style that has flow and vitality, is swamped by its message. Ella Richard, seventy-six, has left her house and moved to the boat moored on the river; she lives on sales of fish plus her social security. Ella takes in a brawny, gentle, retarded young man who can remember no name except "Reetard," and they gradually learn to love and depend on each other; he calls her "Mama." They fight a losing battle against Florida real estate sharks and others who have no care for the wildlife or the beautiful river being damaged by erosion and pollution. In the end, Reetard is killed by the racing boat of their bitter enemy, and old Ella fights on alone.


Harry, eleven, knew perfectly well that the older boys—especially the Morrison brothers—who had asked him to join their "war games" on the island were bullies, but he was thrilled when they invited him to join them. He hadn't expected to be saddled with a younger sister and with the "Fresh Air" boy from New York who had come for a fortnight. And he knew it would be necessary to lie, to tell his mother they were going on a picnic. Harry didn't understand that he was meant to be the victim. The gear that he and Sarah and John brought with them is ripped and thrown about; Sarah and John are tied and their mouths taped, are put in a pit and bombarded with lighted matches. Harry rescues them, catches one of the Morrisons and tricks him into the pit. And then the three "nice" children treat him exactly as they have been treated. They go off, with no thought of telling parents, with some guilt feelings for having sunk to the Morrisons' level, and with some confusion about why it had all happened. Degens pulls no punches: young people can be cruel, and cruelty can engender a reciprocating violence. She is also realistic in perceiving the small deceptions people use to hide their fears or to gain status; Harry and John have lied to each other, covering what they think are their own weaknesses. The story is dramatic and fast-paced, with good characterization and dialogue.

[ 157 ]

A collection of 127 original puzzles and problems are arranged in order of difficulty; pedestrian cartoon-style drawings illustrate the first part of the book. Not unlike other compilations of puzzlers, this demands logical reasoning and a certain amount of mathematical ability, rather than mathematical knowledge. The puzzlers are posed lucidly, and the book, while not unusual of its kind, should afford entertainment to brainteaser buffs. The puzzles are followed by a section of answers that is quite full, the section taking up almost half the book.


Only the jacket copy indicates that Farber has retold an episode from Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year;* no credit is given on the title page. The story, written in a rather heavy style that is not inappropriately like the prose of the period but that does not make for easy reading, concerns three men who fled the Wapping district of plague-infested London, joined forces with another band of refugees, and lived in the countryside as best they could until the news came that it would be safe to return to London. Mikolaycak's two-color illustrations are bold and dramatic, with flowing lines and a stark reality in depicting victims, refugees, and some of those maddened by fear. Yet in those places where there are several pages of pictures (five or six) that carry on the story, the reading flow is broken; some of the pictures are meaningless until one reads the notes at the back of the book; some readers may object to the explicit anatomical details.

Farrow, Rachi. *Charlie's Dream;* written and illus. by Rachi Farrow. Pantheon, 1978. 77-4320. 30p. Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $5.99 net.

Charlie, a ram, lives with his family on a Vermont farm where each season brings its chores; when Robin tells Charlie what it's like to spend a winter in Florida, Charlie mopes for months and finally decides that he'll drive his family down south the next winter. He does; the last picture shows the family lolling about the beach, perspiring or reading a book about Vermont or (in a balloon) dreaming of ice-skating. The text ends with a page that says, 'The End?'. The no-place-like-home theme (stressed in jacket copy) is only lightly suggested, more of the story being concerned with Charlie's envy or his cataloging of chores; the latter may prove to be the most interesting part of the book to young listeners who are curious about a farmer's (or ram-farmer's) life. The story also can reinforce concepts of seasons, but it's not very substantial in structure and the illustrations are undistinguished despite interesting textural contrasts.


A biography of Robert Rogers, the wily leader of a band of rangers in the French and Indian War of the eighteenth century, is written in a casual, conversational style. It's a good way to make history appealing to readers, although there are some passages in which Gauch's chatty tone or casual syntax are obtrusive. Rogers was not above smuggling or passing counterfeit money, and he eventually landed in an English jail, but as a soldier/scout he accomplished missions that did indeed seem impossible and that were laudable for the tenacity and ingenuity they displayed. Parker's scrawly line and deft tonal treatment create roughness and vitality in illustrations that echo the vigor and bravado of the subject.

