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

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

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A brisk and salty tale is illustrated with soft black and white drawings that, like the text, have a small surprise at the close. Luther is a happy man; he loves his boat, he loves his wife, he has a superb compass, and he sings in a clear, sweet tenor. Caught in a fog while pulling lobster traps, Luther is accosted by a series of people who can't find their way back to harbor. Luther makes them wait while he gets around to all his traps; he sings as he works; his retinue dutifully follows him: a motorboat, a cabin cruiser, and Coast Guard vessel, and more. Fortunately his wife has made enough chowder for everybody, so they are all happy, almost as happy as Luther. Adkins conveys the appeal of the sea, and the story moves along nicely; it's not very substantial, but it's original and occasionally humorous.


Each of the eight tales in this collection is fresh, witty, and written in polished, deceptively light style; beneath the magic and humor and entertaining dialogue are perceptive insights into the foibles of creatures, feline or human. It's the cats who are wise in these original fairy tales, getting rid of a bullying official, soothing irate gentlemen who want their portraits to surpass reality, helping a pair of young lovers overcome a father's obduracy, or tricking a foolish master into behaving sensibly. Alexander at his best.


Kent's cartoon style drawings seem as inappropriate for this old favorite as does the bland, simplified retelling, in which the emperor "spent all of his time trying on new suits and showing them off." What Gross does is overexplain the joke by having the ruler's ministers assure themselves that they aren't stupid or bad at their jobs (which the quacks have said would be demonstrated if anyone said they couldn't see the cloth), and she also gives the story a flat ending. As a picture book edition, this compares unfavorably with the Delanos' version.


A story of adjustment to a stepfather and his three children is told in first person by Carrie. Her own father was a drinker, and Mom had "kicked him out" when Carrie was a baby. In eighth grade, Carrie helps one of her stepbrothers get along with classmates, and in time she becomes friendly with the other two, but it's her relationship with their father that's abrasive. A furniture mover, Dominic Ginetti is—to Carrie—repulsive in appearance; he's hearty, solid, and ready to accept Carrie
as his daughter. But she doesn’t want to be adopted; she feels that nobody will listen to her, that they all have bugs in their ears. The adoption goes through, and Dominic wins Carrie’s affection by giving her a thoughtful present; the book ends with Carrie realizing that she’s part of a family, she’s now Carrie Ginetti. The ending is a bit sugary, but not unrealistically so, and the rest of the story is—while not exciting—believable. The characterization and dialogue are sound, and the writing has, for a first novel, considerable vitality.


On his seventeenth birthday, Shan gets a card that says, “Happy Birthday, Murderer,” and the handwriting is his own. He pries out of his mother the fact that he had accidentally caused the death of adolescent George Lambert when he (Shan) was five. His widowed mother is now in love with George’s father, and both of them assure him that they feel he is innocent. Shan is convinced that someone is trying to kill him . . . that it has to be Lambert. Someone shoots at him, someone is creeping about the house at night, someone is making threatening telephone calls. Lambert and Shan’s mother urge that Shan see a psychiatrist, but by then Shan has decided. It’s Lambert, and he must kill him or be killed. The ending is sharply dramatic, following a careful building of suspense; although there are some parts of the story that seem over-extended, it is constructed deftly enough to compensate for the uneven pace.

Brewton, Sara Westbrook, comp. *Of Quarks, Quasars, and Other Quirks; Quizzical Poems for the Supersonic Age*; comp. by Sara and John E. Brewton and John Brewton Blackburn; illus. by Quentin Blake. T. Y. Crowell, 1977. 76-54747. 113p. $6.95.

A diverse and discriminating selection of poems of our time, most of which are pointed and funny. There are many parodies, and there’s much trenchant commentary; some of the best-known poets are Belloc, McCord, Merriam, Nash, Starbird, and Updike, and they—and other poets—poke fun at advertising, scientific jargon, organic produce, transplants, and water beds. It’s a tart, refreshing anthology.


Framed drawings that incorporate animal characters whose words are shown in comic-strip style balloon captions seem rather immature for much of the text level; the text includes some facts about the first Thanksgiving, recipes, riddles, projects, some sign language, games, and so on. Since there’s no extended treatment of any one subject and since most of what’s in the book can be found in other books about sign language or picture writing or the Pilgrims’ Thanksgiving with more detail, this is only moderately interesting.

Christopher, Matthew F. *Johnny No Hit*; illus. by Ray Burns. Little, 1977. 77-5488. 43p. $4.95.

Afraid of bullying Roy Burke, Johnny Webb, playing in a baseball game, remembers that Roy had threatened Johnny would “get it” if he touched one of Roy’s pitches. After two strikes, Johnny decides he won’t let Roy bluff him; he swings and gets a home run. He’d remembered that Roy, watching a game as participant, had yelled that the batter was a big bluff. “Who’s a big bluff now?” he jeers at Roy, as he walks happily off the field. The writing is passable, the story has enough description of baseball plays to satisfy young fans, and the message is a sensible one; however,
Conklin, Gladys Plemon. *The Octopus and Other Cephalopods.* Holiday House, 1977. 77-3818. 63p. illus. $5.95.

