BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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New Titles for Children and Young People

Ahlberg, Janet. The Baby's Catalogue; written and illus. by Janet and Allan Ahlberg. Little, 1983. 82-9928. ISBN 0-316-02037-0. 27p. $10.50.

Titles and labels are the only print on the pages of a book that begins with a page headed "Babies" and goes through the objects and activities and people that most 1-3 babies see on a typical day. There are Moms, Dads, brothers and sisters, toys, high chairs, diapers, meals, books, baths, bedtimes, etc. The softly colored paintings are cheerful and amusing, the format is clean and uncluttered, and the whole should provide happy hours of pointing, identification, and naming.

D.V. Everyday life concepts


Illustrated with photographs that are of good quality but that are not always good compositions, this has a flatly written third person text that describes Sonya's activities at home, at school, and at outdoor play. Sonya wishes her mother were at home to talk to and hug, but she enjoys visiting Mommy's office. She especially enjoys weekends because then she has time with Mommy and Daddy. Sonya likes her sitter, and she gets along well with the grandmother who stays with her while Mommy is on a business trip. Mommy comes home in time for Sonya's sixth birthday party, and Sonya has fun helping prepare for the party as well as at the party. This may assuage the feelings of children who also have working mothers, but it has a static quality and lacks a sense of story.

D.V. Mother-daughter relations


The characters are mice: detective Tweedy; his assistant Rollo; the wealthy J. P. Cadwalader who calls them in to find his missing, valuable five-hundred-year-old cheese; the cheese expert, M. Chandelier, and the thief. After going to France by submarine and swimming to land when their vessel is cut in two by a swordfish, they charter a plane and return. The case is solved by deduction despite the locked room/alarm system/single key situation, and the untouched missing cheese is then enjoyed as the four mice have a feast. Action and a simple writing style are the book's strengths, the characters its appeal, and the hit-or-miss plot its weakness; this has none of the brio of the Anatole stories about a more convincing mouse detective, and little of the Anatole humor.
Debbie, who tells the story, is just starting high school and hopes that it won’t affect her the way it has affected her older sister: Maggie now wants to be called Margaret, she is aloof with members of her family, and she is completely devoted to Mr. Carraway, the handsome teacher who is coaching the drama club play. Equally devoted is Debbie’s best friend, Karen, who’s just been given a role in the play. Debbie’s puzzled. Why are the other two so defensive about Mr. Carraway? She’s even more puzzled when Karen abruptly quits the cast. Missing Karen, Debbie has become good friends with Murray, despite the fact that they are teased because he’s shorter than she; Murray tries to help her find out what’s going on. When Karen does confess that the teacher had kissed and caressed her, she makes Debbie promise not to tell. That she knows and won’t tell makes Murray angry; her knowledge also leads to a realization that the same thing must have happened to Maggie. With family support, Maggie finally goes to the school principal, and Karen (who does not have parental support) joins them. Eventually Murray learns the truth and admits Debbie did the right thing by keeping Karen’s secret. Although the story occasionally lags in pace, it is honest and clear-sighted, and it’s written with compassion and humor.

D.V. Ethical concepts; Friendship values; Parent-child relations; Sisters; Teacher-pupil relations


A dozen previously published stories are included in an anthology in which each story illustrates some aspect of psychological functioning: development, sensation, perception, learning, memory, intelligence, etc. The quality of the selections is high, with contributors that include Asimov and Waugh, Jerome Bixby, Roald Dahl, and Donald Westlake. A set of editorial notes is appended; they discuss the scientific rather than the literary aspects of the stories.


Frank has done an adequate job of condensing and simplifying this children’s classic, and the soft, romantic illustrations, subdued in colors, are appropriate for the story. The question is (as it is with most abbreviated classics) who’s the audience? Even when shortened, this is not a short story; it loses Barrie’s style, although it adheres to the plot, and while the publisher’s foreword suggests that the read-aloud audience will want to read the full text when they are older, the likelihood of that happening is moot.


Alphabetically arranged, a series of entries includes descriptions of sports, sports terms, outstanding players, trophies, and special sports events. While the book gives a great deal of information, it is often uneven in treatment, occasionally arbitrary about inclusions (a soccer field is shown but not an ice-hockey rink; yet half a page is devoted to a drawing of the Stanley Cup) and choice of performers seems arbitrary. It is understandable that, given production time, no hardbound book can be wholly up-to-date, but—to stay with hockey—the exclusion of Wayne Gretzky? No mention of a hat trick? No index that might, for example, pull together “bunt,” “squeeze play,” and “steal” for those unfamiliar with baseball terminology?

A dour hypochondriac, Mrs. McGinty is always complaining and is the butt of neighborhood children's teasing. One day she buys a cucumber plant, and its rapid growth causes people to flock to her home; even the children become proud of the plant that's higher than a house, and they help her tend it. When a team of botanists begs to have the plant for their collection, it is flown off by several helicopters. Meanwhile, the story ends, "That night ... in a secluded corner of the garden ..." and the last page shows a new plant growing. Neither the idea of a plant grown enormous nor the had-she-but-known ending is original, but the idea is amusing and the story simply told; the weakness is the stress, at the beginning of the book, on Mrs. McGinty's personality, which has nothing to do with the rest of the story. The illustrations, by a New Zealand artist, are boldly designed, usually dramatically composed, nicely detailed.


One of a series called "A Sports for Me Book," this is profusely illustrated by action photographs, some of which either don't agree with the text or are badly placed in relation to it. On the whole, however, the pictures implement the description by a neophyte diver of the basic skills he learns in a first class in diving. Briggs includes the criteria by which competitive diving is judged, which may interest readers who prefer the role of spectator. This doesn't take the place of a teacher, but it's useful supplementary material. For another book in the series, see the Hammond title reviewed below. As with other books in the series, a glossary of terms is appended.


One of a series of books about a girl who had been an outstanding pitcher on her high school baseball team; here she is signed by the Dodgers and sent to training camp. The baseball material is balanced by some sequences about Ruth's relationships with her mother and with a boy friend who becomes a boyfriend, but the focus is on her experiences as a rookie: coaching sessions, problems in dealing with some of the players who resent or are amused by a female player, and game sequences. Despite the lack of depth in characterization and the sometimes plodding style, this should appeal to sports fans, and the author does a convincing job of handling the signing of a woman to play professional baseball.

