EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH ANNOTATIONS

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

Except for pre-school years, reading range is given for grade rather than for age of child.
C.U. Curricular Use.
D.V. Developmental Values.

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Shy, sensitive thirteen-year-old Shari, "Ape Face" to her abusive mother, Charlotte, feels loved only by her father, Zeke (who is away trucking much of the time) and by her younger brother, Peter. Whenever she can, Shari retreats into the woods, happiest when she is climbing and bird-watching, dreaming of flying free. When Peter is injured in a fall, Charlotte blames Shari, beats her in a rage, and reveals that Zeke is not Shari's father. Shari is helped through the crisis by Zeke and by Mrs. Wallace, an older woman who appreciates Shari and involves her in a bird-banding project. The family scenes are well-drawn, especially the tension of the abused child who suffers a parent's frustration and resentment. But the narrative is slow and sometimes simplistic: Shari's purity and Mrs. Wallace's home-baked bread and refinement opposed to common Charlotte "with a cigarette dangling from her sulky mouth" as she opens cans of spaghetti for dinner.

D.V. Brothers-sisters; Father-daughter relations


While Stacy's on a Caribbean vacation with her mother, her friend Gladston (a local horse keeper) is arrested for drug smuggling. Stacy, convinced of his innocence, wants to hunt down the real culprit. Mother's boyfriend John Reilly, the hotel owner, does his best to dissuade her: "Forget it and go to bed. Little girls who think too much don't grow up beautiful, you know." They don't grow up at all is of course his veiled message, but while this is readily apparent to the reader, Stacy (who otherwise is quite bright) can't see it. This doesn't work as a mystery, but it is an entertaining tale of island intrigue, and the ups and downs of Stacy's relationship with her mother are well realized.


Things, things, and more things: Anno's latest depicts a flea market with a seemingly infinite variety of small and big items for sale, accompanied by an enormous cast of shoppers and purveyors. Children will delight in counting the brightly detailed little wares (one stall displays fifty-nine dolls and puppets) in naming the various objects, and in asking questions about those less familiar. This is wordless, with no narrative line, but each double page spread, with hundreds of things and tiny dramas, is uncluttered, holding the eye and attention. Anno's traditional cameos are here, including appearances by Carroll's Alice and Laurel and Hardy.

While discussing the usual weight control factors like a well-balanced diet, exercise, and the need to distinguish between hunger and the social or psychological reasons for eating, Arnold also emphasizes what cannot be done about altering body size. Starting with a clear chapter on physiology, she then presents recent research; her special focus is on the set-point theory, that each person's weight may be controlled by a sort of weight thermostat which changes the body's metabolic rate so as always to keep fat stores at a set level. On the whole Arnold is careful to show how much is still not proven, for example, the influence of hormones on body fat and on the disease of anorexia; but her discussion of environment and inherited body types is questionable, and some awkward style mars the text. Charts show calorie and nutritional content of common foods, daily nutritional needs, and calories used during exercise; and an annotated bibliography pays attention to both boys and girls.

C.U. Health and hygiene


When fifteen-year-old Heather's funny, warm father dies suddenly of a heart attack, her mother withdraws from Heather, plunges into a frenzy of work and activity, and hides the pain. Heather envies the loving comradeship her friend Cara has with her divorced mother, but Cara is dissatisfied with that very closeness and longs for some privacy. In her first romance (with her classmate Nicky) Heather finds comfort, and she discovers that his moodiness hides the deep hurt of having been deserted by his mother when he was a small child. The theme of how to handle involvement and dependency is interesting, but there are too many unintegrated threads to the story; and, though we do feel Heather's grief, there is little depth to her conflict.

D.V. Death, adjustment to; Mother-daughter relations


A small stunner. Thirteen-year-old Jonathan has longed to go to war against the hated British, and one morning, April 3, 1778 at 11:00 a.m., he gets his chance. Joining a small band of American soldiers he skirmishes with Hessians near Rocktown, New Jersey, and is captured: "Jonathan tried to rekindle his hatred, but all he could muster was the desire to stand close to them, to be taken care of." What is superb is the control. The story takes place in one day, detailed minute by minute. There is constant closeness—huddled soldiers, Jonathan hiding—tightly held and suffocated by darkness or fog. Readers hear the Hessians as Jonathan does, only speaking German, frightening and disorienting. All this makes the war personal and immediate: not history or event, but experience; near and within oneself, and horrible.

C.U. History—U.S.


Part of the You and Your Body series originally published in England, this presentation of the structure and function of the brain, nervous system, and endocrine system makes complicated information accessible to younger readers. The text is clear and accurate, with functional color photographs and simple color diagrams. Unfortunately, the excellent factual material is combined with a diffuse discussion of mental and emotional health, using platitudes ("don't go to bed angry with your family;" "learn to talk
your fears away")) and sometimes awkward expression (the brain-injured baby may be "backward as he grows"). An index and glossary are appended.

C.U. Science


Lively color photographs and simplified color diagrams are well-integrated with a spacious (though too-tightly bound) text to introduce the circulatory and respiratory systems to younger readers. Useful sub-headings divide the information, which is clear, well-organized, and accurate, concluding with a brief chapter on health and the dangers of smoking. Stimulating questions within the text will involve readers ("Which group of blood would you rather have and why?" "Can you think of two reasons why you should not pick at a scab?"); but the occasional emotional comments are inappropriate ("Blood is precious and wonderful;" "Sadly, you are not safe against all diseases."). Technical terms are printed in bold type and explained in the glossary; there is an index.

C.U. Science


Intrepid Doris is back, and finds herself in a mystery which has its roots in the gangland terror of 1920s Chicago. Doris' inheritance from Harry Grubb is endangered by Ashford Miller, a black social activist who claims to be Harry's illegitimate son. Smoothly intertwined with this are the machinations of Chicago gang leader Dominic Le Castro, who forces Miller to sell real estate to the mob's cover corporation. At the center of both mysteries is Ash's late mother, glamorous and enigmatic Luene Miller, "the toast of Paris." Doris is her usual forthright self, and the Sam Spade touches ("All right, sister," Le Castro said. "Talk.") are fun. Gangbuster echoes and high-tech detection methods combine for a fast-paced well-wrought mystery.