Richie, who tells the story, is just turning fourteen and just graduated from elementary school when the book starts; a hyperactive and destructive child, he has no friends, a poor record and reputation at school, and little support or understanding from his parents. Every time Richie damages something or offends someone—and he enjoys offending—his father offers the victim money. Then Richie makes a friend, Norman, who is wheelchair-bound, through his walkie-talkie; they each give the other a comforting acceptance. Richie even begins to feel that Norman has a pacifying effect—and then they are left alone one night. Frightened by a storm, Richie becomes so angry at Norman's amusement that he endangers his friend's life; he's repentant, but the friendship is over. The author, once a special education teacher, has made the behavior patterns of Richie and Norman believable; the writing style is adequate; it is not quite credible that neither boy seems to be getting professional help, and it may frustrate readers that no specific information about their illness is included.


Heather comes straight from hockey practice to babysit with Lisa; Lisa's pleased, because Heather is cheerful, inventive, and self-reliant, but not—Lisa discovers—when there's thunder. Heather tries hard to mask her fear, but Lisa sees through her efforts and suggests a series of occupations to keep her babysitter busy. By the time the storm ends and Lisa goes to bed, it's clear that there's been a role reversal. A good child-babysitter relationship and genuine kindness on Lisa's part are assets in a story that is nicely told and that has a fresh viewpoint in dealing with the handicap of fear. The illustrations are in pastel tones and, while not cluttered, are filled with small details (figured wallpaper, patterned rugs, floral print on clothing) that make them a bit busy.


A simplified version of the story of the sleeping beauty has no poetic cadence, but can be used for reading aloud to younger children. There is some discrepancy between the simplicity of the text and the sophistication of the illustrations, which are elaborately romantic and beautifully detailed. The text pages are framed in borders reminiscent of illuminated manuscript, the full-page paintings that face them reminiscent of the intricacy of Persian miniatures.


Eleven-year-old Hilary takes piano lessons, but she knows she plays badly and she detests the thought of her imminent recital. Her teacher, Miss Orphee, scolds; she pleads for more practicing; she urges Hilary to relax. No improvement. In fact, she's the last person in the world that Hilary would expect to come to her rescue at the dreaded recital, but it is Miss Orphee who—by disappearing into the piano—saves the day at the recital. But had she been in the piano? Or was it practice and self-confidence that made Hilary play so well? An original and very funny story, told in andante tempo and with brio.

One of a series of sports biographies designed to appeal to the slow older reader, this has good-sized, well-spaced print, an undemanding vocabulary, and fairly short sentences. It is, however, not written down and is reportorial rather than laudatory, emphasizing each woman's dedication and rigorous training rather than her accomplishments, although those are of course included. The six women described are Nadia Comaneci, Chris Evert, Dorothy Hamill, Kathy Kusner, Cindy Nelson, and Judy Rankin, so the book has variety. An index is appended.


Twelve-year-old Jim, one of seven children of a peripatetic Air Force colonel, describes the lurid adventures he and his siblings have when they move into a French farmhouse. They already know that a M. Birrot wants them out of there; they soon discover that some of their neighbors are hostile. The plot, which revolves about the theft of a piece of furniture and the mystery of its contents, is intricate. The book has too many characters, none of them fully developed; it has too many incidents, many of them not quite credible. The writing style is florid, particularly in the glib, pseudo-clever dialogue of the children. There may be appeal to some readers in the pace, the element of mystery, or the French setting.


In a fourth book about the terse disciplinarian Louie, an English milkman whose "boys" have remembered him with deep affection as they moved from being his helpers to being famous actors or lawyers, Louie comes to the United States and is kidnapped. Ransom is demanded for him and for the daughter of a wealthy American; the two English boys who've come over with Louie are also taken. It's a race against time as Louie's influential friends, the F.B.I., and the shrewd protagonist match wits with the mysterious organizer of the kidnapping. Hildick doesn't ever mean the reader to quite believe the excesses of his tale, but there's enough realism and suspense to make it almost credible and certainly exciting; there are no comic lines, but there's ample humor in the situation.


