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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PRINTED IN U.S.A.
New Titles for Children and Young People


With almost one hundred full-color illustrations from the original edition in 1919, this oversize version of the classic fables is limited to an audience old enough to understand the vocabulary and concepts, and young enough to accept the very large (but close) print. The tales are printed in two columns per page, separated by small paintings at times but crowding in without intervening space at other times. The tellings are adequate in style although not distinctive; morals are in italics. The illustrations are conservatively representational, with touches of whimsy.


Readers who enjoyed the two earlier comic novels about Arabel and her pet raven, Mortimer, will welcome this latest extravaganza, for Aiken has again compounded a series of improbable and hilarious adventures in which everything that can happen does. There are three longish stories that include an iceberg off the coast of Ireland (with a dinosaur frozen in it) and the rescue of a pop singer from an abandoned building and a convenient flood that helps trap a book thief and more. The exaggeration is so broad and so good-humored that it doesn’t pall.


Color photographs of many varieties of the lemur, a native of Madagascar, illustrate a text that is clearly written and carefully structured. The authors describe the lemur, a primate, discuss varieties, and then focus on how the animal has been studied in the wild and in captivity; the text concludes with facts about the attrition of the species because so many lemurs have been killed for food (by people, rather than wild predators) or lost their homes because of the clearing of the forests in which they live. An index gives access to the contents of the text.


Fifteen-year-old Tru (Gertrude), the narrator, tells a story marred by diffusion and
lack of direction; it is adequate in characterization and style, unimpressive in story
line. Tru discovers her father is still alive and that he had deserted his family to be a
correct writer; Tru, who'd been told that he was dead, then understands why her mother
disapproves of Tru's desire to be a poet. There is a crotchety, superstitious, devoutly
Catholic great-aunt who proves to be Tru's grandmother, and an unwed mother who
is, along with old Aunt Paige, taken in by Tru's mother and who regains her faith
when a healer comes to visit the old woman. And more. There are some cogent bits
of story in the book, but the whole is far weaker than its parts.

D.V. Family relations

48p. illus. with photographs. $7.95.

Photographs of unimpressive quality illustrate a text that is capably organized,
simply written, and spaciously printed. Billings explains how the microchip is made,
how it functions, and what an improvement it is in making it possible for computers
to do more faster. The text includes an explanation of the binary system and dis-
cusses possible advances of the future, such as biochips that will be instructed to
"assemble more molecules like themselves." A one-page index is included.

Branley, Franklyn Mansfield. Is There Life in Outer Space?; illus. by Don Madden. Crowell,
29p. (Let's-Read-And-Find-Out Science Book.) Library ed. $10.89; Trade ed.
$11.50.

This should be as intriguing and, when read aloud, as comprehensible to the
preschool child as it is to the independent reader. It is written simply, but with no
condescension, it has lively and imaginative illustrations, and it is both succinct and
lucid in describing what investigations have shown about the moon and Mars, what
is known about other planets in the solar system that makes it unlikely that they
sustain life, and what probably exists of life on planets in other galaxies. Good
scientist that he is, Branley makes it clear that his opinions on the last topic are con-
jectural.

C.U. Science

Branley, Franklyn Mansfield. Mysteries of the Universe; illus. with diagrams by Sally J. Ben-

A distinguished astronomer who has been a prolific author of excellent science
books for children and young people, Branley here again exemplifies good scientific
principles. There are clear distinctions drawn between facts and theories, the infor-
mation is authoritative and is logically arranged, and the text moves always from the
more to the less familiar. Giving background information to help readers understand
the nature of the questions he poses (What are supernovas? How and when did
galaxies form? Why do pulsars pulse?) and answers. A bibliography and a carefully
compiled index are appended.

C.U. Science

Brighton, Catherine. My Hands, My World; written and illus. by Catherine Brighton. Mac-
A young child, blind, describes a quiet day in her life. An older sister goes off to school, the child plays with her imaginary friend Bumper, she strokes a pet bird; she mars some of her mother's dressmaking and is scolded, etc. At bedtime, the story ends, "Bumper stays with me until I go to sleep and then I think she goes away." The book can give young children an appreciation of the fact that blind children have the same interests and many of the same pursuits as those who are sighted. Brighton also shows how often the speaker uses touch or hearing to learn about her environment. Unfortunately, the story as narrative is weak. The illustrations (soft colors and few hard lines, good play of light, rather repetitive) show the imaginary playmate clad in ruff and coif, with the many rings of the Elizabethan period, an odd conceptualization for the imagination of a contemporary child.