Although tinged with an almost enraptured view of the beauty and grace of cephalopods, Conklin’s text is concise and informative despite one metric conversion error; photographs have been well chosen, but some are not clear in showing anatomical details and could have been supplemented by diagrams. The book includes descriptions of the habits, habitat, species, and patterns of locomotion and reproduction of the octopus, squids, cuttlefish, and other cephalopods, concluding with a brief mention of the ammonoids, now extinct. A divided reading list and an index are appended.


First published in England under the title *A Flute in Mayferry Street,* this beautifully crafted story is basically realistic but has a fantasy element adroitly woven in. Eleven-year-old Colin and his sister Marion, an invalid since an accident several years before, become intrigued by scraps of evidence that indicate there is a hidden treasure somewhere in the house, a trunk that had disappeared at the time of World War I. Their mother is a widow, and they have little money; since Colin yearns for a flute so that he can join the school orchestra, he is enthralled when he hears mysterious flute music and delighted when his sister hears it also. Save for this and the fact that Marion has some psychic presentiment, the story focuses on her emotional lethargy and on the pursuing of clues. What Dunlop achieves is remarkable, a deft blend of percipient characterization, evocative atmosphere (Edinburgh), sound motivations and relationships, good pace, and a fluid, polished style that keeps the narrative vigorous.


While this has some concrete advice for putting up small structures (plastic inflatables, greenhouses made of old windows, connecting underground pits, huts made of soda or beer cans, sturdier wooden houses, etc.) it has neither an adequate listing of materials, adequate safety measures cited, nor adequate step-by-step instruction. (One page for a solar house.) The book concludes with a listing of tools (hammer, saw, square, and level are discussed, no other tools) and a list of sources of “More information on many of the projects in this book.”


A bouncy turn of the century story, episodic and faintly nostalgic, is set in Philadelphia. Barney Freedman is one of seven children, and he’s ten. “Ten,” he feels, is “just the right age to appreciate the joys of Reed Street—the sights, the sounds, the smells.” Based on a friend’s recollections, the story is not burdened by sentimentality and it incorporates period details smoothly. There’s some continuity provided by Barney’s worries about deciding on a career (his brothers have already made up their minds) but most of the story describes the small adventures of Barney and his friends in a heterogeneous neighborhood: a brush with a bullying policeman, a day of swimming in a muddy pond, the joys of the Independence Day celebration,
the visit to a medicine show where the "patient" proved to be Barney's brother, the
delights of hanging around a stable.

32p. (Read-alone Books). Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $5.49 net.

    The brisk, flyaway line-and-crayon drawings are comic, the rhyming text has vi-
    tality, humor, rhythm, and just enough repetition for beginning readers. The deaf
    farmer who can't hear his mule bray, hens cackle, wife screech, dog bark, or ancient
    wagon squeal and creak thinks it's quiet and peaceful in the country, but the robber
    who'd crept close and then been frightened away by the din ends the story with
    "Now I'm glad I don't live / In the boondocks, the boondocks / Close to that farmer/
    Who is deaf in one ear." The lines almost sing themselves, and the book will prob-
    ably be surreptitiously enjoyed by many who are far older than the intended audi-
    ence.

$6.43 net.

    Bill's daughter, "Bilgewater" to all the boys at the school where her father was a
    Housemaster, had been aware all her seventeen years that she was ugly. Why
    shouldn't she be called Bilgewater instead of her real name, Marigold? The story she
tells of her first romancing, her first friendship, her first brush with haute couture, and
her discovery that she was (after having had trouble reading most of her life) bright
enough to be admitted to Cambridge, is touching, funny, and brilliantly written.

Gardner, John Champlin. A Child's Bestiary; with additional poems by Lucy Gardner &
Eugene Rudzewicz; illus. by Lucy, Joel, Joan, & John Gardner. Knopf, 1977. 77-
3945. 69p. Trade ed. $4.95; Library ed. $5.99 net.

    Pedestrian drawings illustrate a book of flippant and often witty animal poems.
    Some of the selections are as brief as "Never grab a Crab," or, "If somebody offers
    you a Bear, bow low / And say no." Some are longer but rather labored, and some
    have a deft blend of felicitous phrasing and pithy concept; many of these include wry
    comments by God or His Son. In "The Crow," for example God says, "... Be
    considerate, ye know? In general, Crow / Don't be a dope / Imitate the Pope," and
    His Son advises "... Try not to be / Too disgusting, see? / But celebrate, you
    know? / Like I mean: Be a Crow." In all, an uneven collection, but with high
    moments.

$7.95; Library ed. $7.49 net.

    Four English children (Terry, Lucy, Chris and Andy, who tells the story) come
    across an injured man when they play in an abandoned building. Dave has deserted
from the army after serving in Ireland, and the children take him on as their re-
sponsibility, bringing him food and then—in a long but exciting sequence—taking him
by raft to a river island. The river is in spate, and the drenched foursome have to
explain when they get home. Mum and Dad condone the children's charity and
loyalty; they give Dave money and food so that he can get away, and they collaborate
in the children's protective lies to the police. While the theme of loyalty and the
dramatic river trip may be the most appealing aspects to readers, the story is also
strong in its messages of nonviolence and parental love; Andy's compassionate Dad
and Christine's cheery Mum live together without legal sanction, but they are wise
and loving parents to their own and to each other's children.

