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.
CU Curricular Use.
DV Developmental Values.

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Seventh child of a seventh child, thirteen-year-old Cassie is expected by her mother, a medium, to have psychic powers. Cassie doesn’t have the heart to tell Mum that she abhors the idea, and she’s stunned with dismay when, on a dare, she attempts to raise a ghost and is successful. Homely and shabby, Deverill appears, announces his friendship and his gratitude at being brought back from limbo, and proceeds to make Cassie’s life miserable. There is a quickening tempo to the relationship and its impact on family affairs; within the parameters of the fantasy’s logic, there is a perfectly logical and touching conclusion. This is an impressive first novel from a British writer, with a fusion of realism and fantasy that are remarkably smooth. The characterization adds depth to the story, particularly in the depiction of Cassie’s mother, big and blowsy, a psychic past her prime and repeatedly exposed as fraudulent, but a loving and garrulous woman.


Whether or not Ames succeeds in his purpose of fostering appreciation of abstract art is moot; he tries to explain what it is, and exactly what it is not, and he uses the technique of involving the reader in order to further understanding. Showing the variety of lines, dots, shapes, and adding color and textures and solid forms, he puts various abstractions together, and encourages the reader both to follow suit and to try it alone in developing new ideas and combinations. There’s some useful information about colors, including color wheels and a chart on color relationships at the back of the book.


Sixteen-year-old Larry, who tells the story, is a student at the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan, and he meets Ahbra in dramatic fashion when she collapses in a faint on him—literally—in the school corridor. It is a coincidence that she is Egyptian and that the King Tut exhibit is on at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and a puzzle that, although they are supposed to go there for a school project, Ahbra seems terrified at the idea. She goes, and collapses again, later confiding that she is accursed. There’s a diagnosis of narcolepsy, drugs are recommended, and Larry fears that Ahbra has become addicted. However, the story ends with a long letter from Ahbra, who has gone back to Egypt, in which she says that she now considers her visions a link to the past rather than a curse, and that she does not...
accept the diagnosis, for "Who's to say what reality is?" After this, Larry has a vision of himself and Ahbra, together forever in a mystic sense even though he knows that nobody will ever truly capture Ahbra's spirit. This is a poorly structured book, with a muddied rather than an open end; Ahbra is never made a convincing character even though she is a colorful one, and there is such a narrow focus on Ahbra, her problems, and her relationship with Larry that the book lacks the breadth that might compensate for its lack of depth.


This is one of the publisher's series of books designed, like the Grey book reviewed below, for the beginning reader but so insubstantial that it is perhaps better suited for reading aloud to spur reading readiness. Here the repetitive cartoon-style drawings show a rabbit, clothed but not shod, as is true of the other animals in this book. Rosy Rabbit has hiccups, her friends try various methods of stopping them, and finally Rosy stops after a sneeze. Immediately Roger Rabbit hiccups. End of story. The style, even given the purpose of the book, is stiff: "Rosy jumps. Then Rosy hiccups. Boris tickles Rosy. Rosy giggles and giggles. Then Rosy hiccups." And so on.


An orphaned girl, a talking raven, a performing pig, magical spells, a flight across the mountains of a fictional land, and a quest—these are the ingredients for a pleasant tale of ingenuity and industry that prove even more powerful than magic. Drucilla is a slave at her uncle's inn, and she yearns to get to the town of Farewell in the land of Iskany, for there she can study to be a true sorceress, improving on the few spells she already knows. She falls heir to a caravan and befriends Pitt and Humphrey (raven and pig) and she runs away; most of the story has to do with the vicissitudes of the journey and the ploys Dru invents to keep them all fed and safe. The tale at times moves slowly, but the writing is smooth, the situation appealing, the journey successful, and the ending has a nice twist, surprising but logical.


Photographs of good quality, some of which are cropped (i.e., missing the tops of heads or parts of limbs) illustrate a text about dethronement written from the viewpoint of the only child. The text is therefore very simply written, and it shows that there is apprehension and jealousy even when parents have made every effort to include a child in plans, to reassure him of their love, and to make him feel that the baby belongs to him, too. The small boy who is the narrator here expresses his emotions but quickly moves to other observations; indeed, this effort to reflect the brief attention span is the one thing that makes the text choppy occasionally. For example, the book begins, "That's my Mom and Dad and me. The baby is growing inside my Mom. We have bread to feed the ducks," which is printed next to a picture of the family standing at the edge of a pond. This has the expectable adjustment, with the pivotal moment (as in so many other books like this) coming when the baby smiles at his big brother. Not unusual, but nicely done.


Although this doesn't give as many details about flying as do several other books, it is an excellent choice for very young children: the text is minimal, the pictures are big
and bold and bright, and it covers the salient points that a young child is likely to notice in the period that begins with arrival at the airport and ends with lift-off. The text shows the bustle of passengers arriving and then waiting to board, the crews that check and load the airplane, and the preparatory work of control tower and flight crew.


An English primary school teacher and librarian, Bennett has selected light-hearted poems by British and American writers, plus a good number of anonymous verses, that should appeal to young children; many are nonsense poems and several have that touch of the macabre that provides enjoyable shudders. The Oxenbury illustrations are vigorous but not cluttered, with bright colors and humorous interpretations that extend the verses and that are nicely incorporated into the layout of the pages.


Color photographs of good quality are used for an alphabet book that focuses on action: awakening, brushing, combing, dressing, and so on through the day until washing, x-ing (crossing the day off on the calendar), yawning and "zzzzzzzzz." The capital letter and the word appear, in large print, set off at the bottom of each page. This has, in addition to a clear presentation of letters and their association with words, the appeal of objects and events familiar to most young children as part of their daily routine, and it includes such activities as making cookies with a friend (under adult supervision one hopes, although this is not made specific) and helping with some household chores, as well as taking care of a pet—so it fosters concepts of independence, helpfulness, and cooperative behavior without preaching about them.


