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

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First published in Russia in 1856, these reminiscences of childhood in the country and at school have a direct, ingenuous quality that belies the oppressive appearance of the pages, solid and heavy with print. Aksakov's story pours out, fond and rueful, as he recalls the heady joys of country life and the security of family love (both he and his mother were given to swooning with emotion) from which he was removed when he went, as a government scholar, to live at school. The book carries Aksakov through his university years, and he writes with as much zest of academic and cultural pursuits as he does of the bucolic charms of his home, Aksakovo, and with as much tenderness and spontaneity of his friends and teachers as he does of his family and the dear, familiar countryside of home. This is both an engaging personal document and a vivid picture of middle-class country life in Russia almost two hundred years ago, since the author was born in 1791.


Ronnie, in this English story, lives in constant fear of violence from the criminals for whom his father does odd jobs; what the malevolent Bradshaw brothers had said was, "One word outta place, Steven, my son, and we break the kid's back, right?" Ronnie, motherless, is a surly child, friendless, unhappy at school, and eager to find someone weaker than he; his victim is a timid Indian girl who shares the time of a special reading teacher. When Ronnie becomes involved in a criminal act, he is pursued with quiet persistence by the police of London's East End, who have long known about the Bradshaws and hope this will be the time to catch them. This is a dramatic adventure story with good pace and suspense, but it is also a vivid picture of a poor, multi-ethnic community and is given depth by the astute characterization and the relationships between characters.


An experienced teacher, Asimov does not arrive at a discussion of the title subject until he has carefully and clearly laid a groundwork for understanding it. First describing the ways in which astronomers observe and analyze aberrant behavior in stellar bodies, he explains the several ways in which stars change as they age, and how—having lost its ability to emit light—the dense, collapsed star appears as a black hole in space. Asimov has the ability to write without condescension for the reader with no previous knowledge, and this book is an excellent example of that ability.
An anthology with an international flavor, this has twelve excerpts and a short story from a range of distinguished books. The authors include Bødker, Pearce, O’Dell, Thiele, and Van Iterson; the settings include the U.S.S.R., Africa, Norway, Holland, and Columbia. Some of the material has been adapted or abridged; this has been done with care. Because of the range of material—from Vestly’s little heroine Aurora to the adolescent pearl-diver of O’Dell’s *The Black Pearl*—and because of the fact that most of the selections are easily available, this seems best suited to a home collection.


Amusing if rather repetitive drawings show the strenuous efforts of Casey and the other members of the ballet class she’s in, in a perky and satisfying story about a plump child who never wavers in her desire to become a ballet dancer. She yearns to play a lead role in her first recital, and is disappointed when she’s cast as a tree. A fat tree, she knows. But her technique has been improving, she enjoys performing, and she realizes—after all the envious heartache about how much better the other girls are—that what she loves best is not being best but the joy of dancing. Blithe, occasionally touching, and always realistic, the story Casey tells is both pithy and appealing.


Bottner’s flyaway drawings have the brio, if not the polish, of Hilary Knight’s exuberant pictures, as Myra cavorts and daydreams through a dancing class. There are few words: directions from the teacher, and an occasional reprimand to Myra when her three classmates complain about her “funny business.” Myra means well, but when the others are obediently “swimming” across the floor, Myra imagines herself (as seen in the illustration) a fish, or—when the class is kicking, a donkey. Naturally, somebody nearby gets bumped or kicked, or even bitten. Amusing but slight, the story ends weakly when Myra promises the teacher there will be no more funny business and joins the class in swaying: everybody bends to the left including Myra, who becomes a tree.


Quentin, whose father is a struggling small farmer, wishes for all the money in the world. Since he has just rescued a leprechaun, his wish comes true, and Quentin finds that there is no way he can spend the money, no way he can give it away. All the world’s money is piled in heaps on his father’s fields—and he has to work just as hard as he ever did, with no reward. He’s badgered by the army, taken to see the President, and finally outwits the leprechaun (a little green man who chats with all comers) to recover the status quo. Only benefit: a bicycle from the President. While there are moments of humor, this is not a convincing fantasy, and the army’s bluster, leprechaun’s badinage, and townpeople’s complaints seem equally contrived. The story does attempt to inculcate some idea of the convenience of money as a medium of exchange, but it’s didactically presented.
Byars, Betsy C. *Goodbye, Chicken Little*. Harper, 1979. 78-19829. 94p. Trade ed. $5.95; Library ed. $5.79 net.

Jimmie Little is horrified when he watches his uncle crash through the ice to his death. Uncle Pete had always been quick to take a dare, eager to please people with his clowning, and now he had taken one dare too many. It’s hard for Jimmie to accept Pete’s death, equally hard for him to understand his mother’s attitude; how can she plan a family Christmas party at such a time? What Jimmie learns is that people have different ways of handling their grief, just as they have different ways of forgiving each other. All the members of a large family gather, talking with love and laughter about what fun Pete had been; they dance and sing, even the old uncle who’s been brought over from a nursing home (to which he is anxious to return) tells jokes and stories. Later, they call it “Pete’s party.” So Chicken Little learns that the sky won’t fall, that life goes on, that one can celebrate love even in bereavement. Byars writes with sympathy but not with sentimentality about a boy’s feelings, and—realistically—about how children can gain insight and adjust to new situations. Her style is understated, but the impact of her story is strong.