For co-curricular and reference purposes this account of current issues and prospects in genetics contains detailed diagrams, laboratory photographs, and much valuable up-to-date information. It is especially useful on particular genetic diseases, like sickle-cell anemia and Tay-Sachs disease; on diagnostic tools like amniocentesis; and on topics like genetic engineering. But the haphazard organization and unsystematic approach makes for confusion. The information ranges from the highly sophisticated to the simple, often in that order. The abnormal is sometimes discussed before the normal. Many technical terms are used without explanation or defined several pages after they first appear. Several terms are repeatedly misspelled in the text and in the index.

C.U. Science


Dave has been attracted to Susan since 7th grade; the catch is that she's going steady with Dave's best friend, Jep. When Susan confesses to Dave that she has fallen in love with him, the two begin to see each other on the sly. It all climaxes with a car crash, leaving Jep dead, Dave (at the wheel) guilty, and Susan as little more than a thrill seeker, not loving either of the boys. This is lightweight and predictable, but the dialogue and character interactions are realistic. Dave's present tense narration lends a
cinematic immediacy, although it also diffuses suspense and momentum, slowing things
down a bit.

D.V. Friendship values


Upbeat black-and-white photographs with a simple large-type text show preschool
disabled children actively playing and learning, alone, with their teachers, and with their
peers. The emphasis is on the pleasures they share with all children: eating ice-cream,
swimming, finger-painting, going on school trips to the dolphin in the aquarium.
Wheelchairs, hearing-aids, and leg-braces are depicted as a natural part of the everyday
activities. All children will be fascinated by the disabled’s special skills (reading with
their fingers, speaking with their hands) and will identify with the visually impaired
boy’s rubbing his cheek on a pet rabbit’s fur, and with the pride of the girl walking the
balance beam. In dispelling the fear of the unknown and showing our common needs
for physical affection, community, skills, and independence, this book should do much
to help the disabled gain acceptance from other children. The annotated bibliography
includes references for adults and books (divided by type of handicap) for preschool
through age eight.

D.V. Handicaps, overcoming


Swirling double-page pencil drawings framed in blue depict a timeless landscape of
dark bare trees and moonlit snow for this tale of love and menace and restoration. In his
soft white cloak the owl man calls the owls to him, watched by the boy, Con, who loves
him and learns from him. A stranger covets the owl man’s power, kills him and steals
his cloak; the owls do come to the stranger, but they tear at him with talon and beak,
drive him out, and settle with love around Con. Mikolaycak’s illustrations range from
scenes of violent movement to those of quiet vitality that unify cloak, snowy drifts,
man, boy, and many species of owl. The drawings’ composition and depth focus attention
on Con’s special sensitivity: he is the first to see the threatening stranger and later
the avenging great snowy owl; and only he looks up at the great bird disappearing in
space as the townspeople watch the stranger’s leaving.


Narrator Rick is the oldest of six children (four of whom are adopted) and he’s the
only one in the family who is unhappy about moving to the country and helping Mom
and Dad farm. In this competent but predictable first novel, Rick describes family life,
the myriad small disasters of farming, and his own determination to get away as soon as
possible—a goal he voluntarily abandons as he becomes involved in farm and family
problems. The pace and structure of the story are adequate, the style and characteriza-
tion more promising.

D.V. Family relations; Urban-rural contrasts


After his father’s bedtime story, Henry the rabbit is sure there’s a dragon in his room;
he can see its shadow and he hears “a rustling noise outside his window.” His parents
offer nothing but reassurances, so Henry builds a dragon trap in the garden, capturing
only his father. While children might spot the tell-tale shadow that causes all the fuss, that’s all part of the fun, and they will applaud Henry’s sturdy bravery and resourcefulness in solving his night fears. The orange and green watercolors on pencil nicely evoke the excitement of the dragon scare, and the coziness of Henry’s family; and the telling expressions on the rabbits’ faces are beguiling.

D.V. Courage; Fear, overcoming


Demons ride, poltergeists throw things, zombies sit down to dinner, and half-rotted corpses seek revenge in this high-interest low-vocabulary collection of eleven ghost stories from around the world. In the folktale tradition, the gruesome erupts in the everyday world, and the occult subject matter will fascinate readers. The type is welldusted and the cover luridly appealing, but the prints and photographs which illustrate the stories are poorly reproduced. The style is flat: “the thing waved its arms, and fell to its knees”—and it could be Haiti, ancient China, or Australia.


This latest story about Jim and his classmates concerns Jim’s grief and depression upon the death of his dog, Muffins. Perhaps due to the theme, this is static—Jim doesn’t want to play, read, or participate in classroom activities. Jim does get over his depression, rather abruptly, when eating pizza with his friend Paul: “Remember how I used to give Muffins the crust?” Tears came down on his pizza but he kept on eating.” Hoban’s bright, scruffy paintings, expertly casual, have more interest than a rather thin story.

D.V. Death, adjustment to


With the lucid, spaciously laid out text and clear diagrams that distinguish other books in this anatomical series, and with stunning photographs by Wexler and by Mendez, Cole uses the common house cricket as her example of how an insect’s body helps it to survive. She moves smoothly from the evolution (probably from a prehistoric worm) through the anatomy (the mouthparts “form a kind of Swiss army knife”), presenting detailed factual material in a lively style suitable for reading aloud to younger children. The circulation works “almost like stirring;” the blood “sloshes about.” The nervous system has “assistant brains” called ganglia: that is why a headless cricket can chirp, and a headless praying mantis can mate. The excellent discussion of reproduction focuses on the cricket, with dramatic photographs (stills and action shots) of the mating, egg-laying, and hatching.