In a fifth book about Doris, the eighteen-year-old whose prowess as an amateur detective has been recorded in some lively stories, written with humor and suspense, is adjusting to the fact that the man she loves has spurned her because she's inherited a fortune. As always, Doris eats when troubled. Then she decides to go to a health and weight-loss spa for women—and that's how she is introduced to a racket that is not only mercenary but that's also involved with murder. Bethancourt always puts Doris in danger and extricates her in a crash ending, and fans won't be disappointed here. While the criminals are close-to-stock characters, they aren't wooden, and the style and structure are better than those of most juvenile detective fiction.


The Old Testament text is set against the background of oversize pages that are crowded with lushly detailed, at times mystical paintings; occasionally the words of the text are very difficult to read against the dark colors of the background. The paintings are rich in ornamentation, but they lack the dramatic impact of Leonard Everett Fisher's interpretation of the same Biblical passages in *The Seven Days of Creation* (reviewed in the September, 1981 issue) which is equally rich but has more definition; the compositions by Reed have some lovely details but they are crowded.
The story is told by adolescent Lev Kolokov, who has grown up knowing he's an outsider, scorned by his Moscow classmates and followed everywhere by KGB agents. Lev's parents are political dissidents who have lost their jobs and eke out a bare living; his father has been the object of political harassment for years. The book gives a trenchant picture of the harsh tactics used to persecute and punish Lev's father, and eventually Lev himself, and makes clear the dilemma of the individual caught between the danger of cleaving to his own beliefs in a totalitarian state, and the promised comfort of conformity. As Lev's father goes through the mockery of his trial and conviction, he chooses principle over compromise. So does Lev, when his turn comes. Although the characters are clearly defined, the style capable, and the atmosphere vividly evoked, the story line is almost lost in the book's heavy emphasis on expose and message.

Ellen, fifteen, lives in a small town with her widowed mother; her maternal grandparents live nearby, and so does Eva, her father's mother—but she is forbidden to see Grandma Eva, who has become increasingly eccentric and senile and lives alone in a dilapidated mansion at the edge of town. Eva, once the wealthy and beautiful town belle, is tolerated by everybody, even when she steals, but she is also an outcast, and Ellen—who remembers Eva's love and kindness in the past—is miserably aware that only she cares for the old woman. She secretly visits her and realizes that she must get help although she fears that intervention will lead to Eva's being put into an institution. Ellen's dilemma about Eva is deftly meshed with her relationships with her other grandparents and her mother, and with a growing affection for a sympathetic boy who knows about Eva and helps Ellen long before she capitulates, tells her mother, and gets professional help. Brancato's insight and perception make Ellen's ambivalence clear and also make the attitudes of others understandable in a smoothly written story that has suspense and pace—and just a bitter-sweet trace of pathos.

Just before the end of the war, the story begins, Coco was found by the side of the road, a baby wearing a gold ring bearing his name; he was brought up by Rosa, a poor and loving woman. One day his uncle appeared, having traced him somehow; he said Coco's parents were dead and took the boy home to luxury and loving generosity. At first, Uncle Paul expressed his love with material things, but he understood when Coco spurned the gift of a wild horse, took the horse back to its herd, and then showed his nephew that he wanted him to be truly happy. The story ends with Coco, who had been planning to run away to Rosa, deciding to stay. Despite a bland quality in the writing and an uneven pace, the story has a directness and tenderness that rise effectively above the style and the superficial characterization.

Charlie, a college freshman, is anxious to lose his virginity; infatuated with Nina, he is bitterly aware that she prefers an older man and he is half in love with a warm, compassionate woman who is obviously unhappily married. In time, he and Nina become lovers; by then she has been spurned by the other man and Charlie has
accepted the fact that Mrs. Madeira is fond of him but not in love. Overwhelmed by their first night together (Nina’s parents are away), with its passion and tenderness, Charlie and Nina realize they are in love. The writing style is competent, the characters and relationships believable, but the plot—despite its sophisticated veneer—is basically boy meets/loses/regains girl; while there are few love stories told from the masculine viewpoint, this one offers little that is new.


The distinctive pen-and-ink sketches add vigor and humor to a rhyming tale that is set “in the north, near the Isle of Skye,” in a coastal village where the ocean’s roar is so loud that people have to shout to be heard. The repeated mistakes in communication, based on this noise, have the kind of humor that appeals to children, although the device is used rather heavily. The villagers become concerned because poor old Mary, living in isolation in the foothills, is so alone; when one visitor mishears Mary’s “the loose earth stay” as “birthday” they all decide to give Mary a present, and that’s how Mary gets not one but three hundred cats. A burglar mishears Mary called a witch and thinks she is rich. Mary, who in fact has always detested cats, changes her mind when three hundred yowls dispatch the burglar. The plot is a bit contrived, the writing style adequate despite some faltering of scansion and rhyme; however, this is the sort of nonsensical exaggeration that appeals to young children.


First published in Italy under the title *Il Viaggio di Marco Polo*, this oversize book affords the artist an opportunity to do splendid large-scale scenes with meticulously detailed minutiae. Ventura’s paintings have the same use of color, the same sense of movement as Peter Spier’s large canvases, and they also include some excellent botanical drawings. The text is lucid, forthright, and informative, giving the background for Marco Polo’s long stay in China, with his father and uncle, at the courts of Kublai Khan; it concludes with an account of Polo’s return to Venice, his imprisonment, and his publication of an account of his travels.


Although this has a preface to parents, and a place at the end of each section for added parental notes, it is a good choice for a library collection as well as for home use. The book is alphabetically arranged by such topics as accident prevention, arguments, entertaining children, nutrition, safety and security, and working parents. There is commonsense advice on preventing problems and on solving them; the coverage is broad, the tone is brisk and the approach candid, and the material is cross-referenced. Within each section of this useful compendium, there is separate treatment of many subjects; under “Safety and Security,” for example, the authors discuss aspects of safety at home and while traveling, with explicit tips on what to do if you detect an attempted break-in, or are being followed, or see someone in an elevator cage who makes you feel uncomfortable; there’s also a section on how to cope with sexual advances, and all of these things may be mentioned in other sections as well, as when there’s advice on handling people who come to the door when you are home alone, under the heading of “Deliveries.”
Jenny and Billy, thirteen and eleven, get jobs at Apple Hill, a farm home for retarded young people, a property near the rural home to which they've just moved. They also become instantly interested in a murder that had taken place twelve years earlier when they hear that one of the men involved, Kurt Heineken of the notorious Quarry Gang, has been released from prison. What follows is patterned, as the children become involved with tracking down the criminals. The story, crowded with characters, is written in a mediocre style, the characterization is formulaic, the role of Jenny in ending an estrangement between one of the retarded girls and her family is contrived. In fact, the fusing of the detective action and the problems at Apple Hill is consistently awkward.