Molly and her family had just moved to a new apartment in Brooklyn, and Molly faced the usual hurdles of making new friends and starting classes in a new school. The story of a Jewish family in the period of Nazi atrocities is anecdotal and humorous: Molly knows how upset her parents get when they listen to news on the radio, but she can’t help feeling happy about her new friends, and her days are filled with small but exciting adventures. A nice family story is colored by period details and by the convincing parochialism of Molly’s attitudes (she really believes that missionaries “stole Jewish children and made gentiles out of them.”) There’s no strong story line, but it’s compensated for by the warmth and humor of the writing.


An eminent British author, editor, and critic uses several literary devices to probe and analyze adolescent Ditto’s self-exploration and his determined effort to gain maturity and independence. To refute his friend Morgan’s “Charges Against Literature” (“Literature is . . . outmoded . . . dead . . . by definition, a lie . . . a pretence . . . a sham, no longer useful, effluent, CRAP . . .”) Ditto records his trip away from home, his first sexual experience, his encounter with brawling strangers, their attempt (foiled) at a burglary. When it is over, Morgan admits it’s a story, but denies that it’s fiction. “Are you saying I’m just a character in a story?” he asks—and Ditto laughs. “Aren’t we all?” the book ends. Ditto tells the story, and there’s straight narration, script-style dialogue, entries in diary style, guide-book entries in contrasting type as well as other uses of visual variants (balloon captions, double columns of separate but related comments) that give the text variety but also fragment it, losing in continuity what it gains in impact. Ditto establishes a new relationship with the ailing father with whom he’s had long and acrimonious conflict, he gains some perspective on his own role, and some satisfaction in having carried off the ploy of his (as reported to his parents, a school project-cum-camping trip) pursuit of sexual fulfillment. There are passages that are witty or brilliant, and there is a pervasive percipience, but as a story the action is almost overwhelmed by the literary and visual experimentation.

Jill and Andy, who speak in alternate chapters, are the “us” of the title, while “it” is a sentient water creature that escapes (via a magic hoop) to the sky, and “the others” are some malevolent beings, never clearly seen, who are trying to prevent the escape of “it.” Jill is handicapped; she has one normal arm and hand, and one vestigial stump; this is treated by the author with a nice balance of awareness and acceptance, as is the friendship between the two young people. Despite a capable writing style, this English story never quite coagulates, since the fantastic creatures on whose plight the plot is hinged do not emerge as real within the parameters of the fantasy.


What’s left to say about Ramona? Cleary has created a wholly delightful personality, she writes in a deceptively casual and conversational style, she has a fine ear for dialogue, and her family scenes are vividly real and funny. Here Ramona, now seven and a half, feels that she is at a particularly difficult time: too young to be given the freedom or the responsibility her older sister Beezus has, too old to be treated indulgently, as is obnoxious little Willa Jean Kemp. Ramona’s after-school hours are spent at the Kemp home now that both parents are working. There’s no real story line, but each incident focuses on Ramona’s feelings, her relationship with her mother, and her place in the family, and each is a small gem.


As he did in *I Am the Cheese*, Cormier uses different voices to tell a story; at times it is adolescent Ben Marchand, at times the voice of the narrator, and at times Ben’s father, a man engaged in a secret government project that is threatened by the main action of the book, the hijacking of a bus full of children by terrorists—and at times, one of the terrorists, or of the girl who is the bus driver. What’s achieved resembles a series of overlays, so that not until the end does the reader see all of the pattern and discern the fate of all the characters. Although the tale is filled with drama and action and suspense, and despite the craftsmanship of the writing, there are long and often introspective passages that may challenge all but the most sophisticated readers. Again, as he did in *I Am the Cheese*, Cormier explores the concept of the individual who is sacrificed by the group; again, he insists on truth however bitter or violent that truth is.


Fourteen-year-old Lauren occasionally feels resentment toward her beautiful older sister, Melissa, or toward smaller Linda, who is going through a typical age ten infatuation with puzzles, but she’s really fond of them. It’s her parents who give her trouble, particularly her father, who is domineering; she’s also troubled by her parents’ fighting. Such general problems are the background for a wry and humorous story of Lauren’s coping with the conformity her classmates and friends expect: a girl in ninth grade doesn’t, simply doesn’t, date an eighth grade boy. But Zack is so nice, a boy who is pleasant, intelligent, tolerant, amusing. Even when her old boyfriend (sixteen) wants to resume their relationship, Lauren can’t give up Zack just to do the “done” thing. While Lauren is confronting the generation gap, establishing independence, giving adherence to standards of social behavior, and other universal prob-
lems of the adolescent, the book has enough humor and breezy dialogue to make it fun to read, and enough solidity in characters and relationships to make it thought-provoking.


Profusely illustrated with precisely-detailed line drawings, a text by an English architect provides a great deal of information about the history of London, the architecture of its buildings and bridges, and the various influences that contributed to the growth and changes in the city: the river and its tributaries, the political and social pressures, the catastrophies, the industrial and commercial developments, and the changing needs of a growing population. The writing is competent and authoritative, although so meticulously detailed that it may prove too intensive for the general reader in countries other than England. A final chapter discusses contemporary London and suggests those changes that might improve it. An index and a bibliography are appended.


