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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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New Titles for Children and Young People


Remember *Nightbirds on Nantucket*? This is just as outrageously flagrant a fanciful romp, as the indomitable Dido Twite, age twelve, is homeward bound to England and never gets there. Her ship is summoned to help the Queen of New Cumbria, in a never-never land and time, for the country is in South America, where the people are descendants of ancient Britons who fled their own country when it was invaded by Saxons. The problem: the queen wants her stolen lake back; King Mabon has taken it because the queen is holding his daughter hostage. The mission is, of course, accomplished, but not before Dido has encountered a series of villains and heroes, is kidnapped, discovers that the evil Queen Ginevra is waiting for her long-lost mate King Arthur (missing for thirteen hundred years) and narrowly escapes a flow of glacial ice. And more. The story is full of half-familiar names, salty characters, saltier dialogue, and amusing magic, all combined in Aiken’s yeasty style.


Nine tales by Andersen, including such favorites as “Thumbelina,” “The Ugly Duckling,” “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” “The Snow Queen,” and “The Little Match Girl,” are illustrated by gravely romantic paintings, traditional in mood and rich in color, with Hague’s typical touch of a heavy black outline. The type is close-set but large, the illustrations carefully placed in relation to textual references. A handsome addition to collections of Andersen stories.


Like the book above, this is a partial collection of Andersen’s tales; there are few of the most familiar tales in this volume: eleven stories, the only overlap with the book above being “The Snow Queen.” The illustrations are reproduced from a 1924 edition; here the ecru pages have an ornamental border, there are decorations that precede each story, and the full-color paintings, framed and delicately detailed, are not always placed near the textual references, although the phrase or passage each illustrates is repeated on a page that faces the painting. There are, in addition, some single-color drawings (brown, like the print) that combine effectively textured detail with a sense of line and composition that are often reminiscent of the work of Aubrey Beardsley.

The oversize pages of this single-tale edition of a favorite Andersen tale are used to full advantage by the artist, some of whose pictures are reminiscent of the work of Nancy Ekholm Burkert, although Jeffers' work is not imitative. It is distinguished for the design and composition, the restrained and effective use of color, and the intricately detailed and textured materials, from lacy leaf patterns to massive stones. The translation is smooth, and the illustrations echo the romantic mood of the story of a sister's loving sacrifice to win her brothers back from their enchanted forms of swans.


Written by a former high school science teacher and a professor of science education, this book exemplifies the scientific approach, stressing the difference between fact and theory, emphasizing the fact that Halley's work was built on the body of knowledge to which so many earlier scientists had contributed, and carefully pointing out alternate theories when discussing scientists' conjectures about the formation and composition of comets. The text, well organized and clearly written, describes Halley's research and his prediction of the return of the comet which was named for him; it focuses on the orbits and behavior of comets, and closes with instructions to readers who may want to become comet-watchers. A list of the dates on which Halley's comet has appeared (first recorded appearance: 467 B.C., expected again in 1985) and an index are appended.


When their home is broken up because of a divorce, the three Currie children react very differently: adolescent Lee wants to be with her father, in part because he's staying in an apartment near their suburban home; she's to stay with him for the summer. Allison, twelve, and little Joel have moved to Manhattan with their mother, and Allison throws herself completely into the role of second mother when Mom gets a job. Each child reacts to stress in a different way, but their problems are serious, and Angell deals perceptively with the intricate pain of separation and the subtle ways in which each member of a family group affects and is affected by the others. They all do adjust; the story ends on a positive note that has been realistically achieved, as new interests, new people, time and acceptance of change blur both Lee's open anger at her mother and Allison's carefully-buried resentment. There's no strong story line developed, but there is vigor and contrast in the development of the situation and the exploration of characters.


An oversize book, profusely illustrated, describes the many new kinds of vehicles that the future may bring: trains that travel by magnetic levitation (or, returning to the past because of a fuel shortage, by coal) cars that need no driving because they are computer-controlled, spaceplanes and skycruisers, ships controlled by navigation satellites, etc. The sometimes garish and usually crowded illustrations show these alluring vehicles in pages that have a two-column format, although only one column
is used for the text—or perhaps half a column (a quarter-page) and, although the text is clearly written, the use of two type sizes (text and captions for drawings) on pages with varying layouts is at times confusing, especially when there is more than one picture and its caption on a page.


A scholarly preface, a concluding literary essay, and copious notes on the stories (often published as the fables of Bidpai) indicate that the book is intended for an adult audience—but the fables themselves are appropriate for, and should be made available to, young readers. The heavy paper and broad margins, as well as the delicate tones of the illustrations, make the book handsome; the margins also contribute by compensating visually for the solid print of the text. The fables range from brief animal stories and parables to longer tales that explore human weaknesses and relationships, and the sustaining motif is that all creatures are part of a whole, an entity that has a common fate. The book is valuable both because of its literary components and because it is a handsome example of a fourteenth century Arabic manuscript.


Large, bold print is used on pages facing spacious paintings that have awkward figures and a stiff, primitive look. Bawden includes the familiar incidents of Tell’s shooting an apple that’s on his son’s head, but this is a broader account that is designed to show Tell’s role in the overthrow of the tyrant Gessler and in the subsequent unification of Switzerland. It’s a dramatic story, told more stiffly than is Bawden’s wont but told with a direct simplicity, and occasionally over-simplified.


Bright but not brash in hues, the realistic and lively paintings are framed for those pages that illustrate the stories told by a visiting grandmother; the realistic setting is depicted without frames. Sue and Nicky enjoy other things about Grandma, but best of all are the stories she invents, and three are included here: one (a bit didactic) about a naughty child saved by her mother from a witch, one about a china frog, one in which Jack and his mother go down a beanstalk (or a reasonable facsimile thereof) and escape with some of the goblins’ treasure that had been heaped in an underground cave. Adequately told and illustrated, this is pleasant rather than memorable.