George dislikes his grandmother. She's a querulous, selfish woman with "a small puckered-up mouth like a dog's bottom," and she orders George about. She teases George and threatens him, and so George, age eight, mixes a strange batch of ingredients meant to do something drastic to her. It does. She swells up, then she grows enormously tall and thin, finally bursting through the roof. A hen also takes some and grows gigantic. George's parents, until then conveniently absent, return; his father excitedly feeds some medicine to various animals and is delighted with their size. Dad wants more of the medicine, but George can't remember all the ingredients; there are dire results with each new batch. With the last batch, Grandma gets smaller and smaller and then disappears altogether. Her daughter is mournful for a bit, but by lunchtime she's saying, "Ah well, I suppose it's all for the best, really. She was a bit of a nuisance around the house, wasn't she?" Blake's pictures use the exaggeration to advantage, but the story really bogs down. It does, of course, treat Grandma in wholly cavalier fashion, but the literary weakness may prove as boring as the treatment of Grandma; Dahl has a wild imagination which usually works to his advantage as a writer of fantasy, but here he has floundered in ramification of one concept. Any situation, no matter how amusing, becomes tedious when overdone, and here the idea of the shape-changing magic potion is run into the ground.

A photodocumentary gives a great deal of information about the way of life on an Illinois livestock farm and focuses on the youngest child. Joel, thirteen, is a good student, and he has time for extracurricular activities, but most of his time after school and on days when there is no school is devoted to doing a full share of the farm work. Demuth describes in great detail each procedure and some of the problems in caring for the hogs that are solely Joel's responsibility; among his other tasks are field work, cleaning, caring for machinery, and harvesting the feed crop. Photographs of good quality make processes and equipment more comprehensible to readers with no experience of farm life. The text is capably written, carefully detailed, and informative, making it clear that farm life may be difficult but that it can also be satisfying and lucrative.

The seventh raven is Juan O'Grady, added to the cast of an original children's opera put on each year in an English church. There were to have been six ravens;
Juan has been added at the request of Doll's father (Doll, seventeen, is the narrator) who wants Juan in as a political favor, since the boy is the son of the ambassador of a country (fictional) that may be an ally. The story is moving gently along, amusing as a backstage melange of humor, theatrical politics, and personal commentary by Doll, when a group of revolutionaries from Juan's country burst in to take the whole cast and staff hostage. Their goal: to kidnap Juan, who is immediately hidden and protected by the others. There is a trial of sorts, during which Doll's mother is shot in the hand (she's a concert-calibre cellist) but Juan is kept safe and the terrorists are caught. This has a diverting setting, good writing style and characterization, and a quiet and very British humor, and although the dramatic development is slow to start, it has enjoyable suspense and convincing structure once it does start.


While the material here has appeared in other baseball books, all such accounts of baseball history's highlights appeal to fans. Dolan has chosen nine episodes, from the first game between two pennant winners (the Providence Grays and the New York Metropolitans) in 1884—a game notable only because it set a precedent and started the world series tradition—to Reggie Jackson's five-homer record of 1977. There's a bit of fictionalization through dialogue, but most of the text is direct, informal, and written with enough color and simplicity to make the book appropriate for slow older readers as well as the target audience.


Lois Duncan began writing and submitting short stories when she was ten, received her first check when she was thirteen, and continued as a magazine writer for many years before she turned to book-length novels. In this entertaining partial biography, she includes many examples of her stories and shows how she used material and people from her real life experiences. It is interesting to see the literary growth over the years; there is little discussion of her novels. Both the stories she includes and the autobiographical material should appeal to her fans; she writes with candor and discernment, in an easy, flowing style.


In a posthumous publication, facets of a three-year-old's interests, charm, and egocentricity are explored through short sentences that are balanced by a sprightly picture on each single or double page. Natti's black and white drawings extend the text; for example, "What if it is too long? It's mine, isn't it?" is the caption for a trailing blanket, and "I like to make friends" is faced by a drawing of an eager face peering over the back seat in a plane. Some of the paired comments/pictures fall a bit flat, but others should evoke amusement, if not recognition, on the part of adult readers-aloud, three-year-old listeners, and even some in-betweens, who can look back with a superiority at the foibles of age three—perhaps in-betweens who are four.


Annie, who tells the story, is a freshman at Sacred Heart High School and is instantly smitten when the English teacher, Mr. Angelucci, walks into class. With her best friend Susanna Siegelbaum she trails him every Saturday, waiting patiently outside the library where he works on his dissertation all day. She even breaks her
first date when Angelucci asks her to add evening hours to the day job as research assistant for which she’s volunteered. Expectably, her teacher does not respond when she blurts out her love; expectably, she turns to Robby, the jilted date who has clearly become increasingly fond of her as they worked together on the school paper. The main plot is well balanced by Annie’s problems in getting along with three younger sisters for whom she is responsible since her widowed mother took a job, and by the changes in the relationship between Annie and her mother. The characters are drawn with firmness if not depth. The chief appeal of the book may well be the humor with which it is permeated and which appears primarily in the dialogue—and yet this is the one weakness of the book, since the flippant, jaunty dialogue, mostly in conversation between Annie and Siegelbaum (she’s seldom called Susanna) is persistent, a permanent jocosity that frays in time.


This is not at all like Jane Gardam’s other books, but it is just as polished and entertaining. The people are warm and real, but it is the sense of the land and the rural community that plays the stronger part. Bell begins his story when he’s eight, and he introduces the London family whose “little lad,” Harry, becomes his friend. The setting is the Cumbrian Fells, that part of England where the rivers run below ground, the “Hollow Land” of the title. This is a series of stories, but they are so closely linked that there is no sense of separation; the writing style is smooth and flowing, with a judicious use of local dialect. The characters are strongly developed, and the shifting viewpoint (sometimes first person, sometimes third) gives a good coverage of the several generations who participate in Bell’s and Harry’s lifelong friendship. Because of the structure, this is an excellent book for reading aloud in installments to a group.