Profusely illustrated with photographs, the text describes all aspects of the life of a New York City policeman’s horse. One of a group of twenty Tennessee Walkers, the horse, Hannon, has had to get accustomed to the hard pavements, the heavy traffic and noise, and the strange objects (he was frightened by vendors’ umbrellas, for example) of city streets. Some of the text describes the work of Hannon’s rider, but most of it is devoted to descriptions of Hannon’s training, his accommodations, the work of the blacksmith, the attention he gets from children, and the hazards of police work in the city prevent for horse and rider. The writing style is casual and includes many comments by Hannon’s rider, Officer Mike Sicignano, whose affection for his horse adds warmth to the book.


There have been many books written about Victoria, about the Victorian Age, and about particular aspects of that Age. Drabble pulls it all together in a remarkably successful fashion, examining first the monarch herself and her role and influence. Other chapters deal with the arts, with the middle and the lower classes, with the Crystal Palace and with Darwin, accorded a brief, separate chapter that begins, “For me, the greatest single discovery of the nineteenth century was the discovery of the theory of evolution.” This is one of the few times in the book that Drabble permits herself to become personal, for most of the text is permeated by objectivity, candor, and perspective. To include so much: to blend political, artistic, ethical, and historical viewpoints so deftly; and to achieve an eminently readable and occasionally entertaining synthesis is quite a feat. A divided bibliography and an index are included.


A former sportswriter gives facts about the development of judo and karate, describes the official costume and the rules, and offers—in great detail—the various moves and how they are performed. He emphasizes, in the preface, the fact that the book does not give all the fine points of these martial arts, and offers advice on choosing a school. Since the photographs are static, although useful, they and the
text cannot take the place of personal instruction; however, the writing is clear (not sequential, since most of the moves are considered separately) and the book includes a final section of tips from professionals as well as a glossary and a list of judo contest calls.


Continuing the story of a rural family in England that began with the short novels *The Stone Book* and *Granny Reardun*, this focuses on a day in the life of William, grandson of the lad who, in *Granny Reardun*, so joyfully became an apprentice smith. Now he is old Joseph, William's Grandad, and the time is World War II; despite the sirens and enemy planes, William and his friends delight in sLEDging down a steep hill. Grandad makes the boy a new sledge when his old one shatters, and William watches the skill and love with which his sledge is fastened, feeling the strength of the family lineage as Grandad talks about the past. Garner has always been adept at infusing his stories with local color, using local idiom in dialogue, and suggesting more than he tells; in this, as in the two earlier books, he adds a sweetness that makes it a memorable cameo.


Rich Gaskins had been a basketball star in his first high school and is a natural for the Marchmont team when he transfers. But Marchmont is a school with few white students, so Rich has a double handicap: he's white, and he's expected to be the coach's pet. All Rich wants is to play. His life is complicated by the fact that he begins dating a black girl, Glen, and creates further resentment. Some of the other boys on the team learn that Rich is not only friendly but more anxious for team success than for personal success, and they accept him—it's the white boys who beat him up. Glen breaks up their relationship; the team (with a crippled Rich playing) loses the tournament; what heartens Rich, in the end, is that some of his team come to see him as a demonstration of the fact that he's still their blond brother. Geibel handles the racial conflict with honesty in a story that has good style and pace: there are good game sequences, but not too many, and the book eschews the usual sports story formulae.


A former science teacher writes with lucid simplicity about the properties of water in its various states, suggesting several home demonstrations so that the reader can verify such processes as evaporation or melting, and explaining the molecular motion that causes water to assume the shape of any container when it is in liquid form. A crisp introduction, with no extraneous material, is nicely gauged for the primary grades reader. The pages have a spacious look, and the illustrations are carefully enough placed in relation to the text to need no captions or labels.


Graeme Drury, a seventeen-year-old Australian, records his strange adventure in a "greyworld" he calls his Limbo, an experience he views in retrospect and cannot understand. At first he was upset because people seemed not to hear him or see him well . . . then he was terrified when his parents ignored him, even seeking medical help . . . then he realized that he had indeed become invisible, alone in a colorless world. Graeme finds two others who are in the same state, Jamie and Marion, who
disappear again; he has tapes of their conversations, but when he returns to the real
world and plays those tapes, Graeme can remember nothing. It's an intriguing fant-
sasy concept and the author creates the mood and situation believably, but the story
is weakened by a lack of pace and by the tenuous conclusion.

$5.95.

Molly sees a small lion under her bed: her parents and her grandmother tell her to
stop pretending; she gets the lion cub some milk, and then they snuggle together and
sleep. When the adults learn that a baby lioness escaped from a zoo truck, they think
that must be where Molly got the idea. Next morning they discover it was all true;
Grandmother puts a handkerchief over her face (licked by the lion) and (unaccount-
ably) lisps. A lion keeper takes the animal away, later showing Molly that the cub's
cage has a sign that says "Sweet Molly." This reads like an adaptation of Guilfoile's
Nobody Listens to Andrew, which has almost the same plot but is written with more
vitality and humor; the read-aloud audience should like the idea here, although
neither text nor illustrations is as well executed.