D.V. Handicaps, overcoming


Jerome, the narrator, is very bright, very perceptive and articulate, and the only black student in a newly-integrated junior high school in a southern town. This is not, however, a book about that but about the white boy, Bix, who becomes a best friend—and at times an enemy. Jerome (who uses or cites others using every pejorative racist term) is basketball-mad, and he's happy to coach Bix; evening after evening, they play alone on an outdoor court, and Bix improves but refuses to make any moves, to do any faking. This culminates in a bet with his stepfather: if Bix can beat him at basketball, he will be allowed to visit his mother, who is in a mental institution. Bix, who is clearly a borderline psychotic, has a harrowing experience in the hospital and runs away. This is a book that has some potent qualities and some structural and stylistic weaknesses; Jerome is a sympathetic character whose familial relationships are warm and mature, whose calm self-pride is admirable; his depiction of the friendship with Bix despite the latter's peculiarities is touching. On the other hand, the book swings rather awkwardly from a rambling description of Jerome's life to a slow central section that stresses the basketball sequences and then to a crashing finale that is out of balance (in pace) with the rest of the story. Still, a first novel with promise.

D.V. Friendship values; Intercultural relations


Although the drawings here have more softness and textural variety, they are like Lenski's work in the stiffness of the little figures. The text is a bit on the stiff side, also, in three episodes in which Jane successfully pursues three cases. In one, the dog has been taken and a note left, in the second two dogs are wrongfully accused of antifeline persecution, and in the third a dog has disappeared. Despite the weakness in style, the book should appeal because of the animal connection and because of the successful and logical detective efforts of the dedicated dog detective.


One of a science fiction series in which the protagonist is adolescent Jenny (her
detective abilities and her bland character are reminiscent of Nancy Drew at her most patterned), this posits a visit by a city full of friendly space travellers who have come to observe Earth. They are an advanced civilization, telepathic and benign. Jenny and her friends pass the force field that keeps the crystal city of Krishna-la invisible, have some adventures, and are returned to the Kansas countryside after a lapse of only a few Earth hours. Save for a message about war and peace, this book says nothing and it says it badly. It’s repetitious: page fifteen, describing Jenny and her cousin, “...both small, sturdy athletic girls,” and two pages later, describing the same cousin, “She was small like Jenny and just as athletic.” It uses redundant language: “...cows...with some sort of bovine intestinal flu,” and it frequently offers non sequiturs. The plot is patterned, the characterization superficial.


First published five years ago (in French and English) as an unillustrated short story, this became very popular in Canada and was used as the script for an animated film which has won many prizes. Here the animator has condensed the images from the film version to create a picture book for the middle grades. Readers who are not committed hockey fans or players may not share the protagonist’s feelings, but children anywhere can appreciate the sort of dedication to a sports hero felt by the author when, as a boy, he shared with other French Canadian boys a conviction that Montreal had the best team in the world and that the best player was Maurice Richard. In fact, every boy Roch played with had a sweater with Richard’s number. A Canadiens’ sweater, of course. What a dilemma faces Roch when the sweater his mother’s ordered through a catalog turns out to be a Toronto Maple Leaf sweater—and he has to wear it. In public. An amusing story, nicely told.


Photographs and diagrams illustrate a book on gestation and birth (it does not discuss conception) that is written simply, clearly, candidly. The text is in second person, which tends to make listeners feel involved. A preface directed to parents describes the aims of the book and the ways it may be used with children of different ages. Cole describes changes in utero and in infancy, ending on a note that is warm and positive: just as babies have learned new skills, so will the listener continue to grow and change and become a unique person.

C.U. Sex education


Katie, the narrator, had never watched soap operas, but it only took one episode of "Lonely Days, Restless Nights" to make her fall in love with Thad Marshall, who played the ruthless womanizer, Brick. When Thad turned up at her high school as a classmate, Kate (who was one of the many smitten) was thrilled. In the love affair that develops, it is Thad who sees clearly what Katie does not: it isn’t Thad she loves but the cavalier Brick. Thad tells Katie when he leaves how bitter it has been for him, just before he leaves town, but in a brief postscript, she gets a message from him that indicates they may meet again...you never can tell. This has good
D. V. Boy-girl relations


Paintings that are romantic, imaginative, and delicately detailed illustrate a retelling, in an oversize format, of a Viking legend. It is the story of a wizard’s patient apprentice who rescues the wizard’s beautiful daughter from her underwater captivity and who learns from her how to outwit her evil father and save the kingdom he has ravaged. The retelling is adequate in style but lacks a compelling narrative flow. The story is rather long and complex for a read-aloud audience, but the oversize format may seem too juvenile for middle grades children who could read the book independently.