Bester records, in text and photographs, a twenty-four hour shift for a fireman who lives in a suburb, works in lower Manhattan, and is the driver of one of his station’s two ladder-rescue trucks. During the shift, there’s one serious fire and a minor one; Bester describes the action at the scene, but most of the book is devoted to routine aspects of station life: checking equipment, taking a nap, preparing food, taking a turn at manning the telephone and the computer. There’s drama inherent in the call to a fire, and the rest of the book is lucid, informative, and nicely arranged in terms of page layout, print size, and the quality and placement of photographs.
Like Leonard Fisher's *The Seven Days of Creation* (reviewed in the September, 1981 issue), this is an oversize book with richly colored paintings. It differs in that it provides the text of the King James version, whereas Fisher's interpretation accompanies a simplified adaptation, and in the fact that much of the print is hard to read because of the color or design of the background. First published in England, Reed's version has a stronger sense of design, more details, and some stylized treatment (the man in the moon, the full face of the sun) and is very handsome but not as sweepingly dramatic as Fisher's paintings, and not as appropriate for use with younger children.


Writing with authority and simplicity, Branley carefully tailors the amount and complexity of his information to the age of the intended audience. He discusses the facts that stars seem to move across the sky just as our sun does, that they are in different positions at different times of the year, and that there are times when some stars are not visible to watchers on this continent. Using duplicate facing photographs, Branley shows a part of a night sky and the same view with a drawing of the constellation superimposed—there are just a few of these, so that readers can get the idea without being overwhelmed by constellations. Explanations for finding stars are brief and clear—in a certain month, you face a certain direction, look up (high or low in the sky) and locate the brightest star in a pattern. Very simple, very clear, this could easily go beyond informing to give primary grades readers a new interest.

**Braun, Isabella. *The Little Actors' Theater*; tr. by Paula Didriksen; ad. by Peter Seymour. Philomel, 1981. ISBN 0-399-20846-1. 8p. illus. $10.95.**

Reproduced from a nineteenth century children's book, this replica of an antique pop-up has four playlets, one for each season. Each of the four has one page of dialogue; a pulled tab on the facing page reveals a three-dimensional (i.e. three depths of paper) stage; a tab moves two of the girls' heads. Below the upstanding scenery is another verse to end each little play. The scenery and costumes are old-fashioned, and the whole is a fragile curiosity, interesting perhaps more to students of the history of publishing or of children's literature than to children; still, children should also find it intriguing, and perhaps it might be best placed in a special collection with limited access.


Annie is twelve when she begins her story, unhappy because her best friend, a year older, seems to have found other interests. What is more natural than getting a crush
Ad
5-7
lessons with Miss Jones, and they become friends, but she cannot bring herself to
believe that Jason Pascal, who had dates with Miss Jones, was important to her
beloved teacher. When Annie does learn that the couple are lovers and planning
marriage, she lies. In jealous anger, she tells her parents that the two had given her
martinis (she’d had drinks on her own) and the authorities are called in. Miserable,
Annie confesses that she’d lied; she’s punished in a logical way (dropped as a soloist
and barred from participation in a concert) and grateful that the boy who’s become
her friend wants to continue the friendship even when he knows what she’s done.
This is written with practiced competence, economical structure, and believable
characterization. Although the pace is at times slow and the action thereby slowed
also, the book gives a good picture of the anguish that children can feel when they are
jealous and the guilt that may follow when that jealousy has led them to hurt another
person.


Although this is written simply enough for readers in the middle grades to com-
prehend, it has the pace and focus of an adult short story. It is told by Meg, one of
three children whose father, having lost his job in the Great Depression, has become
a tenant farmer in Arkansas. Meg is aware that her mother is timid and fearful, and is
rather scornful. However, when there is a small crisis, Mother calmly confronts a
vindictive neighbor to rescue the family cow, and Meg is proud of her mother’s
courage, understanding how hard it was for her to take such action. The illustrations
are realistic, slightly crude technically but not ineffective; the writing style is
adequate, the structure taut, the story weakened by its abrupt ending.

Edwards, Dorothy. *My Naughty Little Sister and Bad Harry's Rabbit*; illus. by Shirley

Shirley Hughes’ slightly scruffy, wholly engaging children are, in realistic and
moderately colored pictures, very nicely integrated with the Edwards text; Hughes is
a past winner of the Greenaway Award. Here the author reminisces about one of her
sister’s small adventures, and why the word “naughty” is used is not clear, since all
little sister did on this occasion was to have a good idea. It struck her that the pair of
shoes that had been sent as a gift to a friend and that were too small would just fit her
friend’s large stuffed rabbit. This made it possible for the rabbit to stand, and thus a
photographer’s attention was attracted, and that’s how little sister showed up in a
newspaper. The story is tepid, but has a nice twist at the ending; it’s adequately told
but would be inert without the pictures.

Fagg, Christopher. *How They Built Long Ago*; written by Christopher Fagg and Adrian

Although the pages of this oversize book are crowded, occasionally cluttered, with
several columns, varying fonts and sizes of type, diagrams and captions, illustrations
of various sizes and more than one technique on a single page, the authors of this
ambitious book (first published in England) have done an impressive job of describing
the buildings of human beings from the beginning of recorded history to the Renais-
sance. They include the tools and techniques, with enough background material
about cultural influences and natural resources to show some of the factors that
influence building. The writing style is a bit heavy, but the book gives accurate
information, broad coverage, and a good matrix; it concludes with a glossary and a
bibliography, and the endpapers provide a worldwide time chart.