Breezy, colloquial writing and subject interest indicate the book’s potential appeal for older slow readers. Action photographs illustrate some of the exciting events in the careers of an animal trainer, a balloonist, a marathon swimmer, a stunt driver (male) and a stunt woman (deaf), and the man who climbed the World Trade Center. These aren’t great feats in their contribution to world history, but most readers can admire the courage and tenacity of these six who enjoy risk.


As always, when Jean Craighead writes of wild animals, they are described with accuracy, whether their behavior is actual or fictional. The story line is thin, here, as Golden Ears bullies other creatures rather than do her own hunting and as she loses her cub, disconsolately hunting until she finds him. The writing style is adequate, the illustrations (pen and ink drawings) fine when they depict bears or fish, awkwardly out of proportion when they depict human beings.


Gilbert doesn’t talk down to her readers, nor does she promise them a rose garden; her discussion of some of the problems that exist in relationships within a one-parent

Goldreich, who is known chiefly for her career biographies of women, written for children, and for several adult novels and short stories, has compiled an impressive anthology of religious and secular materials, all focused on the Jewish experience, history, and religion. Each section (the Apocrypha, the Talmud, American Jewish literature, for example) is prefaced by an introductory explanation about the work or genre. A glossary, bibliography, and index extend the usefulness of the book, which includes excerpts from the work of such writers as Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Sholom Aleichem, and Arthur Miller.


As with the titles by Baines and Grey, also reviewed in this issue, this is intended for the beginning reader and the repetition of words is a device deliberately used to "help the young reader develop word recognition and interest in reading." How this accomplishes the latter is not made clear. Unlike the other two books, this is one in which the author bends the repetition to her own purpose, adding a humorous treatment that should appeal to readers. It can also be used for reading aloud to preschool children to encourage reading readiness. The illustrations have a slapstick mediocrity; the text describes the performance of one player at the end of one game: Kate fields the last long ball hit by the opponents, then wins the game with a two-strike homer when she comes to bat. Slight, but a bit more substantial than other books in the series; even very young baseball fans may notice that the end of the game comes just after its start.


Although fiction, this story of a boy who finds and cares for an injured owl is based on fact; the photographs are posed but not stiff, some of Jacob and the owl, some in which the photographer has superimposed images of the owl, quite effectively, on a woodland scene or a glinting pond. Jacob's mother makes it clear from the start that he cannot keep this wild creature; since Jacob is adjusting both to his parents' separation and to a recent move, he dotes on the bird and secretly hopes that he will be able to keep it. Owl is crippled but gets away from the shed in which he's been housed, and Jacob comes to realize that his pet will be safer in a bird sanctuary; after Owl has been there for a time, Jacob is even more convinced that he's made the right decision. This gives some facts about barred owls, it may foster appreciation of wild creatures and their needs, and it certainly encourages readers to get skilled help for injured animals. As a story, however, it is formulaic although adequately written; it is one of many books in which the message is clear (wild animals should not be kept as pets) and in which children reluctantly give up such pets for the good of the animals.

Fex O'Toole, eleven, knows that he shouldn't do some of the things he's done when his friends have double-dared him. Certainly his best friends and his worried mother have tried to convince him that accepting those dares have usually meant trouble, but Fex goes right on, unable to resist the challenge. And he does get into trouble, especially with the school principal. And with his friend Audrey, who is angry because he accepted a dare and kissed a girl he hardly knew at a party. Fex finally learns his lesson when, just after he has refused to jump into a river in spate, his four-year-old friend says he'll take the dare; Fex rescues Charlie, and sees for himself how rash taking a dare can be. The story has some effective characters and relationships, and it's written in a light and lively style, but it doesn't make Fex's compulsion quite convincing.


The comic valentine style of the illustrations, the lack of a story line (or information, or humor) and the slightness and superficiality of the text indicate a book that is unlikely to be either useful or entertaining, although it might serve as a launching pad for a discussion of time. "What time is it?" the text begins, and then there are several questions like "Is it time for breakfast?" "Is it time for lunch?" "Is it time for dinner?" The original question is then repeated, and is again followed by three more questions. This pattern is repeated, and the book ends as abruptly as it began, with one (the first) answer: "It is time to read." A waste of time.


Three short stories about an earnest and amicable dog, Alex, and his small adventures, are told partly through his dialogue with the family's other pet, a rather languid and sophisticated cat. The stories are appropriate in length, vocabulary difficulty, and concept for the beginning reader, the illustrations are amusing, almost aqueous wash and line, and the book can also be used for reading aloud to the preschool child. Alex learns to tell the difference between a young chicken and a robin, he decides a cat's life is enviable but changes his mind after imitating the cat's indolence, and he definitely decides not to be a night hunter after one expedition with the cat. What makes the book a joy to read aloud or alone is the terse humor of the talks between Alex and his blasé companion.


An addition to the multiplying paperback romances designed for teenage girls, this is patterned, shallow, written in pedestrian fashion, and light in plot. Working for a month as sitter for a family that goes to Maine for vacation, Maggie is smitten by an English visitor, Tony. He's several years older than she, a Don Juan who can't resist moving on to new conquests. When he later visits her at home, Tony makes overtures to Maggie's best friend, spoiling both the love affair and the friendship. This is in the True Love Story formula: Maggie is tempted but maintains her virginity; she is also the vehicle for several sexist commentaries, one of which is that Seth, another and painfully shy boy she meets in Maine, may be that way because his mother worked and left him with sitters; another is that Maggie thinks that "if every woman strikes out in the direction of a profession, there soon won't be anyone to hire as nursemaid or housekeeper." But she doesn't argue with a feminist, "who, appar-
ently, was determined to defend her own sense of liberation from any 'feminist' point of view."