A story in the tradition of the fairy tale uses many common devices: the dream lover, the spell that can be broken only if a riddle is solved, the saving power of true love. It is in her dreams that a lovely princess sees (and loves) the young man who rides the silvery landscape of the land of the Unicorn Moon. After several tries, the princess comes up with the sensible-but-compassionate answer, and the dream hero appears at her bedside. This is typical in structure, adequately but not impressively told, not highly original. The illustrations vary: some are delicately detailed and romantic in mood, others are bold, oversize, almost grotesque.


Claudine and Bessie, best friends, scorn the snobbish Gwen and other wimps at school, they befriend a visiting author and a new school dietician, they get in trouble repeatedly—separately and together. A series of comic episodes, some of the action and dialogue seeming a bit forced, ends with the girls bringing the handsome author and the pretty dietician together. Love instantly conquers all, and the two girls delight in letting wimp Gwen know that they’ll be dining with the happy couple while she’s having a birthday party from which they’ve been excluded. Stock characters in a mildly amusing book verging here and there on pratfall humor.

D. V. Age-mate relations


A book of Easter projects is profusely illustrated with yellow-tinted line drawings of outstanding mediocrity. The projects include a party invitation, recipes, favors, toys, decorations, etc. None of the projects is extremely complicated but all seem ancillary and on the whole they offer no improvement on the crafts and projects suggested in similar holiday projects books. Although the directions are usually clear, there is sometimes no statement of what a project actually is; for example, one
page is headed “Wonder-twister,” but the introductory sentence that begins, “These fun little twisters make the bunny look as if...” doesn’t elucidate, there is no picture of the device, and not until the last direction on the page is there a clue as to what a “twister” is.


First published in England, this oversize book gives little sign that the story was written after the illustrations were completed. This is an animal fantasy, a parable of the seasons, something of a nature book, with the added appeals of a game element (hidden faces) and humor (plugging in crocus bulbs). The story is told by Podd, one of the Trumpets who live in a land of sunshine, whose adventures lead him into participation in the defensive war against the Grumpets, the hostile warriors of a dark and frozen land. The story is capably told, the plot’s cohesive, but the book’s charm is in its illustrations, some in navy and white, some in color. Both kinds of pictures are infinitely detailed, but it is in the paintings that Cross excels, with the sort of natural abundance that is in some Burkert backgrounds (less delicate, more dramatic here) and combining real and fanciful objects to which there is identification access through tiny numbers that correspond to a chart. A tour de force, visually.


Descriptions of some of the major discoveries of treasure (the Sacred Well of Chichen Itza, the tomb of Tutankhamen) are written in easy-to-read but gushing style, embellished by a plethora of exclamation marks. The text also discusses some reputed treasure troves that have never been found. This isn’t good informational writing, but it’s useful for reading practice and deals with an alluring subject.


Bright, breezy humorous illustrations reflect the sunny mood of a story that deviates from the usual odd-pet book. Dabble’s been raised from ducklinghood in a city apartment, and she’s used to it but is lonesome when her boy Jason is at school. His mother has accepted Dabble’s messiness but is worried about the duck being unhappy and investigates the possibility of a nice home in the country. That’s the usual pattern, giving up a pet for its own good; here everyone is indeed thinking of Dabble’s good, but a different solution is found: a stray dog, bedraggled and injured, follows Jason and Dabble in the park; Jason brings the dog home, where it is clear that he’s the answer to the duck’s loneliness. Jason’s parents are models of kindness and tolerance, the animals (and the family’s love for them) are appealing, and it’s nice to have a story in which a city apartment is the right place for pets.

D.V. Pets, care of

There's a range of quality in the illustrations (from Nancy Carlson, pedestrian, to Trina Hyman, elegant) but less variety in the poems, which have an occasional spark of humor or flash of insight but are, for the most part, mediocre in concept and execution. Scansion is fairly dependable, rhyme schemes are not. Some examples: "My cousin Shelly broke her arm/And got to wear a cast/And then she got to wear the names/Of everyone in class," or "My puppy did his business/In the yard across the way/And now my dad and mom/Are sending it away/Because the neighbors got mad."


