ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign Library
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.
New Titles for Children and Young People


Third in the trilogy that included Westmark and The Kestrel, this is just as fine a piece of craftsmanship as the first two books, and just as exciting a story. Alexander is deft at incorporating references to the past, so the book is linked to—and continues from—its predecessors, but it also stands nicely as a literary entity. Here the young queen of Westmark and her advisors learn that their arch enemy Cabbarus is planning to take over the country; he does, and the beggar queen must fight to retrieve it and to decide whether she will wed the commoner Theo (the Kestrel) and give up her throne after victory is won. Theo is the hero of the story, a character who grows and develops, but he is only one of many vivid characters in a story that has pace, polished style, and suspense.

D.V. Friendship values; Loyalty; Patriotism


In an oversize book, each double-page spread is given over to some milieu (a farm, a market) in which Inspector Nom is doing detective work, or to some part of speech in which Detective Preposition or Sergeant Verb goes through a series of actions. The use of words within sentences does make them easier to remember, although in (for example) the market there is such a long list of foods that some may be lost. The pages are filled, at times are crowded with the bright, cartoon style drawings, most of which are in neat ranks on the pages and have the English translations below the French captions. On some pages there are large drawings of scenes in which, unfortunately, the French words are neither translated nor always easy to relate to the picture.

C.U. French—Study and teaching


Two high school students who are loners meet and help each other gain security as their friendship turns to love. That’s a common enough treatment; what makes this story different is the exposition and development of Felice’s involvement in a group of idealists who meet under the guidance of a teacher, and of Tim’s growing suspicion that the teacher is practicing mind control and manipulating his students. Exposed, the teacher is fired. But he gets a good job, and, in a stark ending, it becomes clear that the direction of the cult group is really under the aegis of the headmaster, who quickly finds another cult member to replace the teacher. The story has suspense and pace, and Ames creates an aura of evil most convincingly.

D.V. Friendship values
"I'll never forget the day Momma and Poppa were sold," this begins briskly, and it soon is clear that Pearl (the narrator) is a white mouse, that her parents have been sold by the pet store owner, and that she has promised that she will take care of her little brother Tony. Her other brother, Albert, is too preoccupied with his desire to learn to write (they all learned reading from TV) and so it is Pearl who takes charge. When the pet store owner buys his first snake and tosses Tony in the cage, Pearl knows she has to think of a fast solution . . . but she herself is sold. She escapes and has a series of adventures that include a session with a cat who has parapsychological powers. This is a lively, amusing fantasy that is deftly conceived and executed, and it has a surprise ending that should delight readers.

D.V. Brothers—sisters


Eleven-year-old Lambert and his friend Frances investigate the mystery of two men who seem to be digging in an empty house in the Washington Park area of Manhattan in 1890. Baker has assembled some nicely drawn characters (if a few too many) and a lively pair of protagonists (although they have an often-arch relationship) and the story has almost too much action. One of the most interesting aspects of the book is the material on an old tunnel of the period (an historical fact) and, unfortunately, one of the weaker aspects is the story line, which seems contrived.

D.V. Boy-girl relations


Louis, the narrator, has just entered junior high and he yearns to be one of the "cools," the small in-group that dominates the school socially. It isn't fair that his efforts to pull out, once involved and disillusioned, have no result, nor is it fair that a skit he devises to get revenge on the cools backfires: they think it's just wonderful. But Louis has already learned from DeWitt that life isn't fair; DeWitt is black, persecuted by the cools and ignored by almost all his other classmates. He has just become Louis' next door neighbor and he's the strongest character in the book: wise, self-contained and self-respecting, a cultured and sophisticated adolescent. Another strongly drawn character is Louis' aunt, with whom he lives: she's not a bad woman, but she's stupid and credulous, biased about the black family next door but willing to be neighborly when there's trouble. Above all, this effective novel gives a vivid picture of the power hierarchy of the classroom, with consistently good depictions of characters and their relationships.

D.V. Friendship values; Interracial understanding


Fifteen-year-old Olivia is the narrator in a story that is lively, often funny, and just as often subtly sensitive. Overweight, Livi has a desperate crush on Brian, a schoolmate who regards her as a chum, someone to whom he can talk about the pretty blonde girls he finds attractive. That's one problem; the other is Grandma. First, Livi resents the fact that Grandma's been given Livi's room, then she's appalled by the fact that Grandma never talks or reacts to anything. Ambivalent about whether
or not Grandma should or shouldn't be sent to a nursing home, she tries desperately
to break through Grandma's wall—and she succeeds, Grandma begins to talk again.
Then the question of home versus nursing home becomes even more acute. Both
problems are solved realistically: Livi surprises Brian by kissing him (he responds
with alacrity) and the book ends on a rosy note; the question of what to do about
Grandma is settled when Livi tries to show how independent Grandma can be, almost
causes an injury, and admits that Grandma can't live without having help available
all the time. A believable handling of two common problems.

D.V. Grandparent-child relations

ed. $9.50.