A poetic but simple text and dreamy, swirling pictures describe a child’s dream (or is it a daydream?) of going back across the sea, back in time, to the Africa of long ago. There are strange words in old books, but she can understand them; there are strange faces but they welcome her. A grandfather with her father’s face reaches out to embrace her, a grandmother of long ago—with her mother’s face—cradles her in loving arms. And she becomes a baby and sleeps in that safe clasp. This is almost a prose poem, but the concepts it presents may be difficult for some children to grasp; the bridging of time and space, the fragmentary nature of a dream.


A natural entrepreneur, Mariah had—to her parents’ distress—ignored school and reading in favor of one money-making scheme after another. Now, in sixth grade, she has a brilliant idea. Her parents own hundreds of books—why not start a lending library? So she stamps their books, pastes in pockets, and advertises, having explored the library to see how it was done. Soon her parents begin to miss books, some of them valuable, and Mariah runs into the problem of delinquent patrons. By the time she’s recovered the late books, confessed to her parents, and sought help from the librarian, Mariah has become a convert: she does volunteer work in the library and becomes hooked on *Great Expectations*. There’s humor and pace to the story, but it has some weak aspects; Mrs. Delany is an unconvincing character, both because of the iteration of her optimistic prodding about reading and because she doesn’t notice, for so long, the absence of dozens of books, and because of the unanimity with which borrowers cling to Mariah’s books, one even needing retrieval by a ruse from a boy who’s already wrapped it as a present to his mother. A present that’s stamped “Property of the Mariah Delany Lending Library.”


Translated from the 1819 edition by a winner (for his translation) of the National Book Award, this unillustrated edition of the Grimms’ tales is comparable to, but simpler than, the Pantheon edition based on the Hunt translation. Although some of the titles are given in different forms, they are in the same order, two hundred tales and ten children’s legends. Examples of Manheim’s simpler style compared to the older edition: he begins “Hansel and Gretel” with, “At the edge of the forest lives a poor woodcutter with his wife and two children,” whereas the other reads, “Hard by a great forest dwelt a poor wood-cutter with his wife and his two children.” For “King Thrushbeard,” Manheim translates the start as, “A king had a daughter who was unequalled for beauty, but she was so proud and thought so much of herself that no suitor was good enough for her.” Hunt’s translation, revised by Joseph Stern, “A king had a daughter who was beautiful beyond measure, but so proud and haughty withal that no suitor was good enough for her.” Clearly, for those who like a “withal” here and there to flavor the writing, the older edition may be preferred, while the Manheim translation is easier to read and therefore extends the audience-potential. Both are very good.


Gracefully retold, the story of the princess who slept for a hundred years until waking—as prophesied—from her enchantment, is illustrated by Hyman at her best.

In a short, wide book which, when open, shows double-page spreads that move along in comic-strip style (on some pages the pictures are divided by frames) an animal fantasy is told without words. A mouse brings home some cheese, his family uses it as a birthday cake, and his child makes a birthday wish. The wish, shown in a balloon, is for pink ice cream. Blowing out the candle, the child blows off his mother's party hat; it falls over the head of a flying bug after being blown out the window. The bug crashes into a tree, knocking down an acorn that hits a woodpecker that thinks it was hit by a fire alarm, and so on and so on. Lots of action, some humor, and the appeal of animal subjects militate for the book; heavy dependence on coincidence and a text that is often hard to follow militate against it. The latter is a serious flaw in a wordless book, and it is caused by the often-abrupt shifts of scene; for example, at one point a pig steps on a teeter-totter and the ball that had been lying on one end flies up into the air; at the turn of the page, a turtle is making ice cream and it isn't until the next frame that the bottom of the ball is seen at the top of the picture. (Why? So that it can fall into a paper cone, of course, while the scoop of ice cream falls into the mouth of a small cannon. See?)


Although this gives some information about techniques and some about the early photographers, it is neither a book of photographic techniques nor a history of the art of photography. Focusing on the work of one photographer, or a team, on each page, Glubok shows an example of the artist's work and briefly describes his or her special interests or abilities; she begins with Daguerre in 1837 and concludes with several contemporary photographers. What she achieves, beyond a series of pages that are exciting to look at, is a record that demonstrates rather conclusively that photography is indeed an art.


The setting is middle-European, the clothing indicates an earlier period, and the story seems designed as a preface to, or illustration of, the author-illustrator's closing note about the prevalence of rites in which malevolent spirits are exorcised to cleanse homes and villages in preparation for the spring. The one additional element in the story is the way in which people use trouble-making spirits to explain their own mishaps or errors. The Spinnikins have obviously caused Mother's spinning wheel to tip over; then all the fresh buns disappear—was it Peter or was it the Bunshee? It was surely the Kicklebucket that caused a milkpail to overturn, and the cheese rolling away probably was the work of Hobble Goblins. Father explains all these things, then, wearing a ferocious mask, he leads his family and other villagers in a procession that chants a warning which begins, "Go away, stay away!" The woodcut illustrations are in soft pastel shades, with black outlines; the imaginary beings are outlined in white, feathery figures that contrast with the firmer depiction of reality.


Companion volumes give a jaunty overview of people's life styles and work situa-
tions. The writing is simple, a bit flat ("Some people work together. Some people work alone. Some people work high up. Some people work low down.") It is enlivened, however, by the humorous interpretations in the cartoon-style drawings, colorful but distractingly crowded. The books show, in the illustrations, ethnic diversity and, in the text, an awareness of social problems (unemployment) and contemporary living patterns (single-parent families, communal living) and are therefore good bases for discussions that can help young children understand problems or situations like, or unlike, their own.