Browning had known, when he suggested Seagulls Point, Michigan to Mrs. Hudson as a vacation spot, that he might not find out anything about his father—but he hoped he would. He was going on the trip as babysitter for Mrs. Hudson’s four-year-old son. Browning, orphaned, lived with his great-grandmother and dreamed of finding something about the father he’d never seen; his father had married, gone off to work on a Great Lakes boat, and died in a storm fourteen years earlier. Seagulls Point had been his home—or so he’d told his young, pregnant wife. After an intensive, fruitless search Browning agreed to let Mrs. Hudson try the local newspaper morgue—and later wished he hadn’t. He was bitterly disappointed, but he finally realized that it was the people you loved and who loved you, that mattered, not those who had formal relationships with you. It is a conclusion that could have been arrived at earlier in the book; that is, what happens through most of the story is not necessary for its conclusion, always a weakness in fiction. The writing style is sound, the characters believable, but the pace of the story and its development are weak.


Fox describes Jane Goodall’s childhood, her life-long interest in animal behavior, and her first job in Africa, working with scientists who were so impressed that they recommended Goodall for doctoral study at Cambridge although she had no undergraduate education. Most of the book focuses on Goodall’s observations of chimpanzees; the salient facts of her personal life are mentioned briefly. This covers much the same material as does Eleanor Coerr’s *Jane Goodall*, written for the same level of readers; both books have large print, each offers a few facts the other lacks; Coerr’s is a bit better in style and illustrations, but there is little real difference in coverage or quality.


As always, Fritz’s work is based on meticulous research and she provides extra-textual information in a section of appended notes. The writing is smooth, the material carefully organized and used in the best of biographical style—that is, Arnold is presented accurately and the reader is left to judge the strength and weaknesses of his character rather than being told by the author. Fritz, a polished writer, is both candid and canny, and she gives a brilliant picture of theegotistical, ambitious, and unscrupulous soldier who felt that his contribution to the common weal was unappreciated. An index and a lengthy bibliography are provided, adding usefulness to a vivid and perceptive portrait of a complex personality.


Illustrated with both richly colored paintings and lively, effective black and white line drawings, this is a happy union between a distinguished illustrator and an equally distinguished writer. Godden’s whimsy never becomes cloying, her writing style is fluent and deft, her people—and dragons—are fully-fleshed. Young, shy, and gentle, the Dragon lived in the waters of the estate that Angus Og inherited; the beast responded with love to the kindness of Og’s wife Matilda, and she grew fond of him. When Angus learned that the dragon fed on an occasional bullock, he was so angry he hired a courtly knight to kill the beast. However, due to Angus’ own stinginess and stubbornness, one thing led to another (with Matilda’s help) and by the end of the story...
the dragon was brought back from death, Angus was resigned to the creature’s having a bullock now and then, and everyone went on firmly believing that their dragon was the good luck of the castle and its folk. This is a perfect soufflé of a book: light, melting, tasty, and substantial withal.


Goffstein has chosen five artists: Rembrandt, Guardi, Van Gogh, Bonnard, and Nevelson; for each, there are two examples of his or her work, one in color and one in black and white. For each there are four pages of text which, although they have some facts about the artists and their work, are written like prose poems and pose the question of who the audience for the book is. Although the treatment is slight, few young children would understand “And like the combination of oil and turpentine painters use, he too was a dangerous mixture which might craze or crack,” or, “And the ancient weapons and wind instruments sighed, “All land and sea creatures lead simple lives of great mystery.” One large mirror silently agreed, in Rembrandt’s home in Amsterdam.” There isn’t enough information for those seeking facts about an artist’s life or work, and the tender tribute Goffstein so eloquently pays seems slight for readers already familiar with Rembrandt’s heroic versatility or Bonnard’s shimmering sunlight. This is probably best placed in an art collection.


The authors describe the tragedy and drama of the volcanic eruption of 1980, giving details of some dramatic incidents in which hikers or residents or campers were able to escape—or were not. The text discusses the ways in which volcanoes are formed and erupt, describes the changes caused on or near St. Helens by the fire, mud, and ash, and also mentions briefly some of the other volcanic disasters of history. The text is written with brisk capability, the photographs and diagrams are informative and well-placed; a bibliography, a glossary, and an index are appended.


Andrea didn’t know exactly what to expect when she sent off an order for an easy-to-assemble Wonda-Wings kit, but she didn’t really believe the Aero-Joy Juice that came with the kit would make it possible for her to fly—but fly she did. Awkward at first, Andrea soon learned the joy of riding a soaring current, dipping and swooping through the night sky. Her flights were secret; she tried to explain to her older brother, but he brushed her off. What made things difficult was that she couldn’t get the wings off; what could she do? Answering another ad, Andrea met the evil scientist who wanted her to become a bird, to give up her humanity. She was saved by a hasty gulp of the scientist’s brew called “Pteroterminate,” and by the sudden appearance of her brother on a rescue mission, and not a whit too soon. Although this sags a bit in the center of the story, it’s adequately structured, competently written, and ingeniously conceived; it has a good integration of the realistic and the fanciful, and there are moments of humor to give contrast.


More substantial in storyline and structure than most of Hall’s animal stories, this describes the protective love of a Puerto Rican boy, Paulo, for one of his grand-

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father's horses; Danza is a Paso Fino, a breed that Grandfather thinks is unappreciated. Macho, parochial, and dictatorial, Grandfather sneers at Paulo, who adores and fears the tough old man. The boy goes with Danza to the Louisiana horse farm, taken on loan (slightly contrived circumstance) by Major Kessler (just a touch of patronage here?) who is wonderfully kind to both Danza and Paulo. The horse is very ill; Kessler's very patient; Paulo's very insecure at the beginning of the visit and gains in self-confidence as the horse improves and the ways of the Americans become more familiar. The book ends with Grandfather coming to Louisiana and Danza winning first place in a show. A bit pat in the finish, but this is a horse story with variety and pace.