Bright paintings, realistically detailed and skillfully composed, illustrate a story
that has variations on a theme rather than a plot. Martin, who has a collection of
hats, wears some of them in turn as—in his imagination—he explores caves, drives
a train, puts out a fire, cooks a meal, does farm work, etc. At the end of the book
he finds a nightcap hanging on his bed and goes to sleep. Adequate, but not really
substantial and rather static.

D.V. Imaginative powers


Coming from a Russian shtetl to a New England seacoast town was a big change
for the Berliawsky family, but Louise and the other children adjusted fairly happily
to their new environment. A sympathetic art teacher helped Louise find her way,
and after marriage and a move to New York the new Mrs. Nevelson explored and
expanded; she was interested in singing, in dance, in art above all. Most of this
biography shows how an individual artist moves toward a form of expression in
which she or he feels there is integrity and a personal voice. Now in her eighties
and acknowledged as one of the major artists in the United States, Nevelson is
portrayed as a dynamic and dramatic figure. The writing style is a bit tedious, but
the vibrancy of the subject compensates for this. A list of sources is provided in the
chapter notes; also appended is a divided bibliography.

31011-0. 223p. $12.95.

Another seventeenth summer story is about a self-centered girl who is hurt and
irritated because her parents have arranged for her to spend the vacation helping an
aunt who owns an inn. Hillary is convinced that her summer goal of romance with
a "total guy" will be impossible in a small Oregon town. What she finds is that there
is a large construction project in town, and she has her pick of gorgeous guys. Added
to this lightweight theme are Hillary's becoming more responsible when her aunt
has surgery, and her helpfulness in assisting local authors to sell a self-published
book. Readable as very light fiction, this is impressive neither in style, plot, nor
characterization.

D.V. Boy-girl relations


Burchard writes of three generations of women: Alice, who gets over her childhood
jealousy when a beloved uncle marries; Alice's daughter Anne, whose father dies
during World War II and who finds a boy who helps her bear her grief; and Lisa,
whose mother (Anne) is always nervous about the dangers of Manhattan and whose protectiveness irritates Lisa. Each vignette is well-written and adequately structured, and the characterization is solid although not always drawn in depth; the weaknesses of the book, although they are minor, are that the episodes are thinly attached and that they all end in so neat a fashion.

D.V. Mother-daughter relations


In a story from England, eleven-year-old Lucy is the victim of a bullying trio of girls who insist she must give them presents, and although she is terrified, Lucy submits to their rough handling rather than tell any adult. The other children know, since many of them have also suffered the attentions of tough Melanie Prosser and her two toadies. Eventually, Lucy and others band together and find a way to stop Melanie . . . and that's the story, with a few hints that it's her home situation that causes Melanie to be so awful. This is not unbelievable, but it is an overextended novel, and at times the children seem older than they are supposed to be. Chambers draws a contrast between Lucy's supportive parents and Melanie's self-centered ones, and perhaps that's the message.

D.V. Parent-child relations


The indomitable Beverly Cleary has come up with something new: a picture book about an adolescent motorcycle rider. It's the style that lends humor here, for the text follows a pattern: This is Chuck—this is Chuck's motorcycle—this is Chuck's mother (worrying about Chuck) and so on. The text points out many features of motorcycles and how they function; it depicts a ride in which Chuck is careless, has a spill, is lucky to be unhurt, and even as he's saying, "See, Mom, nothing to worry about," is worrying about how he's going to pay his traffic fine. This is informative and funny, a deft blend of fictional framework and informative text. Endpapers give a labelled picture of each side of a motorcycle.


Cleaver has created here not one but two memorable child characters: eleven-year-old Amy, the crusty little protagonist who tries to harden her heart against the love and innocence of a four-year-old niece (Ella is almost too charming and good to be true, but she's fetching). That's really the story, as Amy reacts to being loved in a situation in which she's getting little show of affection from anyone else; all relationships improve in the course of the story, and almost all the improvement emanates, in a ripple effect, from the little child who leads them. While some of the writing seems precious, some of it is powerful. In other words, Cleaver at her almost-best.

D.V. Family relations


Cohen places the story of Queen Esther as a medieval performance in the Prague ghetto, so that in addition to the drama of the story itself, readers have the benefit of enthusiastic reaction (even participation) from the audience. The story of Purim

The legend of Beauty and the Beast continues to capture the imagination of writers, as evidenced by this variant and that by Rose and Halfyard (reviewed in the March, 1984 issue.) Here Cohen responds with a contemporary story in which an older man, hideously scarred (fire) and tremendously wealthy and learned, hires Isabel, the adolescent narrator, to work in his floral business. (All she asked for was a rose, and her father stole it and was caught.) He becomes her mentor; her father decides there's something odd there and makes Isabel quit. The Beast sickens. Here Izzie has a boy-friend and they visit the Beast in hospital, persuade him to have plastic surgery, and know he accepts the fact that they are in love. This strains credulity a bit here and there (so wealthy, so cultured, so isolated, so easily persuaded to return to society after years of isolation), but it's an intriguing shadow-plot, and it is written with practiced craft, secure in plot, characterization, and writing style, particularly dialogue.