C.U. Science


There are those who are trapped in time, and a few who can slip its net. When Polly’s beloved father, Tom, English coalminer and poet, is injured in a pit accident and confined to bed, she must move to her rigid Aunt Em’s while her mother accompanies Tom
to a distant hospital. Polly believes Old Mazy, the strange outcast, when he tells her the
legend of the whole village of Grimstone that disappeared to live secretly underground
forever; she sees the Grimstone children slip back to dance around the ancient maypole
at dawn. Deep in the woods she meets the Porter family, Time Gypsies from Grimstone,
who have accidentally become trapped in the modern world. She helps them through
the time tunnel, even daring to go down with them to Grimstone, and returns to find her
father recovered from his accident and her family able to go home. The story is
exquisitely told in lucid, rhythmic prose and dramatic dialogue. The characterization is
sharp and complex; ragged Granny Porter, "dismal and fraught," is as ill-tempered a
nag as Aunt Em, and there are other strange parallels between the lonely and displaced
of both worlds. The exciting adventure will grab readers; its subtlety and depth will stay
with them a long time.

DePaola, Thomas Anthony. *The Mysterious Giant of Barletta*; ad. and illus. by Tomie DePaola.

A statue of a giant boy stands in Barletta, enjoying the children and lovers at his feet,
the sleeping doves on his shoulders, until word comes that an enormous army is coming
to invade the town. The Mysterious Giant comes to life, and, with the aid of old Zia
Conchetta, concocts a scheme to turn the army away. He meets the army, crying about
the other boys in town: "They say I'm too small. They call me names, like *minusculo*
and *debole*—'tiny' and 'weakling...'" Of course, the army retreats from the prospect
of even bigger giants. The illustrations are among DePaola's best: vigorous line and
expressive movement against an atmospheric background of rich golds, blues, and reds.
The last wordless page—*Colosso* at rest again, surrounded by the sleeping city—is
beautiful. A fluent retelling and large-scale paintings make this ideal for story hour.


The time seems interminable to Amy as she waits on a bench, sure of her mother's
return, but impatient and lonely. At first passersby greet her; but, as the minutes drag,
she imagines herself waiting a lifetime on that bench: getting married, having children,
then grandchildren, the children owning dogs, the dogs having puppies, all waiting and
waiting until she is a very old lady. The simplified line and wash illustrations nicely
expand the fun of the fantasy, although the realistic first pages are not as effective, dull
in text and garish in color. But this is a lively evocation of a young child's experience in
time: the eternity of present minutes and the sweeping image of a whole future.


Duncan's forte is the suspenseful page-turner, and here she has done well. When a
little boy she is babysitting disappears, Karen finds she is able to "see" where he is. This
ability comes in handy when Karen is abducted while all the babies in the daycare center where she works are kidnapped. Karen's extra-sensory perceptions are convincing and well-described—eerie, elusive, and exhausting. Some ideas are toyed with rather than explored, and while this story rarely stops for reflection, readers will find they won't want to stop, either.


Wending their way through an eerie canal in the Everglades, Barnaby, William, and Lara discover a turnstile into Mesmeria: a polyglot world of witches, talking birds, centaurs, elves, dwarves, nyads, gnomes, fauns, fairies, Vulpines, Kewprums, etc. A war starts, because it turns out Lara fulfills “the prophecy”: she is the rightful queen of Mesmeria, her mother having escaped (to Chicago) when threatened by the evil Thorkin. Lara, along with the people of “Twilandia,” defeat Thorkin: “It would be called Lara Day, which would be something like a combination of Christmas and the Fourth of July.” This is derivative, precious, and condescending, full of just-in-time magic spells, vapid asides, and jarring shifts in tone. The epilogue (“Some of you are saying you won’t be able to sleep unless you find out...”) promises a sequel.


Wonderful for reading aloud, with a smooth integration of the epic and the colloquial, Evslin’s re-telling of the Hercules story takes place in a “terrible magical world” that is also “like ours in some ways.” The dramatic full-page drawings show Hercules in violent combat with hideous terrifying monsters, and Evslin powerfully describes those heroic struggles which push Hercules to the very limits of his strength, wit and endurance. The colloquial elements are usually comic (as in the words of jealous Hera, “I’ll get rid of that overgrown brat if it’s the last thing I do”); they can also intensify the terror (the Nemean lion comes on like “pure yellow murder”). There is no madness, no rage; Hercules is as gentle as he is strong and brave, and even ecologically minded. But though the monsters appear to be all outside, Evslin is also concerned with the “terrible inner war,” with the hero’s perilous journey as a metaphor for personal growth: from the innocent baby’s discovery of evil with the monster-snakes in the cradle, to Hercules’ sad words to Atlas holding up the sky; “I, too, have burdens which I can’t pass on to anyone else.”

C.U. Reading aloud; Storytelling


Profusely illustrated by photographs of variable quality, this is a series of descriptions of the special qualities or abilities of some breeds of dogs. The format of the text is a—a picture of puppies, b—pictures and text about adult dogs of that breed, and c—a final picture of puppies. The material is not comprehensive or alphabetized and has a random air; the large print is easy, if not exciting, to read.


Goode posits an “American obsession with violence,” beginning with violence on the frontier and going on to lynching, vigilante violence, labor violence, New Left and Black Power violence. His last chapters discuss contemporary homicide, robbery and assault, rape, and family abuse. This is comprehensive, if often repetitious, and provocative in its thematic question: “What factors in American life had caused the American people
Many theories are presented and carefully argued: the "frontier mentality," availability of guns, economic and class effects, etc. Goode's claim that American society is predisposed to violence is overstated and under-defended, but, in all, this paints a frightening and convincing picture. Bibliography, index.

C.U. Social studies


While vacationing in Florida, Jeff finds a stray dog he calls Foxy; although she quickly becomes devoted to Jeff, the dog is afraid of other people and clearly has been mistreated in the past. The villain in the story is Amber, the hostile daughter of the trailer camp's owner; it is due to Amber that Foxy almost dies. Griffith has a smooth writing style, but the story is weakened by the unconvincing characterization of Amber and by the rather protracted ending, more melodramatic than dramatic.