This is an exemplary how-to book. The material is arranged in order of increasing complexity, with the text always built on earlier procedures. The explanations are crisp and direct, including step-by-step instructions and safety warnings. The materials are inexpensive, the suggested projects are attractive, the author encourages creativity, and the index gives access to procedures, materials, and subjects.


In many ways this follows the formulaic sports biography, recounting a player's emergence from a childhood of hard work and poverty, to a devotion to several sports in high school, then on to a college sports scholarship, an impressive record in college leading to a niche in major sports, and a record of dazzling play. For Gale Sayers, there is also a niche in the Football Hall of Fame. What isn't formulaic is the Hahns' candor: Sayers was a poor student, he often displayed a bad temper. There's inherent excitement in a career like Sayers' and the authors let that career provide interest for the reader without gushing. There is, however, a choppiness about the writing, and the introduction of non sequiturs that is most unlike the Hahns, the text reading almost as though someone had done a cut and paste job after the authors' work had been done.


Pedestrian cartoon-style paintings illustrate a text that could possibly be weaker, but it's hard to see how. It begins with the suggestion that the reader pretend a Lowland Gorilla is a pet; it gives a few facts, primarily descriptive, but it confuses even those by making such statements as the citation of a gorilla's "needs" until the age of two including diapers, toys, a playpen, and a blanket. It is peppered with cute little asides like, "That means he eats only vegetables and hates liver even more than you do," or, "But don't ever challenge him... 'cause he'll make a monkey out of you!" Unfortunately, this is one of a series of books about far-fetched pets; although a prefatory note warns readers that such pets can live only in the imagination, the rationale for the existence of these books is puzzling.


Perhaps because she doesn't force the historical details that create a flavor of the several periods (presented in vignettes) that span almost a century, Haynes creates a good narrative flow in telling about the series of owners of one artifact, a pot belly stove. The account begins with the casting, seen from the viewpoint of the manufacturer's little daughter in 1888; it continues to describe separate incidents as the stove changed hands, eleven incidents in all. The soft, almost blurred black and white drawings have depth and vigor in their realistic portrayal of the many and varied events in the story.

While most photodocumentaries about children who are studying ballet focus on either the techniques or the student's devotion and perseverance, this describes the way in which ten-year-old Nancy and her classmates, all deaf, learn ballet. They are in a special class at the Joffrey Ballet School, and they are students at the Lexington School for the Deaf. The book is illustrated with the customary photographs of floor work, barre exercises, and delighted children who are costumed for a public performance. This doesn't tell you as much about ballet as the other books, but it tells a great deal about the resilience and potential of handicapped children, and it's written without sugar icing.


Blake's scruffy, broken-line drawings, ink and wash, have a flippant quality that nicely offsets the bland delivery of Hoban's nonsensical story about a boy and a dragon. "Ace Dragon Ltd," the dragon explains, means that he's limited; i.e., there are some things he can't do. What he can do (if John beats him in fair fighting, two times out of three, and John does) is take John flying. They run out of petrol, the dragon's fuel, crash-land on a small golden moon, and manage to get back to earth because of the dragon's other talent, spinning gold into straw. He spins slices of the golden moon into a big enough bundle of straw so that they can jump to earth, their fall cushioned. "You know what, Ace?" says John, "You're not so limited." Light-weight, but deliberately so, this has action, denouement, problem and solution, and a happy impromptu friendship. And, of course, the perennial appeals of dragons and magic.


Variants of three folktales about the Devil are told to a boy by his grandmother in a colloquial, humorous style that makes it appropriate for storytelling and for reading aloud, as well as for independent reading. Three generations of a devil family who pride themselves on being mean are outdone in each tale by Jake, who is even nastier than they. The first, and probably the most familiar, story describes the three wishes given Jake by St. Peter that enable him to trap the oldest, Mister Big Daddy Devil, in a bramble bush; the others explain the reason for the Hallowe'en pumpkin that has a cross for a nose, and the swamp lights that are called fox fire. Hooks doesn't overdo the North Carolina rural dialect, so that the relish of the oral tradition is communicated with zest.


Hoover uses a pattern familiar to science fiction buffs: the planetary colony that has regressed to a more primitive society and then experiences cultural conflict when a team from Earth comes to scout the planet, Xilan, as a colonization site. The protagonist, Garth, is the colony's medical advisor and lives within the compound for the small, elite group that is separated from the credulous, superstitious villagers. The physical separation is a symbol of the barrier that exists between two philosophies of life, a barrier that is repeated in the rift between the Xilans and their visitors. The story has good pace, structure, and style, and the author writes with depth and perception of the arrogance and persistence of the research team, whose
efforts to change and improve life on Xilan are rejected by its people, and who depart a bit puzzled by the rejection and a bit wistful about the simplicity of the colony’s lifestyle—although this is not an anti-technocracy book.


Although this has more ornamental detail it is in the same style as the paintings of Harlow Rockwell: simply composed, uncluttered, using large blocks of color. This shows, at the beginning, a baby’s plump, brown feet waving in the air above its crib (and looking a bit out of scale) and, at the end, two sturdy legs in socks and shoes planted firmly, independently on the floor. In between, there’s a list of all the things you couldn’t do when you were a baby: build blocks, make sand molds, eat with a spoon, sail boats in a bathtub, etc. “But now you can!” the text ends. Not a wholly new idea, but nicely executed, probably a morale builder to a small child who doesn’t always realize how much she or he has already learned.


*Con brio,* a cheerfully exaggerated story of an enfant terrible’s encounter with a moping ghost is funny and fast if a bit repetitious. The book begins with a description of the arrogant nabob, Mr. Cole, who has built the clock tower a century ago, then moves to the present; the deserted tower is to become a museum and awful Amanda’s father is to be its curator. Spiteful, bad-tempered, and hostile, Mandy alienates the ghost of Cole as quickly as she does her new schoolmates. Her parents, in patient despair, put up with Mandy’s assertion that there’s a ghost just as they have borne her tantrums and malicious mischief. There’s a turn for the better at the end of the story, as Mandy and the ghost make peace, and as she finds for the first time that there are ways to get along with her peers. This isn’t quite convincing, even within the parameters of a fantasy, and Mandy is so egregiously awful she’s not quite believable either, but the tale has good tempo and humor.