D.V. Sex roles


Although Hazel, eleven, and her father squabble about everything, they're really good friends; they are, in fact, dependent on each other when Hazel's shiftless mother goes off to visit her folks. Hazel has just been told she will have to spend another year in sixth grade; she's tough, inventive, loquacious, and self-satisfied. And then the Pooles move in next door, and Hazel—who owns their house—relishes the idea of ordering Felder Poole around. She can't understand why all the Pooles love and talk about books, since she scorns reading; she can't understand why Felder gets so excited about plants. Then Hazel becomes smitten with a new love for plants,
and soon Felder is the dominant figure in the relationship; unfortunately, this makes her father jealous and his irritation mounts when Hazel and Felder, with the help of an elderly friend, start a successful money-raising project to buy fertilizer. He evicts the Pooles, but Hazel has been changed forever by knowing them: she has learned that reading is not to be despised, and she has learned to love the land. Like other resilient Cleaver protagonists, this is, even if she’s not likeable, a girl with grit. She’s just a bit too pert, her father just a bit too callow, and Felder just a bit too patient and knowledgeable to be true; save for the evidence of this in dialogue, the writing style is competent.

D.V. Father-daughter relations; Friendship values


“You rub it on your skin. You spread it on bread and eat it. You do the dishes with it. You paste with it. You protect your lips with it, and lots more.” Cobb describes the various (greasy, sticky, slimy, warm, etc.) kinds of goos that share some characteristics. Some of the text is descriptive or explanatory, some devoted to simple home experiments that are informative in themselves and that illustrate scientific principles. The writing is direct, informal, clear in exposition and instruction; the book concludes with a list of “Goos That Do For You,” that specifies what various substances do or don’t do, and things you can do with them: i.e. waxes don’t mix with water, do melt, do become shiny when rubbed, and with them one can polish shoes, floors, and cars.

C.U. Science


Line and wash drawings illustrate a five-chapter story that is based on an actual invasion, by the pirate Hypolite Bouchard, of the San Juan Capistrano Mission in 1818. The protagonist is an Ahachmai Indian boy, Pio, who attends school at the Mission, where his father works as a carpenter. Often in trouble, Pio despairs of ever clearing his record and earning the right to ring the biggest bell, his dearest ambition. When the pirates approach, the padres and Indians go to the hills to hide; Pio stays at the mission, is found and released by the pirates, stays in hiding, and after three days of watching the looting and burning, rings the bell to tell everyone the pirates are gone and it is safe to come back. Thus he earns the right to ring his bell. This is simply written, has the appeals of action and danger, and describes the believable (if foolhardy) behavior of the protagonist. It is weakened by a slow start, in which there are descriptions of what Pio liked to do and of some tangential incidents.

D.V. Courage


In clear language and in logical sequence, Cole explains that wheels make cars go, and describes the several procedures that turn the wheels and the moving or stationary parts that are involved. A useful book, this is profusely illustrated with clear
diagrams and some drawings, all of which are carefully placed in relation to textual references and all of which (save for one page that shows two horse-drawn vehicles with no attachment between the vehicle and the horse) are explicit and adequately labelled.


Louie, the narrator, is a nice guy. He wants desperately to be a good football player, but doesn't expect to be a star; he has a warm relationship with his parents that includes mutual respect; he's surprised and appreciative when one of his high school classmates, Becky, shows an interest. He comes to grief when he publicly accuses the coach of having urged the team to be rough with the black star of an opposing team. That's the end of high school football. He falls deeply in love with Becky, and is stunned by grief when she's killed in a freak accident, then adds to his reputation as a maverick when he shouts defiantly at the funeral service, resenting the platitudes of a minister who never knew her. His parents are supportive, and so is the track coach, who thinks Louie would make a good runner, and who fights the football coach and school principal to get permission to let Louie join the track team. The story ends with Louie's graduation night and his musing about all he's learned in the past year, a quiet ending for a story that is structurally controlled and capably written. Crutcher's characterization is powerful (especially in the depiction of the tyrannical and bullying football coach) and his protagonist's tender relationships are equally convincing. Above all, this is a story of honor and principles, messages that are achieved without preaching. An unusually fine first novel.

D.V. Death, adjustment to; Ethical concepts; Independence; Parent-child relations


Nonsense poetry about animals, alphabetically arranged. The rhymes are often contrived, the scansion is uneven, and the humor is the one appealing facet of the poems, but it varies in effectiveness. Sample, the first stanza of 'The Gibbon.'

"Stanley the Gibbon and his youngest son Bobby/Were bored so decided to start a new hobby/'Let's guess the age of bananas,' Bob said/Said Stanley, 'You're mad,' and smacked Bob round the head/Young Bobby cried/His dad, Stanley, sighed/No ideas sprang to mind though both of them tried."


In a story that is set in Philadelphia in 1793, when there was an epidemic of yellow fever, the protagonist is fourteen-year-old Lep, a devoted apprentice to Dr. Peale, who had decided that he would go from their small town to the city to help the fever victims. Lep goes along, and also hopes to find his sister Clara, who has recently left for Philadelphia with a Mr. Botkin, revered by the children and their widowed mother for the generosity that had once helped their father with a desperately-needed loan. Mr. Botkin had appeared and asked for Clara's assistance in his business. What Lep discovers, when he traces Clara and her employer in the stricken city, is that Mr. Botkin is an imposter and a quack, selling fake cures to a gullible populace. The book has interesting period details, a fine writing style that is reminiscent of the bravado of Leon Garfield; it is weak structurally, with the use of contrivance and coincidence as the paths of the characters cross with suspicious convenience.
It goes to a girl's head when she gets a reputation for being the class wit, and it does a lot for her morale to become the girlfriend of the school's sports star. One of the things that everybody laughs at is Billie's joking about the school drama teacher; her classmates expect Billie to deliberately ruin her role as Juliet while Cameron, the quiet boy who plays Romeo, gets her more involved in the part. At this point the story, already formulaic, becomes fairly predictable; few readers will be surprised when Billie gets rid of her macho hero and turns to Cameron. Despite the predictability, the book should have some appeal to readers, since it has a lively writing style with natural dialogue and a humorous tone in depicting peer relationships.