Tested by the Spache Modified Formula, this has the core vocabulary and short, simplified style that make for easy, if not enjoyable, reading. It describes mammalian species that live on land but can swim, as well as aquatic mammals, devoting a few pages to each species. Words deemed difficult or important are printed in heavy type: mammals, breast, hibernate, Eskimos, tusks, flippers, pups, etc. The information given is accurate, but it isn't always self-explanatory: "The poison comes from the animals' legs." Its fur? A gland? Its claws? Illustrations are not always carefully reflective of the text; "The bear's fur looks just like snow!" is next to a light brown bear standing in blue-white snow.


In describing Barbara Jordan's career, Haskins gives a vivid picture of her vigorous and forceful personality, achieving this not by effusive prose but by letting her words and her accomplishments tell the story. Her record of "firsts" is impressive: the first black woman to become a Texas senator, to sit in the House of Representatives in Washington, to serve during House impeachment proceedings, to give the keynote address at a Democratic National Convention. The writing is balanced, objective, and candid, and it gives fascinating information about political realities, particularly at the state level, as well as about the subject. An index is appended.


Although the approach of the author, a former U.P. correspondent and editor, is fairly objective, the text is neither completely unbiased nor—on some issues—adequately informative (as in the brief mention of the Sacco-Vanzetti case). On the whole, Helitzer does a good job of giving background and of explaining divergent viewpoints, despite a tendency to use colorful and sometimes slanted adjectives. (The Russians subverted U.S. citizens as agents; no suggestion is made that the U.S. may have done the same thing.) Adequate, but neither as comprehensive nor as well-written as Walton's *America and the Cold War*. An index is appended, but no sources or bibliography are provided.


A highly fictionalized version of Hannibal's crossing of the Alps has pedestrian illustrations and a casual, chatty writing style; "Hannibal invited everyone who did not like Rome to join his army. Thousands of people came, because Rome was so bossy." The story does give historical information in easily assimilable form, but it includes details (socks almost the length of a man had the feet cut off and were pulled over the elephants' trunks to keep them warm) that are not verified.

Four short stories for the beginning independent reader are illustrated with cheerful pictures in soft shades. The protagonists are father and son, and it is the son who is the sensible character; Mr. Pig is always in trouble or indulging himself or procrastinating: a porcine fuss-pot. He decides to exercise and winds up eating; he has a disastrous and funny skating lesson; he picks daisies and is chased by bees; he pokes about and makes excuses when he's supposed to be getting to a wedding which proves to be his own. (Presumably Sonny has lost his mother through death rather than divorce?) The stories have action and humor, and as smooth a narrative flow as can be achieved with prose that is so simple.


Big, tough, and ebullient, the undefeated heavyweight John Sullivan was a popular man in Boston, a prodigious eater and drinker who boasted that all he had to do was look at opponents and they fell down. He had some reason to boast, having won over two hundred fights. But his carousing and his age caught up with him, and he was bested in a twenty-one round bout by Jim Corbett, whom he'd sneeringly called "that bank clerk from San Francisco." Whether or not today's readers are interested in pugilistic history is moot, but this adds a new note to the material available for young independent readers, and Hoff's turn-of-the-century cartoon-style pictures have a bouncy humor.


Several animal families prepare for and then celebrate Christmas at a party at Mrs. Rabbit's house. Black and white pen drawings, elaborately detailed, are set on spacious oversize pages; the milieu is Victorian, and the combined appeals of Christmas, animals, and a party overcome to a large extent the sedate text: "Mrs. Rabbit stands by her door and welcomes everyone. She gives the youngest rat a hug and a scratch behind his ear. The children sit together at their own table."


A science fantasy is set on an earth-type planet, peaceful and beautiful, and inhabited by odd beasts. Theo, camping alone in the hills while doing biological research, is horrified to see the Orlovs, eminent scientists, killed by laser rays; the murderers flee, leaving the Orlov's only child, Karen, hiding behind a rock. The woman and the girl become close companions, and they discover a strange creature in a cave. Back at the base settlement, Theo learns that the obsessive fear that has affected most of the staff (and apparently caused the Orlovs' death) is linked to the beautiful crystals that most of them have been hoarding, and they—in turn—are linked to the cave creature. The author has knit deftly the two threads of the plot, the solution to the crippling fear, and Theo's desire to adopt Karen despite prohibitive regulations. The writing is smooth, sophisticated, and at times slowed by descriptive passages; it poses a dramatic situation, however, with a good building of suspense.


In a detailed discussion of the laws and practices that apply to minors in the United States, Hyde is objective about inadequacies, critical in evaluating programs, and realistic in describing possible solutions. However, the material is not as well orga-
nized as it has been in her earlier books, and the solid pages of type, inadequately
leded, are oppressive. The book discusses delinquency, gangs, alternatives to the
courts, and abuses and inequities of treatment of juveniles in our legal system and its
attendant social programs. A bibliography, an index, and a rather extensive list of
resource agencies are provided.