D.V. Pets, care of


Taro's growth to manhood is largely determined by the power struggles of the feudal warlords of 16th century Japan, from the massacre that leaves him an orphan at age four, to the final ferocious slaughter of his lord's soldiers and household. Looking back as an old man, Taro remembers his rise under the great Lord Akiyama's protection, from servant's servant and stable-boy to trusted aide, secret messenger and samurai. Though he yearns for heroism in battle, Taro is never brutalized: various father figures teach him to read and to care; he falls in love with a nobleman's daughter and woos her with poetry; with a close friend, Yoshitoki he enjoys a brief golden adolescence, even as Yoshitoki foresees his own early death. Against a mountainous Japanese landscape Haugaard vividly describes the turbulent sweep of events, with characters of all ranks in the strictly hierarchical society, and the beliefs and pressures which molded them. Yet even as he shows the individual caught up in history, Haugaard dramatizes the personal, and the ambition of the powerful to rule Japan is mirrored in Taro's drive to become a glorious samurai warrior. Readers will welcome the sequel that seems promised, the "attempt to avenge my master."

D.V. Courage; Loyalty


Eighth-grader Kelly is gaining acceptance with the in-crowd, but they taunt her brilliant, unconventional best friend, Tracy. Caught between the two, Kelly's terror is that the crowd will think she's "weird" like her friend. But as the cruelty towards Tracy mounts, Kelly is forced to see that she can't stay with the popular crowd on her own terms; she defends Tracy, chooses independence, and still gets the gorgeous popular guy. The first person narrative is breathless with exclamation marks, and constant reference to everyone's facial expression (usually a smile) is irritating. But Hermes succeeds in making Tracy attractive in her difference; and the junior high school scene is vividly depicted, both in the conformity of its "weird" culture and in the suffering of the outsider.

D.V. Friendship values

“You must take this vision we give you and draw it into your heart, where it must remain like the storm that fills the cloud with lightning.” Gifted by the fox, Amana has in her heart the power of a warrior. She is different, challenging the role of women in her society, challenging the forces, both of the white settlers and of nature, which threaten her entire people. The tragedy, cruelty, and violence contained in this novel are relentless yet never gratuitous—they starkly present the destruction of Native American society, and add a mythic dimension to Amana’s struggle. Says the maddened Yellow Bird Woman, beaten and mutilated because she ran off from her husband, “Within you, Amana, the spirit of our people lives, and through the legends of your life all of us will be remembered.” A strong heroine, in a story notable for its compelling narrative power.

C.U. Social studies
D.V. Courage; Sex roles


Born into slavery and working since childhood as personal attendant to her mistress, sixteen-year-old Tancy has grown up knowing only the small North Carolina plantation and its suppression, though she has been taught to read and write. When Emancipation comes, it takes her a while to leave “home,” but the drive to find her mother (sold when Tancy was barely two) impels her into the wider world, where she finds love, work, and independence. Tancy’s final integration of all the parts of her life is slightly contrived, but her striving for personal emancipation is movingly depicted against the turmoil of the period; her interaction with a wide range of interesting characters (black and white) dramatizes the suffering of slavery and the hopes and broken promises of freedom.

C.U. History—U.S.
D.V. Interracial understanding


Drawing from small presses and magazines as well as from mainstream collections, Janeczko has gathered another outstanding contemporary anthology. The 125 poems of parents and children, brothers and sisters, and also of the extended family, are often positive; but they do not dodge the anger that may be mixed with love, the guilt between brothers, the strain in intense relationships. Rosemary Joseph remembers a warm kitchen in “Baking Day;” Jeannine Dobbs remembers rejection (“My mother’s kitchen. Where my hands/betrayed me: too big, too slow/. . . Get out.”) The poetry leaps out of ordinary words and the familiar rhythms of conversation: “She wore her lore and old age home,” George Ella Lyon grieves for a cousin; Norma Richman revitalizes the whining cliche of her childhood, “and there was nothing on earth to do,” as she applies it literally to her dying father. Young people will find these poems accessible and relevant: library and class discussions could explore their rich, multiple implications.

D.V. Family relations


For the very young child holes can be frightening, especially those of bathroom fixtures. Using bright colors and large simple shapes, Jonas shows that from the child’s perspective the drain opening is dark, and the splitting seams in a stuffed rabbit or in a sock may be threatening. A black child (who could be of either sex) is shown gaining
control of these fears by making "peeks," purposeful holes with which to look up at adults and scare the cat. The final scenes show the child playing in the bathwater (with the hole plugged) and then comfortably enthroned on the junior toilet seat surrounded by cat, patched rabbit, tricycle, and toys. A fresh and reassuring view of the child's familiar world.

D.V. Fear, overcoming; Environmental concepts


In another valuable book in the Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science series, Kaufmann deals with the largest prehistoric animals which flew. Starting with the time when the only flying creatures were insects, he describes giant dragonflies; then birds, including the scavenging teratorns; then flying reptiles, including the largest flying creature of all, Quetzalcoatlus, whose wings spread forty feet; he concludes with today's largest flying creatures. The drawings, some in color, are especially concerned with scale; many show animals in flight. Kaufmann's approach is carefully scientific: "as far as we know" the Meganeura dragonfly is the largest insect that ever lived. The creatures' full scientific names are used with a clear pronunciation guide: for example, "Argentavis magnificens (Are-jen-TA-vis mag-NIF-i-cens)." A pleasure for the many young readers with an intense interest in prehistoric animals, and an unpatronizing method of stimulating reading.

C.U. Science


Blystfylyl was a very tired old dragon who had decided his raiding days were over and he might as well lie around waiting to die. But as long as there are heroes and unwed princesses, there's a role for a dragon. The raids culminate in peace, with the dragon comfortably ensconced in the castle moat until he is told "if you lie around here too long you'll lose your mystique." That's the type of humor that saves the book from being just another cliche.


An introduction to Western mainstream political thought, this study begins with the advent of liberalism during the Enlightenment. Kronenwetter examines two similar 18th century documents—America's Constitution and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man—to show the differences between (and common goals of) liberal and conservative thought, and how these beliefs have changed and developed to the present day in the United States. His explanation is clear, with interesting detail: the terms "left" and "right" derive from where the nobles and the bourgeoisie sat at a meeting of Louis XVI's Estates-General. Occasionally this is too simple, characterizing liberals as "optimists" and conservatives as "pessimists," but its strength is in conveying the common vision of freedom held by both sides. An index (which should be more detailed) and an annotated bibliography are appended.