In a sequel to *War Comes to Willy Freeman* and *Jump Ship to Freedom*, the young black girl, Carrie, makes a determined effort to learn her origins. Orphaned, she works in the historic Fraunces Tavern in New York, a base from which she does a good bit of eavesdropping on some of the major figures of the American Revolution. The book gives a sympathetic picture of black Americans and the problems they faced in the turbulent aftermath of war—but as a story it is too densely written to be truly effective. The characters are believable, there is plenty of action to interest readers, and the outcome is satisfying.


Bright but mediocre illustrations show a small rabbit in a series of stiff and repetitive pictures. The text shares the stiffness: "Bunny opens the store door. 'Look at all the food!' Do you get to ride in the cart? Bunny does. Bunny helps to pick out the cookies. Yum, yum." The heavy board pages should stand up well, and the book chronicles a familiar activity, but it has no literary merit and little visual appeal.


In a series of very brief tall-tale episodes, Dewey establishes the irrepressible Febold in the image of the folk hero; he's a pioneer farmer who learns how to beat the weather, who's inventive. When the Nebraska heat pops corn on the stalk and melts sugar off the cane, Febold enjoys popcorn balls. He imports flying fish to eat the grasshoppers. He invents roads by cutting fog into strips. Not every concept is
humorous or inventive, but enough are to make the book appealing to primary grades readers.

C.U. Reading, beginning


This is a small girl's monologue about what her days would be like and how her pet would behave if she had Coconut, a large hyacinth macaw. Alas, she concludes, the real Coconut is in a pet store and prefers the company of the owner. Some day, the child says, she'll have a hyacinth macaw of her own, one that will like her best. The book gives no indication of the fact that macaws are often given to biting and are noisy birds; the pictures show Coconut as a beautiful creature and very tame. The text is wistful, adequately written, static structurally.

D.V. Pets, care of


Written for her children many years ago by an American who now lives in England, this was first published in that country. The line and wash drawings are sand-colored on cream paper, awkward but rather engaging. The writing has an ingenuous quality and a gentle humor, as two small seals swim off on their own, evade a polite but predatory shark, get lost, are rescued by an amicable little girl who feeds them peanut butter sandwiches (not successful) and rows them home (very successful) to encounter mother seal's "Arthur and Edmund, get out of that boat this moment."


Gibbons points out that many animals build and live in tunnels, that children dig tunnels for fun, and that some tunnels are major engineering projects, serving various industrial or vehicular purposes. She describes the different kinds of tunnels and illustrates their structures in cutaway diagrams. Most children find the subject appealing, and this introduces it very simply. The flat colors in some pictures combined with a stylized treatment of mass add a static note.

D.V. Environmental concepts


Ronald is the narrator in this brief, humorous story about the planning of a class play and the near-disaster of the performance. The princess carps at everything, the prince forgets his lines, the wooden cage (witch's dungeon) Ronald and the prince have made collapses on stage. It is Ronald who steps in when the prince freezes, whips off his cat mask, and announces that he is another prince, come to save the princess. So Ronald saves the day and the play. Simply told, the story should appeal to primary grades readers because of the action, the almost-disaster humor, and the realism of the children's behavior.


A simply written text is divided into brief sections, each of which covers some aspect of the activities or procedures at a radio station. What emerges is a good picture of the work flow, the responsibilities of various members of the staff, and
the practical issues of the business, such as selling advertising time or shaping the
over-all program to the intended audience. Some of the photographs are not inform-
ative ("Announcer Dennis Long spends many hours preparing for his show" is the
caption for a photograph showing the back of a man seated at a desk) but most are ade-
quate. A glossary is provided.

C.U. Industries (Unit)


"Mitakuye oyasin—We are all related" is the theme of an animal-bride story in
which the loving husband, Straight-up-Person, follows his buffalo wife and son when
the members of his family send her away. Carefully structured and told, this legend
of the Buffalo People is illustrated by handsomely designed, stylized paintings notable
for their use of color and for the bright blocks of solid tones.

$11.95.

Finding that another boy had given Quick, Jim's dog, to some tourists out of
malice, Jim decides he will hitchhike after the family that has taken his dog. An
Apache adolescent, Jim is resourceful and diligent in his pursuit of his pet, hitchhiking
from Arizona to California. The story has momentum and human interest; it is on
occasion contrived because of the other aspects Gray brings in to give variety: a
criminal who threatens Jim when he hops a train, a wheelchair-bound young man
who becomes a friend and helper. Subject and style are competently handled; char-
acterization is less impressive.

D.V. Resourcefulness

9044. ISBN 0-396-08213-0. 29p. $10.95.

Because she keeps trying to sleep with twenty stuffed animals who complain and
fight and cry, Sarah creeps into her parents' bed for several nights in a row. Weary,
they decide to build her an enormous bed, so that there will be room for Sarah and
her animals, and that solves the problem. A slight story, structurally insubstantial,
fails to combine fact and fantasy smoothly.


Television has made pairs figure skating a popular spectator sport, although its
devotees think of it (and ice dancing) as more an art form than an athletic event. In
this documentary, the authors examine the careers of Amy Grossman and Robert
Davenport, entrants in the Junior World Championship Figure Skating competition.
Save for a little gushiness ("... they give the crowd a thriller, the death spiral ... The
audience gasps ...") In fact, the death spiral is performed by almost every skating pair and is less dangerous than many of the jumps and lifts) the text is ade-
quately written. Like other photodocumentaries about young performing artists,
this describes their training, their dedication, the way their careers impinge on other
areas of their lives, the necessity of parental involvement and support. A glossary
of skating terms is provided.