D.V. Age-mate relations; Mother-son relations

Pencil drawings, some of which are tinted, illustrate a simply written text that follows one wood duck from birth, through the year's cycle, to maturity and mating. There is no anthropomorphism; in the narrative that depicts the first year of the wood duck and its mother and siblings, behavior is accurately described with no assumptions of human ideas or feelings. In the course of the story, lightly fictionalized, the text gives information about care of young, feeding habits, predators, habitat, et cetera; when some of the duckling's siblings are caught by predators, there is no implication of reprehensible behavior, so that the food chain is presented as a natural situation. A very nice example of a first book about an animal species.

C.U. Nature study; Reading, beginning

After being warned that she's keeping her baby brother from his nap because she's noisy, Mary Rose is told, "Please, just be a good girl and let Peter go to sleep." Trying to be a good girl, Mary Rose pours herself a glass of juice (and spills some juice) and prepares a bath for the baby (bubble-filled) and takes materials out to her sandbox (Mama's pots and pans). When confronted, Mary Rose claims that her doll, Katie, had done all these things. Why, Mama asks, did all those things happen? Why had Katie put the turtle into the fishbowl? "I think his mama was too busy to play with him." So Mama rocks Mary Rose, and rubs her back, and goes outdoors to play with her. Can Katie come, even if she's been naughty? Of course, Mama says, you don't reject someone you love. The quiet black and white pencil drawings have soft lines and restrained composition; the story is told in a direct, simple style, a brief but gentle and convincing assuagement for feelings of dethronement and rejection.

D.V. Baby, adjustment to; Mother-child relations

Tinted in soft colors, animated and humorous line drawings illustrate a fantasy in which the bland style and the whimsical plot are foils for each other. Snatched as an infant by a pelican, Arnold is dropped from the bird's beak into a nest of ducklings, and adopted by Mrs. Leda Duck as one of her own. An odd duckling, but she loves him. With mud and marsh slime, the others paste feathers over Arnold so that he
won't look so odd, and that's how Arnold is able to fly. Alas, investigating a kite one day (although his "mother" has told him to stay away from it) Arnold's caught. He falls, is rescued by a huge dog, taken to a house, and cleaned up by the people who live there and who recognize him as their own boy. Nicely told, with a wistful ending that rounds out the concept of the fantasy.


Suddenly orphaned, sixteen-year-old Colin wonders why his parents had died, why his lot was bereavement; a priest sends him on a quest that begins with an old man who can help him. That is how Colin is led to the maze, is briefly trapped, and escapes to have a series of encounters and adventures that include finding a sweet companion, and arrives at his goal. The book ends, "... Serena beside him, he walked toward the horizon into the country of the dawn." Although such trite writing appears occasionally, the style for the most part is adequate; the characters are busy rather than being portrayed with depth, the pace is fairly brisk, and the plot cliffhanger-to-cliffhanger.


The authors explain, in a preface, that this is a book about insects, that they are using the word "bug" only because it is common parlance. Several pages are devoted to each of fourteen insects, with meticulously detailed black and white pictures, realistic and handsome, dramatically extending the text. The writing is direct, authoritative, and clear; text and pictures are carefully integrated. A list of scientific names is provided.

C.U. Nature study; Science


Her name is Carol Ann Delaney, she's a high school senior, her mother is a Gypsy, and she begins her story with an incident in which Ma has set up a fortune-telling tent on the grounds of the county fair and is arrested on a charge of larceny. Selfish, domineering, and mercenary, Carol Ann's mother tries to pressure her into marrying a young farmer, but Carol Ann wants to have a career as a musician; encouraged by a sympathetic music teacher to believe that her singing, guitar-playing, and composing show true ability, Carol Ann leaves home to try her luck. The author is candid about prejudice and the relationship between mother and daughter, and she writes with a polished flow and a percipience that give the story pace and depth.

D.V. Independence; Mother-daughter relations; Older-younger generations; Self-confidence


A rich blend of fantasy, African and American folklore, history, and marvelous invention, this is the story of a young god, Pretty Pearl, who comes from Mount Highness, in Africa, with her older brother John de Conquer, to America. They rest in the soil for many years, and Pretty Pearl frets, wanting to try her power; John creates for her the John de Conquer root, which she wears around her neck and uses
to wield magic. She emerges during the Reconstruction Era and finds a hidden community, Promise Land, where a group of black people live in secrecy and are helped by some Cherokees. Pearl by now has become two gods, herself and the grandmotherly Mother Pearl, and both live with the “inside people” until their paradise is threatened by the advent of bird hunters and railway builders. They are again helped by their Cherokee friends and by John Henry, but Pretty Pearl is frightened. And then John de Conquer appears, rebuking Pearl for having broken the rules he laid down when he gave her the root and the power, but he forgives her, sets everyone straight, and disappears. They walk, gods and humans, for days, then John de Conquer reappears and takes Mother Pearl with him; they cross the Jordan and come to Ohio. And they take the name of Perry, and when Pearl tells everyone of herself and the other gods of Mount Highness, they laugh with pleasure and it becomes part of their legend. The author has used a bit of family (Perry) history in addition to the other real and mythic and imaginary aspects of this intricate panoply that testifies to the human spirit and the black experience.


Photographs show eight children taking their first lessons in square dancing, the commentary and explanations being given by one of the group. The text and pictures are better matched here than in the Briggs title above, and position diagrams help clarify the patterns of response to calls. The instructions are clear; terms are explained; and because there are no complicated or potentially dangerous procedures, this is probably a more effective teaching tool than other books in the series. It also shows dancers of all ages and suggests the pleasure in performing and competing at events. A glossary is included.

