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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH ANNOTATIONS

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

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

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Now it can be told: Arnold Adoff is in love with food. In this collection of paens to chocolate, apple pie, fresh baked bread, and other delights, he includes some recipe poems, but most of the selections sing the praises of some particular food, and there is in most of the poems a wry humor or an ebullient zest that should engage readers—and, like most poems, the audience is much broader than the middle grades for which this seems most appropriate. Two nibbles from the feast, with apologies for ignoring the poet’s use of line and form, “. . . but in between my smiles and bites / I write a message in the sweet and sour pork / I need a fork,” concludes a poem on learning to use chop sticks; or, from “At the End of Summer,” a pledge of loyalty: “I pledge my loyalty to apple pie and / I insist on deep done dough as heavy as gold / as golden as sweet sun . . .”

Diagrams and paintings in the stiff but colorful style of the Egyptian frieze are used profusely to illustrate and expand a simply written but fully detailed text on burial customs in ancient Egypt. Aliki describes the Egyptian pantheon and concepts of preparation for the other world, an existence for which mummification prepared the corpse; her text gives explicit and step-by-step explanations of how mummies were made and, for those whose rank or fortune permitted, how they were entombed and mourned. The writing style is direct, the material logically arranged, and the illustrations both handsome and informative.

Something new for the ingenious Anno: page after page of leafy forest scenes have animals hidden among the greenery. A list of some of the creatures, several in each double-page spread, is given at the back of the book with page references, although the pages are not numbered. The animals are not easy to find, partly because the whole animal is not always shown, only the face. This may be frustrating for children (or adults, since it’s hard to resist the appeal of a puzzle) who lack visual acuity, but it will probably enthrall those who have it.

Beau (Robert Beaudette) is eighteen and has no illusions about himself: he’s burly and brutish looking, and his appearance either intimidates people or makes them
hostile. It is clear, as he tells his story, that he often acts brutish because he knows he'll be prejudged. But it is equally clear, as he describes his gentle, respectful, almost worshipful love for a beautiful classmate who is also prejudged by her peers as vain and proud because of her appearance, that he is sensitive and idealistic. Beau gets a job with a photographer and uses his new skills to solve the puzzle of a burglary at the studio, a plot that gives the book both continuity and diversity, but the emphasis is on Beau's acceptance of himself and the way he looks, and on the perspective he gains that makes it possible for him to stop being defensive. Dialogue and characterization are deft in a good first novel for young adults.


Adam and Noah are two boys of nine who live in an unspecified (but obviously large) city where, in a series of episodic chapters, they spend their Saturdays prowling happily about and having a variety of adventures. Watching a monster movie, they help catch a man who's robbed a jewelry store; watching a boat race, they drift, in an oarless rowboat in which they've been sitting, into the path of the contestants; somehow they get into a museum exhibit after hours; prowling about an airport, they accidentally get a ride on a plane. There's a bit of contrivance here and there, and occasional padding, but there are also some laughs, plenty of action, and a breezy writing style that carries the improbable catalogue of adventures nicely. Whether or not the author intended messages that are pro-urban and pro-self reliance, that's what comes through.


Although the text gets off to a rather choppy start, the writing smooths out and the story line picks up in tempo as this book for beginning independent readers continues. Soft shades of peach and green are used with white and black in realistic illustrations that echo the gentle quality of a story about a small boy whose older brother jeers at his wood carving of a duck; Daniel's parents encourage him to enter his duck in a local fair, but when the boy hears people laughing at his carving, he seizes it and runs off. He's followed by the man whose carving Daniel has always admired and who convinces him that people were laughing with pleasure, not with derision. Mollified, Daniel starts back to the fair. He refuses to sell the man his duck, but he happily presents it as a gift. The setting is Tennessee and rural, the time early in the century. Readers can empathize with Daniel's desire to achieve and his modest success, and perhaps appreciate the theme of artistic creativity.


In a sixth book about the intrepid and resourceful ten-year-old Arthur Foskett, Coren's lampooning is a bit more broad than in the earlier stories, particularly in the depiction of Major Oliver Spoonurgle. Commander of a fort in the Montana Territory, Spoonurgle is concerned with interior decoration, the right colors of ribbons for the horses, and making sure his men were supplied with lavender water. There's no drilling, and the idea of fighting Indians (Blood on their clean uniforms? Horrors!) dismays him. Arthur, who has shown up with a mangy goat destined to be the fort's mascot, is left behind with the three men on kitchen detail when Spoonurgle is forced by a superior's order to leave the fort. The fort's attacked by the Sioux, but the indomitable Arthur not only saves the day but also arranges for peace. How?
Well, this time it's ventriloquism, and its effectiveness is dependent on the credulity of the attacking braves, a not very convincing device even in a tall and quite funny story.


In a story of an immigrant Irishwoman's experiences, Cummings stresses the horrors of the potato famine, the equal horrors of the voyage, the longing for family and sweetheart, and the difficulties of adjusting to life in the United States. Some of the passages or incidents are vivid, but the writing is weakened by the number of emphases, the shifts in style, the not infrequent sentimentality, and the reiterated portrayal of the protagonist as a bigot.


Based on the Dasent translation of Asbjørnsen's and Moe's collection of Norse folktales, this is a "why" story that explains why the trolls avoid a cottage on the Dovrefell on Christmas Eve: the trolls are frightened away by the huge white bear they think is a cat. De Paola's illustrations present a variety of amusingly ugly trolls and some attractively spacious outdoor scenes of stylized green trees against the white snow, but the story has a bland, oversimplified quality that detracts from the book's impact.


Robert comes from Holland to the French village cafe that had once been called the Belledonne; although the proprietor's surly wife does so reluctantly, she agrees to let him take a room there. Robert had found, among his grandfather's papers, a cryptic message about "Tonight Belledonne room 16 . . ." and had been intrigued by the clue. He mendaciously claims to be the nephew of Robert Macy, a man whose name had been on a notebook that was also part of his grandfather's effects, and because of that claim, the now-respectable man who had murdered Macy is trapped by his own prejudice into admitting the crime: he had killed Macy because the man was Jewish and had dared love his daughter. The setting is interesting, as are the characters, but the writing style is stiff and the story awkwardly structured and uneven in pace.