Fine-line pencil drawings in black and white are gentle and realistic, although marred somewhat by the fact that parts of heads or bodies are often chopped off. One of the many new books written for younger readers about retarded children, this is told by a small boy who describes his older sister: she is loving and gentle, a brain-damaged child who needs physical care. Sometimes the boy resents the parental attention his sister gets, and sometimes he is embarrassed or angry at the way strangers react to her, but his parents help him understand and accept, and—he concludes—"I love her the way she is." Nicely matter-of-fact about retardation, this has a sympathetic approach, but with no story line, it's static; it is also much like some of the earlier books on the subject.

An exemplary do-it-yourself book gives helpful general directions and clear step-by-step instructions for seven simple projects; explanations and diagrams for basic stitches are integrated into the projects. The authors continue with a section on making your own designs and they include tips on coping with mistakes, finishing off needlepoint work or adjusting it if it is out of shape. Both text and photographs indicate that this is an occupation for both girls and boys.


An oversize book is filled with gaudy pictures of comic-strip calibre; it tells a highly fictionalized story of Lincoln's life, stressing the value of respect. Abe Lincoln has an imaginary squirrel that talks to him, not only in his childhood but also when he is a young man; when he is horrified by a slave auction, he talks to the squirrel, who says, "... of course you can help them. You respect people, no matter who they are. And so almost everyone respects you." The book ends with the presidency; scant attention is given to this and the Civil War, both covered in less than a page of print. A closely-printed page of "Historical Facts" follows the text. The book is physically unattractive because of the illustrations; the text is poorly constructed and poorly written, particularly the dialogue. "Aw stop kidding," says Abe when someone teases him for falling in a creek; "Golly, there's a lot to learn," says the squirrel, when Abe is reading by the fireside.


In the same ValuTales series as the title above, this has the same format, the same illustrator, a similar appended page of historical facts, and the same kind of imaginary animal friend. One day a seagull swoops down and says, "Hi, Chris. My name's See. See Gull." It also has a great many invented incidents and dialogue. It tells the Columbus story, with additions and very badly, and it stresses curiosity.


In a second story about the folk of the mythical land of Dalemark, the protagonist is Mitt (Alhammitt) who grows up planning bitter revenge against the cruel earl who rules Holand and against the men who had betrayed his father, a freedom fighter. When, after years of careful preparation, Mitt tries to kill the old earl, he is not successful. Someone else is, however, and in the ensuing manhunt, Mitt takes refuge on a boat in which two of the earl's grandchildren are sailing. He forces them north to the Holy Islands, and there they fulfill a mystical destiny that is involved with the ritual figures of Ammet and Libby Beer. They are dummies, drowned each year in Holand's chief festival, but Mitt and the others find they are very much alive, creatures with strong magical powers, when they are threatened by storms at sea or by scheming criminals on land. The characters are believable, the setting convincingly created, and the move from realism to fantasy smooth enough; what the book lacks is balanced pace; the long first part is wholly realistic but slow in tempo, while the second half of the book, permeated with symbols and magic, seems dense with action and with new characters—plus Mitt's father, whom he had thought dead for many years and who has become a quite different sort of person from the man Mitt remembered.

First published in Canada, this is a cozy realistic story about Jewish family life told by eleven-year-old Becky. When her mother died, almost every woman in the family decided that Becky and her brother needed a woman to raise them, and a succession of candidates was introduced to poor Papa. The basic plot is not highly original (a child's adjustment to death and eventual acceptance of a stepmother) but the story has color and warmth, and the family scenes are often very funny. A glossary of Yiddish words used in the story is appended.


This has all the clichés repeatedly found in Stratemeyer Syndicate books but here they are laced with a few feminist remarks; it also has the same ingredients of Nancy's omniscience, heavy dependence on coincidence, and all bits of the puzzle neatly tied and packaged at the conclusion. The writing is mediocre: "Nancy, Bess, and George were amazed to hear this." What they were amazed to hear is that an owner of a costume store had made costumes for puppets. The plot concerns Nancy's investigation of two life-size puppets that seem to operate on their own while the puppeteer sits in the audience and of the fact that ten-year-old twins and their grandparents are missing. (Imagine anyone spotting a connection between the two mysteries!) In sum, the picture book version has the few strengths (suspense, an active female protagonist) and the many weaknesses of other books in series.