Forman posits a situation familiar to readers of science fiction: a world in which Ad society, after a nuclear holocaust (Doomsday) begins to repeat the mistakes that led to pre-holocaust world tension. It is the year 2000, and a band of young pacifists march from Oregon to San Diego to try and persuade a militant group to turn to peaceful discussion and negotiation rather than fight Japan, the one nation whose industry and technological skills have survived. This has a stirring message about brotherhood; it has pace and suspense; it has a leader, Valerie, who is a fairly strong and sympathetic character. It is weakened stylistically by long descriptive passages and structurally by the fact that Forman incorporates so many sub-groups and causes that he crowds his narrative.

D.V. Courage; Pacific attitudes; Self-confidence


Max is an operator, the one member of the crew of new waiters at a resort hotel who is able to fast-talk the manager into letting the cabinful of neophytes take on jobs as lifeguards when the original guards go on strike. It's better pay, but Max has a more pressing reason for wanting the change: it will make it possible for him to see more of Annabelle, very pretty and very rich. Max does fall in love with her, but he also uses her to get her father to promise him a job. Just as his friend Reggie has been predicting, Annabelle drops Max at the end of the summer—and Max, ambitious as ever, is only briefly daunted in his quest for riches. French takes a long, often tedious time about telling what could have been nicely compressed into an effective short story; extraneous characters (and occasionally, incidents) slow the pace; characterization is differentiated and motivation indicated but neither is drawn in depth; the writing style is adequate, but often stodgy.


Uncluttered drawings, tinted in restrained colors and large enough in scale to be good for a group showing during story hour, illustrate a story about a toy. Katie considers Poppy her best friend, and he sleeps with her every night. Every night, that is, until the night he declares he's too unhappy to sleep. His problem: all the other toys or pets have something to wear, and he doesn't. After many unsatis-
factory tries, Katie turns to her mother, whose idea of a ribbon around his neck satisfies Poppy. “And they both went right to sleep,” the story ends. This has good structure, some humor in the outfitting efforts, and a decided appeal to children who are in that stage in which their toy animals and dolls seem very real.


Original stories by some of the notable writers of books for young adults show a range of theme and style; most of them are realistic and contemporary; most of good quality. Each short story is followed by a biographical sketch. Readers may be turned off by the last section, a pointless series of superficial questions (a set for each story) like “How many different meanings can you find in the title?” or “What clues are there that this story takes place in recent times?” Brief notes to readers and teachers precede this section.


The author does an effective job of showing a fruit tree changing during the cycle of the year, but a less effective job of telling a story that has any narrative flow or impact. Bright but occasionally awkwardly drawn pictures, framed (usually one per page, sometimes several) show Arnold building a tree house, picking apple blossoms, gathering apples, building a snow fort beneath his tree, all appropriate seasonal activities but forced as a story. Inserts provide an apple pie recipe and a diagram with captions that show how an apple cider press works.


Well-placed and adequately labelled drawings and photographs extend and complement the text of a book that is carefully organized, capably written, and nicely varied. Giblin focuses on actual structures: the walls of Jericho, Hadrian’s Wall, the Great Wall of China, etc. (concluding with the Maginot Line) and uses each example to give information both about the specific structure or, when applicable, the type it represents. He is careful to point out the reasons for the walls being constructed and for structural details. A glossary, a bibliography, and an index are provided.

*SCU* Social studies


The story is told by Skeeter, whose summer job is taking care of nine-year-old Shane, thin and insecure and homely and lovable. Skeeter becomes fond of Shane quickly, and admires his mother, Maxine, who runs a horse ranch and also has a part-time job. Maxine doesn’t demonstrate her love for her son, and so when a friendly man, Burge, comes along, the boy delightedly adopts him as surrogate father. Maxine admits to Skeeter that she would like to marry Burge, but Skeeter—although she can’t say why—feels uneasy about the man. Her fears are justified, for a terrorized Shane, victim of Burge’s sexual abuse becomes (curably) psychotic, presenting a new personality, John, to replace the Shane who has done bad things. This
has no tinge of a fictionalized case history, but it has the ring of truth. The characters are drawn with depth and perception, the observations and understanding are believably those of a thirteen-year-old, and the reactions Shane has are equally convincing. A fine book (one of Hall's best) in its presentation of a potentially tragic situation.