In a sequel to *May I Cross Your Golden River*, which concludes with the death of Jordan Phillips, his youngest brother Johnny, who had never known his father (George Phillips had gone before Johnny was born) decides to go east and visit his father's family, hoping to learn something, hoping he might meet his father. There are several generations living on the old North Carolina estate, and Skipper becomes deeply involved in the family and their tensions. He's particularly disturbed by the arrogance of his half-brother, their great-grandfather's pet, surprised at the boy's hostility, aware that he, like Johnny, had been abandoned by their hapless father. When the old man dies and Johnny leaves, he feels satisfied—despite the fact that his father hasn't bothered to come south to meet him—to have come to know all his kin, and newly aware, because of this experience, that a wider world exists than he had known in Colorado. This doesn't have the poignancy or the cohesion of the earlier book, but it is just as well written, and it presents a fascinating picture of the complexity and richness of relationships in an extended family.

Hyman's graceful drawings, brown or black and white, illustrate a rhyming text in which an old woman responds to her grandchild's question. The question is periodically repeated, and each time the grandmother starts off with cheerful bravado: "Quite brave, quite bold: I say what I choose—having nothing to lose by being a demon . . ." or, "Free, free, free: I'm living alone and I eat as much as I'm able." Each time, however, the section moves to a wistful note about what the old woman misses, like companionship at meals, or someone to get angry when she's irritating (and someone with whom one has a loving reconciliation) or being called by her first name. There's a bit of reminiscing, a bit about coming to the end of life, and a great deal about love. Poignant, perhaps too poignant or static for some children, and possibly more appealing to adults than to children.


Like the Krementz book, reviewed below, this is oversize, is profusely illustrated with photographs that include many action shots of the protagonist, eleven-year-old Karen Berig, and other skaters, and describes the hard work, the anxiety at trials, the practice sessions, and the thrill of skating before an audience. It differs, however, in several ways; the text is written by Faulkner, not told in first person, which makes it possible to include comments that would not be natural if they were made by Karen; the text is more substantial in extent and coverage, and Faulkner explores and explains some aspects of competitive skating (reaction to failure, disruption of normal family life, the camaraderie of the group, the problem of working with a coach whose methods you don't like, the planning of group numbers for a show) that are seldom found in books about this subject.


A book for the beginning independent reader has four chapters, each built around an event; the writing style is simple, the print large, and the pages uncrowded. The illustrations are decorative rather than informative, but they have a comic appeal in picturing the thin, wobbly legs of the small moose with his mournful eyes and bulbous nose. The framework is narrative, but the facts that emerge about child-care, predators, environment, etc., are accurate.


A science fantasy is set in the 28th century, when a new race of talking beasts, Cats, has emerged from a laboratory accident. Although ordinary cats are still pets, Cats live and work on a par with human beings, and it is two such Cats, Agnes and Putney, who call Hannah from her school to join them in an experiment. They have found the papers of the late scientist Margo Krupp; Agnes has used these notes to learn how to 'merge,' to dissolve corporeal bodies and enter other forms of matter, and she wants to train Hannah to do the same thing. Hannah learns and is exhilarated by the experience, but she has trouble keeping the secret, especially when she goes back to school. When Krupp reappears, the three friends learn that her 'accident' was planned, that she became addicted to merging, and she adjures them to stop their work lest they, too, want to give up the real world. Although this has some minor weaknesses (an anticlimactic ending, the inclusion of some material, such as Han-
nah’s piano lessons, that do nothing to advance the plot or develop characters) it is well conceived, holds its pace, and is written with a capability unusual in a first novel.


Goldston surveys the history of the Arab world objectively and seriously, in a chronological arrangement that covers much of the same material as *Arabs and the Islamic World* by Ross (reviewed in the June, 1979 issue) but does not explore the arts and sciences as does the Ross book. It is more up-to-date, including the revolution in Iran, however, and while it is heavier in writing style, is rather more penetrating, and has a more extensive and scholarly bibliography of sources; this is followed by a brief list of suggestions for further reading and an index. Ross examines all aspects of Arab cultures while Goldston’s approach is primarily political; both books are excellent.


In a first-person, present tense sequel to *A Little Breathing Room* (reviewed in the November, 1978 issue) Ray Decker is now eighteen, and the year is 1940. His home situation is still an unhappy one, especially in his relationship with his carping mother; he is rejected by a young and pretty teacher to whom he makes advances and later is seduced by the mother of his best friend, Floyd Benson, growing increasingly bitter after a suicide attempt for which he blames Ray, saying Ray was “horsing around” on the ferris wheel, a complete fabrication. It’s easy to see why the book ends with Ray entraining for the coast to get away from it all; in fact, the consistency with which Graber records events from Ray’s viewpoint is one of the book’s strengths; the other is the often-vivid vignette of a relationship or an incident; on the other hand, the elements of the book don’t quite fuse and the result is more a collage than a picture.


Frascino’s casual line and humor in two-color pictures of a young family add action to a small girl’s recitation of a list of minor disasters. Every time she spills something, daubs herself with paint or cosmetics, floods the kitchen in an excess of dishwashing zeal, her mum is appalled, while her easy-going dad says, “Don’t worry, Love, that’s how she learns. And it’ll all come out in the wash.” And that’s what the child says as she copes with the laundry on which she’s spilled three breakfasts: “Don’t worry, Mum, that’s how I learn.” It’s really a repeated situation as well as a repeated message, but the light touch, the child-oriented message, and the element of disaster-humor that so appeals to young children contribute to a pleasant read-aloud story.


Emily, who tells the story, is twelve and has just discovered what it’s like to be an outsider; for one thing, she’s grown rapidly and is now five feet, eight inches tall, and for another, her best friend has become interested in boys and makeup. Teased and lonely, Emily is delighted when Sara moves in next door, for her new friend is even
taller than she is and is just as little interested in boys and clothes as Emily is. Part of
the story is about the cruel way Sara treats her six-year-old sister, part about the
hostility between the two friends and their peers, a hostility that erupts at a birthday
party from which Sara is sent home. Emily saves the little sister from almost certain
death in a situation in which, terrorized, the child is almost hit by a train; Sara for the
first time shows compunction for what she has done and is kind to her sibling. Still
ostracized, the two girls become closer than ever when Emily, who has assumed a
subservient role, tells Sara that she wants to do things her way some of the time.
While the writing style in this author's first book for children is adequate, and there
are some dramatic moments, the story never really comes to resolution, although
there are hints that Sara is ready to compromise with life. She has been so un-
pleasantly depicted (sloppy, rude, overbearing) that her semi-conversion seems not
quite believable. Hahn also draws an unpleasant picture of an academic household:
Sara's father is preoccupied and remote, her mother almost always shut into a study
typing a novel, the house is dirty and messy, and neither parent disciplines Sara
either for her rudeness to them or her brutal treatment of her sister.