In a novel based on the author's life, a blind adolescent who has been attending a special school decides that she wants to transfer to the local public high school. What Meg yearns for is acceptance as an individual on her own merits, not admiration for what she can do as a handicapped person, not pity or charity. Meg becomes involved in some school activities, makes two good friends, and learns—just as sighted teenagers often learn, that friends are preferable to inclusion in an "in" group; she learns that the one teacher she has liked is imperfect, that the teacher she'd disliked can be kind. Disheartened, she feels she may as well go back to the special school, but changes her mind when she is given the same treatment (suspension) as the two others who helped write an editorial protesting the dismissal of a teacher. The story can help sighted readers understand the feelings Meg has about acceptance; style and characterization are adequate, but the whole has a rather purposive air.


Thirteen-year-old Billy Morrison's white father has sent Billy's mother back to her people, a Modoc tribe, and has married a white woman who treats the boy with contempt. Billy runs off to live with the tribe; he is not fully accepted by some of its members, but his allegiance is to the Modocs when white aggressiveness leads to open warfare. Most of the book is about the struggle of the Indians against white treachery although the author makes it clear that there were heroes and villains in each group. As for Billy, who is captured and then released to his father, he takes off for the coast with a white boyhood friend. The book gives a portion of Oregon history in stirring fashion, history seen primarily from the native American viewpoint, and is based on actual events. Some of the characters are historical figures; an author's note is appended.

Most of the mysteries to which Laycock devotes individual chapters are as well known as UFO's, the Loch Ness Monster, or the Bermuda Triangle. Most of them are given better coverage in other books, several having whole books devoted to them. While there is use for a book that scans the field and introduces readers to a range of topics of such undeniable allure, this text is too careless in distinguishing between fact and hearsay evidence and too negligent in discussing scientific theories to be taken seriously. There is, for example, no propounding of natural causes (winds, marine conditions, weather) for the disappearances in the "Bermuda Triangle." A minor weakness is the use of photographs with captions like "This painting shows how the Mary Celeste probably appeared to the first men to sight the ghost ship," or "These dogs, similar to Hightail, may possess strange extrasensory powers..." An index is appended.

Leach, Maria. *The Lion Sneezed; Folktales and Myths of the Cat;* illus. by Helen Siegl. T. Y. Crowell, 1977. 77-3665. 102p. $6.95.

Black and white woodcuts with fine detail illustrate a good collection of a long poem, tales, and sayings about cats. Chosen by an eminent folklorist, the book has notes for adults, giving sources and information about each selection; there is also a fairly extensive bibliography. Selections are from many countries and are varied in length and style. Because of the scholarly introduction and notes, the book can be used by older readers as well.


Naomi is a refugee from France, one of the victims of Nazi oppression; she is silent, fearful, a disturbed and lonely child. When his parents and Naomi's hostess beg Alan to make friendly overtures to her, he agrees reluctantly. "She's a girl; and she's crazy; and I won't," he's said, but he's really a kind boy, and once Naomi responds to his friendliness, he begins to feel fond of her, although he makes very sure none of his friends know about the relationship. Slowly, very slowly, Naomi stops her compulsive tearing of paper, gets over her fear, and begins to confide in Alan. She even goes to school. And then one of the prejudiced toughs at school bullies the two friends; to Naomi it is a repetition of her own persecution and her fragile hold on stability is gone. The ending is poignant and dramatic, especially because such progress had been made, but it is a more effective ending than a happy one would have been; Levoy has been forthright about prejudice (as Alan has been exposed to it) throughout the book, and he preserves his artistic integrity. Good writing style and characterization, and a true ear for dialogue add to the merit of a deeply perceptive story.


A music educator, Luttrell describes standard orchestral instruments, American folk instruments, the human voice, and electronic instruments. There are separate chapters on strings, horns, woodwinds, percussion, and harp and keyboard instruments. In each case, the author gives some historical background, explains how the instrument operates, and often describes how it sounds or is used in ensemble playing. The diagrams and photographs are adequate, although some of the latter give no indication of comparative size; for example, the violin and viola look the same size and the separate pictures are preceded by a diagram that shows the outlines...
of four string instruments but doesn't indicate which is which. On the whole, a good introduction that covers a great deal of material with celerity and accuracy. An index is appended.