Hess, Lilo. *A Cat's Nine Lives*; written and illus. with photographs by Lilo Hess. Scribner,
Although this text, profusely illustrated with photographs of fine quality, is primarily about the various stages in the life of Misty, a young Persian cat, it also gives a considerable amount of information about breeds and show cats. Implicit throughout the text is a concern for the care and welfare of animals. Misty is at one point abandoned as she passes through the hands of a series of owners, another time returned to an animal shelter, at one point injured. As the book ends, she is the new and dearly loved pet of a child who has been withdrawn and for whom Misty opens new avenues of interest and achievement. Very nice balance here.

D.V. Animals, kindness to


A most useful book about the variety of ethnic groups and life styles in Canada also gives a great deal of information about political, educational, and industrial facets of Canadian life. Although the author uses the sort of authoritative detail that comes from living with families, as she did, this never gains the personal touch that made the Gidal series so popular. However, it is even more useful as supplementary material for a social studies unit, and it is candid about conflicts and problems between groups and within them. A bibliography and an index are appended.

C.U. Social studies


Little Rabbit learns some lessons about being careful and solving problems in an agreeably silly if not substantial picture book that is intended to help speed beginning independent reading. "Look before you hop," and "Use your head" are the two dicta that Little Rabbit learns, and he uses the latter more than once to outwit Terrible Tiger. All of the animals look like cartoon-style human beings, but the drawings have a naive ebullience that lends vitality to the story.


Merry is alone on the family's country estate when she meets the strange and beautiful young man who has come from an artificial moon, the shepherd moon, to dominate the earth. Mikel has superhuman powers, immense arrogance, and a childlike disposition; he is amoral, and eventually he is outwitted and defeated by Merry's grandfather. The novel is set in the 48th century and has a good balance of realism and fantasy, posing thoughtful problems about the direction of man's progress. The characterization is competent, the writing style smooth, the pace of the story brisk.


A simply written photodocumentary describes all of the nighttime activity in Manhattan's food and flower markets. Food comes in by train, plane, and bus; much of it is prepared for retailing during the night. Also during the night bakeries are preparing for the morning rush. This is adequately written, and the photographs are of good quality; it is on a par with other competent but not outstanding books on night workers in general, or food markets in particular.

C.U. Industries (Unit)
A third story about a small English boy is as nice as the first two. Softly colored, the realistic pictures show some engagingly scruffy children of various ethnic backgrounds at a backyard birthday party at which the birthday boy, Bernard, is tiresomely obstreperous and aggressive. His mother copes as best she can, and the other children adjust to Bernard's behavior. Alfie is complimented on his behavior; a bit timid at his first party, Alfie clings to his security blanket until he has to choose between it and giving a comforting hand to another child. So what Alfie learns is that maybe, next time, he can manage without the blanket. Very nicely done: an appealing subject and protagonist add to the substance of a well-told story about a familiar situation.

A farcical novel that moves at frenetic pace will probably have appeal to some readers because of the incessant action and because of the author’s declared partiality for children versus the authorities. Here the mutant red ant, the powerful Mr. Foreclosure, is bent on stamping out “kidness” and turns all his malevolent forces on the objective of producing a compliant, conforming group of sedate young people rather than kids. The book is full of weird characters like Mr. Foreclosure, it is relentless in its pace and whimsy, its use of odd names (Sterling Guts, Irascible State College in Scrofulous, Tennessee), but it does have some humor.


The paintings on the oversize pages of a handsome alphabet book are reminiscent, in their fidelity of detail and sense of texture, of the paintings of Bruno Munari. Here the pages are (effectively) even more stark: lots of white space, one huge upper case letter, one animal leaning on, perched on, climbing up, or peering through the letter. Identification is provided at the back of the book. The visual appeal extends far beyond the range of the usual audience for alphabet books.

C.U. Art—Study and teaching


Jennie, the narrator, is thirteen; she’s shocked when she sees her respected and respectable father passionately embracing a woman in a doorway. Eventually Jennie meets Daddy’s girl; eventually she finds out that her mother knows about it; eventually she accepts the fact that she and Mom both still love Daddy. This might be a grim story were it not balanced by Jennie’s humorous accounts of her own love life, a modest affair in which her beau Howie is more ardent in theory than in fact. The writing style and the characters in the adolescent novel are of good if not impressive quality; the plot, while it’s stretched, deals with a serious subject adequately.

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


A member of an East Boston blue collar family, Birdie Flynn is disturbed when her brother Tim is picked up as one of three juveniles who have desecrated a local synagogue. Most of the story is concerned with Birdie’s worry about Tim, her concern about her own future (she wants to be a writer and is working in a department store), and her deep and growing horror at everything she has read about the treatment of Jews in Germany. She sees, in Tim, a parallel to all those Nazis who said they merely watched (like Tim) but did nothing violent. Lasky has to an extent defeated her apparent purpose, to show how deeply the Holocaust can still affect young people; the defeat is caused by repetition and by overwriting—both too many tangential incidents and several peripheral characters who contribute little to the story.