C.U. Hobbies


Although she chattered easily with her parents and with people she’d known long and well, Nancy was painfully shy with strangers and especially with her classmates. Her parents helped her understand that there are times when everyone feels shy, and that if shy people make an effort, it becomes easier, with practice, to approach others. Nancy tried it with a new boy in school, and in a few days they became friends; together, they were able to approach other children on the playground. This is realistic in depicting the problems of shyness and some of the reasons for it, and it’s simply written, but it’s static as a story and it is illustrated by stiff drawings.

D.V. Shyness, overcoming


A wordless picture book tells a story clearly through its illustrations. It’s a grand chase scene with plenty of action and the cumulation children enjoy, as a cat chases a mouse (presumably mizzling, whatever that is) who ducks into a hole in the ground; the cat is chased by a dog which is in its path, this upsets two people one of whom ends with whipped cream on her face, etc. The setting seems to be outdoors, despite the fact that the two people are dining, and the cumulation ends with all of the above plus a policeman knocked from his motorcycle on or near a crocodile bearing, preceded, or followed by several members of a circus troupe plus a variety of circus
animals. As they fall in an exhausted heap, the mouse pokes its head out of the hole. A good example of disaster humor, the book is also appealing because of the vigor and humor of the clever paintings.


Small, square books with washable pages of heavy board, these have no texts; each is a compilation of brightly colored pictures that show more or less familiar objects in four different environments. *At Home*, for example, has pictures of the toy bear (who appears in every book) watching television, a chair, a table, a vase of flowers, a telephone, a curtained window, a mirror, a lamp, a clock, a towel, and the bear sitting on his potty. *My Pets* shows various animals; *The Park* has a bench, flowers, trees, a pond, playground equipment, et cetera; and *Up There* shows objects that are in the sky or, like a squirrel on a tree branch, that might be seen if one looked up. The books are useful for the very young child who likes to point to objects that are recognizable, but they are slight in coverage and at times garish in the use of color.

D.V. Environmental concepts


An only and sometimes lonely child, Hope has just completed third grade, is in a shopping mall with a friend, and steals some candy. She's horrified at what she's done, but the impulse seizes her again, and she steals an ornamental pin; while at summer day camp, she steals some stones, worthless in themselves but affecting the winning of a treasure hunt. Hope never uses what she steals and doesn't understand why she does; it may be more clear to readers, since she has working parents, a beloved sitter who's unavailable for the summer, and a best friend who has gone away for vacation. The theft of the stones is discovered, and Hope's shame and guilt are assuaged by a sympathetic camp counselor. The story ends with Hope home and happy because her parents have accepted an invitation to visit her best friend's family in their vacation home, and a description of the warm welcome at their arrival. This happy ending seems tacked on, not unrealistic in itself but not proceeding smoothly from previous events. The writing style is adequate, although there are occasional abrupt shifts; the characters and dialogue are ably handled, and the strength of the story is in its insight into the behavior of a troubled child.

D.V. Age-mate relations; Ethical concepts


First published in England, this oversize book is based on stories Jones invented for his daughter, and the illustrations—whether small black and white sketches or rich, imaginative full-color pages—are beautifully attuned to the combined strains of the romantic and of the comic/grotesque that are in the writing. Not all the thirty stories are of high calibre, but many of them have touches that are reminiscent of Andersen when he is humorous or of Thurber when he is satirical. All of the stories are short, are fitting by their style and pace to read aloud, and are humorous; the one weakness of the book is that occasionally Jones works too hard at being funny.

C.U. Reading aloud; Storytelling

In her first book for older readers, Kesselman uses the voice of Nana, a ninth grade student in a private school for girls, and a first-time attendant at a Western riding camp. Flick is a bit older, a beautiful and popular senior on whom Nana has a crush—as do most of the other girls. Nana learns that the camp wrangler, Sam, is in love with Flick; she’s pleased that Flick confines in her, invites Flick to visit when camp is over, and even clings to the friendship when Flick tries to usurp her one boy friend. What begins as demonstrative affection turns into a physical relationship with Flick, and Nana learns the bitter fact that Flick can be as cruel at some times as she is loving and passionate at others. Nana knows she will never see Flick again. This is poignant and at times pathetic from Nana’s viewpoint, with a perceptive depiction of a relationship in which one person is dominant and with a convincing development of that relationship, but it has a choppiness of style that weakens the story and the ending is close to the fervor of *True Romance* magazine.


Cartoon style drawings add a little humor, but the text really needs none, for it is very funny, gently inculcates a few sensible principles about the competitive spirit, and describes—mostly through dialogue—a spirited contest among a group of small animals. When the race is announced, Frog pleads to be allowed to take part even if he can’t run but must hop. Great zeal is displayed in a week of training, and the race is won by Dog. Frog comes in last, but he’s perfectly happy just to have crossed the finish line. Beginning independent readers should enjoy this, and it’s also nice for reading aloud to pre-readers.

C.U. Reading, beginning

D.V. Age-mate relations


There seems no discernible arrangement in this collective biography, since it is neither alphabetical nor chronological; it is not organized by types of careers. Some of the subjects have been covered in other books, often with more extensive treatment: Amelia Earhart, for example, or Barbara Jordan. These are, according to the jacket copy, stories of women “who are building careers in fields once firmly closed to them.” Julie Nixon Eisenhower? She has worked in publishing, but most of the biographical sketch focuses on her role as the daughter of a president, and it exemplifies the gushy writing that appears through the book; “...a slim, vibrant, dark-haired girl fought like a tiger in his defense,” or “That's not for me,” Julie said laughingly,” when someone commented that her mother had been a movie actress. Certainly the book covers women in many careers, over a dozen, but there seems no focus or organization, and the writing style is mediocre.


Illustrated by appropriately eerie pictures that achieve tonal variations by the use of cross-hatching, this is a story about a camping experience. His older brother had warned Robert, seven, not to take his baby pillow and Dracula doll to camp. Sam proved to be right: Robert was teased by his tent-mates and, when they heard about
it, by other campers. When all the camp was disturbed by some mysterious night
moans, Robert and two other boys tracked down the source. This is the weak point of
the story: the culprits prove to be two plump counselors who say, "We dressed up as
Dracula so we could raid the icebox . . ." So the wave of worry about whether or not
there really was a vampire in camp ends, although Robert isn't wholly convinced.
There's some humor, believable dialogue, good style for primary readers, but a shaky
plot.