Of all the places she might stay while her parents went on a trip, the least appealing to Heather was the Greenwalds. The Greenwalds observed the Sabbath strictly and ate kosher food; they even sent their daughter to a Hebrew high school. Heather, the narrator, says, "We never went in for any of those things." Like other recent books in which children prove more open to theological tradition than do their parents, this moves predictably toward an ending in which Heather, once exposed, decides that she will become an Orthodox Jew. At the end of the trip, Heather's parents return, accept her new views, and even—at Heather's request—have a traditional Passover meal. Written with a light touch and a heavy message.


Although some of the pages are crowded, Heller's pictures of plants and animals are striking in their bold use of shapes and colors in combination with a cleanly-defined line that is also used for meticulous details. The text, which has a nice lilt and an occasional rhyme, points out that many other kinds of creatures lay eggs in addition to the most familiar one, the chicken; some of the details—all accurate—are corroborated by the illustrations. Very handsome.


Using the same photographic technique that she did in her first book, *Shapes and Things*, Hoban shows white silhouettes (sometimes shadowed) on black pages. There are several objects for each letter of the alphabet; almost all the objects are easily identifiable: for example, for B the page shows a bee, butterfly, bottle, banana, bird, bone, boat, and buttons. Occasionally (abacus, eraser of the wheel-and-whisk style, octopus) an object may challenge a child. Across the foot of each page, the pertinent letter is enlarged and in bold face, standing out from a running frieze. Useful and attractive.


In a sequel to *The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou* (reviewed in the December, 1968 issue) Lou and the other three black adolescents who have formed a vocal group leave home in hopes of becoming better known in the world of popular music. Hunter perpetuates the tradition of the black matriarch, for it is no-nonsense "Aunt"
Jerutha, an older woman, who comes to Las Vegas to help (in response to Lou's frantic wire to her brother) and straightens out everything with home cooking and common sense. Lou has been having a rocky affair with one of the three men in their group, she's been worried about their finances and the way their manager is handling them, and horrified by the fact that the "boys" are using dope and gambling. Aunt Jerutha copes with everything. The story ends with Lou's illness and recovery and her decision to live with cultured Cousin Julia and then go to college. This is less focused than the first book, and it's weakened by an uneven pace that makes the action sag in spots, but it gives a convincing picture of the vicissitudes of the music business: the unscrupulous managers and agents, the cheap jobs, the easy temptations, and the constant need to improve the act, provide new material, keep up appearances, and be nice to the right (or wrong) people.


With her customary brisk efficiency and sympathetic perception, Hyde discusses and advises on some of the problems that arise for children who must adjust to stepfamilies; single-parent homes; divorce, with the several custody arrangements that may obtain; and the growing phenomenon of parental kidnapping. She describes the ways in which children react to these problems, using many fictional examples, and suggests ways of helping oneself or getting help if adjustment seems difficult or impossible. A useful, sensible book closes with an index, a divided bibliography, and a list that includes both organizations readers may wish to join and sources from which they may get helpful information or actual counseling.


While almost everything Ingalls describes is covered in the many articles and books that have been written on McCarthy, a fact that is gratefully acknowledged, this succinct description of McCarthy's career is an excellent introduction for young adult readers. The author is critical of his subject, but he writes in a moderate tone that is a better showcase for McCarthy's reckless invective than an equally impassioned tone would be. Although the text covers the beginning and end of McCarthy's political career, it focuses on the Senate hearings in detail, and since they were high theater albeit low politics, the account is dramatic, vividly evoking the conflicts and the personalities involved in them. A bibliography and a relative index are appended.


Galdone's wild-eyed, active people and animals, drawn with comic flair and livened with just enough color, add a slightly manic dimension to a traditional noodlehead story from English folklore. The bonny (but draft) fiancee of a stalwart youth is overcome by how awful it would be if she were married and if her husband were to go to the cellar and if an ax fell on his head—and she sobs bitterly. Each of her equally silly parents sobs sympathetically at the terrible thought. The bridegroom goes off saying that if he ever finds three sillier people he'll come back to be wed. He does find them, he decides his three sillies are not so bad, and he comes home to marry his own dear silly. An amusing tale, as nice for telling as for reading, is adapted and illustrated in equally blithe spirits.

The authors discuss communications in general and give some history of the development of primitive communications (smoke signals, yodeling, pictographs, etc.) before describing the work of scientists, over generations, whose findings contributed to the present state of knowledge and to present technological proficiency in communications. Although the writing is straightforward, clearly intended for the layperson, the amount and complexity of facts about electro-magnetic and electronic devices may prove difficult for such readers to comprehend. Both theoretical and applied aspects of telecommunication are covered, and the final chapters discuss some of the advances that may take place in the future: electronic newspapers, combinations of television-and-computer installations that could be individually programmed, more sophisticated ways to contact intelligent life on other planets. A glossary and index are included.


Short sentences and large print make this book easy to read, but what it offers is little more than the information provided in most encyclopedia articles, which often have interesting full-color examples of valentines of the past; here the rather awkward line drawings are uninformative. Kessel describes the pagan origins of the holiday in ancient Rome, its abolition in that form by a third century pope, who renamed it St. Valentine's Day in honor of one of several Saint Valentines (which of those by that name is not known), and some of the customs associated with the holiday. She discusses the way in which the day is celebrated now, in a final section of a continuous text.


Most people thought of thirteen-year-old Christopher as a nuisance. Unpopular at school, in a hostile relationship with his sister, he was a worry to his parents and an aggravation to his teachers. Christopher changes very gradually in this episodic fantasy, each of his strange experiences contributing to his understanding of himself and his compassion and affection for others. The device for change and adventure is the strange man who calls himself "Headmaster," and who teaches the boy how to use his psychic powers, including changing his own size, reading minds, and making himself invisible. The major lesson Christopher learns: people don't necessarily dislike you just because they dislike what you do or say. This doesn't quite succeed in being credible within the parameters of the fantasy, but it comes close, having adequate structure and style, a fairly strong merging of fantasy and realism, and plenty of action; it's the fantasy element that seems forced.