When her mother takes a summer job as a cook for the wealthy Fairchild family,
eleven-year-old Fran, who tells the story, is furious. She doesn't want to be cast in
the role of a servant's child, and doesn't want to be exposed to the snobbery of
Andrea Fairchild, just her age. While this has a dash of stereotypical poor-little-rich-
girl, Andrea (left alone a great deal by her career-oriented mother and stepfather) is a
believable character, and the slow development of friendship and understanding
leads Fran to sympathy for Andrea and to a re-evaluation about her own snobbery in
being ashamed of her mother's work, and about her misconceptions about la vie en
rose.

Hayman, LeRoy. Thirteen Who Vanished: True Stories of Mysterious Disappearances. Mess-
ner, 1979. 78-26750. 159p. $7.29.

The thirteen cases Hayman describes include the Grand Duchess Anastasia,
Jimmy Hoffa, Amelia Earhart, Michael Rockefeller, Judge Crater, seven others and
the Bermuda Triangle victims. The tone of the writing is set by the author's preface:
"You'll see that when a man or woman vanishes, he or she often had a hand (perhaps
unknowingly) in making it happen." Anastasia? And quoting Shakespeare, he goes
on to say "... you yourself can take most of the credit, or the blame, for what
happens to you." This sort of inappropriate pontificating pervades the book, written
with a strong dash of journalesque. Most sections start with a question: "Ever try
getting lost at home?" "How could a top labor boss vanish without a trace?" "How
could a prominent New York judge drop out of sight right on Broadway?" A bio-
graphical sketch is followed by an account of the disappearance and of the ensuing
investigation. The material is inherently dramatic, and Hayman's treatment gilds the
lily so that it droops. A divided bibliography and an index are appended.

$7.95.

In a sequel to South Star (reviewed in the January, 1978 issue) the young giant
Megan, adventurer and dreamer, slips away from the home valley and goes off to
hunt for her long-missing brother-in-law, the king Brendan whom she has never seen
but whose voice seems to call to her. She is joined after some trials and dangers on
her own, by her old friend Randall, the boy who was her companion in South Star;
together they find the land where Brendan is the captive of a fierce, leonine people and, with the help of three huge Sun Birds, they fly home to the valley. While this has some episodes that move slowly, it is a more cohesive story than its predecessor, better balanced and structured, and written in the same quasi-poetic vein, with passages or phrases that spring out, fine-honed. The longish section in which Megan copes on her own, albeit slow-moving, has a Crusoe appeal, and the romantic illustrations heighten some dramatic moments. Occasionally there are words and music sung by Megan and written by the versatile author.


While her father, working on a series of crime articles, is away, Liza follows clues that lead to proof of the innocence of a man who was framed. Like Nancy Drew, this girl sleuth is able to see and solve problems that have baffled professional investigators. The story has one character who is suspiciously obstructionist (and innocent) and one who is open and friendly (and guilty), it has a helpful, wholesome boyfriend, and it has a spattering of coincidence and contrivance to help propel the action. There's no real depiction of character, and the writing style is pedestrian, but the suspense, mystery, and action will undoubtedly appeal to readers who accept the facile.


Excellent photographs and a clearly written, neatly organized text give good information about earthworms, including their structure, habitat, feeding habits, reproductive processes, and regenerative powers. Hess also describes the ways in which the earthworm helps hold and improve the soil, and provides valuable fertilizer; she discusses the earthworm as food, and the creatures for whom the earthworm is prey, concluding with the fact that raising earthworms can be profitable; instructions for raising earthworms are provided, and the text points out that the greatest danger to earthworms is insecticide. A brisk and straightforward text is followed by a relative index.


Jimmy, in second grade, describes his friendship with William: the way they walked to school together, the games they played, the things they shared. Sad because William has moved away, Jimmy is pleased when another friend, Mary Ellen, offers to play with him; she tells him she often walked to school alone, in back of them—and Jimmy thinks about that. They have a pleasant afternoon, and Jimmy realizes that he's not going to be all alone, that he still has a friend. The illustrations are conventional and competent, large-scale paintings, uncluttered, in subdued tones; the story is simply told, a bit static and certainly low-keyed, not an unusual treatment of a familiar situation, but adequate.


Johanna, fifteen, and Peter, a bit older, decide to run away when Johanna becomes pregnant. Jo, living at a boarding school, is afraid of her father, a minister who has become righteous and wrathful since gaining publicity as “the TV Vicar,” and Pete, failing at school, doesn’t even tell his widowed mother about Jo. They stay with a slightly mad old man for a bit, are evicted and go to London, where they live in a communal flat until Jo’s father denounces her on television: they run off to Scotland
where Jo has a miscarriage and Pete is caught in a blizzard: they are caught by the police and Jo goes off to face her father. As she goes, she calls, "Forever!" and Pete lets "all his hope ring back to her with one long whoop of joy." "Suddenly, she seemed so near..." the story ends. Hinton writes in a heavy style, and his structure is a bit turgid; while the characterization is not deep, he does convey a sympathetic compassion for the adolescent's yearning for freedom and independence.