D.V. Brothers-sisters


A novel with depth and compassion, the story of the friends is far from the usual triangle. Joshua is a loner who’s never had a girl friend and seldom a boy as a friend; he’s addicted to high-level tournament chess. Karen and Lori are best friends, Lori
shy and sensitive and Karen a forthright, cheerful feminist. What happens when Joshua and Karen begin dating is that Lori, who cares for both of them but thinks she may have a lesbian love for Karen, withdraws and attempts suicide. Both of the others love her and have tried to include her in their plans, but Lori cannot accept the status quo until—during her recovery—Joshua presses her and gets her to admit her jealousy and her injured pride that her two dear friends ever want to do things without her. These are three interesting and well-defined characters, and Levoy has made them and their relationships believable and vivid. There may be a bit too much chess for some readers, but the book is otherwise as well-structured as it is well-written.

D.V. Friendship values; Jealousy, overcoming


A charming diversion, this combination of cumulative verse and rich—also cumulative—paintings of flowers in a profusion of improbably simultaneous bloom. Anita Lobel begins with a luxuriant red rose, adding other flowers and echoing Arnold Lobel's verse story of near-carnage (cat and fieldmouse) in the flower-beds. Lovely to look at, and enjoyable for reading aloud.


In a companion volume to his *Going to School in 1776*, Loeper shows not only the state of education in the United States but also what changes had taken place in the first hundred years of a new country. The idea of tax-supported universal education did not appeal to everyone, and the schools were as diversified as the range of opinion on free and mandatory education. Using an anecdotal approach, Loeper describes the schoolhouses, books, lessons, teachers, and pastimes in schools of all kinds. Reproductions of old prints add to the appeal of a book that is capably written and has both nostalgic and informational value.

C.U. History—U.S.


In this sequel to earlier books about Anastasia, the redoubtable heroine is now thirteen, and the accumulation of adolescent woes (her hormones, her relationship with her parents, who have suddenly developed awful faults, and her feelings about her younger brother) convinces her she needs therapy. Her problems are perfectly normal for her age, her father says, and refuses. Anastasia buys a bust of Freud and talks to it, often answering her own questions quite rationally. "I don't hate you and Dad anymore," Anastasia tells her mother at the close of the book, "I think my hormones are gone." This is up-beat, funny, and sophisticatedly witty, like Lowry's other Anastasia stories; the characters are solidly conceived, the writing style and dialogue both polished and effervescent.

D.V. Parent-child relations


The evidence of research in a rather lively text is corroborated by the appended list of sources; Marrin incorporates vivid details of personalities and conflicts in a book that describes both such famous figures as Henry Morgan, Blackbeard, and
the pirates of the Barbary Coast, and lesser known ones such as the Chinese woman who commanded a greater fleet than any pirate of all time, Ching Yih Saou. The material itself offers enough drama and excitement to compensate for the several weaknesses of the writing style, one of which is a tendency to use the non sequitur ("The boy grew into a lonely, silent man, except when his temper flared"), and another the awkward phrasing: "Having wronged him, he felt that everything he did to them from now on was right." Wrong.


Four small, square books, each dealing with one arithmetic function, use paper engineering to good advantage with wheels and tabs that pull out to show the answers and illustrate the numbers. Children should enjoy the illustrations, since the answer to $2 \times 2$, for example, is four spaceships, and the answer to $2 + 2$ is four monsters. A useful adjunct to learning the basic math skills.

C.U. Arithmetic—Study and teaching


Jonno, eleven, is the narrator of a story that presents the problems that other children have in coping with a family situation in which there is an autistic sibling who creates unpleasant incidents, demands the time and attention of weary parents, and has the potential for embarrassing the other children in the family. James is four, and dominates the frazzled household; in the course of the story he starts school and begins to learn how to fend for himself (dressing, toilet-training, etc.) and how to relate to others. This is realistic: no promises are made as to James' future; as a fictionalized case history it is convincing. What the book lacks is flow and writing style and integration of the material about James and Jonno's worries about being weird or natural, being "inside out." Strong facets here, but the book doesn't quite coalesce.

D.V. Brothers


A brief, continuous text is adequately organized and simply written, describing the ways in which parent birds house, feed, teach, and care for their young. Handsome color photographs (with labels) fill the oversize pages. This isn't comprehensive, but it's a good introduction to the topic. End papers show photographs of sixteen birds' eggs, from the tiny egg of the ruby-throated hummingbird to the ostrich's, several times larger than any of the others.

C.U. Science

A retelling of the springtime myth of Ceres and Proserpina (the Greek Demeter and Persephone) is more sophisticated than the picture book format warrants. The paintings are brightly colored, lavish in their swirling lines, awkward in the drawing of the human figure. McDermott, in a publicity release accompanying the review copy, states that he has used three distinct styles. The juxtaposition is at times unfortunate.