A continuation of the turn-of-the-century story of Tish Sterling, and of the prob-
lems and relationships in her circle of friends, teachers, and family. One teacher,
Mrs. Owens, plays a major role here because sixteen-year-old Tish balks at her
teacher's criticism of her writing. The discipline of Mrs. Owens' editing is effective,
however; bitter at first, Tish realizes how much she has helped. Trying to help other
people adjust to their problems, Tish confronts her own difficulties, getting support
from her faith, her friends, and her growing insight into her own strengths and
limitations. Although the many threads of the story are nicely knit, the book is
weakened by a plethora of subplots. The characterization is good, the writing style
adequate, occasionally jarring because of such errors as "... he had not yet de-

$6.95.

Living in a contemporary Massachusetts village, the four Wynd children and their
parents are never suspected of being magicians, but they are, as their ancestors have
been for generations. After several incidents in which their spells go awry, they
suspect another magic power is nearby. Sure enough, five talking dragons use their
magic to capture the children, who have stumbled into the dragon circle's treasure-
heaped cave, and it takes Father's adult powers plus those of his progeny to destroy
the dragons. The writing pace is uneven, the narrative flow being jarred when the
author intervenes with comments; for example, "That last remark showed the drag-
on's true colors—dreadful is too kind a word for him," and the realistic and fanciful
elements do not mesh.


Of the eight merry-go-round animals, two—Gryphon and Pegason—can fly; all the
animals come to life at night and slip out to gambol on Green Knoll. One night
Pegason flies too far and comes down, lost and battered, in the city. His friends and
his keeper hear that he is to be encased in cement: Gryphon and Pyggon fly off to
rescue Pegason. They all return to Green Knoll and Keeper repairs the winged
horse. The story line is weak and shaky, the writing style poetic and too sophisticated
for a reader young enough to enjoy the level of the plot and the appeal of the subject.
"Tired, the animals stroll, listening to wind rustle through trees, to water gurgle over
boulders, watching Sun set behind turquoise and coral clouds." The black and white
illustrations are strong, spare, and dramatic.

Levy, Elizabeth. *Doctors For the People; Profiles of Six Who Serve*; by Elizabeth Levy and

Based on a series of interviews with five individual doctors and a group of three
who participate in New York's "The Door," an adolescent clinic, the text is about
evenly divided between quoted comments about training, practice, and philosophy of
medicine, and the authors' comments on the doctors and the doctor-patient rela-
tionships. The emphasis of the book is on men and women who "care about people
and health more than money and status." It's heartening to read of such doctors,
but—aside from human interest anecdotes and a few facts about special medical areas—this adds little to knowledge available in other books about medical practitioners, and the writing is inappropriately unscientific: "This possibility is called a gene . . ." "If that spum slide . . ." (Sputum is misspelled several times.)


As was *The Riddle-Master of Hed,* to which this is a sequel, this is the story of a quest. Morgon of Hed has disappeared and Raederle, who is in love with him, goes to hunt for him. Like Morgon, she has magical powers and battles enemies in an intricate unfolding of the legends and wizardry of a fantasy world. The story is so heavily laden with personal and place names, mysteries and encounters, that the fabric of the book is weakened.


The boy who tells the story says that David is the smartest boy in the class; once he would have said it was the two of them who were the smartest. They have been best friends, but when the speaker changes a word on a spelling test just after the papers have been handed in, David points out that that’s cheating. He won’t speak to the writer (nameless) who ends with, “I really don’t blame him . . . I guess I did cheat. But what do I do now? I just don’t know.” The color photographs, posed but attractive, show that the friendship is interracial, the text deals adequately with the problem save for the fact that it’s a moot point about the cheating: the boy realized he’d spelled a word wrong and changed it. The teacher had said that the test was over, to put pencils down, but the child is not copying from a book or a friend.


Told by her parents to go outdoors and find a friend with whom she can play, Small Rabbit is warned that she must run if she sees a flying creature (hawk) swoop, or a sharp-nosed animal (fox) prowl, or a two-legged creature (human) standing. She runs from butterflies, a mouse, and a sitting squirrel; she finds another young rabbit and brings her new friend home to dinner. The plot is slight, the telling static; the appeal is in the humor of Small Rabbit’s errors of judgment, but there is little humor in the writing and virtually none in the repetitive illustrations.


In a deft blend of fantasy and realism, an eminent Austrian author tells the story of a factory-made child of seven who is delivered by mistake to a scatter-brained but delightful woman. Mrs. Bartolotti is a free-wheeling eccentric, and she becomes fond of Konrad, but she can’t adjust to his perfection. Konrad is always truthful, helpful, polite, industrious, and sensible. He’s been programmed that way. Konrad is not a success with his classmates; if the teacher asks who knows who broke the window, Konrad tells her, of course. He always tells the truth. Offered ice cream, he tells Mrs. Bartolotti that he’s sorry, but it should only be eaten for dessert—and then only if one has finished all other food. So—when the factory catches up with its error and comes to reclaim Konrad, the only way for Mrs. B. to keep him is to reprogram him until he’s such a scamp that the factory will reject him as not being their product. It’s daftness made believable, it’s great fun, and the translator has done a very nice job of conveying the author’s blithe style.