While most of the selections in this mini-anthology of bedtime poetry are easily obtainable elsewhere, it's an assortment that is chosen with discrimination and illustrated with soft pencil drawings—slightly comic, slightly grotesque—that frame the poem on each page. Hopkins has included two of his own poems as well as such favorites as Beatrice Schenk de Regniers' "Keep a Poem in Your Pocket," Langston Hughes' "The Dream Keeper," Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Land of Nod," and poems by Gwendolyn Brooks, Eleanor Farjeon, Sylvia Plath, and others.


The wonder wheels are those of Mick's roller skates; a superb performer, he's centered his life at the rink and is practicing for a competition that may give him a summer job. Mick has a happy, secure life at home, a steady part-time job at a grocery store, and some fellow-skaters as friends; not until sweet, quiet Kitty appears at the rink does he fall in love. He wins the summer job, but he loses Kitty, for she is killed (carbon monoxide poisoning) when a sadistic and possessive former boyfriend forces her into his car. The rink milieu is strongly depicted, Mick's family relationships and those with the owner and the organist at the skating rink are warm and believable, but the relationship between Mick and Kitty is less convincing, and the whole story of Kitty—her unhappy home and her harsh mother, her relationship with the boorish boyfriend on whom her mother dotes—seems almost a separate entity, one that doesn't quite mesh with Mick and his skating.


Although the realistic paintings, deftly composed and nicely integrated with the text, are more rewarding than most illustrations for stories about shifting homes, this pleasant English story has a run-of-the-mill text. Molly, youngest of three, enjoys her new home but is lonely when her older siblings go off to school each day; she plays, in solitary fashion, in the garden of the empty house next door, and when twins her age move into that house, she is busy and content. A bit sedate, but adequately told.


There is a double meaning to the title, for the protagonist, Elizabeth, has her own crucial year and there's a great deal concerning a performance of Miller's play, The Crucible. As is true of earlier Johnston books, the story is crowded: too many characters, too many sub-plots, and a heavy dose of turgid emotion. Elizabeth, who tells the story, is adjusting to her father's death, to her first term in a public school, to new friends, to a controversy about a teacher she admires, to her boyfriend's discovery that his supposedly prim father has been having an affair with the mother of another friend, to Kennedy's assassination. Ad infinitum.

Like *Who Are the Handicapped?* the book by Haskins for older readers, this deals with particular kinds of handicaps in separate chapters and explains some of the causes; it is more simply written, however, and more direct, much of the time addressing the reader: "If you were retarded, you could still learn . . ." or "If you couldn't hear as well as everyone else . . ." With directness and candor, Kamien describes the problems associated with each handicap, the devices or procedures that help handicapped persons adjust, the ways in which they receive special education, and their need for the same kinds of emotional and social satisfactions desired by those who are not handicapped. The author makes it clear that handicapped people don't want pity, and there is no note of pity in her text, but a crisp and sensible attitude that recognizes the fact that understanding and communication can alleviate the uncomfortable distance normal children often feel between themselves and the handicapped.


A simplified and simply written survey of railroads, touching on the changes from horse-drawn to steam, diesel, and electric engines, freight and passenger cars, tracks and their care, switching and traffic, and some modern trains. The book gives no coverage in depth, but serves adequately as an introduction to the subject. A glossary, a pronunciation guide, an index and a brief bibliography are provided, as is a two-page spread, with conversion chart, on the metric system.


Written in a style that is dignified but not dry or formal, this text gives good coverage to the historical development of aids to vision, to causes and corrective measures for flawed eyesight, and to the training of ophthalmologists, optometrists, and opticians—including some of the conflicts between the first two. Kelley also describes the ways in which eyes are tested and eyeglasses or contact lenses made, and discusses, in the concluding chapter, the possibility of electronic testing (requiring no response from the patient) in the future, advances in eye surgery and aids for the blind, new knowledge about such aspects of anatomy as the cause of cataracts or the functioning of the retina, and the possibility of lifelong eye care through a social breakthrough in health services. Well-organized and smoothly written, the text is followed by a bibliography and an index that are in vision-straining small print.


In a sequel to the stories about a German refugee in England, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* and *The Other Way Round*, Anna is married and is, like her husband, a writer for the BBC, as Judith Kerr is in real life. Her father is dead, her mother has gone back to Germany and is living with a man named Konrad. It is Konrad who calls Anna to say her mother is in a coma, having attempted suicide when she learned that Konrad had had a brief affair with his secretary. Nervous about going back to Germany, worried about her mother, anxious to get back to her husband, Anna goes through days of introspective memories of her childhood, mourning again the death of her father and trying to clarify her relationship with her mother. It is in the last aspect that the book gains its strength, for Kerr's unraveling of the intricate emotions in a parent-child relationship are remarkably candid and perceptive; somehow, despite the introspection, the story never loses pace. It is sophisticated, mature, and honest.

Lewin records his impressions of the flora and fauna of Baja California while waiting for the annual migration of the California gray whales. His text is impressionistic, lyric, and acute in observation of behavioral details, particularly of seals and sea lions: finally the whales come, breaching and leaping in awesome beauty. Beautifully textured, soft pencil drawings of plants and animals are as vivid as the textual comments. Not to all readers’ tastes, perhaps, but the book should delight budding (and even full-blown) naturalists.