C.U. History—U.S.


Who was that masked man attacking O'Day with a gaff hook aboard O'Day's fishing boat? What about all the other misfortunes the crusty but kind lobsterman had suffered
—tangled lines, poisoned traps? Sleuth Tracy James is determined to find out. The mystery takes her to Cornucopia, a cult commune where O'Day's son Casey is a devoted member. She almost (unconvincingly) gets sucked in, but it is there she finds the clue. Purposive in its anti-cult posture, this also is contrived—Tracy, by happenstance, has seen the culprit's picture on a Post Office "Wanted" poster. While Tracy is an able detective, she is faceless and undeveloped as a character—so different from Bethancourt's Doris Fein (see review above). Well-paced, with some suspense, this is moderately entertaining.


Passion, not romance, is the theme of this fine small anthology. The poems, many in translation, from a great variety of times and places, express the intensity of love's various moods and stages, physical and spiritual; from the ecstasy of "The Song of Solomon" and E.E. Cummings to the obsessive pain of "Don't Touch Me! I Scream at Passers-by," by the Russian poet, Natalya Gorbanyevskaya; from the blunt tenderness of W.H. Auden and the self-assertion of Denise Levertov to the Turkish poet, Nazim Hikmet's, world-encompassing "Things I Didn't Know I Loved." A most welcome balance to the surfeit of formula romance.


An oversize book is illustrated with garishly bright paintings of Harriet, a blocky elephant, and other stylized animals. A gift of a watch is the catalyst for the record of a full day. This is no more than minimally successful as a time concept book; it moves mechanically through the day, with Harriet rising at eight, breakfasting at nine, playing ball at ten, going to the library at eleven, eating lunch at twelve and so on, the text written in a choppy style.


Set in Poland in 1913, this is a series of vignettes about a naive and sensitive Jewish child of a blind tailor, whom she adores. Each of the stories is modest: Toba goes to the dentist, she finds a robin's egg, takes a train trip with her family, goes shopping with her mother. This is the first part, the jacket states, of a longer work based on the life of the author's grandmother. This is an impressive first book, graceful in style and tender in mood.

D.V. Father-daughter relations; Handicaps, overcoming


Not a story, but a round-up of how different mommies make money. "My mommy is..." a car salesperson, a carpenter, a travel agent, etc. with a brief description of what each job entails. This isn't a new idea, but the illustrations are lively and humorous—the travel agent is talking to a customer dressed in a skin-diving outfit, reading a brochure about the Alps.


In a fine Holocaust survival story, first published in Israel and based on the author's childhood experience hiding in the Warsaw Ghetto, eleven-year-old Alex builds himself
an ingenious secret hideout in the ruins of a bombed building on the edge of an unspecified Polish ghetto. He lives there alone for five months, waiting for his father to come for him. Comparing himself to Robinson Crusoe on a desert island, he forages in the abandoned houses around him, with only his pet white mouse for company. Yet even as he hears the screams and shots of Jews being rounded up, he finds that a kind of normal life continues. He watches a girl in the streets outside the ghetto, and once he learns the secret passageways from the Polish Underground, he "crosses over" to the Polish section sometimes, and meets her, and plays with the kids in the park. The physical details are fascinating: what he eats, how he keeps warm, how he builds the hideout, the secret passageways that connect the lofts and cellars; all described in quiet, unemotional style. Self-pity is prevented by the very pressure of survival, and by Alex's knowledge of the fate of other Jewish children. But his control snaps after he has been forced to shoot a German soldier; and in the poignant scene of his father's return, Alex realizes how much he has suppressed, especially the terror that his father would not come.

D.V. Courage; Self-reliance


A fine introduction to the national bird, this focuses upon those bald eagles that gather each fall for the salmon spawning in Montana's Glacier National Park. Starting from this point, Patent describes the eagles' feeding activities, their subsequent southward migration, and eventual return to Alaska and the Northwest Territories for breeding. The text is straightforwardly factual, well-organized, and fluent. As fascinating as the topic itself is, equally interesting is Patent's parallel discussion of how scientists gather information about the eagles; and her discussion of visual and electronic tagging is comprehensive. Numerous large black and white photographs are well placed, and an index is appended.

C.U. Science


Scott buys a duck in the candy store for seven cents. The duck (who informs Scott that he's really an angel) tells Scott, "If you give me my freedom, I will grant you one wish." He also tells Scott what to wish for: "a beautiful chariot with a really nice paint job and semiprecious stones all over it." And so it continues with delightfully nonsensical, dead-pan humor, in the style of a shaggy-dog story. The garish, outrageously clashing illustrations strike just the right note; particularly funny is Scott's mother, with her green-tipped punk haircut and "I Love Rock 'n Roll" t-shirt. Absolutely mad, with a contorted internal logic that is Pinkwater's alone.


Whether the subject is the intricacy of one snowflake or a romp through a winter landscape where "the air is a silvery blur," these poems speak with immediacy and wit of the child's experience. Using colloquial language and rhythms, Prelutsky moves from concrete, everyday images ("I am shivering and shaking/like a pudding in a mold") to a wider world, and then back again; as in the wry, dreamy poem, "My sister would never throw snowballs at butterflies" ("she only throws them at me"); or in the dark humor of "The Snowman's Lament" ("For my ears are disappearing/and my eyes are coming loose") with its funny use of rhyme and assonance ("Now I'm thinner than a splinter"). Delicate pencil drawings in grey, white, and pale blue extend the humor and the range of mood.

A concept book that will stimulate readers into making new connections, this uses common objects and a simple format to present some complicated ideas. The basic concept itself is fun, that a hole is necessary, that there would be no ring without the hole. Then there are holes that change shape, like a rubber band; those like handles help us hold things; those that keep things in place, like buttonholes and holes for shoelaces; and so on. Rahn's presentation is straightforward, and the well-focused, small but clear black-and-white photographs of everyday things, at least one to a page, are cleverly juxtaposed: a water pipe, a straw in a milkshake and a traffic underpass are all holes that are passageways. Like the best science books, this is just a beginning, and will leave readers with a fresh way of perceiving the shapes and patterns around them.