First told to amuse his children, Mr. McCarthy's tales of the animals of a riverside community are soberly fanciful in the Rabbit Hill tradition, although they have less cohesion and a weaker writing style. Mr. Raccoon is a C.P.A. and Miss Rabbit is a schoolteacher; other animals simply live as animals, although they have telephones and automated machinery in their homes. There's also a story about a horse that can talk and read (the animals of the riverside talk, but only to each other) and another about Herman the milk bottle. There are humorous touches here and there, but the anecdotes—while avoiding cuteness—are often contrived and at times go beyond most children's concepts; "He felt that society owed him a debt." On the whole, although the stories may have been effective when told, in print they seem static and often the language seems too sophisticated for readers who enjoy episodic tales of the small creatures of woods and ponds.


There are many stories about children who let a pet go, when it matures, so that it can join its kind; this book does that but adds another dimension. Using a different type-face for the two speakers, it gives concurrent accounts of an experience from the viewpoints of a boy and of his pet mouse. Tim finds the baby mouse, feeds and cossets her, plays with her, and prepares her, by giving her the sort of food she will find in the wild, for her release. The mouse comments on the strange and strong-smelling thing that held her, on the growing familiarity of her boy, on the foods he gives her, and on the strange, sweet-smelling dark into which he releases her. Simont's illustrations, clean and softly-colored in a subdued orange and blue, add a note of explicit tenderness to a simply written text.


An author-photographer, McPhee spent a month in the country with veterinarian George Beneke, going on rounds, watching patients being cared for at the animal hospital, and occasionally lending a hand when complicated treatment was under way. The book gives a great deal of information about animal illness and the work of animal doctors; it is not strengthened by occasional rapturous passages about country life. The photographs are of good quality, but some lack captions or are not tied to the text.


The compilers have culled British, Irish, and American writers from Charles Dickens to Shirley Jackson, including sixteen eminent authors whose work is chronologically arranged. Each selection is preceded by several paragraphs that give a few facts about the author and introduce the story. In some instances, the story is more interesting as literary history than it is as a spine-chiller, but there's enough variety to appeal to those addicted to ghostly tales.

Walter is a child who daydreams; one day he carelessly stumbles into “a hole that was being dug for a well” in a neighbor’s yard. Friends try in vain to get him out; his parents succeed, and they tell each other that their son will have to be more careful in the future. The story is flimsy, the illustrations—heavy black line and crayon drawings—mediocre, some of them chopped off so that only parts of figures are visible.


Cheerful, uncluttered paintings with realistic details and clear, firm use of color show the Danish background for a rather rambling story about a stray dog, Jasper.

Made a pet by a group of taxi drivers, Jasper takes up residence at a grocer’s and gets around Copenhagen by hopping on the runningboards of any taxis he sees. Once he gets taken to the country but misses city life and gnaws through a rope so that he can get home. The ending is weak, the final incident beginning, “And Jasper might be taking taxis to this very day if not for an accident. One morning, as he was racing for a cab, Jasper was hit by a bus.” However, he proves to be only stunned; then he sees an alluring dachshund and forgets everything else. “Imagine that!” the story ends, and the last picture shows Jasper, in his basket, smiling in his sleep. There seems to be no relation between the accident that stopped his taxi-riding (why?) and what follows.


Like the first two books about Soup and Rob (who tells the story) this is filled with corn-fed nostalgia. Peck’s stories are based on his own boyhood in a small Vermont town, and his characters are all reminiscent of Rockwell’s *Saturday Evening Post* covers: just a bit too jolly, or stupid, or surly. This volume has more cohesion than *Soup* or *Soup and Me*; although the chapters are still self-contained, they are less episodic, since the class election contest between Soup and Norma Jean Bissell provides continuity. The writing has humor and affection in describing the boys’ pranks: painting Soup’s name on a barn, tricking tough Janice, outfoxing the town curmudgeon. Yet for some readers the fact that most of the humor depends on tricks like the above or on someone’s stupidity (Rob’s idea of gallantry is singing the national anthem under Norma Jean’s window; Rob thinks “Democrat” is a dirty word; Soup’s father believes that “deportment” has to do with a store) may prove wearing.