The text, published as a paperback in 1979 (reviewed in the December, 1979 issue), is written by two brothers and is useful more for its simplicity than its coverage or organization; this edition has dropped the awkward drawings of the original and has some separation of text into separate items in the table of contents, items that appeared under subheads in the original. This does not compare in scope, coverage, or
Lobel uses soft colors and softened lines for a folk-like tale that has a subdued humor and that is sturdily constructed. The writing is direct and simple, telling the story of a hapless couple in long-ago China; repeatedly Ming Lo goes to a wise man to find out how he can move the mountain, since the falling rocks ruin the roof of his house and the perpetual shade prevents his garden from flourishing. The house clearly is too close to the mountain, but it’s only after a few abortive plans (pushing the mountain, or trying to frighten it) that the wise man finds a way for Ming Lo to move the mountain, an ingenious solution that should afford the audience the pleasure of knowing more than Ming Lo about what’s really going on.

MacCloud uses a theme familiar to science fiction readers: the encounter between a creature or person from a highly advanced society and a creature or person from one that had less technological proficiency but (usually) more warmth. Michael, the protagonist, is the product of a civilization of the future in which people are products; his value is that he can be sent on an exploratory mission to a twin planet (he’s from Vax) that is called Mirrorvax. However, it is not a mirror; Michael falls in love with Anamandra, whose gentle affection is irresistible, whose way of life is alien. Michael leaves; in a poignant ending Anamandra vows she will love him forever, as she sadly watches the sky in which Michael’s ship is now only a point of light. The writing style is smooth; characterization is adequate if not deep; the story gets off to a good, brisk start and sags before Michael and his colleagues land on Mirrorvax to find the primitive people who have so little—or (and this is the message of most such books) is it the visitors who have so little?

Six episodes, each a small adventure in the life of a little girl, are well-suited for reading aloud and should appeal to readers in the primary grades because they reflect the sorts of experiences that are familiar: making a new friend at school, playing with other children in the neighborhood, taking a friend’s toy and having a guilty conscience until the deed is confessed, celebrating a family Christmas. The writing is bland, only occasionally alleviated by humor, smooth but rather static.

Twelve-year-old Daniel Rider and his parents have just moved to a small town from Manhattan, and Daniel is saddened when the one friend he’s made, Father Petrakis, goes off on vacation. He’s further dismayed when a young man, a friend of Petrakis’s, is dumped at the rectory by an angry sister: the man, Nikos, is a poet, pining away in grief and guilt because his friend Mark had died of exposure while the two were camping. Most of the story has to do with Daniel’s friendship with a girl...
neighbor, and to Daniel’s curiosity about the strange, light-filled mist on the lake and the magical bird that has emerged from that light and taken him flying into other people’s dreams. In the end, Petrakis returns, they all ride into the mist (where Mark greets and embraces Nikos) and return home, where Nikos is suddenly cured. Too bad that the occult fantasy and the realism never mesh convincingly, because the author has a strong potential for polished and substantive writing: his characters are convincingly drawn, and his writing style is firm and fluent, particularly strong in dialogue.


There is a pervasive simplicity and candor in this new collection by one of today’s major poets for children; although not every selection is Merriam at her best, there are many particularly deft poems. Some of the poems are about words (particularly about rhyming words) and some have a sense of fun, although these are not really humorous poems. Some have the lift of jump-rope verses, and all are appropriately directed, by subject interest and level of complexity, to a young audience; most of the poems could be enjoyed by very young children if they were read aloud.


This focuses on the noises that Fred, a dog, makes or hears during one active day when he is attacked by a cat, sprayed by a hose, causes an accident, and catches a thief. The noises are used as part of the story; as in concrete poetry, they are placed on the pages in patterns, printed in various sizes and colors. The read-aloud audience should enjoy the vvvrooms and beeps and ding ding ringelings, especially if the reader-aloud delivers them with gusto, and they will undoubtedly enjoy also the in-and-out-of-trouble action of the plot; Fred, the only figure shown, is an orange silhouette scampering over the pages. Not distinctive, but amusing.


Profusely illustrated by color photographs of excellent quality, as well as by some maps and drawings, the two oversize volumes are alphabetically arranged, the material printed in two-column format. The alphabetization is preceded by some general discussion of animals’ homes, habitats, communications, et cetera; explicit details about such aspects of each animal’s life are provided within the alphabetical listings. Vital statistics are given in bold print, and are therefore easy to spot in quick reference use of the book; a table of mammalian orders, a bibliography, and an index (giving scientific as well as the popular names under which the animals are entered) are appended.


Simont never draws any more than is necessary, so the cheerful pink and green tints of his monster and his two human characters have only enough background detail to complement the story, simply told in first person by Minn (Minneapolis
Simpkins). True, her mother had said no pets but she’d never specifically mentioned a monster, so Minn brought the unhappy little creature in out of the rain. That’s how this juvenile version of a French farce starts, as Minn manages to get the monster out of sight whenever it appears—and whenever it appears, it’s grown. Mom doesn’t take Minn’s reports on the monster literally but assumes her child is so anxious for a pet that she’s invented a monster. So Minn takes the monster to its home, Mom promises a pet, and the story ends with absolutely everybody happy. Brisk, funny, easy to read, with the appeal of wish-fulfillment and the satisfaction of being able to identify with a child who knows something an adult doesn’t.