In October the ox-cart man packed all the things his family had grown or made
during the year, trudged the long miles to a harbor town, and sold everything—even
the ox and cart. With a few purchases, and coins in his pocket, he plodded back home
... and the cycle begins again, with carving, planting, whittling, shearing, embroi-
dering, and so on. The text has the lulling quality of a bucolic idyll, and the picture it
draws of a self-sufficient farm family of the early nineteenth century in New England
is made specific by the lovely Cooney paintings: melting sunset colors, misty hills, a
froth of pink and white blossoms in a springtime orchard, and several interiors that
are distinctive for their play of light and shadow. In all of the illustrations, the figures
have a slightly stiff simplicity that is reminiscent of the art of the period.


Hyman's pencil drawings, strong in composition and detail, are nicely meshed with
a succinct text in which a small child prattles on about how much things have
changed since Daddy lost his job, about wanting a dog for a pet, about how much
closer it was before Mommy went to work and there was no Mrs. McIntosh at the
house after school. Then the child (no indication in text or pictures of whether this is
a boy or a girl) finds a starved kitten in a trash can and brings it home; even though
times are tight, Mommy and Daddy agree the kitten may stay—but there must be no
more talk about wanting a dog. No problem, the child simply calls the cat "Dog," and
enjoys having a pet to play with. The first-person monologue is convincingly that
of a child; the theme of hard times is pervasive but not overpowering; the plot, while
not strong, is adequately structured.

Hewett, Joan. Watching Them Grow; Inside a Zoo Nursery; illus. with photographs by

Based on the records kept by a nursery attendant at the San Diego zoo, this
account of typical days runs from November to March; it consists of descriptions
rather than of entries, and is liberally illustrated with photographs of the several baby
animals cared for by Loretta Owens, the night attendant. The photographs are a bit
repetitious but are predictably beguiling; the text, save for an implication that all
nursery attendants are female ("That's the first thing that every woman who's trained

as a nursery attendant learns." is direct and informative, and makes amply clear the affection and care given to a zoo's animal babies.


R
4-6
yrs.

Reminiscent of *Dawn,* by Shulevitz, this has either no text or a single line of print at the foot of each page; the space is filled by a series of sensitive paintings that move from the cool, hushed hues of pre-dawn to a hilltop scene. Jeremiah has rushed out of bed, dressed hastily, and run to see the sunrise. The whole scene is bathed in effulgent gold, and the small boy stands quietly and absorbs it—then he runs as quickly home, and up the stairs to his parent's bedroom. As they smile sleepily, the text closes, "Wake Mama. Wake Papa. Wake them to a new day."


Nicely textured drawings, lightly tinted, are effectively used on pages with no background distraction, so that the basic ballet positions demonstrated by the figures in a class of young dancers are very clear. The child who is describing her class makes a few references to friends, but most of the commentary consists of a line or two on each page: "We do an arabesque," or, "I tie the ribbons of my ballet slippers around my ankles." On only one page is the text confusing: it reads "We do portes de bras. I bend forward and try to touch my nose to my knees." Unless the readers already know what "Portes de bras" means, the figure of a child bending down may make them think that the second statement is an explanation of the first. Otherwise the book is excellent: simply written, nicely illustrated, and introducing ballet basics not only in a way that is clear but also in a tone that suggests ballet lessons are enjoyable.


A tale set in an earlier time than *Drowned Ammet,* a story of the fictional land of Dalemark, is told by Tanaqui who, with her brother and sisters, escapes the hostile people of their native village. The hostility is due to the fact that the children look more like the enemy Heathen than like their neighbors. On their voyage, Tanaqui weaves the message-bearing "rugcoats" that have magic qualities, and she discovers that she herself is one of the Undying, the dynasty of household gods who guide and protect. Most of her use of power is against the malevolent Kankedrin. Unlike *Cart and Cwidder* and *Drowned Ammet,* both of which take place later in Dalemark's history, this seems, by the end of the story, patterned, attenuated, and elaborately intricate; like them, however, it has a strong narrative sense, distinct and consistent characterization, and an adept meshing of realistic and fanciful elements. The theme, as in so many quest fantasies, is that of good versus evil.


R
4-6

Ringo is a tough, street-wise London waif who has a learning disability; his difficulty in reading numbers as well as letters propels him into a series of wild and hilarious adventures. It begins when his brother, a petty criminal, gives Ringo instructions for passing on a stolen picture and Ringo boards a bus that's numbered 14
rather than 41, which he'd been told to take to the end of the line. Ringo, who tells the
story, gets mixed up with one peculiar group after another, including a gang of
criminals and an artist who's painted a copy of the very picture that London police,
the gang, the gallery from which the picture had been stolen, and Ringo's angry
brother are seeking. It's wild, but as Ringo tells it, it's believable; what pulls the story
together and gives it color and humor is Ringo's viewpoint and language, for King has
made him consistently a scruffy street urchin with just enough heart-of-gold to make
him a sympathetic character. The dialogue is delicious, the story a romp.

Klein, Aaron E. Mind Trips; The Story of Consciousness-raising Movements; by Aaron E. and

Although the Kleins give descriptions of other groups and their systems of con-
sciousness raising, over half the book is devoted to transcendental meditation: what
it is, how it works, what scientific experiments have been used to test its effects on
bodily functions, the growth of the TM establishment, and the court cases (based on
the principle of separation of church and state) that arose when government-funded
courses were established in schools. The authors begin by discussing the conscious-
ness revolution of the 1960's and the 1970's, briefly describing such teachings as
yoga, zen, and hare krishna, and they conclude with some comments on the declining
popularity of all such movements and the rising interest in health and sports pro-
grams. The material is ably organized, the writing style rather ponderous. An index is
appended.

Krementz, Jill. A Very Young Skater; written and illus. with photographs by Jill Krementz.

In the now familiar format of earlier books about young performers, this oversize
volume is in first person and is based on many interviews with ten-year-old Katherine
Healy, the narrator. It covers practice sessions, trials, competitions, and perfor-
mances; like the earlier books about children proficient in dancing, riding, gymnas-
tics, and acrobatics, it demonstrates both the dedication of the participant and the
support given by families. The photographs are, as always, of high quality.