C.U. Reading, beginning
D.V. Environmental concepts


Norse gods in Oshkosh? Ginny has troubles at home (parents divorcing, alcoholic mother) and feels "trembling and alone" in her first year of high school. She's a perfect target for Loki, who, if he can seduce Ginny to "the dark," will be able to use this power to release his wolf-son Fenrir, magically enslaved in a cave on an island in Lake Michigan. A talking crow at the zoo tells Ginny to seek the help of "Moon Woman," and the battle is on. The blend of myth and problem fiction is unconvincing and even silly. Loki says to Ginny, "I know what it's like out there. Dog eat dog. You got to grab all the gusto, am I right?" "Right," thinks Ginny. This kind of blend can work, as Westall and Garner have demonstrated, but Loki's psuedo-hipness, Moon Woman's mystical hokum, the crow's Disney-ish repartee and Ginny's problems fail to coalesce into a believable whole.


This easy reader contains general information about nutrition and how the body uses food, as well as facts about the adverse effects of junk food—candy, potato chips, etc. Although occasionally terms are not explained (body temperature, carbohydrate, high blood pressure) this is accurate. Unfortunately, the style takes the form of admonitory repetition: "Do not suck on hard candy for hours at a time. Brush your teeth after you eat. If you can't, then rinse your mouth. Do not go to bed with anything sweet in your mouth. Always brush your teeth before you go to bed." Informative but tedious.

C.U. Health and hygiene


Not a sequel to Sharmat's *How to Meet a Gorgeous Guy* (reviewed in the March, 1984 issue) but just as much fun. Mark finds a book that promises a foolproof way to meet, attract, and make yours forever, the girl of your dreams. His objective is Meg, temporary cosmetics clerk at the department store. The offensive strategies ("make her grateful") in the book don't work, but eventually love does conquer in this chaste romance. Underneath his bravado, Mark is an engaging character; Meg is witty, smart, and attractive—a formidable challenge to Mark's sexist ploys. A cast of entertaining supporting characters rounds out the story, which moves along at a nice, light clip. It's refreshing to see a romance with a sense of humor.
An introduction to the human brain: how it sends and receives messages, and how the different sections of the brain function. The explanation is well-organized, with good, well-placed diagrams and boxed anecdotes ("During brain surgery, there is no need to numb the brain itself, since it can feel no pain") that are informative and interesting. Meaning is occasionally ambiguous ("Even the blink of an eye causes many parts of the brain to jump into action," "Is it (your brain) in charge of you or are you in charge of it?") and the "team" metaphor, in both text and pictures is forced. Pronunciation guide, and a good index are provided.

C.U. Science

A clear, organized account of the anatomy and physiology of the mouth, this begins with a general overview of the parts and their functions—in eating, speaking, breathing, and as sense organs—and then discusses in detail the teeth, tongue, and salivary glands. The scientific information is presented simply and objectively, enlivened with vivid examples (the power of the jaw muscles is demonstrated in trapeze artists gripping a bar with their teeth), comparisons with other animals, and facts of recent medical research. Diagrams and text are not always well-synchronized; the diagrams are sometimes more technical and they use terms not mentioned in the text. Nevertheless, this should prove a useful and readable source of accurate information. An index is appended.

C.U. Biology

A small child spends a rainy day in the woods observing the animals: a skunk stealing eggs from a quail, a river hawk diving for fish, deer drinking at the river's edge. The text is slight but gently poetic ("Below and blind, the soft, star-nosed mole swims through dark and damp, deep-rooted, fragrant earth") with nice balance and structure. (When the rain ends and night comes we see the mole emerge and blink at a star.) Stanley's detailed, quiet, and softly colored illustrations fulfill the mood. The child does not appear in the text, only in the pictures, watching, and serving as a visual metaphor that fuses pictures, text, and reader.

C.U. Nature study

Twelve-year-old ranch-boy, Justin, puts on a country-Western drawl and acts the hick cowboy with his snooty, city-slicker cousin, Gina, as they climb high in the Arizona mountains. But they drop their personal antagonisms and help each other survive when they are pursued down a steep trail by a killer with a gun, and then are caught in quicksand and trapped overnight by a flash flood. As they huddle together for warmth in an ancient Indian shelter, they talk openly about their fear, and cry about the pain each has been hiding behind a mask. This has all the trappings of the formula survival story, including the spoiled rich girl who comes through with courage, but the alternating first-
person narratives reveal the character beneath the stereotype; the climbing and mountain survival lore is authentic and exciting; and the fast paced adventure will attract even reluctant readers.

D.V. Cousins


Five more stories about Adam Joshua have the same endearing combination of exuberance, strong characterization and sensitivity as those in *The Monster in the Third Dresser* (reviewed in the March, 1982 issue). Nelson, the kid next door, is scared of Adam Joshua's new puppy. Nelson likes things nice and neat, he likes to wear a tie, and is furious at the mess Adam Joshua makes in their tree-house. But after the friends unite against a bully and forget their differences, Nelson comes to spend the night, bringing two suitcases, a sleeping bag, his special pillow, "the one-eyed, one-armed, no legged teddy bear Adam Joshua had let him borrow again, and his tie." Children and the adults who read to them will respond with delighted recognition to Adam Joshua's problems ("What do you do if you're afraid to be brave?") and to Gackenbach's funny small drawings, which depict the vehemence of Adam Joshua's feelings and the details of his comfortable messy world.

D.V. Brother-sister relations; Friendship values


Sensitive and candid, this photo-essay about two Korean boys adopted by an American couple, the Levins, shows a loving family which directly confronts its special conflicts. Joshua, now eleven, was two when he came from Korea; Eric, now ten, was a few months old; they have different mothers. As well as the usual adoptees' concerns about their origins and why their mothers gave them up, the boys must cope with looking different from their parents; "Most of the time the boys don't think about being Korean." Photos, some of them stiffly posed, show Eric and Joshua busy and socialized. But, like the Levins themselves, the book is honest about the difficulties: the family's being stared at in public; Eric's yelling at Joshua in a quarrel, "You're not my brother;" Eric when he was younger working very hard "to try to keep his eyes opened when he smiled, but he just couldn't." What finally emerges is the boys' enrichment and pride in being both Korean and American, and the most memorable photographs show Eric and Joshua with their mother handling the tiny clothes they wore when they came to America, and the Levins cooking a Korean meal together in their kitchen.