Like the Goldner book for younger readers, reviewed above, this gives scientific information about the eruption of Mount St. Helens and of the investigative work scientists were doing at the site, since there had been seismographic disturbances for almost two months. There are many anecdotes about individuals or groups in the area, or even on the mountain, some of whom escaped. Others did not, including some scientists who knew they were risking their lives to gather information. Place gives detailed information about the destruction and the second-wave results, such as the blockage of channels (mud from a tributary) in the Columbia River, a fact that caused losses in the millions of dollars. The writing is informal and colorful, the subject dramatic, the coverage good; an index is included.


With the establishment of the first animal protection law in the state of New York in 1866, there was legal sanction for founding of an American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Poynter’s text is sympathetic and informal, but it points to some serious problems: the widespread abandonment of pets by owners; the need for more, and better-supervised, animal shelters; a rapidly growing population of domesticated animals, not all of whom get adequate care from their owners. All of these problems put a heavy responsibility on those concerned people who staff the animal shelters, and this book is primarily about them and what they do; it offers advice to owners on the care and safety of their pets, and it alleviates the problem-oriented nature of its subject with enough anecdotes that do have happy endings to make the tone of the book balanced. An index gives access to the contents.


De Paola’s stumpy little figures, in black white, and tones of grey, are just right for the light, breezy tone of a simply written story that has as its appeals a Hallowe’en setting, a story told primarily in easy-to-read dialogue, and a brief but nicely structured plot. Nicky is giving a party that is sure to be spooky, he says; his friend Albert is delighted to be coming to the party but loftily sure he won’t be scared. By anything. However, he becomes increasingly alarmed as the party progresses and only when the guests take off their masks does he realize they are all strangers. The gaffe is explained when Nicky and his guests appear at the door, calling “Trick or treat!” Clearly, in a big apartment building it’s possible to get the wrong party. What occurs is logical and the story ends with the two groups joining forces for popcorn and games at Nicky’s.

Direct and clear, Pringle's text describes the many factors that cause differences between microclimates and the larger ecological milieu within which they exist. He also points out how some of the plants and animals that are affected by the microclimate may, in turn, affect it; for example, ants in an anthill may vary their activities in relation to which side of their structure receives the most sunlight, but in the small scale of a microclimate, the structure itself may cut off wind or sun to influence what grows in the shadow of the anthill. The photographs are informative and are carefully placed in relation to the well-written and well-organized text; a glossary, a bibliography, and an index are provided.


Broad in coverage, precise in detail, objective and serious in tone, this excellent survey of the intricate problem of land use is written in a straightforward and authoritative style. Whether it is shoreline, forest, or the wilderness, rangeland or farmland, the decisions of today will affect the land and the people for generations to come. The hopes of conservationists, the needs for energy sources, the conflicting demands of individuals, agencies, business interests, and agricultural prerogatives all point to one multifaceted and crucial question: who has the right to decide? An index and a bibliography add to the usefulness of a timely and provocative book.


The oversize pages accommodate many drawings each, in this new book about Maple Hill Farm and its animals; the line, composition, color, and humor of the pictures are as engaging as ever. The text is split; the first part describes the baby owl that tumbled out of a fallen tree, went on to become a family pet, and eventually was turned loose, and the second part has no narrative structure but simply describes the behavior and characteristics of three Maple Hill Farm cats. The writing is breezy and affectionate, but neither the style nor the substance is impressive.


Although neither the writing style nor the plot of this modest story is likely to dazzle readers, it is just the sort that's needed to fill a gap in the growing list of books about handicapped children (and for handicapped and other children), for it focuses on Margaret and not on her physical condition. In a wheelchair, Margaret is in what appears to be a kindergarten class. She has a running feud with Tommy, who's a bit jealous because Margaret wins praise for balancing such things as magic markers or blocks, and who often knocks her projects over. No shrinking violet, Margaret issues a stern warning. He masterpiece is a structure of dominoes which wins kudos and cash at a school carnival and also ends the feud. The story is told in a direct, simple style; the illustrations have a casual, rumpled, cheerful air.


Tidy little pictures of subdued brightness have no background clutter to distract the readers and viewers; the first-person text is a monologue (and a bit monotonous)
about all the objects in the room and how the little girl plays with them. The only
3-5 action occurs when the child hears her mother coming, hides, and is delighted when
yrs. mother goes along with the gag and pretends to be desolate because her little girl has
disappeared. This may have the appeal of the familiar for some children, but it’s
static writing and makes a tepid book.

354p. illus. with photographs. $19.95.

Written by a professor of physical education who is also a former soccer coach and
R sports writer, this is a book in which the beginner can find basic facts, the seasoned
6-6 player can find excellent advice on both individual and team play, and the fan can
wallow happily in soccer history. The history comes first and includes facts about the
evolution of the sport and about some of soccer’s dramatic moments, particularly in
World Cup play. Rosenthal discusses tactics and systems of play, advocates soccer
as a sport for women, describes common injuries and injury prevention as well as
training exercises, and concludes with a detailed explanation of the rules, penalties
and procedures of soccer. There’s a mass of material here, and the print is small, but
the full coverage, authoritative and lucid writing, and logical arrangement of subject
matter amply compensate. Diagrams of official soccer signals, a glossary, a list of
World Cup competitions, and an index are appended.

160p. $9.95.

When Janie first came into the hospital as a patient, she discovered that Courtney,
just her age, also had scoliosis but that was about all they had in common. They
4-6 didn’t even like each other very much. Time brought changes, however; Janie
learned how brave quiet, dreamy Courtney was although she insisted that Janie was
the brave one, and Courtney learned that it was fun to go along with harum-scarum
Janie on her small acts of rebellion against hospital routine. By the time Janie left, she
knew that she loved her new friend and that when they met again, it would be “just
like always.” This has moments of contrivance and it lacks a strong story line, but
the writing style, setting, and sympathetic protagonists are sturdy and indicate a
potential for better books to come.