D.V. Age-mate relations

22p. $7.95.

A small boy in South Africa, Jafta, says "When I'm happy I purr like a lion cub, or
skip like a spider, or laugh like a hyena. And sometimes I want to jump like an
impala, and dance like a zebra . . ." and so on. There's no story. The illustrations
have no background clutter, showing only the attractive brown child and the appeal-
ing animals. About all one can say for this is that it can give the audience an idea of the
animals with which a South African child becomes familiar.


This has more narrative appeal than the title above, since Jafta describes his
sister's wedding, a process that gives facts about customs, has action sequences, and
incorporates some humor. The illustrations show the beauty of the bride, again in
spacious brown and white pictures, and the two together communicate the joy and
excitement of a festive occasion. The other two books about Jafta are *Jafta's Mother*
and *Jafta's Father*, neither of which has a story line but both of which express a
loving parent-child relationship and inform readers about the roles of males and
females in the rural society.

688-01961-7. 22p. Trade ed. $9.00; Library ed. $8.59.

In a sequel to *The Wild Baby* (reviewed in the October, 1981 issue) the happily
obstreperous toddler builds a boat and goes to sea with three stuffed animal com-
panions and a large supply of buns. With navigational flair and great sangfroid he
pilots his crate through dangers and a storm, and even rescues a chicken before
sailing home. Since Mama has relinquished her apron to serve as a sail, and since the
journey starts on a rumpled (wavelike) blue rug, the journey is clearly an imaginative
one. Why, then, Mama wonders, does her wild baby have a real chicken perching on
his chair after they come back? The pictures, deft and animated, have the same
cheerful humor as the text, which Prelutsky has translated with good attention to
rhyme and scansion.

Loescher, Gil. *The World's Refugees: A Test of Humanity*; illus. with photographs. Harcourt,

Beginning with an overview of the many refugee movements in the twentieth
century, the authors describe the numbers of refugees today, their locations, and the
causes for their displacement; the text is given variety (and pathos) by the inclusion
of first-person testimony and accounts of harrowing incidents. Succeeding chapters
discuss the journeys, the camps, the resettlement projects, the prejudice or violence
that some refugees encounter; the final chapters describe the history of migration to
the United States and the history of international organizations that deal with ref-
A sober, candid, comprehensive, and depressing account that is nevertheless interesting, certainly touching, and carefully researched. A bibliography, a relative index, a list of sources of information about refugees, and a directory of organizations are appended.

C.U. History


Cartoon style drawings illustrate a flippant and often funny text on behavior. Topically arranged, the text confronts a series of situations and routine activities about which children often have fears or dislike. This is written to sympathize with the child's viewpoint; for example, the author and illustrator agree that brushing teeth is boring, and that it's true that you get dirty again after you have a bath—but the advantages are then pointed out. The general idea is that adults are odd, but not necessarily always unreasonable. Parents who read the book may find some ideas objectionable: the proposal that parents pay for having a child do chores or the sexist advice on dealing with the opposite sex, despite the humorous treatment. Funny, but superficial and often heavily cute.


Jenny, the narrator, is sixteen and going through a period of feeling the isolation and purposelessness that many adolescents experience. When her school counselor advises Jenny to do some volunteer work so that her activities record will look better to college admissions officers, Jenny becomes the accompanist for a senior citizens' kitchen band. To her own surprise, Jenny begins to feel concerned affection for the "Sunshine Seniors," and her admiration for their courage helps her face the tragedy of a friend's suicide. Above all, Jenny realizes that she herself has been close to the edge in her own depression, not seeing clearly the love that surrounds her in her home. The change is logically developed, the relationships in the story are seen with perception and drawn in depth, and the writing style has a controlled flow.

D.V. Older-younger generations


Jenny has come to spend a week as a guest at the New Hampshire cabin of Nicole Bidwell and her parents; at first she's impressed by the fact that Nicole enjoys her parents so much, but as the week goes by Jenny realizes that Mr. Bidwell is domineering and bad-tempered when he doesn't get his way. Nicole defends him, but Jenny's impression is corroborated when she meets Nicole's older brother, who has run away from camp and is secretly staying nearby, not wanting to confront his father. The confrontation comes, however, and, in an about-face ending, Mr. Bidwell seems surprised that he's been regarded as a tyrant and vows to give his children the independence of choice they feel they've been denied. Jenny, from whose viewpoint the story is written, is less a character than a commentator; although she participates in the action, she affects it very little, and at times by chance—as when Mr. Bidwell finds out his son's left camp because Jenny, making a bed, has exposed the letter Nicole (who had not told Jenny about her brother) had hidden. The explanation of the title is that there are nesting loons in the vicinity, and a ranger has told Jenny about this endangered species; the absence of this would have changed the plot very little, save for a contrived use of the finding of a baby loon at the close. There's a fairly
perceptive exploration of internal family problems, but the structure and style of the book are unimpressive.

D.V. Father-daughter relations; Friendship values


Although the author does not use the term "imprinting," that is what happens in this story about a newly-hatched duckling whose first sight is homely, kindly Samson and who thinks he is his mother. Samson responds with love for his pet, and with gratitude to Kristin Karversdatter, the brawny villager who gives the duck corn and even some of her delicious corn bread. When the duck disappears, it’s Kristin who deduces his whereabouts. Out of all this comes a marriage for Samson and Kristin, both of whom the villagers had expected never to marry—he so homely and she so hefty. But each saw the kindness and gentleness of the other, and both thought themselves very lucky. The soft black and white pictures are repetitive but they have a gentle quality that echoes the mood of the story. Although the jacket copy and the publisher’s catalogue refer to this as a folk tale, no source is cited. The author’s first book, this is a quiet tale and its development of a love story may mitigate the appeal of the "baby" aspect. The style is excellent, a good balance of exposition and dialogue; the quiet humor livens the writing and indicates promise for future books.