Zoologist strikes again! The direct and unpretentious writing has almost a conversational flow, describing the evolution of reptilian species, the characteristics of each, and the characteristics they have in common. Separate chapters then describe patterns of courting and mating, nest-building, and—in some species—care of young, social organization, establishment of territorial rights or individual dominance. The careful drawings are well-placed and adequately labelled, and the writing is scientifically exemplary, using technical terms when necessary and otherwise avoiding them, distinguishing between fact and theory, communicating a sense of appreciation for the intricacies of life forms without becoming rhapsodical about them. A glossary, a list of suggested readings, and a relative index are appended. Patently superior.


When William discovers that he can hear radio programs on the new filling in his tooth, he proceeds to play tricks on his mother and—to the joy of his classmates—on his tough teacher, Mr. Wendel. When Mr. Wendel accuses the wrong boy, Melvyn protests. "You are persecuting me. I want a lawyer!" "You will have the best defense money can buy," Mr. Wendel says coldly, "After that—Devil's Island. Give me the radio." The scene will be a high point for many readers, but they can look forward to William's encounter with the fat men from space, invaders who plunder the earth of all junk food and disappear in search of a giant potato pancake that has been launched into space. William, who has been captured and then released by the space men, manages to subsist on lean meat, fresh produce, and other healthful foods. And what do you know? When the dentist checks William, he has no cavities. There's been no sugar for a year; nobody has cavities! Message books aren't usually this much fun, but Pinkwater makes his a polished romp.


Cassie had a special relationship with Grampa, who seemed to her as strong and durable as the beautiful walnut tree on his farm. She felt bitter when her parents insisted that Grampa move into town where he could be closer and have less work; Grampa belonged in his own place. But move he did, and both he and Cassie adjusted. Yet, somehow, now that she was in seventh grade and becoming involved in extracurricular activities and social life, they saw each other less even though he was nearby. Eventually Grampa had to move into Cassie's home, much as he preferred independence; the story closes with his death and Cassie's tearful retreat to her own room with Grampa's cinnamon cane, a bark cane from which pieces could be cut. She chews cinnamon bark, then goes down to make lemonade, just as she always did with Grampa, a rite of farewell. The story is realistic and adequately written, but slow-paced and lacking focus.


First there's the obligatory bit about the good priest Valentine, then some general advice about making one's own valentines; next are some instructions for making cloth and paper flowers, with poorly illustrated samples and inadequate information, then some recipes. Last, a few pages on Valentine's Day superstitions. It's a hodgepodge, coyly written and awkwardly illustrated.

Boat-smitten and enthusiastic, Ransom describes the canals of the British Isles, the locks and boats and barges, the ways to operate locks (usually done by the boat’s crew rather than the lock-keeper on small canals) and the revival of interest in canals that has led to the establishment of canal museums and to the restoring of disused canals. The writing style is static, the two columns of very small print oppressive, and the information so detailed that this seems unlikely to attract any but the most devoted of messers-around-with-boats. The photographs, although tending to be dark, and the diagrams are interesting; an index is appended.


Twelve-year-old Elizabeth tells the story of her summer as a worker and rider at Mrs. Nolly’s stables. There’s the usual spoiled rich girl who owns a beautiful horse, while Elizabeth, nicknamed “Chicken,” has no horse of her own. There’s the disreputable-looking pinto her father buys for Chicken at which she sneers, Mr. Ragman, who proves to be a superb jumper. There’s an unscrupulous man who always wins prizes and who is unmasked and disqualified for doping his horses. There are the events Chicken wins, the offer of $2500 for Ragman which she turns down, the acknowledgement by the rich girl that she owes a debt to Chicken for taking such good care of her thoroughbreds, et cetera. The plot is very much like that of many other horse stories and the characterization is superficial; however, there is considerable potential in the author’s writing, the story has pace, and the subject would make it appealing to insatiable readers of horse stories in any case.

Rockwell, Anne F. *I Like the Library*. Dutton, 1977. 77-6365. 27p. illus. $6.50.

A small boy describes his weekly visit to the library with his mother. While she is choosing her own books downstairs, he looks through picture books, chooses three, selects a record (although it is not made clear how, since he can’t read, he knows it is “bands and parades,”) and comments on some of the activities he sees: chess playing, preparation of puppets. He’s listened to a storytelling session and looked at a filmstrip. At home, his mother reads a book to him, then helps him learn to write his name. Goal: his own library card. This is a pleasant introduction to the library’s program, but it’s a bit static as a story; the style is bland and direct, the pictures precisely drawn, the colors varied but subdued.


Ms. Klondike gets a job as a cab driver and, although nervous at first, she soon becomes used to it. She is twitted because she’s slow changing a tire, and told driving a cab is men’s work, but the very man who had made the remark is glad to see Ms. Klondike when she rams the car of some men who are robbing him. Just then two police officers rush to the scene, so the story loses its point to some degree, since Ms. K. isn’t the instrument of deliverance. However, the book may cause children to consider the problems of discriminatory attitudes or equal opportunities; yet this is more a message than a story. The illustrations, two-color line drawings, have awkwardly drawn figures, but they have some vitality and the scenes of vehicles and traffic snarls will appeal to some children.


Written simply and competently, a text that describes many of the canals of the
world is illustrated with drawings and diagrams. Russell describes major canals in the United States, giving special attention to the Erie Canal and describing the problems in its construction. The same detailed attention is given to accounts of the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal, and the St. Lawrence Seaway, although the text discusses other European and Asian canals or, as in Holland or Venice, canal systems. A good introduction to the subject is weakened, but only slightly, in its usefulness by the extremely small type used in the index.