It’s hard to beat the combination of baseball, animals, and humor, and Kessler provides all three in a simply written book for beginning readers. Scheherezade meets her match in Old Turtle, who sits with other animals around a pot-bellied stove and reminisces about such great stars as Melvin Moose, the great hitter who hit a double with his antlers, or Carla Kangaroo, the great outfielder who tripped while going for a long ball that would have meant a home run for the opponents—but whose Joey jumped out of her pocket to make the catch and save the day. What puts the icing on this tasty cake is the approximation of a storyteller’s style: Old Turtle ends each anecdote with “Every word of it,” when asked if it’s a true story, and begins another with “Let me tell you about…”


“My mother, Karen, isn’t dead. She just didn’t like being a mother,” adolescent Jessica explains, as she begins her story about adjusting to a stepmother, Martha, and seeking a reunion with her natural mother. The story is punctuated, in fact, by italicized daydreams in which Jessica and Karen meet and have loving, intimate
talks. Observing the problems her friend Sylvia has with her own stepmother, Jessica is dubious about getting along with one, but Martha is a staunch character and it is she who helps Jessica make a trip to see her mother. The glamorous career Jessica's envisioned for her mother doesn't exist; Karen is a member of the Children of the Lotus commune, vague and distant, so disinterested that she doesn't even seem to notice her daughter is leaving, so preoccupied she doesn't even say goodbye. This is not a tragic book, but it is a sad one, not only because of Jessica's disappointment but also because of the rather depressing situations of her closest friends: Sylvia wilting under the sneers of a domineering stepmother, Brookie living with an alcoholic mother. The writing style is competent, however, and the story strong in its characters, relationships, and dialogue.


In an oversize flat, seventeen of the publisher's books have been excerpted or compressed; at times the whole text of a picture book is provided, but the illustrations have been cut, as with *Sylvester's Pebble*, the William Steig book that won the Caldecott Medal for its illustrations. This alone would constitute a black mark, but the volume comprises other such telescoping, so that the reader is losing either some of the pictures of the original, or the full text, as is true of Steig's *CDB* or of his *Roland the Minstrel Pig*, of which only some songs and some pictures are included. Very disappointing, very crowded.


The rich colors and baroque swirls of ornamentation in the artist's interpretation of the story are in the tradition of Persian painting, with a romantic mood and a high sense of design. Le Cain's interpretation is wonderfully appropriate for the extravagant fantasy of the story of the poor boy whose life was changed when he met the wish-fulfilling genie of the lamp; in the best fairytale tradition, Aladdin outwits the evil magician, wins the hand of a princess, and succeeds to the throne of her father, the sultan.


Three stories that combine the themes of slaves who long for freedom and of their love are either true stories or are based on real events. One is the story of William and Ellen Craft's escape, with the fair-skinned Ellen posing as a white man and her husband pretending to be her slave. Most accounts stop with the couple's safe arrival in Philadelphia; Lester carries their well-documented story much farther. "Ras and Sally" is a dramatic tale based on fact, the story of two young people whose love is slow to ripen, and "Where the Sun Lives," the most poignant of the three, focuses on the law that forced a wife back into slavery when her husband died if he was a free man and had bought her as the only way to have a life together, and if only her sale could settle his debts after death. All of the stories have drama and suspense, but all of them are weakened somewhat by the intermittent stiffness of the writing style; it is the combination of the burning devotion to the achievement of freedom and the deep hatred of slavery that carry the stories rather than the writing style or any romantic appeal.

In an originally conceived and entertaining fantasy that is smoothly fused with reality, Lively creates not only the ghost of Samuel Stokes but of the whole estate he had so beautifully landscaped centuries before. The setting is contemporary, a housing development that stands on the extensive grounds once occupied by a great house and its gardens and outbuildings; the residents of the development are baffled by such strange events as brick walls that persistently push up through the ground, or smells of cooking from a washing machine, or a disruption of a television program by a sputtering, angry man—Stokes. It is one of the children who first realizes that Stokes is furious because of what is happening to the grounds he had landscaped. Tim, his friend Jane, and his eccentric grandfather are the only people who understand what is going on and who make an effort to get in touch with Stokes and distract him by diverting his attention to another project. The writing has warmth and vitality, strong characters and dialogue, and an intriguing situation that is deftly developed.


Scott, the narrator, is a high school junior who is unhappy because his grief about his mother’s death is compounded by his resentment against a father who has become withdrawn and alcoholic. When he learns that Hilah, who had been his swimming teacher and on whom he had had a crush when he was twelve and she was twenty-one, is back in town his affection revives. But Hilah soon makes it clear that she’s less interested in Scott than in his father. After a period of surliness toward both, Scott finally accepts the situation, and the book ends with an epilogue: Hilah and Scott’s father are married, and Scott is hitchhiking off, fairly happy, to a summer job. The story is given some variety by sequences with Scott’s friends and some comic relief by a Mrs. Malaprop character, the family housekeeper, but it often has a slowed pace because, despite the adequate writing style and believable characterizations, the first-person format leads to heavy introspection.


Photographs of two attractive adolescent girls are used to illustrate (at times usefully) techniques of skin care, hair arrangement, a manicure, etc. The advice is sensible and fairly comprehensive, the writing style direct; occasionally there are textual errors (“cantaloupe,” “bacteria starts...”) but on the whole this is a useful guide to good health habits and cosmetic grooming, with an index to give access to the contents of the book.


Jed, who lives in a spaceship, goes outside one day while his parents, cargo pilots, are away; the cry for help he’s heard proves to be from a mother cog (they resemble both cats and dogs) who asks Jed to take care of her two babies before she dies. He takes the animals back to the ship, but nobody believes that they talk to him. A patrolman takes the animals to Headquarters because they have special powers, but they still communicate, this time telepathically. Jed’s parents buy him a teddy robot computer which secretly helps him find and take the cogs. When the cogs, who can
sense danger, save the ship from a fireball ("starburst") all the adults agree that Jed may keep his pets, and with Teddy they form his junior space patrol. The story affords reading practice for the beginner, and there is audience appeal in science fiction and pets, but the writing style is bland, weakening the book despite those twin appeals and the adequate, if slow-paced, story line.