$6.95; Library ed. $6.99 net.

A child remembers the evening her mother stopped dinner preparations to take
advantage of just the right kind of snow for packing, and suggested making a snow-
man. The girl, her brother, and her mother went outdoors and made a huge, wonder-
ful snowman. It grew dark, people coming home from work stopped to look at the
snowman, lights glowed on the snow, and they all went in and ate their meal. Cozy
and warm, they listened to the rain. No more snowman, but a happy memory. The
story is slight, but it's nicely told and nostalgically evocative; the delicacy of Bleg-
vad's tones and of the tracery of black branches against the twilight sky, and the
bright, small figures of mother and children echo and elaborate on the happy, tender
mood.

McClenathan, Louise. My Mother Sends Her Wisdom; illus. by Rosekrans Hoffman. Morrow,
Trade ed. $7.95; Library ed. $7.63 net.

A story of peasant shrewdness triumphing over greed is illustrated with pencil
drawings and paintings that have exquisite textural detail but that are overcrowded
Little Katya makes several trips to pay the mercenary moneylender K-3 Boris installments on the debt accrued by her father before his death. Each time she brings pigs or wheat or geese she also brings a rhymed couplet and "'My mother sends her wisdom,'" at which Boris sneers; but when the case is taken to court the judge decides that Katya's mother does not owe the rubles Boris claims are still due, but that he owes her some instead, for in her wisdom she had, via the couplets, conveyed the message that the grain would bring a crop if planted, and the animals have progeny, whereas Boris had sold them all immediately. The story is adequately told but with little flavor, and it is not speeded along by the introduction of such tangential material as a bit about Easter eggs, although it affords the illustrator a nice opportunity to paint some lovely decorated eggs, not so described in the text, which states that "some were beet red while others glowed saffron yellow."


Annie, who tells the story, and her best friend Rachel are twelve and in no hurry to grow up too fast; Little Women is still their favorite book and they can't understand classmates who read Seventeen and use eye shadow. When Rachel's parents decide to get a divorce, Rachel and her mother move to the city. While Annie's adjustment to her friend's departure, to the fact that they are each going to have other close friends, and to the death of a beloved pet gives the story some continuity, this is primarily an account of changes that are peculiar to adolescent girlhood. It has perceptively drawn peer and familial relationships, a capable writing style, and consistency in characterization, but the book does not have quite enough substance or movement to produce a strong impact.


Lightly humorous in style, this is the story of a girl who gets her heart's desire, her own horse. Handed over by his owner, college-bound, who would rather give Charlie to the right person than sell him, he delights Jackie. He's a beautiful horse and, she's told, biddable. Charlie is beautiful, everyone agrees, but he's far from tractable; he refuses to cooperate in the ring and he so irritates Jackie's father that he threatens to get rid of the animal. Jackie finally learns that it's she who has to change her tactics before Charlie will change his behavior, and she finally gets—realistically—fourth place at a show. Not dramatic, but satisfying, this believable book should appeal especially to inveterate readers of horse stories, and it's balanced enough to entertain other readers as well.


When their parents go off for a week and hire a Professional Caretaker, Miss Brasscoat, to stay with Timothy, Amy, and Douglas John, the three children do not anticipate a jolly time. They are cooperative, pleasant children but they aren't used to a martinet; they are also literal, and when Miss Brasscoat grimly says "'How lazy can you get?'" or "'Just how messy can you get?'" they show her. Tired of no smiles, strict curfews, endless chores, and disagreeably wholesome foods, they are amazed when, on the last morning of the week, there's a contretemps (a pet crab gets into the food on the table) that actually makes their Professional Caretaker smile. They're even more amazed—and delighted—when she laughs and says "'How silly can I get?';" and then shows them by imitating a parrot. So Father and Mother come home to a scene
of rapport, and the children bid Miss Brasscoat an almost affectionate farewell. This doesn’t have a strong story line, but it has a brisk, light writing style and plenty of action and humor to appeal to readers.


A reproduction of a book first published in 1892, this has, facing each verso page of poetry, a right-hand page with two lines at the foot of the page and, above them, a circular picture that changes when a tab is pulled and triangles of moving paper produce another picture. There are six such pictures, and they are filled with animals and with children dressed in clothing worn at the turn of the century. A sample of the poetry: “We saw such a dear little baby calf / But the tiny chickies they made us laugh / And all of us said, as we went away / “We must come to the Farm again some day,” from “Buttercup Farm.” Quaint, but sugary and dated, this may amuse children because of its toy-book quality, but it is more likely to appeal to students of children’s literature as a facsimile of a period piece.


Simon Wiesenthal was a concentration camp inmate, a man who more than once narrowly escaped death at the hands of Nazis; after World War II ended, he was invited by the Americans to become a member of the War Crimes Commission and that began his many years as a tenacious hunter of Nazis with war crimes records. While some of Noble’s material is repetitive (most of it based on Wiesenthal’s book The Murderers Among Us) and tinged with an adulatory tone, it is inherently dramatic material if grim, it is true, and it has the combined appeals of vindication for Nazi atrocities and of a detective story. Wiesenthal was not always successful in his manhunts, sometimes due to lack of cooperation from local authorities, but he did track down many major Nazis in hiding, and was successfully relentless in finding Adolf Eichmann. A brief bibliography and an index are appended.


Although the writing tends to be exclamatory (“The next time you go to a Chinese restaurant ask for bird’s nest soup. You may love it!” or “Who lives here? A gang of robbers? Spies? Pirates? No! A family of beavers!”) it is basically simple and direct, with a few pages devoted to each description of some kind of animal and the way it builds and uses its home. The illustrations are not outstanding artistically, but they are informative.


A project book for readers in the primary grades is simple, explicit, and nicely illustrated with the diagrams in a step-by-step format. General instructions precede the examples, all of which use the same base, a circle of oak tag or cardboard; none of the materials required is expensive or difficult to get: pipe cleaners, construction paper, staples and glue, scissors, egg cartons, etc. The print is large and is set off by ample space; the projects include mobiles that can be used for holidays and that may, as the author suggests, prompt children to try their own ideas.
After Teresa rescues Barney, who'd been locked in a closet of their junior high school by a tough gang, they take refuge together in an empty building when the bullies follow. By then they are friends, so Barney goes along with Teresa to run away—somewhere—since she dislikes her home. They take refuge in a department store and soon learn that there is a whole group of young people there, living secretly in the store and rigidly organized into a tight, defensive society, with Duty Personnel, a Chairperson, guards, Night Patrol, etc. The organization and its members lampoon their real life grey flannel equivalents, so there's intrinsic wry humor to the writing, but this isn't a humorous story; although it presents an intriguing concept, it is not quite believable as realism and not quite fanciful enough to be fantasy. The book ends with a fight between the department store stowaways and the King Kobra bullies who had persecuted Barney, and with the subsequent disbanding of the stowaways and a job for Teresa in stemware. Dialogue and writing style are up to Peck's usual standards, in sum, while the story line is not.