The time-shift treasure hunt is a familiar theme in fantasy fiction, and in this English story a boy from the future visits the inn where his forebears are living. Tom Rushton and his sister try to find the treasure that Steve Rushton (Tom’s grand-nephew) has been told is somewhere about; a surly odd-jobs boy is suspicious about Steve and makes trouble, but the confrontation he and his equally hostile father arrange is dominated by the united front put up by the Rushton family, even by old Gran, before they get Steve’s explanation. A recurrent pattern in the story has been Tom’s dogged inscribing, at Gran’s insistence, bits of lore for her Commonplace Book. And this—probably to the surprise of few readers—proves to be the treasure, a book written in Tom’s fine hand. There are some exciting moments and some suspense in the book, but the pace is uneven and there are moments of contrivance as well.


McDermott’s adaptation of a portion of the Arthurian legend is based in outline on the version by Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain, ou Le Chevalier au Lion*, and it is illustrated in black and white ink and crayon drawings that are quite unlike McDermott’s previous book illustrations: the pictures have the same boldness and some of the stylized quality, but they are rough and stark and often crowded with massing of detail. The story of Yvain, the young knight who achieved his first quest but lost his lady and had to go forth again to gain his maturity (in a second quest in which he befriends a lion) and win his wife again, is told in present tense, a rather awkward device. The story itself has all of the qualities that have made chivalric tales endure: daring, danger, magic, love, and dedication. It is weakened by the surfeit of florid writing: “Where once leaves flourished, now sings a plumed chorus: a melodious foliage;” and by some abrupt developments in the story line, as when the Lady of the Fountain speaks to Yvain for the first time, enraged, “You are my husband’s slayer! Do you presume to take his place?” and Yvain, who is seeing her for the first time, responds with “I love you, beautiful and gracious lady . . .” An attendant says, when the Lady leaves, “I think she likes you not a little.” Turn the page, and suddenly “Amid song of bells, merry shouts and laughter, I am wed to Laudine, the Lady of the Fountain.”


David and Pat, cousins, get their parents’ approval to stay on their vacation island to help Joe Shipley, a disabled camper. The boys are suspicious about the activities of surly Mr. Rose, who’s rented Joe’s house, curious about Rose’s odd sister, Zilla, who is shabbily treated by her brother and friendly to them, and convinced that Rose has an ally who is helping him steal valuable objects from a vacant house on the island. The boys poke and pry, get caught, are rescued, and are pleased when Rose

Jamie, newly transferred to a plush suburban high school, is told by the football coach that he's too slight for the team, but "... We've got something for everybody! ... Get involved," and Jamie does. He organizes a soccer team, gets a female faculty member as coach, and—with his teammates—perseveres; in fact, the team comes close to topping the local league. There are several familiar sports story elements: a surly athlete who thaws in the end, the tough football coach who concedes he was wrong about sponsoring the team (and who announces his engagement to the plucky soccer coach) and the fat boy who makes good. There are enough lectures (coach to team, usually) on soccer play to explain the game to those ignorant about it and perhaps to pall on those who are not. There's a mild love interest and a bit of balance in family scenes. Not MacKellar's best writing, and—although there are no glaring weaknesses—too much a formula sports plot to be impressive.


Catherine D'Amato's record of her fifteenth year is intense, introspective, and perceptive: it is weakened by a tenuous ending, but the book speaks movingly of the adolescent who feels inadequate and insecure. For Catherine, who lives with her blowsy, divorced mother and whose only sense of achievement comes from her drawing, it is the extended family that gives her strength: Aunt Mary's praise for her sketches, the loyalty of her cousins, the love of her grandparents. She has conceived a desperate devotion to a new teacher in the school, a cool blond gym teacher who is everything Catherine would like to be; when she takes a portfolio of sketches to Miss Alcott as a gift, she is stunned by the fact that the teacher despises her work, apparently despises her, and reports to the principal that Catherine has broken a rule by coming to a teacher's house. Suspended for a week, Catherine attempts suicide, and fails. Only after three weeks with her grandparents in the country does she begin to draw again, to feel a sense of her own worth, to accept the sort of person she is. The characterization is strong, although the depiction of Miss Alcott seems overdrawn in its harshness, and the nuances of relationships within the family are drawn with insight, particularly the mingled exasperation, love, and dependence between Catherine and her mother.