D.V. Animals, kindness to


Sixteen one-act plays, royalty free, are included in selections garnered from the author’s 1970 publication, *Round-the-World Plays for Young People*. All are based on folk literature save for "A Leak in the Dike," a story used within *Hans Brinker: Or the Silver Skates*, by Mary Mapes Dodge. Each selection is prefaced by the adapter’s note that gives interesting background information. While the plays are available in the earlier anthology, it is useful for students of folklore to have this focused volume.

C.U. Theater


Another amusing story for readers and listeners who have become addicted to the adventures of the church cat, Samson, and the enterprising mice with whom he lives in amity. Here the catalyst is the parson’s sister, who grooms and perfumes the long-suffering Samson, giving the mice the idea of entering their cat in a show, which they plan to win (and do) by climbing on the judge and making all the other entrants misbehave. Then Samson is kidnapped by two men who have the erroneous idea that the contest winnings amount to a great deal of money. The way the mice rescue the cat is hilarious, a chase scene that’s blandly told but frenetically pictured. Oakley is, as always, inventive in the pictorial expression of dastardly villains and ingenious mice.


Although the text tends to be repetitive, it gives a great deal of information about Sweden, with chapters on its history, its present government and laws, its educa-
tional system, holidays, and recreation. There are also chapters on home and family life, folk heritage, and Swedish-Americans. The writing style is direct and casual. Appended are a brief bibliography, an index, a glossary, a list of Swedish consulates in the United States and Canada, and a list of Swedish words that are similar to their English counterparts.


Three tales set in the Far North have good structure and pace, and give a vivid picture of the life-style and interests of children in each setting. The first story is about a small Eskimo boy who has an exciting and dangerous adventure while out with a dog-sledge in Greenland; the second tale is set in Iceland, where Jon is deemed old enough to go with the men and older boys to round up the sheep that have been summering on the mountain; in the third story, two boys in the Faroe Islands catch a huge halibut. The writing is brisk; the illustrations are handsome in line and composition, but particularly striking in the use of color: the cold blue-white of snow, the steely mountains, the clear, pale skies, and the glow of lighted windows in the blue-green twilight.


A new miniseries of books for the small child who's too sophisticated for Oxenbury's books for the very, very young like *Family* and *Dressing*. There are real plots here, but the same affectionate humor and the same clean, clear, bright illustration. In *Birthday Party*, a child chooses a present but hates to give it away, is miffed at the casual way the gift is received, has a splendidly messy time, and walks home triumphantly, enjoying the souvenir balloon all the more because it's clear that the birthday child didn't want to give it up. In *Dancing Class*, there's a minor disaster when the pudgy, engaging dancers collide, but the enthusiastic neophyte enjoys it all, and insists on doing the gallop all the way home, clinging to the hand of a frazzled Mum. *Eating Out* also has the disaster humor small children enjoy, with an irritated waiter and spilled food leading to a hasty exit and a bowl of cereal at home. These are just right, in the tone, length, and simplicity of the stories, for the preschool child, and they should bring a recognition reflex from the audience and some smiles from those who read the books to them.


Aunt Emma loves cats and has a houseful. One night the cats jump on her bed and wake her, and she realizes that there's someone in the house. She comes out of the bedroom to find a sneezing burglar (allergic to cats) and thinks it's very funny. She's called the police, and when Chief Dan and his men come, they don't think it's funny. The neighbors come, and Aunt Emma accepts another stray kitten; the neighbors agree that Aunt Emma does not have too many cats. Literal beginning readers may query the fact that the opening of the story describes three visitors but the illustrations, line and wash, show only two. The vocabulary and sentence length are appro-

Lars, fifteen, resents the fact that his domineering father feels that his son should stay at home and do his share of the farm work. Lars can't even get permission to go into town for an evening high school basketball game. Prodded by his new classmate Doug, who lives in a nearby home for juvenile delinquents, Lars agrees to run away. They plan to go to Idaho, where Doug thinks his father is and where he's sure they can get jobs. They don't plan on having Doug's younger sister insist on joining them, on not finding Doug's father or, when they go to San Francisco, finding that Doug's mother has moved and left no forwarding address. Petersen doesn't preach, but the recital of the sordid, hopeless journey with its necessary evasions and hunger and anger speaks grimly of the lot of the drop-out vagabond. Lars is not a strong character, but Doug (a petty criminal, a liar, a boaster) is well-drawn, as is his more sensible and realistic sister. The story has good structure, adequate style, and a realistic ending: Doug agrees to go back to the juvenile home, and Lars, with some relief, goes home.

D.V. Father-son relations; self-reliance


Deft, comic line drawings illustrate a collection of the animal poems from three earlier books by Prelutsky. The subjects are appealing, the verse bouncy and lilting, with strong rhymes and meter. Although not new, the poems are witty, and the book can also be used for reading aloud to younger children.

C.U. Reading aloud


First published in England, a murder mystery with good pace and suspense begins when Harriet, her brother Ian, and a new boy in school, Neil, discover a corpse in the woods near their home. They are triply upset: first, the corpse has disappeared by the time the police come; second, they are angry and baffled by the animosity of the gamekeeper on Mr. Ashworth's estate; third, they are nervous about the deserted airfield, believed to be haunted by the ghosts of dead flyers. The children expose themselves to violence when they creep out at night to investigate, trap the cattle rustlers the gamekeeper had been working with, and emerge as heroes. The story gets rather melodramatic at points, but the action and the children's success should appeal to readers.


Pringle's text focuses, after an introductory chapter that discusses feral animals, on six animals; in separate chapters, he discusses birds, pigs, dogs, cats, burros, and horses, although the introduction notes that there are other feral creatures: goats and cattle, for example. Each chapter gives some historical background, describes the
way they live and the dangers or potential dangers they pose to people, to other
creatures and to the environment, and discusses the ways in which the feral animals
are studied by scientists and the ways in which they are protected or pursued. Crisp,
knowledgeable, and well-organized, the text presents this often-controversial subject
with clarity and objectivity. A bibliography and an index are provided.