No dry presentation, this; Phelan makes the intricate story of the purchase of the huge expanse of land known as the Louisiana province as exciting as a detective thriller. Using source materials (an extensive list provided at the back of the book) she unravels the ploys of international power politics as Jefferson worried, Napoleon wavered, and their several advisors and envoys used strategy and threat to achieve their goals. The reader gets a vivid picture of the manipulations of balance of power among France, Spain, England, Santo Domingo, and the United States as well as of the burgeoning city of New Orleans and what it meant to Americans as a port. Crisp and clear, with an extensive relative index to give access to the complexity of names and events.

They built their house from the roof down, they walked backwards and rode on the underside of a horse, and the brothers Wrong and Wrong Again, with their queer clothes and habits, were laughed at by the whole town. After they saved it from attack by another town, they were cheered. And how did they save it? By bringing a dragon (which they thought was a canary) home as a dinner guest. The writing style is direct and bland, but much of the story is used for extending the eccentricity gag before there is any action; the illustrations are pencil drawings that have humor and vitality but that are, on most pages, cluttered with details.

The concern of a major Australian author for wild life is demonstrated again in a novel that is slow-moving but compassionate, sensitive, and gracefully written, the pace alleviated by natural dialogue and a dramatic final episode. Johnny, easy-going and often naive, earns money by trapping; he wants his classmate Wilfred (a serious, tense loner) to be able to join a school trip, and he offers to earn more money by extra trapping. Wilfred wants to help, but he's upset by killing animals; he's even more upset when some illegal bird trappers make a deal with Johnny to catch parrots for their pet shop. The boys quarrel, and Johnny slams a shed door on Wilfred although
he knows his friend is terrified by enclosures; he goes off and is himself caught in an animal trap. So Johnny finds out what it's like to be trapped, and his pain and fear bring him to the decision that he'll give it up—if he lives. His father gets Wilfred's help in finding him, and there is a confrontation with the two men who've made the deal about bird-catching. There's enough tension to hold any reader, but nature lovers should enjoy the book particularly.


Pencil drawings illustrate a small girl's monologue on the differences between her own mother and her friend Laura's mother. Her mother, busy with two small brothers, requires Jennifer to do things for herself; meals are messy, so they eat in the kitchen, while at Laura's house, her mother serves meals in the dining room; snacks are wholesome at home, but are sweet things at Laura's. Reviewing the situation, Jennifer wishes Laura's Mommy was her Mommy—until her mother goes to work and Jennifer's mother is hired to take care of all of them. Distracted by having the two smaller children, Laura's mother soon adopts the make-your-own-bed tactics of Jennifer's. Jennifer reconsiders, especially when her mother gives her special attention on weekends. While the special attention weakens the child's realization that circumstances affect behavior, it puts a little frosting on the cake; basically, the story shows quite effectively how, from a child's viewpoint, the performance of adults may be evaluated.


In his foreword, Pringle states, "... it is difficult to find a well-informed person who is also neutral. This book is not neutral either," and prepares the reader for the fact that, in the controversy between those who espouse the operation of nuclear power plants and those who decry them, there is little likelihood of compromise. Still, the text is remarkably objective in approach, examining the smudged record of violation and cover-up, the safety hazards, the role of the Atomic Energy Commission, and the problems of nuclear waste disposal. The examples Pringle cites are of actual cases, and his explanations of processes are crisp and lucid. A glossary, an extensive bibliography, and a relative index are included.


Based on lectures given by the author at the Junior Museum of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, this is a selection of myths accompanied by photographs of some art objects that interpreted them: the story of the beheading of Medusa by Perseus retold, and pictured as shown on a Greek vase; the story of Pandora, and Redon's painting; Diana and Actaeon, and its reproduction on a maiolica dish, etc. The stories are adequately retold, but there are occasional indications that the lectures were not reshaped: for example, in the story of "The Triumph of Bacchus," told in a few paragraphs, the text continues with "This small, round ivory box . . . ." despite the fact that the photographs of details of the carving refer to a pyxis, a term that is not defined. Clear enough if someone's holding it up, but not here. Color reproductions are bound in together, so that textual references require back-leafing, although pictures of details are usually better placed. Although the amount of information about
the art or the artist, or both, varies, this is an interesting idea, but the material seems not carefully enough adapted to book form.


It would be impossible to write a book about the history of the Middle East without including a bewildering number of place and personal names; Rice has chosen only the most important to discuss, filling the interstices with brief summaries, yet there still remain hundreds. The book must, therefore, be savored rather than gulped if the reader is to appreciate the intricacy, the sweep, and the drama of events as civilization emerged from an amorphous nomad society and the pageant of dynasties, wars, conquerors, religious movements, and cultural refinements rolled through the Mesopotamian lands. Save for a few pages that are devoted, oddly, to recipes from an old Iraqi cookbook, the text moves at good pace through the centuries of kingdoms and peoples who rose and fell; it concludes with an account of the investigations of archeologists and linguists of the 19th century, a review of the Seljuk and Ottoman roles, and a brief look at some events of the twentieth century. An index is included.


Roach brings a few real characters from the 1760's (Samuel Johnson, Horace Walpole) to play bit parts in her story of the adventures of a small dog who runs away from the inn where his sole function is to turn the wheel that roasts meats. Presto, a travelling puppeteer had dubbed him, and that's the name he takes, for in this story the animals talk to each other and understand human speech. Presto finds the puppeteer in London and becomes part of his Punch and Judy show, but his life in the city is fraught with danger and adventure as he and his master meet the knaves and petty criminals (human and canine) who prey on others. Roach has put the story together smoothly, using just enough thieves' cant and eighteenth century idiom to give the tale color without drenching it.