Lonely because she has no other bird to fly with, Blossom gets a brief but violent crush on an airplane, looping the loop until the irritated aviator throws her off just as she proclaims her love. After moping again, Blossom encounters another bird; this one, despite his Hitlerian hair and mustache, proves to be her own kind. They fall in love and are married by an owl in a ceremony in which they promise to be nice to each other. This is silly without being funny, a slapdash text that has only the ludicrous note of bird-loves-plane as appeal. The illustrations are mediocre, the rhyming text frequently falters metrically: "The man in the plane / could take no more / You silly thing / Let go of my wing / Then off he flew with a roar / Now Blossom was lonely / A tear fell from her eye . . . ."


Collin's father, tired of having a lazy teenage son who is thrown out of one school after another, drives Collin up to the Vermont mountains to stay with Sabbath Kirk, an old codger who is going to make a man of the boy. How? By teaching him to shoot, hunt, fend for himself in the woods, et cetera. Collin, the narrator, conforms almost immediately, and by the time three weeks have passed and his parents pay a surprise visit, he has learned to cope with everything and has even performed an emergency appendectomy on old Kirk. By candlelight. The whole thing is so preposterous it's almost funny; it's hackneyed in conception and trite in characterization, and the writing style is marred by a persistent intrusion of irrelevant details.


Becca, the narrator, is seventeen. She's pretty, popular, a good student, and one of a small group who decide they will publish an underground newspaper when the school newspaper's advisor, Miss Holdstein, won't let them print an article that criticizes school policy. One of the group draws a suggestive cartoon of Miss Holdstein and the school principal, and the whole group is suspended—and told that an apology will end the suspension. The students sue instead, claiming violation of their constitutional rights. Eventually the case comes to trial and those students who hadn't already apologized are readmitted—but there's a long period before that in which, through Becky, Pfeffer explores the effects of pressure on individuals, the tension such pressures bring to families, the ambivalence the suspended students feel, the conflict between the issue of freedom of the individual or the press and the slander-by-innuendo of the cartoon. Pfeffer manages to present a complicated and clouded issue and keep the narrative moving with pace and vitality.


Tidily framed drawings, colored in orange, blue, and gray, show worried little Piet as he thinks about being in first grade. The look-alike characters are rabbits, drawn in
Piet wonders if his kindergarten friends will be in his room, and is afraid the teacher will talk in a way he can’t understand: “She might say: ‘Oogly Boogly.’ When I ask her what that means she might answer: ‘Muncha, Chumba, Zeglipo.’” The audience may enjoy these nonsense words, but there’s no logical reason why a child who’s been in kindergarten should expect another teacher to talk gibberish. At any rate, Piet is reassured by a friend who has met the teacher while shopping, and he then plays happily at pretending to be on the school bus. This may comfort the kindergarten child or amuse a jaded first or second grade child, but it’s rather thin stuff.


First published in England, this is a catalogue of extinct creatures, primarily birds. Each recto page carries a framed painting, lavishly detailed in stylized and fanciful style, providing an ornate background for the creature on which it focuses. The colors are brilliantly jewel-toned, the drawing deliberately out of scale. The text on the verso pages that face each painting is written in an informal, almost jocose style. For example, “If you can imagine a zebra who has forgotten to put on the bottom half of his striped pajamas, you have an idea of how the Quagga used to look.” Despite the levity, there is information to be gleaned, usually facts about how the animal got its name, what patterns of behavior are known, and how it became extinct.


Although the illustrations are of pedestrian quality as art, and they crowd the pages of this alphabet book, they have vitality and humor, and they add a narrative note that may appeal to small children. Wise Owl, equipped with backpack and binoculars, takes his three owlet pupils on a nature walk; they see an ant, a butterfly, a caterpillar, a dragonfly, an eagle, etc. Each page has a letter in upper and lower case, a brief sentence (“A” is for “ANT”) and a small boxed picture of the creature in addition to the large, centered picture of one or more of the owls meeting it.


Fourteen, Scott had come to Aspen to visit his brother Tony, and he was apprehensive about skiing, since there was talk about the danger of an avalanche. Tony seemed unworried, however, so off they went. In view of the title, readers will not be surprised to find that there is an avalanche; Tony’s buried, Scott goes for help, Tony receives mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, and the dormant love between brothers is revived—just when Scott needs reassurance, since his parents have just decided on a divorce. This isn’t a flagrantly weak book, but it has little to recommend it beyond action, in an overextended plot laced with a soupçon of courage. The impending divorce seems superimposed; characterization is superficial. This is not to be confused with the same title (even to the exclamation point) published in 1958 by Anna Rutgers Van der Loeff-Basenau.


First published in England, this is an extensive description of castles in the British Isles; many of the structures are now in ruins. Sancha does a good research job as she discusses how the plans for castles changed over several centuries, why the struc-
tures took the forms they did, and how castles were designed to function both as dwellings and fortresses. There are many photographs, some quite hazy; many have balloon captions added, or small figures, some of which do little more than clutter the picture. However, the author’s diagrams are informative and carefully placed, the text is adequately written; a map and a glossary extend the usefulness of the text, and an index lists only the names of castles. The text is in uncomfortably small print.


In a touching story, set in England during the Victorian Era, Schlee has so consistently kept the viewpoints and mores and language of the period that the book has no obtrusive or contemporary notes: It is based on a true institution, run by Mr. Drouet; Drouet in the story, as in life, is the master of a school for workhouse children, advertised as a place where the young will be well taken care of and will learn useful trades. In fact, as Laura, the protagonist of Schlee’s story, learns, the children are barely fed and clothed while Drouet grows plump and prosperous. Laura and her brother have been sent out of London because of the cholera epidemic of 1847, and they stay—next door to Drouet’s establishment—with their harsh, domineering aunt. Secretly, after they have met three of the starving children eating from Aunt Bolinger’s pig trough at night, Laura brings food. She also secretly suffers, because to get the food she steals and lies. The book moves to a tragic conclusion, with cholera at Drouet’s and the deaths of many of the children. The story is broadened by some sub-plots and deepened by the strong characterization. Drouet (again, as in life) is tried and found innocent.