Pringle, Laurence P. Radiation: Waves and Particles/Benefits and Risks. Enslow, 1983. 82-

Pringle discusses aspects of the subject with his usual thoroughness, beginning
with a chapter on the range of radiation, noting that all humans are exposed to some
degree of it, and describing the effects of radiation from various sources. When
reporting on research, he is both critical of methodology and objective in discussing
beneficial versus adverse effects. The writing style is heavier, more packed with
facts, than it is in most of his books; the choice of illustrations is often poor, and the
captions or labels for illustrations often irrelevant or inadequate. A glossary, an
index, and a bibliography are appended.

C.U. Science; Social studies

Rabinowich, Ellen. Underneath I'm Different. Delacorte, 1983. 82-14919. ISBN 0-440-
09253-1. 180p. $12.95.

Amy, the narrator, is sixteen and fat; her mother, who tends to nag, enrolls her in a
ballet class so that she'll get some exercise. That's where Amy meets Ansel, the class
accompanist and a fellow high school student, and she's incredulous and delighted
when he becomes her friend and admirer. Amy doesn't understand his moods of
depression until after Ansel's gone and his father tells her that Ansel's in an institu-
tion. She goes to visit him repeatedly, but he won't talk to her. At the close of the
story, Ansel has recovered and gone to Paris; Amy is adjusting to her loss and
beginning to take part in school activities, beginning to make new friends. The shift of
focus from Amy to Ansel weakens the story, which is not unusual in its development
of Amy's maturation but has adequate characterization, interesting familial re-
lationships, and a smooth writing style.

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Mother-daughter relations

$7.95.

Constantly goaded by his boastful neighbor Veronica, Chris is not happy about
school (Veronica has transferred to a private school) and aware that his new kitten is
ordinary (Veronica's cat is special) and conscious of the fact that his photographer
father has an erratic income (they don't even have color TV; Veronica has two). In an
easy, casual style that has warmth and humor, the author describes Chris and his
day-to-day relationships and problems in a lively story that captures the essence of
third grade peer relationships and the small events of family life.

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Pets, care of

Robinson, Nancy K. Veronica the Show-Off. Four Winds, 1983. 82-18277. ISBN 0-590-
07877-1. 119p. $7.95.

Veronica, who confesses at the end of Just Plain Cat, reviewed above, that she
hates her fancy school and her snobbish classmates, finally makes some friends in
this companion volume. At first, trying to impress the other girls, she tells silly
lies—like saying she has a horse because she knows that someone's interested in

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horses. It's a slow and sometimes painful process, but eventually, despite her showing off, Veronica makes two friends, and she tries very hard to change because she's learned that denigrating others can hurt their feelings. This has the same smooth narrative flow, the same perception as the story of Chris, and it has an even stronger characterization, one that evokes sympathetic understanding and shows a logical growth and change.

D.V. Age-mate relations; Honesty


Another story of the inseparable friends Mandy and Mimi. Just as they are thinking of the fact that they need to earn money to buy fish for an old tank they've been fixing, they have a chance to take care of small twin boys while their mother does a quick errand. Richie and Benjie are active and curious, and the girls have a few problems keeping them happy and out of trouble, but they are glad to have the money and are gratified by the twins' vocal appreciation of the fish tank. Naturally, they name their fish Richie and Benjie. Like other M and M stories, this is light but not insubstantial, realistic, funny, and brisk of pace.

D.V. Friendship values; Responsibility


Dyna, on probation for participating in a burglary, has just been transferred to a new high school to begin her senior year. On the first day, she discovers that she has to pay a fee before she can be registered; desperate, she volunteers to help in one more breaking and entering to get the money. Living alone with her grandmother, Dyna never has money for anything. This time, she vows, she will manage: there will never be another burglary. Most of the book is about Dyna's class in creative writing, and her relationships with them and the sympathetic teacher, or with her grandmother's three elderly friends. The two themes come together when the class takes on a project: they write about old Oscar, whose home is threatened with foreclosure, produce a fine script, and turn over the money to him so that he can pay back taxes. Shortly before graduation, Dyna is sent to a detention home because her accomplice has told police about that last burglary. Her best friend in the class knows about it, talks to the teacher, and the whole class shows up at the hearing to support Dyna. The judge won't let her leave to take part in graduation, but it's clear that after her next (mandatory) hearing, she will be free and forgiven, since it's clear that she has really changed. The story ends with Dyna aware that her classmates have faith in her; the boy who is her friend sends roses to the detention home. Dyna is a strong and believable protagonist in this well-structured story; the book has pace, color, and firm characterization.

D.V. Age-mate relations; Ethical concepts; Grandparent-child relations; Older-younger generations


An Appalachian story is illustrated with soft, soft pencil drawings that have an impressive variety texturally and that are evocative in the spare, wintry outdoor scenes. The story is slight, but—as with the illustrations—it is in part the economical

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structure that makes it effective, a vivid fragment. Nat has always been frightened by old Maggie, who lives in a rotting cabin reputed to have a pet snake in the rafters. When his grandmother sent food over, or his grandfather gave old Maggie a lift to town, Nat stayed as far away as possible. Then, one icy day, Nat saw that there was no smoke coming from the cabin chimney; he rushed over, found the old woman mourning over a frozen pet bird, and a friendship began; the story ends with Nat giving Miss Maggie a new pet, a blacksnake that he names “Henry,” just like the dead bird. Despite its simplicity, a moving tale about friendship.

D.V. Helpfulness; Older-younger generations


A romantic fantasy is framed by the nameless narrator, who is on his way to compete in the Chester Music Festival, and meets a boy and girl who tell him the story of Cecelia; the book ends with the story told and the narrator so smitten that he goes off after the contest is over, to find the Blue Mountain. “Would you like to come along?” the book ends. Cecelia, whose mother had died when the child was born, is the youngest of three girls whose father is work-oriented and who disapproves of wasting time—including dancing. This baffles Cecelia, who loves to dance. One day she wanders far from home, searching for a place where people love music and dancing; she meets a woman who tells her to follow the creek, and she does, and she finds a boy playing a fiddle. He plays, she dances and whirls into insensibility. Pale and wan, she stops dancing and dreams of the fiddling boy and the Blue Mountain where he is waiting for her. Now her sisters sing and dance, trying to encourage Cecelia but also enjoying the dancing. Father relents, then the other somber people of the hitherto quiet town of Chester, and they hold square dances, and eventually they hold a music festival. Cecelia, abed, hears a familiar fiddle, comes to the festival and dances, and then she and the fiddler disappear and are never seen again. The illustrations, black and white, some in silhouette, have a delicate appeal; the story is adequately told—although the framing device seems extraneous—but seems overextended, slowing the narrative flow.