Far from a run-of-the-mill novel for young adults, this strong and moving story is told alternately by Matt and Leah; he's seventeen, an unwed father who has insisted on taking the baby girl whose mother was ready to give her up for adoption; she's fifteen and lives with an elderly, loving stepfather. Leah's mother is dead, her natural father has disappeared from her life, and she's buried her memories of an earlier stepfather who abused her sexually. All of Leah's love fastens on Matt's baby, Barbara, and she does her utmost to convince him that he should give her the baby. Matt doesn't like or trust Leah, but he finds it useful to let her give him help in caring for Barbara—until it becomes clear that Leah's obsessed, and indeed she takes the baby to her home, locks herself in a room she's stealthily equipped with gear for the child, and refuses to come out. Leah has a breakdown and is hospitalized, following which she has long-needed therapy and tells her doctor about the abusive stepfather, taking her first step toward stability, even accepting the fact that Matt is moving away and taking the baby out of her life. No sweetness and light here, but a trenchant picture of a disturbed adolescent that evolves believably as Leah's obsession grows and those around her realize that her tenacity is more than eccentric behavior. Well-structured and paced, with good characterization and dialogue and a candid exploration of human relationships.

Ruth Saunders, twelve, is the narrator of a mystery novel that is well balanced by material about family and peers, but has suspense and (for once) a logical reason for the protagonist's investigating on her own. The mystery: why are counterfeit bills being traced back to St. Martin's, the church of which Ruth's father is rector? The logical reason for Ruth's exposing herself to danger: her father has told her not to meddle in church affairs. Ruth keeps meddling; she suspects almost every adult who is a major character and active in church affairs. St. George tosses in such issues as rehabilitation of criminals (her father hires one), women in the clergy (her father's parishioners object because he wants to hire a woman as his assistant) and how old one should be to have pierced ears. A well-paced story, with good dialogue and a concluding episode in which Ruth is trapped, alone in the church basement, with the counterfeiter.


Although Segovia's foreword states "... I offer here a few exercises and observations for further technical development to the student with no access to competent instruction," the book is really for beginners; it gives such rudimentary information as staff, clef, types of notes and rests, other musical marks; provides diagrams on reading diagrams, shows hand and finger positions, provides lessons for practicing on each string, etc. It concludes with a series of short musical studies arranged and fingered by Segovia, and with a glossary of musical terms. While some of the color photographs are uninformative, most of them augment the text; the material is logically arranged and the instructions and explanations clear. The instructional material is prefaced by some rather rambling but endearing comments by Segovia.


The characters in this story of a foundling boy have a melodramatic quality that is sheer Victoriana, yet Seidler make the Alger-like adventures of the dulcimer boy almost believable and certainly touching. As ten-month-old infants, the twins William and Jules are deposited on the doorstep of a harsh and avaricious uncle. William runs away, taking the one object that had been left with him, a dulcimer. Self-taught, the small boy becomes a great attraction, playing and singing at an inn; he meets his long-lost father, who runs off again; comes searching for his brother, and both of them are rescued by the Mayor of New York, who owes a debt to their father. Jules will live in luxury, but William goes off to find his father. Exaggerated, of course, but this has the same appeal as do the deliberately overstated tales of Joan Aiken and Leon Garfield. What it lacks is their humor.


Plain, timid, and credulous, Jane—who tells the story—was a bit frightened by Natalie when they first met. She was so self-confident, so articulate, so pretty: all the things Jane was not. Although Jane, as their friendship solidified, was at times disturbed by Natalie's insistence on her occult powers and by her possessiveness and jealousy, she couldn't understand why her parents disliked her friend. It wasn't until Natalie moved away that Jane found how dishonest and scheming her best friend had been; Jane's efforts to make friends with the other children on Barkley Street, all of
whom Natalie had alienated, finally achieved the "six-pack," the friendly gang her
father had hoped for when they moved in. Not an unusual theme, the adherence of a
loyal Jane to a Natalie who used and abused her, and Shura treats it with consider-
able insight save for the fact that Jane is not quite believably gullible and that the
story, although competently written, is slow-paced.

Silverstein, Alvin. Aging; by Alvin Silverstein, Virginia Silverstein, and Glenn Silverstein.

Since factors in our society have tended to increase the life spans of human beings,
the old are an increasing part of the world's population. The Silversteins discuss the
various changes that take place in old age, and what causes them; they point out the
fact that senility has many causes and that some individuals remain alert and produc-
tive into very old age; in a separate chapter, they discuss scientists' theories on what
causes aging and how influential environmental and genetic factors are. The text
includes discussions of early efforts to counteract the aging process and of contempo-
rary research in the field; it concludes with a survey of the roles of old people in our
society (family patterns, mandatory retirement, and the problems of the aged). The
writing is sober in tone, the material logically organized, and the text enlivened
somewhat by anecdotes about, or comments on, some of the old people in our society
who have made or are making major contributions. A bibliography and an index are
provided.

07625-6. 177p. $7.95.

An interesting contrast to Huddy's Time Piper (reviewed in the October, 1979
issue) in which a time machine explains what happened to the children of Hamelin,
this offers an explanation in a historical fiction format. It's told by Geist, the poor
orphan who works as a baker's boy, and who is at first dazzled by the cleverness and
kindness of the itinerant stranger Gast. He even manages to get rid of the rats that
plague the town, not by magic but by a ruse; he enchants all the children, not only by
his piping, but by the sweets he distributes. What they don't know is that the sweets
are drugged. The Pied Piper, Gast, does pipe the children out of town, and his
motive—as in Browning's poem—is revenge, but they are not merrily skipping; the
drugged children are plodding along to be sold into servitude. The author's appended
note explains that, from the historical evidence on which Browning's poem was
based, there was a tragedy involving the children in 1284 as shown in the town
records of Hamelin, Germany, and that purple fungus ergot (which the piper feeds
the children in this story) was known to cause epidemics of hallucination in medieval
times. The story as told by Geist, one of the two survivors, is convincing; the
material is inherently dramatic and smoothly written, and it builds nicely toward the
tense final tragedy.


Not a story, but a patterned account of the changes in her life as told by a child, this
is illustrated by pink-tinted drawings that have more technical proficiency than
charm. The pattern is based on days: on Mondays mother and daughter used to do a
certain thing, now Mondays have an alternate plan; on Tuesdays Mom used to be a
teacher's helper, now she isn't; a friend's mother has taken over the convoys to
ballet class, etc. The solutions may not be familiar to all readers with working par-
ents, but they present a fairly positive approach in that some of the new ways are fun
(even though the child misses the old ways) and they incorporate shopping and
reading with Dad. Realistic but tepid.