D.V. Parent-child relations


"I promise to stay awake." So sixteen-year-old Jon begins his part of Operation S.W.O.R.D.; standing guard on the cliff, waiting to signal "the coming of the heroes of light." It is 1941, S.W.O.R.D. is an Australian Moral ReArmament type of organization of 100 people who have sailed for forty days and nights to a remote Pacific island. There, the Brigadier has promised, God will come and lift them up, away from the fire soon to consume the world. When Jon breaks his promise and falls asleep, the lights do come, but it is the Japanese invading the island. When they land they find five surviving teenagers, including Jon. The other ninety-five have disappeared. Short chapters alternate between Jon's Job-like arguments with God, and the stories of the Brigadier and the other teenagers. Southall has created a contemporary miracle story, with echoes of
Daniel, and without any explanation for the mysterious disappearance. While the telling is difficult, with much introspection, the questions (there are no answers) and enigmas will keep readers involved in this unsettling and provocative story.


In a very funny novel, alive with the kind of wit and snappy dialogue of Lowry's *Anastasia* books, Springstubb poignantly depicts the groping, complicated quality of relationships. Tired of being perceived as the "sensible" middle child ("When the dam busted, Eunice's role was a sandbag"), eleven-year-old Eunice reads *Walden* and dreams of escape to "a sunlit one room cabin in the woods" where she can look out for number one and, above all, get away from her parents' rising discord. When her friend Joy fails to get a coveted solo and is resentful, both girls vent their separate angers in a poison pen letters business, selling cards to their schoolmates for "When You Care Enough to Send the Very Worst." As demand for the ugly cards grows, Eunice is more and more sickened, shocked to discover "the level of loathing loose in the world"—and in herself, and she breaks with Joy and the letters. Her plans for escape from home are foiled when her mother beats her to it, and Eunice must help the family cope. Her mother returns, but, though both parents try, the tensions do not disappear, and her mother could leave again. But Eunice knows that she will not leave, and that in "the family rubble of pettiness and pain," and in her renewed friendship with Joy, "We're all in this together."

D.V. Parent-child relations


A contemporary little girl and her father are on a fishing trip in the moonlight for Saldutti's illustrations of Stevenson's poem from *A Child's Garden of Verses*. This is bright moonlight, softly textured and glowing with purple and green in rich, mixed-media framed drawings. Saldutti is not much concerned with the slight eeriness of Stevenson's poem: the burglars are cheerfully caught, a shoe flies out at the howling dog. In this country place the child can see the moon shine on both "streets and fields" as she returns home close and protected, part of a quietly unified natural world.


With their mother long dead and their father an alcoholic who abuses them, five teenage brothers steal the family car and take off to save themselves. Their leader is Shawn (18), who has always been their father-figure, just as Chris (16) has been acting mother since he was six years old. As they wander through cheap motels and fast-food places from Ohio across the Midwest and finally down to Florida, living off Shawn's college savings and finding odd jobs (Mark, the youngest, supports them for a while as a "blind" guitarist in a shopping mall), they trick naive cops and other adults, pick up women, read, drink, get sick, worry, and move on. They are comrade brothers, tough, loyal and caring. Only Rick (15) doesn't fit in; he has always been the outsider who felt himself unloved even by the saintly mother they all remember; and, in a powerful climactic scene, he openly attacks Shawn, accusing him of denying them a high school education, until Shawn is provoked into beating Rick uncontrollably, just as their father did. There is some stereotyping (the women are either easily manipulated sex-objects or madonna-mothers), the symbolism is heavy-handed, and an idealistic glow tends to oversimplify the problems of survival. But this is a strong first novel (it won the first annual Delacorte Press prize for an outstanding young adult novel), with fast-
moving adventure, a gritty sense of place, and controlled scenes of comedy, drama, and pathos.

D.V. Brothers; Self-reliance


When athletic English high-schooler Jamie is trapped into replacing the injured male lead in a ballet show, his one terror is that his friends will find out. As rehearsals continue, he gets to like his partner, upper-class dance-fanatic Anita, and discovers that ballet is the one thing for which he has a natural talent; but he is also desperately trying for a place on the baseball team, and talking tough about sex and girls with his friend Doug. Much of the comedy comes from the transitions Jamie has to make between his macho culture (with its scorn for men “messing about in tights and ballet shoes”) and the obsessive, rarefied atmosphere of the rehearsal room. The cover showing an embarrassed muscular young man holding an aloof ballerina may entice boys as well as girls into a funny and liberating novel.


World War I has ended, and Tikhon is a Russian soldier caught in Germany, without the papers that will allow him home. Hidden by young Inge and her parents, Tikhon soon becomes a cherished friend. He and Inge teach each other their languages, play together, and watch the sun set over Zobten Mountain. In an exciting episode the two climb Zobten, disappearing overnight, and Tikhon is arrested. Inge’s narration is strong, told with childlike authenticity and with lots of action, but Tikhon is a romantic Russian cliche: (“omesick for Volga...Omesick—eart vill break”) striking a false sentimental note.

D.V. Older-younger generations


Harriet is the school terror, in fact the town terror: the bus company displays a “Warning Notice with Big Red Letters” along with Harriet’s picture. She adopts a crocodile as her new bodyguard (his predecessor was a snail) and pandemonium ensues as the crocodile (and later, lots of crocodiles) eats everything, and scares everybody. The story has relentless humor, both broad and arch, but the uniformly hysterical pitch rapidly becomes monotonous.