As she did in *Bus Ride*, Sachs tells her story just by the dialogue between two
adolescents, an effective way to appeal to the target audience for this series, the slow
or reluctant older reader. The subject is one with universal appeal, too: boy-girl
relations, and it’s handled with humor. Angie, nervously calling the popular boy on
whom she has a crush, Jim, gets the wrong number but finds the party she’s called
(another Jim) friendly. They talk every evening, are convinced they are in love (sight
unseen) and almost break up when Angie finds out that Jim’s neglected to tell her that
he has a very large nose about which he’s been teased all his life—and that he’s fibbed
about a few other things. However, after a little plea bargaining, Angie says she still
cares and they agree to meet at last. This is that rarity, a story written for a high-low
series that has style and ingenuity enough to be a good read for all readers.

Sadler, Catherine Edwards. *Two Chinese Families*; illus. with photographs by Alan Sadler.

Every page of text is faced by a full-page photograph in a photodocumentary in
which the subject triumphs over the style, which is choppy and plodding. The pic-
Ad
acters are of good quality, the subject is interesting, and the text is informative; the
arrangement, after separate chapters on each of two young families, is topical
(school, work, free day) and the tone is matter-of-fact, although the author is positive
in her appreciation of the improved living conditions and educational benefits for
most Chinese citizens.

$7.95; Library ed. $7.63.

Although the title may lead children to think this story is about an April Fool’s Day
joke, it is not; it is about a clever jester, or fool, who took his place in a series of fools,
each of whom lasted a month, and all of whom had been hired to amuse a king who
was miserable because his feet hurt. The read-aloud audience can enjoy being wiser
than the silly king, who threw away a mountain of shoes that hurt his feet. Not until
the April Fool had led the weary monarch on a long hike and then given him the shoes
he’d worn (unlike all the others, well broken in and by now comfortable) did the king
find a comfortable pair of shoes and the April Fool get his promised bag of gold.
Pastel-tinted, McCully’s pictures have a comic flair that matches the nicely-turned
silliness of the blithely developed plot.


The author and photographer pool their dependable skills to produce another good
book in their series of photo-essays on animals. Here the majestic scenery of the far
north adds to the beauty of the photographs; the text is Scott’s usual amalgam of
carefully detailed facts about habits, habitat, mating and reproductive patterns, ap-
pearance, eating habits, et cetera. The writing is serious but not dry, dignified but not
formal, and imbued with naturalist Scott’s own enthusiastic interest in the subject.

Segal, Lore. *The Story of Old Mrs. Brubeck and How She Looked for Trouble and Where She

Softly tinted in pale, bright colors, the spare and comic drawings—at times show-
ing the doughty Mrs. Brubeck in an animated frieze—are exactly right for a nonsense
tale that has the simplicity and directness of folk literature. A chronic worrier, old
Mrs. Brubeck is especially perturbed when a beloved grandchild is visiting; she’s so
sure trouble is waiting to hurt the child that she spends an exhausting day trying to
catch him. Only at bedtime does she spy trouble (her shadow) and clasps him in her
arms so that he can’t hurt the child during the night. But when her arm loosens,
trouble escapes and leaves the house in haste and, the story ends, never ever again
bothers Mrs. Brubeck. The style is brisk and bouncy, with an ingenuous note that’s a
nice foil for the fantasy ending.


In a fantasy that verges on the tall tale, the story is told by eleven-year-old Oliver,
oldest of the three children who feel mildly bereft when their beloved housekeeper
leaves them. After several candidates who don’t quite work out, they meet Ilsa Von
der Nagel, whose speech (as in the title) is flavored by her Belgian origins, whose
cooking is heavenly, whose nature is cheery and loving. What’s the problem? Ilsa
feels that the psychic activity (noises, apparitions) she brings is disturbing the household. Fortunately, an accident discloses the fact that what the fairies want is the stick to which Ilsa’s dog is so devoted; since it is actually a magic wand that had been stolen years ago. This has a lot of action, some humor, good characters, and some good writing; it is weakened by the inclusion of extraneous material (for example, a great deal about the original housekeeper, a character who completely drops out of the action but is given a big part at the start and from whom communications—leading to nothing—keep arriving.) The illustrations are awkward, inept pencil drawings.


Although Siegal’s story is told by a fictional narrator, Piri, it is based on her own memories of the privation and persecution of Hungarian Jews under German occupation during World War II. Written in a vigorous conversational flow, the story is dramatic and moving, ending with stunning impact as Piri’s family—or what is left of it—boards a train for a work camp at a place nobody’s ever heard of, Auschwitz. This is a touching addition, effective and affective, to the growing body of books about the Holocaust.


Scratchy line drawings, occasionally macabre and usually humorous, illustrate a robust collection of entertaining poetry. Little of this is sensitive, and some of it is more slapstick than subtle, but there’s a sense of fun and nonsense that should appeal to most children. Many of the selections have a memorable lilt, some almost like jump-rope rhymes. For example, “‘Hammock.’ ‘Grandma sent the hammock /The good Lord sent the breeze/I’m here to do the swinging /Now, who’s gonna move the trees?’” Not great poetry, but likely to be popular.


An addition to the growing number of books about a child’s first day at school, this is adequately told, realistic in its avoidance of Instant Adaptation but not outstanding in style, and not enhanced by the amateurish-looking pencil drawings. Marsha Lou’s mother has decided to take a job; on Marsha Lou’s first day at a day care center she weeps, sits alone, and refuses to participate in any of the activities, although it is clear the other children are enjoying themselves. “I was mad and I was sad,” she reports to her mother at the end of the day, “But maybe . . . maybe I’ll have a good time tomorrow.” “And you know what? She did,” the book ends.