In a case of mistaken identity, fifteen-year-old Jimmy is picked up by the police; an old man insists that he recognizes the checked shirt Jimmy’s wearing as the clothes of one of the four boys who assaulted his wife. Sent to a juvenile detention center for the weekend, Jimmy comes back to the station on Monday morning to find that his accuser has identified as the real culprit another boy wearing a similar shirt. Most of the story describes the offenders and the staff at the detention home, where some guards are reasonable and others cruel, where the inmates fight savagely, particularly one black boy who attacks another. This is one of a series designed for slow older
readers, and it has action enough to attract them, but even given the need for simplified vocabulary the story is awkwardly written, and the almost unrelieved violence seems overdrawn.


Since Korbut and Comaneci made headlines, there has been a spate of books about them or about women’s gymnastics; this book gives that coverage and more. Resnick describes the moves in various areas of women’s gymnastics and in men’s gymnastics, gives detailed information about scoring, and discusses training, financial aspects, sources of information, and other forms of gymnastics now and in the past. The tone is light, the writing style casual, the information specific. Lists of Olympic gold medalists and an index are appended.


Rockwell presents three very simple projects for younger children, each incorporated into a pleasant narrative framework, each told by a different child. In the first, a girl makes a paper dancing frog for a younger child, in the second two children make applesauce with parental guidance, and in the third a boy follows a magazine’s directions for making a New Year’s Eve noisemaker. It isn’t New Year’s Eve, but the boy thinks the house is too quiet. Directions are clear, projects inexpensive, and the author makes the projects sound easy and fun to make.


A book of black and white photographs, each with a true-false question, can be used to heighten acuity of observation and to suggest or reinforce concepts of shape, size, texture, numbers and even simple logic. For most questions, the answer is either “true” or “false,” but for some the answers are partly true and partly false, or false because of a more complex reason than a simple fact like the wrong number of circles on a butterfly’s wing; for example, “Chickens lay eggs because people like to eat them for breakfast.” There’s even one slightly tricky question. A good book for stimulating discussion.

Selsam, Millicent (Ellis). *A First Look at the World of Plants;* by Millicent E. Selsam and Joyce Hunt; illus. by Harriett Springer. Walker, 1978. 77-78088. 32p. Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $5.85 net.

Just enough material, just enough classification in the plant world is included in an excellent book for the primary-grades reader. Clear pictures, adequately labelled, show the differences among bacteria, algae, bryophytes, fungi, ferns, gymnosperms, and angiosperms. The text and illustrations are nicely coordinated to give children repeated opportunities to observe and to differentiate among botanical species.


Among the aspects of left-handedness that the Silversteins discuss are handedness among wild animals and some plants, well-known people who are or were left-handed, and left-handers in sports. The more pertinent chapters, for most readers, will probably be those that describe the functioning of the left and right spheres of the
brain, left-handed writing, and the problems left-handed people have in adjusting to the many objects (scissors, can-openers) that are designed for the right-handed majority. An interesting book, but rather heavily written and padded by the comparative unimportance of such chapters as "Famous Left-handers," this concludes with sources of further information and of some manufacturers who make products especially for the left-handed. An index is appended.


Margaret Fuller was a woman who thought and lived ahead of her time, a liberated woman in an era in which to be liberated was to be notorious. This is not an adulatory biography, and the author makes it clear that Fuller was intellectually arrogant, convinced she was a match for any woman or man. A leader of the transcendentalist movement, editor of its magazine, journalist, feminist, reformer, she knew many of the great political and literary figures of the early nineteenth century. She had a child by her lover, an Italian nobleman, who she married. All three drowned when their America-bound ship sank just before reaching port. Fascinating as Fuller's life is, this biography makes tedious reading, since the writing is heavy, often bogging down into details about background matters (the revolution that resulted in the short-lived Roman Republic that ended in 1849 when French troops entered the city) or becoming fulsome: "She had grown up on tales of the Roman Empire and the Roman Republic; she had felt as close to Romulus and Remus, to Julius Caesar and Marc Antony as to her own brothers." A bibliography is appended.