On each page of this fantasy, most of the space is given over to the illustrations; there is a sentence or two of print, and these are preceded by a number, which serves as the page number. The illustrations are varied; all are stylized, but some have a flat quality, while others have the soft subtlety of traditional paintings of the Orient. The text is stiff in style, far more than is needed for easy comprehension. Magic Deer rescues some foreign merchants stranded by an icy sandstorm, the men leave, Magic Deer does another good deed, the caravan arrives at a town, and suddenly the action switches to follow the adventures of a poor snake charmer. And more, equally rambling. This has a patchwork effect and is a weak story in every way. It may, however, be of concern to students of children's literature who are interested in the sorts of materials that are being published in other countries.


Referred to on the jacket as a collection of “playground poetry,” this is a compilation of the jumping and counting rhymes, nonsense verses and taunts, and hand-clap games of black children of Houston, Texas. The pencil drawings, soft and realistic, add to the appeal of the book. The material (nothing is titled) varies from lilting to banal, often with faulty rhyme schemes, less often with faulty scansion.


It’s hard to be anything but appealing when you have a beautiful and amicable dragon and a shy little demon as protagonists—especially when the latter suffers from unrequited love for the former. When the demon’s various valentine gifts are burned to cinders (Fervicent the dragon scorches them with her breath before she even sees them), the demon finally thinks of the perfect gift. Fervicent responds and they live happily together for centuries if not forever. This tale in the fairy tradition is adequately structured, although it may seem a thickening of the plot that Fervicent and the little demon win human approbation at the same time they find each other.


Staying with their aunt in the old house that had been owned by Dad’s family since the days of the Revolutionary War, three children become increasingly frightened by the evidence of ghosts, of intended evil, and of the curse that has been put on the family. After some uncomfortable experiences, the children lay the ghosts to rest. This is not an outstanding occult tale, but it is adequately told, it incorporates some historical incidents, and it moves at a good pace.


Like many other stories of young hunters, this is a novel in which the protagonist
Ad is so moved by the beauty of a wild creature that he finds he cannot any longer kill.

John, thirteen, is hunting alone for the first time, since the grandfather with whom he lives has cancer and cannot make the effort. To John, there is a connection between his fierce anguish at the ebbing of his beloved grandfather's life and the sparing of the beautiful doe he tracks but does not kill. To John's joy, Grandpa understands why it was more important for him to touch the tired doe than to shoot her. Like other Paulsen stories, this has a writing style that verges on the poetic, a romantic theme, a sense of compassion, and a slow-moving plot.

D.V. Grandparent-child relations


In a carefully crafted story from a distinguished British writer, the reader is not presented with a full-blown mystery, but with a family story into which an element of mystery is introduced, grows, and unravels. Kate is curious about the letter her grandmother receives, especially when neither Gran nor Mother will talk about it. She knows it has something to do with the fact that her father's gravestone disappears; she wonders about the father who died by drowning on the very day she was born. The suspense is deftly maintained as Kate discovers more and more about that fatal drowning; the characters are strongly defined, the writing style fluent and polished.


Cathy, just starting junior high and missing her two best friends who have transferred, begins a campaign to get Jessica to like her, since Jessica is pretty, intelligent, and obviously destined to be a leader in junior high. Jessica is interested in Cathy's brother Paul, who's devoted to ballet, but she barely responds to Cathy's overtures. What Cathy learns, as she ignores other friends in order to cultivate snobbish Jessica, is that she's made a big mistake. This is not an unusual theme, but it's thoughtfully treated; the combination of a sound writing style, sturdy characterization, and a theme balanced by other facets (family relationships, for example) gives the story strength and substance.

D.V. Friendship values


Prelutsky's rhythmic, humorous verses are nicely complemented by comic drawings of the boy who is the narrator in all the poems and of his family and friends.


In a sequel to *The Sinister Airfield* (reviewed in the May, 1983 issue), eleven-year-old Harriet and her friend Neil again become involved in a mystery; this time they are told by Rick, a boy who's hiding in a barn, that his mother has been coerced...
into cooperation by two vicious men engaged in a smuggling operation. Because he's heard the men refer obliquely to his mother's past involvement, Rick doesn't want the police to know there's going to be a drop at the airfield. This has just as much action as the first book, but is better structured; the characters are firmly drawn, the pace is brisk, and the dramatic ending doesn't depend solely on the children as the criminals are confronted and caught.


David, the narrator, is so good a basketball player that he hopes, in the next year, to get on the junior high team although he's short. He's a star of the "Shrimp League" (short players) he's organized, and his big problem is that preparation for his bar mitzvah takes so much time. David rebels, but finds the members of his family ranked against him—even his beloved grandfather, albeit an avowed agnostic, presses for following tradition. There are some good family relationships, especially that between David and Grampa, and a bit of basketball and first love to give variety, but the heavy stress on the preparation and the procedures for the bar mitzvah, the frantic organizing of a large reception, and the sentimental ending weaken the book.