Robyn is seventeen, living with her mother (tense), her stepfather (gentle and sympathetic), and her stepsister (hostile) when her father gets out of prison. Robert Adam had, in a drunken fight, knocked out his stepfather, who had hit a radiator and died. Robyn’s mother objects when she learns that Robyn is seeing her father, out on parole; Robyn’s friend Victor refuses to come to see her when she leaves home to live with her father. Adam punches a bullying parole officer and is sent back to jail; another parole officer, young and intelligent, becomes Robyn’s friend, and the story ends in a roseate glow as Robyn goes on stage (in a school play) feeling “sadness mixed surprisingly with joy, and with wonder, too, about the new chapter in her own life, just beginning.” The ending is weak, and the book is—although capably written—weakened also by the case-history tinge given by all the facts about prison parole, including a facsimile of a release form. This is intended to be a documentary novel, but the information swamps the story. The language is at times rough and bitter, but the characters are convincing and the situation is one seldom explored in the literature for young people.


Sweet’s photographs are beautiful, varied, clear, and informative; Scott’s writing is lucid, authoritative, skillfully organized and often poetic in its phrasing and vision. In his description of the herring gulls and black-backed gulls that take over an Atlantic island rookery each summer, Scott includes every aspect of the gulls’ lives: mating and breeding patterns, group behavior, territorial prerogatives, flight, feeding and nesting . . . . it’s a superb book.


Photographs in black and white and in color illustrate a text that describes the fascinating flora and fauna of the Galápagos Islands. Selsam, in her usual impeccable style, discusses the creatures and plants that are found on these volcanic islands and presents the theories of their evolution in a way that exemplifies scientific teaching: disciplined, lucid, organized logically, and careful to distinguish between fact and conjecture. An index is appended.

Stewart, A. C. Silas and Con. Atheneum, 1977. 77-23318. 120p. $5.95.

Ten-year-old Silas, abandoned by his mother and his abusive stepfather, picks up a stray dog and, while staying on a farm, a cow, a kitten, and a hen and her chicks. The farmer has planned to get rid of them, so Silas quietly assembles the animals and leaves. He crosses to an island at low tide, and finds a kindly crippled man who takes him in and offers a permanent home between the school terms he insists Silas have. There’s a bit too much coincidence, a bit too little characterization for this slow-moving story to appeal to those readers who are not animal lovers, but the writing style and the evocation of setting are impressive.

Although the plot boils down to porcupine wants hug—porcupine gets hug, there’s enough humor in style and situation to amuse the lap audience; the line drawings are repetitive, but they have a Thurberish flair. None of the other porcupines shares Elliot Kravitz’s yearning to be hugged. He gets tired of hugging telephone poles and parking meters; his plot to be hugged because he’s such a lovable walking Christmas tree (with a light at the end of each quill) fails, and he finally goes off to the forest. There, at last, he finds another porcupine who—carefully—hugs him, and the story ends with Elliot smiling, thinking that this is nice, a predictable and therefore slightly downbeat ending.


The child of divorced parents, Joel is aware that his mother has badgered his father into taking him for the summer while she is in Europe. Dad, an ornithologist, is preoccupied and remote, and Joel doesn’t look forward to spending the summer on a lonely island or to being with a father he’s hardly seen for two years. Dad is brusque and strict, giving Joel chores just as he does members of his staff. The summer seems brighter when Joel meets Vicky (also a child of divorce) who is secretly camping on an uninhabited island nearby; her parents think she is at a camp. Joel rescues Vicky during a hurricane, in a long sequence that is in sharp contrast to the tempo of the rest of the story. His heroism is within the bounds of credibility, although some aspects of the story are less believable. The island setting is appealing and is vividly evoked, the writing style is competent, and the dialogue and characterization are convincing.


In limping rhyme, the fanciful story of a flying moose ends with the line, “End of Book I . . .” which is perhaps a reason for the abrupt cut-off in the narrative. Separated from the other moose when he was covered by snow during a halt, Christopher finds himself at the North Pole and rescues a bundle of Santa’s by catching it in his antlers. He discovers he can fly because his antlers “are so very wide” they act as wings; just as he decides he’ll fly around and hunt for his family, Christopher hears his father bellow and there is a happy reunion—and the end of the story. There may be some appeal to young children in the prowess of the littlest and the Santa Claus aspect, but the illustrations vie in mediocrity with the writing style, and the plot is labored.


One of a series of books that inform readers about the specialities within various fields of occupation, including information on training, prerequisites for advanced study, and details about each specialty. The author describes a range of careers, from those requiring post-medical school training, such as orthopedic surgery, to several kinds of assistantships in therapy that need only a high school diploma or its equivalent. Some of the specialities are mobility instruction for the blind, speech pathology, recreation therapy, making prosthetic devices, physical therapy, et cetera. While the descriptions are brief and the writing style rather heavy, the book gives a good overview of possible careers in the field, and each section is followed by a source that can provide further information. An index is appended.

Old-fashioned sentiment and country settings give flavor to stories chosen from Uttley’s books, stories in which plants and animals talk (not to people, but to each other) and in which the descriptions of English Christmas customs are strongly evocative. The inhabitants of a dollhouse hang tiny Christmas stockings; in another tale, cat and mice declare a moratorium so that they can prepare for Santa Claus in the absence of their mistress; a company of small angels blesses the house of the Dale family; the three Wise Men visit a country cottage. The writing style is polished, and the stories have warmth and a gentle humor; their audience may be somewhat limited by the sustained sweetness of the characters.