As he did in *Chester*, to which this is a sequel, Jamie tells the story, again about the boys and girls of his neighborhood. This time, the problem is that one of them, George, had volunteered to be chairman of a committee to prepare a float for the city’s field day—but he hadn’t known then that they’d be on national television because the town’s great basketball star, Pogo Lambert, would be the guest of honor. The story boils down to a series of disasters in preparing the float and the emergence of Eleanor (Chester’s older sister) as heroine when she organizes a substitute bicycle parade. While this has plenty of action and disaster humor in the incidents, the humor that was ebullient in the first book seems forced here; the story is also weakened by the manic delight of adults and children at Pogo’s visit, and to a lesser extent by the late emergence of Eleanor as a major character.


Soft pencil drawings, realistic and beautifully detailed, illustrate a book that has no plot but consists of a small girl’s monologue. She describes the different places her cat sleeps, noting that she and other members of her family sleep in the same place.
every night but that the cat moves around the house, sleeping wherever he wants to, except for the baby’s crib. Cat lovers should enjoy the pictures and the familiar feline behavior, and all the lap audience should enjoy some of the humor that emerges occasionally, but the lack of story line or action may limit the book’s appeal.


Fine black and white drawings with stippled detail show each of the creatures that is a giant of its own species. Although the text that faces each full-page illustration gives measurements, the pictures in themselves give no indication of comparative size save for occasional background details. The book provides less than a page of text for each “little giant,” and the creatures range from insects that are larger than most of their kind to such animals as the ostrich or beluga sturgeon. The material is accurate and interesting, but the fact that the arrangement seems haphazard and that the book has neither an index nor a table of contents limits access and indicates that the primary use will be for browsing.

C.U. Science


This isn’t the first book in which a boy and girl who’ve been childhood friends fall in love, nor is it the first in which the characters are involved in putting on a high school play—but it’s better than most. Becky and Nemi are infatuated with the handsome brother and sister Blake and Leila; Becky suggests that Nemi, who’s a film buff, create a movie so that he can give Blake and Leila parts. It works, but familiarity breeds awareness if not contempt: both protagonists find that physical attraction is not, after all, as strong as love. Not an unusual plot, but unusual treatment makes this a strong novel; the minor characters are sharply defined, the familial relationships are strongly drawn, with perceptive treatment of the dynamics of the acting group and especially of its gay members; the writing style has a smooth flow, natural dialogue, and good pace.

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Family relations


Riding the bus with other students from farms, Megan is conscious of the fact that they are outsiders, and she yearns to be accepted by the town kids, especially the group of girls who call themselves the “Hi Gals.” When the local newspaper editor offers her a chance to write a column for young people, Megan is thrilled; she irritates some of her peers by her remarks in the column, but she does get attention, is invited to join Hi Gals, and even acquires the “right” kind of boyfriend, a basketball star. Her old friends do not take kindly to all this, and make their feelings of rejection clear. The moment of decision comes for Megan when she has to make a choice between supporting Pris, a girl she dislikes, for an election as delegate to a state-wide leadership conference, or work for her oldest friend, Tom. Other Hi Gals make it clear that they expect Megan to support Pris—but Megan decides she’ll act as Tom’s campaign manager. After all, there are a lot of “country kids” and she’s one of them. This is capably written, adequate in characterization, but uneven in pace.

D.V. Age-mate relations

Jeff, the narrator, is a beer vendor at a baseball stadium; his father—surly, idle, and domineering—is out of work, his mother supports the family by driving a bus. When Jeff realizes that the attractive girl he's talked to at games is the daughter of the family that runs the concessions, he's taken aback, but by then he's dated Melissa, is in love with her, and has had to come to terms with the differences in their status. They drift apart after Melissa's home is robbed by some gang members Jeff knows and dislikes; while Melissa knows he is innocent, she cannot accept the fact that he comes from the same social stratum as the gang. This is an honest, vigorous, and perceptive story, convincingly told from Jeff's viewpoint; it has sharp characterization and vivid depictions of Jeff's work situation and his relationship with his father.

D.V. Father-son relations


Fourteen-year-old Jenny, oldest of the four Skinner children, is the narrator in this humorous, if not quite convincing, family story. The children get home from school one day to find their mother ensconced in a tent in the front yard, the house barred, and Mom marching back and forth with a sign announcing she's on strike. Mom has given up her part-time job, and she's protesting because the members of her family don't do their share of the housework. Dad and the children have a hard time (too hard to believe) running the household, and Jenny and her sister eventually see Mom's point and become her supporters, going on a sympathy strike (cutting school). The whole affair, with other mothers joining, other fathers organizing, and a truant officer appearing (the least believable scene of the book) and becoming a catalyst for a confrontation, ends in a new share-the-work plan that is accepted by all. This has good style and characterization, but the plot is stretched thin and some of the incidents even thinner.

D.V. Family relations


Jason won't go out to play with his friends because, he says, his mother needs him to help with the new baby. He wants to hold his sister, but Mama says he must wait until the baby's awake. He's just about to have a snack at a neighbor's house, but decides his mama needs him and rushes off. Finally, he's allowed to hold the baby and to help bathe her; Mama encourages him to go and play, gives him the hug he's been craving, and tells him gently that of course she needs him, but not all the time. So Jason goes out to play with his friends. The illustrations show a black family; they have a static quality and are often crowded with ornamental details. The story has some of the same static quality in its style and slow pace; it is believable but rather tepid.

D.V. Baby, adjustment to; Responsibility

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Thomas, James L. "'Selecting Periodicals for Children and Young Adults.'" *School Library Journal*, January, 1983.