Although this lacks some of the facets of Adkins' *How a House Happens,* such as explanations of tools or a diagram of the house plan, it is quite adequate for the slightly younger reader than one who might comprehend the Adkins book. Photographs, without captions but well placed, show each step in the construction of a house; occasional terms are defined and most procedures are explained. The story has a slight narrative framework: Pete comes over to watch each step of the building and can't wait to move in. Explanations are clear, and the book gives a good picture of the sequence of events.


Spier's pictures are always engaging in their draughtsmanship and humorous details, but they're used here to embellish the slightest of texts. Having heard their parents talk about how much the house (large, three-storied) needs painting, three children take it on themselves to surprise their parents, who have gone off to do a day of errands. The babysitter, who was to be there "in a few minutes," hasn't shown up. Hauling out a ladder and all the paint in the garage, the children proceed to produce a rainbow patchwork on house, garage, fence, themselves, and the bathroom where they clean up. The children preen themselves on how delighted their parents will be when they see the finished job; the anticlimactic punchline is the title. Given the obvious impossibilities such as getting that much painting done in one day, the improbability of none of the watching neighbors stopping the mess, the dangers involved, and so on, one must regard the book as a near-fantasy; however, it is neither fantastic enough to be a fantasy nor believable as realism. It telegraphs its message in advance, and all that is left is the humor-of-calamity as appeal.

Shimin's soft, realistic two-color paintings are a bit repetitious, but they reflect admirably the tender quality of a nicely-told story about the death of a pet. Emily describes her apprehension on finding her gerbil Petey unresponsive one afternoon; her father gently tells her that Petey is old for a gerbil, that he's had a happy life due to Emily's loving care, that the pet book states there is nothing that can be done. Petey dies and is buried; when offered new gerbils, Emily decides she isn't ready. Maybe later. Not unusual in structure, the book still is one of the better stories about accepting death, especially for the reader to whom it is a new experience.


Alexander describes his sad plight. He admits he likes money, he admits that he's a spendthrift. Last Sunday, his grandparents had given him and his brothers a dollar each; now Anthony and Nicholas are rich and Alexander's jealous. He's made some foolish bets (holding his breath to the count of 300) and lost some and spent some. The concept is amusing, but it's a bit overworked; it's saved by humor: "My father said that there are certain words a boy can never say, no matter how ratty and mean his brothers are being. My father fined me five cents each for saying them." And, the story concludes, after being unable to resist such bargains at a garage sale as a one-eyed bear and a melted candle, all the once-wealthy Alexander has left are some bus tokens and his no-longer-alluring purchases.


Henstra's distinctive paintings, stiffly medieval yet ebullient, are eminently appropriate for the sly humor of a legendary Dutch hero. Williams retells four tales in which Tyl outwits Spanish soldiers or misers by his wit and cunning; often he steals from the rich and helps the poor, but his chief concern is to fill his own pockets. Here and there the prose is stiff, but for the most part Williams is simple and direct in his writing style, and he does communicate the zest and merriness that have made the Tyl Uilenspiegel stories popular for several centuries.

Yolen, Jane H. *The Hundredth Dove and Other Tales*; illus. by David Palladini. T. Y. Crowell, 1977. 77-1591. 64p. $7.50.

Seven short stories are illustrated by gravely romantic charcoal drawings in black and white. Most of the tales, which are in the fairy tale tradition, are faintly melancholy; the title story, for example, is about a loyal fowler who has promised to capture one hundred doves for his king's wedding feast; one eludes him, a white dove that is finally captured. The dove begs for mercy, the fowler refuses; he brings the hundredth dove to his king, but there is no wedding feast: he has killed the dove-bride. The tales are capably written but sedate, a palatable but not a stirring collection.
BIBLIOGRAPHIES

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


Books for the Teen Age. New York Public Library. 64 p. $2.50. Free for teenagers through the branches of NYPL. The charge for mailing and handling is $.50 for 1-5 copies; $.75 for 6-10 copies; and $1 for bulk orders. Write to: NYPL, 8 E. 40th St., New York, N.Y. 10016.