Winner of the 1976 Carnegie Medal, this is the story of a friendship between Andrew, who has just moved to Norfolk, and Victor, who has always lived there. The setting is important, both because of the richness of the local dialect and because Norfolk is known as "the world's largest aircraft carrier." For aircraft are Victor's passion; a poor student and a loner, Victor seems almost doltish until Andrew learns how knowledgeable he is about anything to do with airplanes. Victor's home is rigid and sterile, and he blossoms in the casual, untidy atmosphere of Andrew's home. And Andrew? For the sake of friendship, he gives up his own hobbies to share Victor's, to help his friend feel self-confidence. There's warmth in the depiction of Andrew's family, humor in the dialogue, and a distinctive individuality of writing style. The book has that rare quality of almost seeming to evolve its own story, as though the author were only a channel: Mark never comes between book and reader.
Traditional tales remembered from the adapter's youth are retold in a mature style, with a vocabulary that indicates the necessity of simplification if the tales are to be told to children: for most children, the stories would be difficult to understand if read aloud. Examples: "And so, the years of hunger and misery were slowly obliterated in a smooth serene stream of affluent days which succeeded each other," or "She lashed at him with her tongue, reviling and denigrating him for his impotence to provide for his family..." Some of the tales are about traditional heroes like the warped judge Karakosh or the witty Goha, but most of them exemplify the traditional values of the culture and embody the mores of their source; titles like "The Rashness of the Young and the Wisdom of the Old," or stories that incorporate the firm belief in immutable destiny and the power of luck reflect Sudanese and Egyptian acceptance of one's fate. This can be adapted for telling to children, but may be of more interest to students of folklore.


In a sixth book about Samson, the church cat, and the mice he had sworn never to harm, their English church is taken over—temporarily—by a substitute curate. Afraid of mice, the young man takes on a new church cat and gets the municipal authorities to catch the mice and Samson. Put in a pound, Samson is rescued by his friends, but the open door allows all the dogs out; the ensuing chase ends with the curate, frightened out of his bath, fleeing the mice who are followed by the dogs. Unfortunately the curate, unclad, runs into an imposing procession of town dignitaries and visitors. End of curate, end of the exile of Samson and his friends. The story would be amusing on its own, but it's hilariously extended by the combination of bland text and pictures that Tell All; for example, when the parishioners all hope for a quiet young chap, the text states only, "He wasn't," but the deft and colorful illustrations show a long-haired chap with "Love" painted on his shirt, flowers painted on his jeans, "Peace" painted on his car, and his guitar prominently displayed amongst the bundles that are in and on it—while the car knocks down a cyclist and spews black smoke into the road.


Rupert and his four buddies were horrified by the newcomer's name, let alone the fact that he could knit: Shirley Vincent. Pudgy, friendly, shockingly candid (the others thought) about liking to cook and, even worse, liking girls, Shirley was so cheerful and competent that the boys couldn't dislike him, but his candor was so embarrassing that the boys tried to do things without him. Shirley, like the other boys and girls of Wakefield, became involved in the campaign to raise money for a community center and the close-knit five also became involved in trying to get the town's doctor from leaving, unaware that he was simply taking a vacation. There's lots of action; there is a good deal of humor, although much of it is based on people's stupidity or eccentricity; the writing style is jaunty but fragmented, the characterization superficial—yet the story does convey a sense of community and will probably appeal to readers for its humor, despite the fact that it's obvious and often coy.

Steve and his two older sisters, able to indulge their varying tastes in television programs because they have three sets, are horrified when their mother announces they spend too much time watching, and that she’s curtailing TV for a week. Steve, who tells the story, mopes about, finally becomes interested in observing nature through a homemade telescope, draws his sisters into sharing his new interest, and becomes so enthralled by insects and stars that he doesn’t bother to watch TV when the week is over. The message is clear, but the story is slight and contrived; there’s some structure and a modicum of humor, but no characterization and little conviction in the children’s (especially Steve’s) sudden about-face.


A first-person story about Bigfoot (Place’s fourth book on the subject) is told by ten-year-old Joey, who has come as a hard-to-place foster child to live with Mike and Sara Brown in their home in the woods in the state of Washington. The placement is a successful one, as Joey learns to love and trust his foster parents; he also believes Sara when she tells him she has seen Bigfoot. One day Joey sees the monster himself, but it’s hard to convince his classmates that he’s telling the truth; he leads the others on a school-sponsored field trip where Joey puts on a Bigfoot costume to fool them. A weak ending vitiates a story in which the reader is asked to accept Bigfoot as real or to assume that the book is a fantasy; the writing style is adequate, but the fictional framework is used as a device for information about the possibility of the existence of the monster, especially in classroom discussions.


While much has been written about endangered animal species, less attention has been paid to the species of plants that are threatened with extinction; almost 2,000 species in the United States alone have been officially classified by the Department of the Interior as either in immediate danger or likely to become endangered. While natural attrition or environmental changes may account for some of the decimation, most of it is due to changes made in the environment by people: practices resulting in erosion or air pollution, building highways, encroaching on the wilderness. Ricciuti discusses many of the endangered species, the problems of conservation, and the many ways (food, medicines, sheer pleasure) we will suffer if some of the world’s flora disappear. The text is not notable for its organization, but it gives accurate information in a straightforward writing style.


Discussing some of the effects on human history by insects, a British historian ranges widely through centuries and subjects: Ritchie explains in his preface that he has defined as “insects” all creatures that were regarded as such before scientific classification imposed narrower definitions. Chapters are arranged by subject (“The Story of Silk,” “Insects in Medicine”) rather than chronologically and the material within the chapters is presented in a rambling if readable style. Ritchie is given to generalizations and to digressions; an example of the latter is (following an implication that Boccaccio’s *Decameron* might be attributed to his experience during the plague) the jump from a discussion of the plague of the 14th century to the production of the *Decameron* in the vernacular rather than in Latin, and then to Chaucer’s use of the vernacular. Again, in the chapter on “Insects as Food or Food Providers for
Man," after a description of the way in which honeycombs were used to make mead, Ritchie digresses to a description of drinking customs and drinking vessels. In sum, there's a great deal of interesting material arranged in no discernible pattern; the writing style is fairly flowing but marred by digression, conjecture, and generalization. An index is appended.