C.U. Religious education
D.V. Grandparent-child relations


Living in a trailer with his divorced mother and small brother Scotty, Jeff is responsible while his mother works. It's a long summer, and Jeff at first suspects (then, by snooping, verifies) the fact that Scotty does not just have asthma, as Mom had said, but something more serious. He finds a paper that shows Scotty has cystic fibrosis. Angry at Mom for keeping it secret, heartsick because his brother has an illness with no cure, Jeff decides Scotty has a right to know the truth. In the end, both Scotty's doctor and Mom agree that it is better for adults to be honest with a child who is suffering a fatal disease. Readers may be disappointed by the fact that Radley never is specific about the disease (it's just a lung disease with digestive complications) and most of them will be able to realize that the plot and the characters have been overshadowed by the purposive nature of the novel, although it is not badly written.

D.V. Brothers; Handicaps, adjustment to


In a text illustrated with many photographs of good quality, the author stresses the problems adoptive children—especially those from other countries or those who look markedly different from other members of their families—have in adjusting to their new homes. The emphasis is positive here, assuring readers of the love and permanence of the adoptive relationship; the text is well organized and simply written; an appended note is addressed to adults, discussing contemporary adoption patterns.

D.V. Adaptability


This is a story in which two plot threads come together, although the device of
shifting point-of-view is maintained to the end. Plot one: a small band of Marines disappears from Texas and nobody knows where they are...except... (Plot two) for two thirteen-year-old boys, Jakey and Hogan, who pick up the trail of the men in Louisiana and catch up with them, helping to feed them. The Marines are bound for a Fourth of July Parade in Vicksburg, and the story ends with a dramatic and dangerous incident in which the two boys become heroes. This has action, humor, some suspense, and a plot that becomes tedious through stretching and is not wholly credible to boot.

D.V. Cousins


Pencil drawings so faint as to make it difficult to see details illustrate a believable but stiff little story. Julie always wishes, when they visit Grandma and Daddy plays the piano there, that she might have a piano and learn to play. Daddy and Mommy decide to buy a piano, and when it comes Daddy teaches Julie to play ‘‘Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,’’ and makes her happy by telling her she is going to be a fine musician. A worthy goal, but a slight and slow-moving book.

D.V. Parent-child relations


Repeating third grade is a gloomy prospect for Joshua, not only because it’s embarrassing, not only because it seems unfair (other kids were just as bad at reading), but also because the teacher, Mrs. Goodwin, looks like a tank. So much for appearances. Mrs. Goodwin proves to be helpful and understanding, coaching Joshua at her home every weekday, having him help other third graders with their arithmetic. It will surprise few readers that Joshua blossoms and is given early promotion. In addition to this warm depiction of a teacher-pupil relationship, the story has other relationships, astutely drawn: Joshua’s parents, the former classmate who teases Joshua, the best friend who stoutly defends him. The dialogue is particularly good, often contributing to characterization, just as often crisply humorous.

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


Two brothers, Sam and Dave, are the detectives who solve the mystery of who is causing accidents and creating problems for the cast and crew of a school play. Like many other plays the Drama Club has put on, this one has been written by Mary Ellen, who also has a small part in the play The Merry Pirates. When somebody tampers with the light board, Sam thinks of a way to catch the culprit. This has action and some humor, but the characters are superficially drawn, the plot has a measure of contrivance, and the writing style is not Singer at her best.


Stella, who dislikes her fourth grade teacher, looks back with nostalgia to Mrs. Mazursky, the third grade teacher who was kind, who told jokes, who never made kids stay after school. In fact, Stella goes back to visit Mrs. M. because she considers...
her a friend—that is, she seems a friend until there's a softball game between Stella's class and Mrs. M's, and Stella is appalled at the way her former teacher supports her side by yelling, "Drop it, Stella!" (Stella drops the ball, and her class loses the game.) This has an easy, casual style and the kind of humor (although it's minimal) that should appeal to readers in the primary grades; it's a bit unsubstantial structurally, with too much build-up for the dénouement.

D. V. Teacher-pupil relations


In part because her Welsh-born mother has talked so lovingly of Wales, and in part because she's baffled by the fact that her mother won't talk of her own parents or of why she left Wales, Morfa embarks on a year of study at Carmarthen College in South Wales. She makes friends easily, enjoys learning the language, but is for a long time thwarted in her efforts to find out something about her grandparents. Several times Morfa has eerie episodes in which a sudden fog rises, or she sees a strange, dark man visible to nobody else. Finally she learns that her grandfather is dead, and her grandmother is in a mental home; she also learns that her grandmother is an evil witch. In a final, not very convincing scene, Morfa confronts her grandmother in a psychic struggle which Morfa wins, while the old woman is killed in a magically-precipitated avalanche. The mixture of realism and fantasy is not quite smooth enough to be believable, and the book has a certain amount of obtrusively-presented facts about Wales (its customs, its politics, and its language), but it is nevertheless a good read. Strongest in its realistic aspects, the story indicates the author's potential as to style, characterization, and dialogue. Imperfect, but a promising first book.

D. V. Age-mate relations; Grandmother-child relations


Cam, the narrator, is ten years old; the setting is rural North Carolina; the time is the period of World War II, and Cam has two abiding interests. One is his concern for his father, who is in service; the other is the protection of an elderly man, Jeddah, who has run away from a nursing home and is in hiding. Cam's best friend Tal is irritated by Cam's pride in his father; Tal's father (who runs the nursing home with an eye to profits) tries to get Jeddah back and also makes advances to Cam's pretty, lonely mother. Todd has knit the plot elements together nicely, and the resultant exposé is both logical and satisfying, although it's perhaps a bit too neat. The story is capably written, with good pace and well-drawn characters.