Although Waber’s books are usually for the picture book audience and this is in picture book format, it would be a rather sophisticated prereader who’d appreciate the latent content and sly innuendo of *Mice on My Mind*. The characters are all cats, the protagonist an adult male, and the problem the absence of mice. “I jog... I took up needlepoint... I pay my taxes... I give at the office...” He tries everything to rid himself of the obsession, but all he can think about is mice, mice, mice. Why aren’t there any? Scattering cheese about the house and drilling holes in the baseboards produce only a smelly house and drafts. A psychiatrist doesn’t help; in fact, he gets carried away along with his patient. Clever and sprightly in style, the book could well become a favorite of older readers.


Weiss, an old and deft hand at “how-to” books, describes some of the ways in which two objects, or parts of an object, are held together: nails, screws, clamps, thread, glue, cement, melting, forging, et cetera. The writing is casual in tone but precise in the information it gives, and the illustrations are placed and labelled carefully. The author does more than simply list devices that hold things together, however; he explains how each method works and gives advice on what to do or what not to do. Simple and clear, this is more enjoyable reading than are many books of comparable usefulness.


An intriguing time-shift story has a solid contemporary base and is at the same time a perceptive story of the adjustment to stepparents of three children who have an affinity that transcends their divided loyalties. Mike is the son of Bertrand, a prosaic and pedantic professor; Sally and Beth are the daughters of Madelene, a volatile and assertive woman. It is the children who discover, on vacation in an isolated part of the English coast, that an old boat is a time ship that takes them back to the medieval period in which the local legendary saint, St. Cuthbert, lived. Sally, the youngest, is marooned in the saint’s time and is, in a final time journey, in need of rescue; when she comes back, a miracle has happened, the complete healing of a crippled hand. Then it is Beth who is in danger, and this time it is Bertrand, the unbeliever, who passes through the time warp and finds he is in the midst of a Viking raid. And he understands then that the mysterious “Wind Eye” is a window, that he has been privileged to see through it to another world. Westall’s characterization is firm, particularly astute in drawing the petulant, egocentric Madeleine and her re-

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relationships with other family members. The plot is tightly constructed and nicely meshes realistic and fantastic aspects, and the story has good pace and a compelling narrative flow.


Danny’s back, and so is Professor Bullfinch, the scientist for whom Danny’s mother is housekeeper. This time he’s stumbled on a glue so powerful that it “will even—if you can imagine such a thing—stick two pieces of water together!” Danny chooses a crucial situation to use the glue, hoping to prevent the appearance of hostile Mr. Blaze at a hearing. Danny’s mother, who’s head of the Citizen’s Environmental Committee, is protesting, not for the first time, the waste produced by Mr. Blaze’s factory. But the glue is also used to repair a dam and prevent a flood, and when it is discovered that it’s the waste that caused the crack in the dam, the factory owner apologizes. The plot is not quite believable, but the writing is lively and the story has good pace if not good characterization.


The concept of sharing is introduced in a brief and simply told story that has a good balance of dialogue and exposition, and that has line drawings (black and white, with touches of red) that are modestly effective. A boy and girl, each building a block castle, engage first in some competitive boasting and then in a fight about a single block. The resultant struggle knocks down both castles, so the two children start again. This time, however, they build together, and the castle is bigger than anything either could have built alone. Although no moral is pointed out, the message is clear; however, it’s presented as a solution rather than a maxim, and the familiarity of the situation should appeal to young children.

Wriggins, Sally Hovey, ad. *White Monkey King; A Chinese Fable*; illus. by Ronni Solbert. Pantheon Books, 1977. 76-44281. 113p. $5.95.

A retelling (with credit to the translator given only in the introduction) of a portion of a longer Chinese classic is simple and jaunty, with illustrations that are, like the print, brown on cream paper. Curious, ambitious, and indefatigably daring, the white monkey takes on legendary creatures, the Jade Emperor, and even the Heavenly Forces. His arrogance and mischief finally bring Monkey King to the throne of the Buddha, where he gets his comeuppance—and five hundred years of penance, from which, as the story ends, he is promised release by the merciful Kuan Yin. A lively prankster tale is modernized enough to have flippant dialogue that independent readers can enjoy, and the book is also a good source for storytelling.


Some of the creatures of *An Older Kind of Magic* and *Nargun and the Stars* appear again in a memorable fantasy set in Australia and adroitly meshed with the realistic quest by Wirrun, a young Aborigine, to prevent the terrible destruction that threatens his land. The ancient ice people, the Ninya, are on the march, and the media are filled with reports of strange pockets of ice in summer. Wirrun understands that there are supernatural forces at work, and he calls on other creatures to help him reach the Nargun, the most ancient of them all, a rock-creature with the power of fire, the only hope of stopping the Ninya. Wirrun travels with a wispy, capricious, and delightful rock spirit, a Mimi, and she is an example of Wrightson’s powerful writing: the Mimi is completely believable within the parameters of the fantasy. The story has an almost epic sense of adventure, danger, and high deeds, and it is taut with suspense.
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