Jolene feels there is something strange about their new home, an eerie sense of isolation in the valley—but her father begs her to try it, and she agrees, sensing that he is content for the first time since his wife's death. She is horrified by the fact that all of her neighbors and classmates have jelly-filmed eyes, worried by seeing her father dancing with other people in a midnight ring in the meadow, baffled by the evasiveness of the one friend she makes. The answer: everyone in the valley is from another planet, they are all preparing to depart for their home world, and her father is going along because—he reveals—her mother was one of the aliens. Then Jolene recalls that her mother always wore pink glasses, always had cold hands like the aliens. She begs to go back to the city, to stay with her aunt; she's magically transported there, and she discovers her aunt's eyes are "glazed over like jelly," the story ends. For science fiction fans, any story of alien creatures has some appeal, but this is an awkwardly concocted fantasy, more a situation than a story, and it is weak in characterization and in writing style, especially weak in the abrupt eruption into fantasy and the lack of a realistic base.


Grey tones used with black and white make the simple, almost bland pictures appropriately shadowed for a simplified account of a power failure due to an ice storm. The members of the family notice a live wire emitting sparks, and Father calls the power company. With no lights and no heat, everybody puts on extra clothing and sleeps in front of the fireplace. Mother and Father turn off the water so the pipes won't freeze, they shop in a dark store, they manage to get a small supply of wood and candles. The power company fixes the dangerous wire, goes off to cope with other emergencies, and then—at last—electrical power is restored and the house gets warm again. The text is carefully gauged for a primary grades audience, it's painlessly informative about safety measures, and it conveys quite vividly the tension and suspense of living through a blackout.


Giving a geographical and historical survey of Arab lands, Ross interpolates chapters on such aspects of Arab life as the Islamic faith, or Arabs in science, technology, and the arts, and concludes with chapters entitled "Arabs and the Modern World" and "Israel-Oil and the Arabs." The text is, therefore, chronological with interruptions: the chapter on Arabs and the modern world is up-to-date as of the time of printing, with separate, brief sections on individual countries. The text is informative and fairly well organized, the author's approach objective, the writing candid but rather heavy. The chronology and bibliography are followed by an extensive relative index that is in unfortunately small type.


Set in the Reconstruction Era, this is an impressive first novel about race relationships and nonviolence, written in an easy, vigorous style and candid in its depiction
of discrimination. To escape prejudice, Lena’s father and stepmother had moved to Bethel Springs, an all-white community; there had been no problems until Lena won the school spelldown, when they had the first hint of trouble, arriving home to find someone had been there and committed an act of malicious damage. The serious problem comes when a white woman hires Lena’s father to do some work that a lazy white man, Haney, had neglected, and Haney is openly vindictive. Papa goes off for a few days to mend fences for someone, and when he doesn’t come home, Lena goes off to find him. Shot by Haney’s son, Lena’s dying father urges her to take no revenge, but to save the boy if she can. Thus Lena learns, as she has learned so much from her father, to forgive. A most moving story about a black family strong in their love and pride.


A familiar folktale is retold in simple, direct style and illustrated with paintings that have soft, pure colors and a misty style that obscures harsh lines. The rural scenes are especially effective in spare compositions as the protagonist, Isaac, learns that what is most worth treasuring can often be closest to home. Dreaming thrice of a treasure under a city bridge, Isaac trudges across the countryside; a soldier guarding the bridge laughs at him and says that if he believed his own dream, he’d go to the house of a fellow named Isaac... so Isaac plods home and there, at last, is the treasure—under his own stove.


An original story in the fairytale tradition is lavishly illustrated with ornately detailed and appropriately romantic drawings in Hyman’s elegant style (with a number of well-endowed maidens peeking out of ornamental embellishments of clothing) and is told in a grave style and tone reminiscent of the fairytales by Oscar Wilde. Here a king, delighted with the gift of a mechanical dancing doll, banishes a young musician who, jealous because the king ignores him for the new toy, breaks the doll’s arm. After a time of wandering the kingdom and playing his flute to earn his keep, young Hulun finds the broken metal pieces that were once the doll; he sells his precious instrument to buy the scraps and laboriously puts the doll together. Now she is solemn-faced and awkward, save when Hulun plays his flute—then she dances with grace. The king’s evil son steals the doll from Hulun and brings it to his father, but when the doll refuses to dance, the king suspects there is something wrong. He orders the musician brought to him, and days later Hulun’s still form is carried in—and the doll waters the dead face with her tears—and Hulun lives again.
READING FOR LIBRARIANS

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.


Monson, Dianne and Shurtleff, Cynthia. “‘Altering Attitudes Toward the Physically Handicapped Through Print and Non-Print Media.’” Language Arts, February, 1979.