D. V. Older-younger generations


The Lucky-Duck key-chain charm passes from one member of a 4-B class to another; each is convinced the charm will bring luck, and each keeps the charm and the wishes based on it a secret. Some of the children are convinced it has brought good fortune, others are disappointed, and the story ends with Lucky-Duck being picked up by a crow. This deals with some believable fourth-grade children, it has an imposed pattern, and it has a modicum of characterization. Not an impressive story, but a readable one.

D. V. Age-mate relations

Nicola, eleven, is resentfully aware that her younger sister Rose is pampered; Nicola must rise on time, but Rose sleeps later because she's going to be a dancer and needs her rest. Nicola's tall and lanky, Rose is short and bouncy and assertive. Nicola dances, too, but only when she's alone, and she's thunderstruck (as is her mother) when a neighbor who's spotted her invites Nicola to participate in a semi-professional mime group. Rose is indignant, since she feels she's the family artist; she fusses so much that Nicola gives up a part for which she's much better suited. In this slightly Cinderella-ish story, it's Nicola who's chosen as a possible comer at ballet rather than superficial Rose; while the book is well-written and the characters well-defined, this has too little pace to be a gripping story, although for many readers the satisfaction of identifying with the duckling who becomes a swan will suffice.

D.V. Sisters


First published in England, this is a simply written text, with a column of large print bordered by a smaller column (and smaller print) that describes what is in the small illustrations. The larger illustrations, almost all clearly drawn diagrams of different kinds of castles, usually are accorded a half or a full page. In addition to describing the parts of a castle, the book gives information about castle life and about the way in which, once castles fell into desuetude as fortresses, they were (and to an extent still are) used as homes. A very good first book on the subject.

C.U. Social studies


Sophie Scholl was twenty-one when she died by the guillotine, accused of treason and aiding the enemy. What she and those who died for the same cause had done was to urge Germans to repudiate Hitler, end the war sooner, strike a blow for freedom and against Nazi tyranny. This is both an affective account and, at times, an affected one because of the rather pompous style. However, the sad story is intrinsically dramatic, and the author uses source materials and interviews to give variety and to gain authenticity.

C.U. History—Germany; Social studies


Not every adolescent reader will warm to a book that is written as a series of monologues addressed to a dead sister, but for those who pursue this intriguing novel, it could be rewarding. The narrator, Paul, is seventeen; along with other families, he and his parents have come from England to Portugal for a mass funeral service. Paul's sister Clare, to whom he speaks, and other children had been killed during a school trip. Paul's mother drinks and she is hostile toward her sad, defeated husband, and Paul takes refuge in his dreams of a World Free Zone, a Utopian community. He is jarred into reality by a visit to a Lisbon cabaret where he's both erotically stimulated and repulsed. When a turn of events bring his parents closer, Paul realizes that his dreams have been an escape, that a happier home situation (which at the end seems promised) brings true release and happiness. A tight-packed and intro-
spective story is nicely honed in its characterization and development. This is perhaps less a novel for young adult readers than an adult novel some young adults will enjoy.

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


Like earlier Watanabe books, this stresses the achievement of a new skill in a child’s repertoire of accomplishments that lead to independence. Unlike the earlier books, this focuses less on a physical skill than on self-reliance, as a small bear goes for a daring walk in which he climbs mountains (a dirt pile) and fords a river (puddle) and meets his father just as he’s found himself in a spot of trouble for the first time. The read-aloud audience can share the satisfaction of the bear’s final comment, “What a good walk!” The simple drawings and clean, spacious pages add to the book’s visual appeal.

D.V. Independence; Self-reliance


In a science fiction novel of Britain in the next century, the society is rigidly regimented, manipulated, and policed. The castes are ruthlessly separated, but young Henry Kitson escapes his high, scientific status to have a holiday in Futuretrack London, a slum where he meets and falls in love with Keri, who is beautiful and tough, condemned to die as a racing cyclist. Together they plot an escape that takes them first to Scotland and then to the Fen country. Learning that Londoners are to be killed off, that the Fen people are being used as an exhibit (they’ve been left as they were in the previous century) and as breeders to be sent north, Kitson decides he will destroy the computer that controls the whole country. The plot is ingenious and fast-paced, with increasing suspense to add momentum and excitement. Carefully crafted and smoothly written, the story has a compelling thrust and a stirring ending with a wry twist.


In another story about the eight-year-old who has acquired two step-brothers, Mitzi goes on a dig with her archaeologist mother and Frederick, the older brother who’s so knowledgeable about her mother’s subject that Mitzi’s nose is out of joint. She makes a small sacrifice for Frederick after he’s rescued her from a rattler, and she decides he’s not a bad brother after all. Low-keyed, this has a static quality although some of the episodes have movement. A pleasant but not unusual story.

D.V. Brothers-sisters
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