Line and watercolor drawings, softly colored and filled with wonderfully detailed scenes of New York City, illustrate a story that is told with verve and humor, and that has a surprise ending the lap audience (and their readers-aloud) should enjoy. A duck, Howard, misses his group's take-off for the south and then loses his way when he tries to catch up. Landing on a New York rooftop in a snowstorm, he flies down to investigate and makes some new friends, a frog and three mice, with whom he has a series of winter adventures. And then comes spring, and Howard hears his group overhead and flies off to join them. Then, the surprise. The illustrations are Stevenson at his best, but it's in the bland humor of the dialogue that the book's chief charm lies; for example, when Howard discovers the other ducks have gone, he asks some rabbits where they went. "Up in the air." "I know that," says Howard. A rabbit points out, helpfully, "Then they turned left."


An autobiographical record of the author's family's start as Nebraska homesteaders is illustrated with photographs from the Adams family album. The text begins in 1914, when Treva was five years old; in their first winter they lived in a tent, establishing proof of the residence that would entitle them to keep the 160 acres. Total cost: $24.00 in legal fees. The government gave the land free, but the rigorous weather, the isolation, and the hard work had no price tag. Merlan Adams built a sod house and a windmill, planted and harvested crops, survived a tornado, and managed to prosper until—as the author explains in an afterword—drought and the 1929 depression. This has something of the appeal of the "Little House" books; although it is not told as fiction, it has the same evidence of pioneer spirit and the same balance of details about the burdens of pioneer life and the pleasures of family love and festive occasions.


Phencyclidine, angel dust, is the drug that causes the violent climax of this trenchant and honest story. Its protagonist, Alex is seventeen, handsome, the son of wealthy parents who spend most of their time wintering in Florida. Alone, Alex has been restless and dissatisfied; he joins his friend Michael in drug-dealing and eventually he is caught. Released on bail, Alex confronts his parents, whose solution is psychiatric counseling; he really gains more security, however, from the girl he loves, who stands by even when he tells her what he's done. Michael, by now a fugitive, takes refuge in Alex's garage and seeks his help; Alex, realizing that the once-tough Michael has been destroyed by angel dust and the other drugs he takes, calls the authorities, who find a sick and wasted man in a coma. This is rough and tough, both in subject and language, but it is not didactic although Alex learns something from his bitter experience, and it's not overdone; Strasser's writing has a depth and candor that puts the book's focus on the intricate and at times compassionate development of the characters and their relationships.


Emma is an imaginative child who expresses herself in her paintings and who feels unappreciated at school. She is resistant to the grandmother who comes to take care of her while Mother goes abroad on business, but Gramma shows quick understand-
ing, a sense of humor, and patient love; via pieces of glass she arranges the rainbow of the title. It's with Gramma's help that Emma writes a self-revelatory poem for her class, and even the teacher, who in the past had reduced Emma to tears, thinks it's excellent. The storyline and characterizations are adequate, but the writing style is pedestrian and the dialogue has no natural flow, so that tedium creeps in. The grandparent-child relationship is a positive aspect of the book.


Davey hears from his mother, who moved away after the divorce that took place when he was four, but he's used to being alone with his father. The only time he wishes there were somebody home is when other mothers call their children indoors at the end of the day. There's a teenage babysitter who's in the house until Daddy gets home, but she's always busy on the telephone or doing homework. When she gets another job and an elderly, motherly woman takes her place, David deliberately slips out just before the evening meal so that he can hear what he's longed for: "Davey, come home now! Suppertime!" The story is written without pathos, but the poignancy of a small boy who wants to be wanted comes through very clearly, and the book is given variety and tempo with episodes at school and with friends, with cleaning binges and weekend jaunts with Daddy; the relationship between Davey and the two adults in his life is warm and positive.


Pete, eleven, tells the story, which is both a fantasy and a baseball tale. Seems she has the habit of inventing Irish names when angry, and this time she's said "Mike McGlory!" Well, there is a Mike McGlory; he's six inches high and he appears, irascibly, to grant a wish. Pete, only girl on her baseball team, asks for the ability to deliver a perfect pitch and is given an invisible ring that will make it possible. The pattern is fairly predictable from there on; Pete pitches, her team wins, and Mike McGlory, seen by nobody but Pete, stalks about the diamond shrieking encouragement or instruction. Eventually the magic ends, but Pete's pitching is still good; the only deviation from pattern is that her team loses the final game. There's some humor, some baseball sequences that will appeal to fans, and some good team spirit, but the story, while adequately written, has an air of concoction.


Taking care of a neighbor's bad-tempered dog, Alan is dismayed when the dog runs into the garden of a retired magician, Abdul Gasazi, especially because Gasazi's sign states "Absolutely, Positively No Dogs Allowed in This Garden." Gasazi, when Alan sees him and apologizes, says he's turned the dog into a duck—but when a disconsolate Alan gets back, the dog is there with his owner, who gently tells the boy that the magician had been fooling him, that nobody can turn a dog into a duck. The story is rather flimsy, but that's amply compensated for by the illustrations, pencil drawings that are stunning in texture, composition, and chiaroscuro virtuosity, with special artistry in the solidity of forms and in architectural details.


A selection of verses, prose, and illustrations from a book first published in a limited edition in 1913. The nonsense verses have a touch of forced whimsy; each
painting is accompanied by either a poem or a few descriptive paragraphs. They all have to do with the assorted birds of the land in which the dread Google lives, and the Google, a leering, fanged reptilian, is shown in the last picture. The great strength of the book lies in the ornate, brilliantly colored imaginary birds, each picture framed. Sketched in pencil and filled in with colored inks, the illustrations have superb details, beautiful even when they are comic or grotesque. Since the text is weak, this may perhaps be best placed in an art collection.


Inge, who tells the story, and her twin sister Erika are curious about their aunt; Isabell has been in a mental institution for a year and is being brought home to a locked room, barred windows, and a guardian nurse. Several times she escapes and talks to the children, often irrationally; the girls are shocked by her occasional rough language, by the fact that she attacks one of their friends, by her hysterical laughter. Still, they love her, and they try to make her happy when they see her, having been told that being happy will make Aunt Isabell recover more quickly. She doesn’t recover; in fact, she is taken back to the hospital. The book has some strong aspects: the candid descriptions and the sympathetic, loving attitude toward a family member who is mentally ill. The weaknesses, however, almost outweigh the strengths: the fragmentary quality of the whole story, the lack of direction, the naivété of the children, and the occasional preciousness of the writing, as when Inge (who appears to be about nine years old in the illustrations) says, “Dew fresh was the morning, but it got warm very fast.”