In simple composed pictures that have bright colors used with restraint, Lionni’s gray mice, shaped like fat little ovoid sausages, cavort in appropriate scenes for each month of the year. The calendar arrangement introduces the young child to concepts of seasonal changes, with each month briefly described in a page opposite the text. Sample: “While cold winter grips the world outside, December is a good time to be at

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home, sharing holiday warmth and cheer." The text is adequate but not distinctive or unusual; the pictures are not unusual for Lionni, but they are distinctively individual and effective.


Photographs of a class of five little girls and their teacher have a self-conscious charm. Cordelia, one of the five, is the narrator, which gives the text an immediacy and simplicity that are appealing; unlike first ballet books for older readers, this does not go into details about steps and positions, but rambles through a casual discussion of what fun it is, what you do, why one member of the class is good (no jealousy, the other girls accept this) and what happens when you get silly and stop working. The message does come through; it’s work, hard work, that’s nevertheless fun.


Adequate but repetitive drawings with scratchy line and subdued shades of blue and peach illustrate a story about a subject of great importance to preschool children, who often hear horror stories from sophisticated members of the second grade set who are delighted to impress younger children with alarming tales. The author gets in every good point she can realistically make in depicting the unnamed narrator’s first-day experiences and the preparation for that day. Both parents are encouraging, the child visits the school in advance of enrolling, an effort has been made to teach the child address and telephone number, there’s a visit to the doctor, etc. Also, the doctor is black, the dentist is female, both parents help in preparation: in other words, Stanek eschews sexism and stereotyping; gives some pointers on getting ready for school, and encourages preschool children to anticipate rather than worry; she also shows some of the things children learn at school, such as not being too noisy or learning to share. Not fine writing or illustration, and not very exciting as a story, but this is both positive and useful.


A potpourri of information, quips, stories, drawings, photographs, and cartoons of cats; there are many strips or single frames featuring Garfield, the syndicated cartoon cat. Some of the photographs are beguiling, some mystifying: what does a shot of the White House, taking up a half page, add to the boxed paragraph of quick facts about four presidential pets? The material is arranged in short topics, with no discernible pattern; however, within the hodge-podge there are some useful sections (care of cats, breeds of cats) and some that seem woefully inadequate: less than half a page of text on "Cats in Folklore" and not much more on "Cats in Literature."


Framed paintings in subdued, bright colors show the street scenes of a small, busy town in Holland in the Christmas season. The watercolors have wonderfully meticulous details of costume, architecture, and holiday decoration; the paintings have been arranged in more or less a story form, although some of the captions (added by the
British publishing house from which the book comes) seem forced: "Delicious hot bread rolls were bought for all the family," or "Not everyone liked the music being played on the bandstand." Nevertheless, this has precise and often comic paintings of considerable charm and authenticity (Pieck was born in 1895) and it can help young children understand what Christmas was like in other times and places.


Repetitive but tidy and cozy, tinted drawings of a brother and sister (mice) illustrate a brief and simple story in which Udry plays with the sounds of the mice’s names, Thump and Plunk, and the names of their dolls, Thumpit and Plunkit. “And Plunk plunks Thump. So—Thump thumps Plunk again. And Plunk plunks Thump again,” and so on. Mother intervenes, scolds, and invites her children to the kitchen for ice cream. Disciples of Alfred Adler may flinch, but the read-aloud audience will undoubtedly enjoy the no-fault ending as well as the plunk /thump nonsense sounds.


Like Alison Lurie’s *The Heavenly Zoo* (reviewed in the October, 1980 issue) this gives brief accounts of some of the Greek legends of the stars; first published in France under the title *Quand Brillent Les Etoiles*, this is not quite as well illustrated as the Lurie book. The retellings of legends are equally brief but are more simple and direct in style, making them more appropriate for slightly younger readers or for reading aloud to children too young to be independent readers. Star maps for each sign of the zodiac are included at the back of the book; each carries the picture (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, etc.) that is also used with the retelling of the appropriate legend.


The author does an adequate job of blending fantasy and realism in this story but fails to make the story convincing within its fanciful parameters because he uses it so heavily as a channel for his message. Worthy as the message may be (children’s belief in unicorns, or Easter rabbit, or Santa Claus must be respected) it is dinned into the reader over and over by the child’s father, a judge, the fictional president of the United States, and a justice of the Supreme Court. Through it all, nine-year-old Dorothy remains wide-eyed and innocent; her parents’ support, when she’s expelled from school for lying (insisting she has seen a unicorn as, in the story, she has indeed done) is the strongest aspect of the story, which contains a few grammatical boners, as when the president of the United States gives Dorothy a glass unicorn, saying, “This is from my wife and myself . . .”


Pastel tints and a slightly raffish line are used, at times in too-busy pages, to illustrate a not-unusual story of a small child’s adjustment to dethronement. Lucy is
not delighted with her baby brother, especially with the way her parents coo at Chuckie; she doesn’t hurt the baby, but she talks a tough line. Lucy does an aboutface when Chuckie’s first word proves to be “Lucy.” After that, Lucy not only is helpful but also goes back to the orderly way she’d lived before jealousy led her to act sloppy. Affable, but not quite as amusing as some of the other sibling /conversion stories—Martha Alexander’s Nobody Asked Me If I Wanted a Baby Sister, for example.
READING FOR PARENTS

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


Braille Institute of America. Expectations 1981, a Braille anthology, is available to any blind American child in grades through six. It is free on parental request. Organizations, schools, or libraries wishing to receive this 33rd volume in an annual series may also write to Betty Kagaljan, Braille Institute of America, 741 N. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90029.


Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Office of Marketing. *Parents in Reading*, a free newsletter, from NREL, 300 S.W. Sixth Ave., Portland, OR 97204.


Sartain, Harry, ed. *Mobilizing Family Forces for Worldwide Reading Success*. International Reading Association, 1981. 86p. Paper. $6.00 prepaid; $4.00 prepaid for IRA individual members.