Andres is abducted by the Chilean junta, since he has been involved in the resistance, joining a pair of revolutionary puppeteers, and uncovering proof that Miguel Alberti, “the people’s choice for president,” has been assassinated by the government. Written with a large measure of righteous anger, the story has force and suspense, but is weakened by purple prose, polemic, and a calculated use of providential coincidence. Andres finds proof of the assassination in a variety of improbable ways, he barely stays one step ahead of the junta, and has several close, unlikely escapes. The ending is weak, giving coherence to a single episode, but not to the story as a whole, and there is a telegraphed epilogue. While political novels for teenagers are rare, and there a some strong scenes here—a satirical puppet show, Andres’ torture in “The House of Laughter,”—there is
no character development or sense of place. Convincing in its horrifying details of the Chilean regime, this is less successful as fiction.

C.U. Social studies
D.V. Courage; Devotion to a cause


A careful examination of the problems of hazardous waste and its disposal in our highly industrialized, densely-populated society, this focuses especially on dioxin, the waste-product so toxic that its maximum safe level is one part per billion. Starting with an unsentimental look at “the good old days,” Weiss then discusses the organic chemistry of several current hazardous waste products, how they are formed, and their physiological effects on humans; he shows that some wastes (like lead, mercury, and radioactive waste) are indestructible, but that new (though often costly) technologies can render most wastes harmless. Although he makes clear that he is on the side of the environmentalists, he presents industry’s arguments fairly and in detail; he also shows that scientists do not agree on how dangerous the poisons may be to human health. Using current examples, especially the disaster at Times Beach, Missouri, he charges industry and government with neglect, and urgently and convincingly calls for clean-up and control. A brief bibliography and an index are appended.


Helen stumbles into a mystery when she sees the “Punk Rock Thrower” cause a car accident, and hears him whistling as he walks away into the woods. The police discount her evidence, but the whistler doesn’t, and sends Helen an ominous (and genuinely creepy) tape recording in the mail. No one believes the tape either: “It was a school prank.” Her life in danger, Helen still determines to catch the whistler, and, in doing so, finds evidence of another and older mystery that, if solved, will shame the vestiges of the town’s aristocracy. There’s a lot going on here, but Wells handles it with remarkable fluency and chilling effect. Helen is prickly, almost snobbish, and the author maintains a slightly ironic distance from her, and from the high school social scene which Helen at once loathes and wants to be a part of. A cool, unsettling, first-rate mystery.


Delicate, spacious, full-page ink and wash drawings, understated yet dramatic, illustrate Oscar Wilde’s story of the giant who drives the children out of his garden and drives out summer with them, until they creep back in and he is saved by his reaching out to one tiny child. Zwerger’s focus is on the human: she depicts an Edwardian world with innocent playful children; the giant is not a monster but a tall, gaunt, alienated man whose “conversation was limited.” The illustrations perfectly express the story’s yearning mood as well as its tension, with large areas of white and pale wash between the diagonally opposed figures; and, in the most dramatic picture, the giant looms from one corner, a girl flees from another, and the tiny child cries bitterly “in the farthest corner of the garden.” Zwerger is the Austrian nominee for the 1984 Hans Christian Andersen Award for illustration.

This introduction to snow, and snow's effect on the environment (and the environment's effect on it) is based on Eskimo perceptions and names for snow. *Annui* (falling snow), *api* (snow on the ground), *quali* (snow in trees), *upsik* (wind-beaten snow), etc. While this approach does encourage close observation and systematic study of natural phenomena, the book is not well organized and definitions of snow types are not always clear. For example, *quali*, "snow that collects horizontally on trees," is found "throughout the taiga regions of the world." Nowhere else? The style meanders through a confusing and uncomfortable blend of poetry, folklore, and science, with a liberal use of exclamation points. Bibliography, index.

C.U. Nature study


Lily, thirteen, is ambivalent about her fourteen-year-old cousin Marie, who has just moved in to stay. On one hand, she could have a new sister and friend, but Marie is also competition for the affection of parents and friends. When Marie turns out to be odd, but quite likeable and a gifted musician, jealousy triumphs, and Lily begins a campaign to discredit Marie. Lily tells Marie's friend how Marie "really" feels about them; Lily spreads malicious gossip. However, the two cousins begin to become friends, and Lily's ambivalence returns. Lily's feelings are brilliantly rendered: we can see Marie both for ourselves and through Lily's eyes, and our loyalties (just like Lily's) change readily and quirkily. This rare complexity diminishes as the novel progresses, though, and it becomes a more conventional, and less affecting, story about the power of gossip.

D.V. Cousins


Mohandas, fourteen, tells the story, based on fact, of Amala and Kamala, two feral girls reared by wolves in 1920s India. Villagers believe the two are *manush-baghas*, ghosts, but Mr. Welles (who runs the orphanage where Mohandas lives) is determined to civilize the girls and bring them to Christianity. While the girls are feared and taunted by the other orphans, Mohandas feels a kinship with their alienation, and so they become his responsibility. "Tame them," says Mr. Welles. The story of these "wild children" has inherent interest, and Yolen brings a strong pathos and drama to the story. Kamala and Amala never adjust to human society, and Kamala, particularly, in her torn up dress, clutching her rag doll, mumbling her few words, is affecting.

D.V. Helpfulness


In a sequel to *Dragon's Blood* (reviewed in the July, 1982 issue) this second volume in a planned trilogy describes the efforts of the former bondsman Jakkin to rescue the woman he loves from the toils of a dangerous group of rebels. This science fantasy is set on a distant world where much of the economy is based on the rearing of fighting dragons; Jakkin's dragon, Heart's Blood, with whom he has telepathic communication, is killed in defending him. A soundly-structured story has good pace, color, and suspense.


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A companion to the author's wordless story about a cat, *Up a Tree* (reviewed in the October, 1983 issue) this is the story of a dog and his bone: dog dreams of bone, smells bone, and finds bone only to lose it while looking at the "other bone" in a pool of water. Simple pencil drawings (nicely framed with thin green line) clearly tell the action-
filled story with fluid grace. Emotional content is expressed through the dog's eyes: a cocky sideways glance after stealing the bone from a garbage can, "what's this?" to the reflected image in the pool, and a look of utter pathos, bewilderment, and desolation after losing the bone to the depths.

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