Using a theme long popular in science fiction, Walters posits the international cooperation of scientists when the world is threatened by pending disaster. Here the disaster is (for no known cause) the moon’s approaching earth. Only the anti-gravity device invented by a crotchety Welsh professor can stop collision; only five years remain for the building of a mammoth installation on the moon. Walters tosses in a love story, an author named “Wally Hughes” who is commissioned to write a novel that is about moon-earth collision (meant to test public reaction, and used by Hugh Walters to take a few pot-shots at reviewers), the eccentric professor’s cat who goes to the moon, etc. Stories on this theme are likely to appeal to unregenerate science fiction buffs, but this—while it has action and suspense—is unoriginal in conception, shallow in characterization, and stiff in the use of dialogue.


Like other books in the series, this is distinguished by the careful choice of material (all salient facts, but not too much information for the primary grades reader to digest) and the simplicity of the writing style. The illustrations either have labels or are so placed in relation to the text that labels are not needed; the print is large, the sentences short. Waters describes the structure of the jellyfish, warns readers that some kinds are dangerous and should not be touched, discusses some varieties, and gives facts on the ways jellyfish feed, move, reproduce, and on the division of labor in the colony of sea creatures known as the Portuguese man-of-war.

Pages framed with ornately detailed borders and pictures with a medieval setting interpret the original and highly moralistic fairy tale by Wilde. The adaptation simplifies the original text but what it gains in comprehensibility it loses in style, while it keeps the sentimentality of Wilde’s writing for children. The child, a handsome foundling, grows to be proud and arrogant, spurning the poor beggar-woman who claims him as her child when she sees the star-covered blanket in which the child’s foster father had found him wrapped. The boy changes into an ugly, misshapen creature who decides to roam the world until he finds his mother, since he’s sure his rejection of her has brought about the change. He makes sacrifices for an animal and a leper, and lo! he becomes as beautiful as before and his parents appear before him and lo! they are a king and queen. So the star child rules with kindness and there are peace and plenty in the land.


Following a first chapter in which Williams surveys the participation of women in legislative, appointive, and administrative offices in the history of the United States, there are seven profiles of women who have attained positions of political importance. They are Genevieve Atwood, a state representative in Utah; Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, former U.S. representative from California; Janet Gray Hayes, mayor of San Jose; Millicent Fenwick, U.S. representative from New Jersey; Dixy Lee Ray, governor of the state of Washington; Esther Peterson, special assistant to the President for consumer affairs; and Nancy Kassebaum, U.S. senator from Kansas. In each case, the description of the subject’s political career is emphasized, although personal information is provided. Candid if not probing, the writing is brisk and informal; it gives the reader insight into the obstacles women candidates encounter in a field traditionally dominated by men as well as into the vagaries of our political system, and it quite sharply defines the personalities of the seven women who are described. An index is included.


A science fiction story is set in the distant future on the planet of Seltique, isolated from the rest of the galaxy for two millennia; Larson McCade, a roving investigator, comes to Seltique’s one remaining city to find a long-lost book that can tell him why Seltique had been placed under embargo, who the rulers had been, why the planet had fallen into decadence. He also hopes the Book of Aradka will make him wealthy. As the only outsider in the society, McCade must cope with its rigid caste structure, its approval of ritual murder, its struggle for internal power, and the opposition of the Separatists who know McCade hopes to bring Seltique back into the galactic organization. He is helped by his superman abilities to speed body action, increase physical power, and block pain signals. He learns the whereabouts of the book, and only one man can give it to him, a man who aspires to be Planet Master—and McCade is the only person who has the key to achieving that position. After many confrontations, McCade gets to the book; it is revealed that he is an heir to the estate in which it’s hidden, and he also becomes Planet Master. After all the conflict, the pursuit, and the violence (McCade kills many) it is almost funny that the book ends with McCade saying, “Oh, dear God, I didn’t want this,” as the “weight of mastery” settles on him. Wold has a wholly conceived society and his story has structure and action, but
it is weakened by the plethora of personal and place names, the touches of fantasy (a talking bird, the music McCade hears in his head), and frenetic pace of the action.


The story is told by eighth-grader Craig, who has just moved from San Francisco’s Chinatown to the small coastal town where his father grew up and was a basketball star. Plump, short, and awkward at sports, Craig is constantly urged by his father to achieve at games; he’s also treated with contempt by the two cousins who are at the same junior high, both because he’s awkward and because they feel Craig acts more Chinese than American. What that means is that they themselves cannot accept their heritage, but that doesn’t make it any easier for Craig. What does help is that he makes two friends: a nonconformist girl who’s in his class, and an elderly man who helps him understand that he must do what he really cares about, who even speaks to his father about choosing one’s own way. Old “Uncle” also helps Craig understand that his father loves him, but sees the path by which he gained approbation as the only path. There’s a strong bond between Craig and Uncle Quail in their interest in the wonders of marine life; the sea glass of the title is a piece of junk glass polished by waves and sand. “Just junk,” says Craig’s friend Kenyon, but Craig thinks that time has brought the glass brightness and clearness, just as it has him. Yep writes with pace and polish, his narrative evolving naturally from the characters and relationships as they adjust, change, and gain insight; the changes are believable, and the author uses both the narrator-protagonist and his dialogues with others with great skill to illuminate attitudes, explore reactions, and further the action.


First published in Greece under the title *Konda stis Raghes,* a story that is imbued with concern for social conditions and reform is told by ten-year-old Sasha. The setting is Russia in the pre-Revolutionary period, and it is through her father and her tutor that Sasha sees inequality in living standards, educational opportunities denied other children less fortunate than she, and persecution by the establishment of those who dare to protest. A tract? No. Zei is too skilled a storyteller to let her message overburden her medium. Skillfully translated, the book has a lively flow and balanced treatment, as the curious, sympathetic, and intelligent Sasha quizzes her father, pokes gentle fun at the household staff, enjoys the unorthodox and effective teaching methods of her tutor, and delights in the small pleasures of a ten-year-old’s life.
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