All of the creatures described here have been discussed in other books, but this is the sort of browsing compendium that serves well as an introduction and can also, because of the combination of brief treatment, simple style, and dignified tone, be useful for slow older readers. Fine lines and hatching in beautifully textured and detailed realistic drawings face each brief entry. There is no attempt to make this a reference book: no table of contents or index, no alphabetical (or other) arrangement. Each page of text gives information about those abilities, habits, or appearance’s that make each creature distinctive; the species described comprise birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and mammals.


Larry and Josh rescue an old man, in this story set in the Caribbean, and take him back to their fathers; after communicating with Sir Harry of the British Naval Archives their suspicions are confirmed: old Vali was in a longboat from a long-missing, ancient ship. Also, Vali is from Grandau, the mysterious little country that is about to be taken over and whose royal family has disappeared. Periodically the scene shifts to follow the nefarious doings of two hit men who are out to stop Larry and Josh as they hunt for the hereditary leaders of Grandau. There's a great deal of sturm und drang and swash and buckle, and a capricious young princess of Grandau. The bad guys are destroyed, the good guys save the princess and the brave little country, and the lost ship, centuries old, even turns up. If this were not a deplorable book because of its plot, which is a pastiche of trite and contrived incidents, it would still be deplorable because of the shallow, stereotyped characters and the slovenly writing style. Example: “The skiff was old and it was sinking, but it had an occupant whose eyes looked at theirs and they had brought the boat to shore.”

Framed pictures of outdoor and interior scenes in a Dutch town on the day before Christmas have a Currier and Ives appeal. Pieck pictures the apothecary's shop, a St. Nicholas procession, ice-skaters on the pond, a Punch and Judy show, and all the bustle and excitement of a nineteenth-century holiday crowd. The paintings, with soft, dulled colors and meticulous details, are tidily framed; the text seems superimposed: captions like "The baker went out on the ice with his sleigh full of tasty gingerbread. His little daughter Bertha would sell them from her basket," or, "Not everyone liked the music being played on the bandstand," have an air of contrivance. In toto, however, the book gives an enjoyable and presumably authentic picture of Christmas festivities in another land and at another time.


A physics professor takes a serious look at possible space colonies of the future, and discusses how they could be designed, constructed, and used, even if only the materials and technical skills now available were used. Trefil's style is solid but not heavy, and is relieved by occasional humor ("If the colonists play baseball, there are going to be some fancy pitchers' duels in space," Trefil says when discussing the Coriolus force that will operate in a rotating space colony). The text includes a description of a day in the life of a typical space colony family, and concludes with chapters on our future in space and on the possibility of colonization of other planets. An index gives access to a text that is written with informed enthusiasm and that gives clear explanations of basic principles and their relations to technical problems and solutions.


First published in Belgium under the titles *Ernest et Celestine Ont Perdu Siméon* and *Ernest et Celestine, Musiciens des Rues*, these are illustrated in pastel-tinted pictures that are reminiscent of the work of Ernest Shepard, with lively line and delicate but controlled composition. In the first story, Siméon's name has been changed to Gideon, a toy that is lost when the bear Ernest and the mouse Celestine go for a walk in the snow. Ernest buys an armful of toy animals, but Celestine mourns for her Gideon until Ernest makes her a replica of the original. This first book ends in a celebratory Christmas party in which other mice children are made happy by the toys Celestine has spurned. The relationship between Ernest and Celestine, apparently avuncular or surrogate-parental, is echoed when other bears (adult) deliver other mice (children) for the party. In the second book, the two are having a hard time financially until, on Celestine's initiative, they go out as street musicians. He plays violin, she sings, coins rain down, and they spend all their first profits on presents for each other. These books don't have strong plots, but they serve quite adequately since they have a problem/solution structure and since they are permeated with affection; they are brisk in pace and should have universal appeal, both for the texts and for the engaging illustrations.

Long shots and close-ups, in competent black and white photography, show the slow stirring and unfolding of spring plants in a woodland setting. The text, simply written, describes the signs of impending renewal in the bleak stillness of winter, and the burgeoning that is part of the cycle as days lengthen and the angle of the sun’s rays brings increasing warmth. Some of the pictures are hazy, but most of them are clearly enough defined to show details, and the text is both accurate and sequentially arranged.


Charley, the narrator, is a sophomore at Loyola High School, and rather irritated by the hostility of some of his peers who had transferred to public school. He’s more than irritated when he gets a poison pen chain letter that calls him a meddler, arrogant, and says, “to know him was to loathe him.” He knows the girl who started it, and he goes to her house to confront her—and that’s the start of a romance during which Charley discovers the reason for his girl’s deserved reputation for being rancorous (a nagging neurotic mother) and also realizes that there can be a compromise between her emotional view of life and his logical, reasoned viewpoint. This has strong characters and a smooth writing style but its story line is not strong, and it is more a depiction of a situation than a development of a plot; Charley and his Chris do not so much change as improve their understanding of each other and themselves.


Green and purple are used for the cartoon-style illustrations in a space adventure for primary grades readers. Commander Toad and several of his crew, trying a new planet, are ingested by rapidly growing purple grapes that burgeon under their feet. Their dilemma is soon solved, as the ship’s doctor gives each gorged grape an injection; they discover that the planet is allergic to its toad visitors and that the grapes are a protective device. Off they go, full of blatant puns (“I thought those jokes were the grapest,” and “They like to wine a lot”) and continued exploratory zest. Mildly funny, adequately written, thinly plotted, and doubtless appealing because of the setting.


Zim, always a dependably thorough and explicit science writer, prefaces a discussion of the many ways in which quartz is used in contemporary life with descriptions of its chemical structure, the way it is formed and shaped, and its peculiar properties. Photographs (some in color) illustrate the textual description of the variety of gem stones of quartz, and diagrams show the special property it has: piezoelectricity. The text is continuous, the print large and well-shaped, and an index gives access to the contents.
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