D.V. Mother-son relations


Joel's mother had never said she began drinking because the shop that was an outlet for her crafts products failed, but that turns out to be the reason she had become an alcoholic. Joel's father spoke little of his wife's illness, but he glued a picture to the refrigerator door: a candid photograph Joel had taken, in which his mother looked frowzy, puffy-faced, and disheveled. That proved to be the catalyst that made her admit she needed help; the book ends with Mother getting supportive counseling and the family again functioning as a happy unit. Although the book deals candidly with the effects of alcoholism in a family, it is rather superficial in describing the mother-son and wife-husband relationships. Much of the story is, in fact, devoted to descriptions of Joel's visits to, and his relationship with, his grandfather, so that much of the material seems peripheral.

D.V. Grandfather-child relations


Soft, realistic, sentimentalized paintings of farm animals should appeal to the read-aloud audience as much as the story (a true one, according to the author) of a stray kitten. Found by Herriot among the frozen rushes, the kitten was quickly adopted by a farm family, warmed back to liveliness in an oven, and named Moses. What the veterinarian-author found, on his next visit, was that Moses had inserted himself into a litter of piglets and been accepted as one of the family, both at feeding times and at sleep-in-a-heap naptime. An appealing story, this creates a problem because of the oversize picture book format and the vocabulary, exemplified by the opening sentence on page three, "The car, heaterless and draughty as it was, seemed like a haven in an uncharitable world and I gripped the wheel tightly."


Among the many books that have been published to help children understand and adjust to bereavement, there are few that deal with infant death. Here, told in first person by a little girl, is the story of a child's questions and feelings about the death of a four-week-old brother with a heart defect. "It's funny how you can miss a person you didn't even used to know," Julie says, remembering how Anthony had kicked when he was in the womb and they didn't even know it was Anthony. This is simple, direct, and gentle, a perceptive story. The illustrations are of poor quality.

D.V. Death, adjustment to

Since seventeen-year-old Hilda tells the story, there's a communication of her growing uneasiness and suspicion at the situation she's found on a Caribbean island where she's visiting Aunt Louisa (her mother's cousin) and Uncle Brace. It is clear that Louisa is being kept drugged by her husband—but why? It is clear that the tyrannical Brace is subservient to a middle-aged visitor, Mr. Gomez—but why? When Hilda tells Brace she wants to leave the island and go back to New York, he categorically refuses. Why? Hilda's doubts become fears, and the one friend she's made tries and fails to help her escape. All becomes clear, if a bit intricate, when she learns that Gomez is really a German, an ex-Nazi (one who didn't know about the concentration camps until the war was over) and that he's her biological father who is leaving her a fortune. He dies, Louisa shoots Brace, the boy friend shows up with Hilda's Daddy (seems she was the illegitimate daughter of Gomez/von Rucker and a Jewish woman, and that the parents Hilda's loved so deeply are adoptive) and the police from a neighboring island. All's well that ends a bit patly, but this would probably seem lurid rather than far-fetched if it were not capably written. It has enough action and suspense to satisfy any mystery/adventure fan.


It's Scott, the narrator, who's been dubbed "Ape Ears" by one of his eighth-grade classmates, and it so infuriates him that he starts a fight—but then, there are a lot of things that make Scott so angry that he fights. In part, this is about Scott's sessions with a counselor and his eventual success in controlling his temper. (Realistically, the success is due in large part to his own efforts at analysis and self-control.) This theme is nicely balanced by some often-humorous sequences about a losing baseball team and by a series of night forays with Beaky that result in their trapping some thieves. Characterization is adequate, plot fast-paced, structure effective, and style lively. 

D.V. Age-mate relations; Self-control


Although on the surface this is the story of an orphan boy captured by an escaped convict and forced to lead a Crusoe-like existence on a remote island in Lake Superior, it really is a message book, the message of the redemptive power of nature outweighing and obscuring the narrative. There's a modicum of suspense, as adolescent Jimmy tries to escape from the dour convict, but that's one of the story's few positive factors. The characterization is stereotypical, the writing style pedestrian (especially in dialogue) and the conclusion (convict becomes an ardent and knowledgeable conservationist and turns himself in, hoping for clemency so that he can "pay his debt to society" by setting up a refuge and observation post on the island) contrived and mawkish.

An oversize book is filled with fictionalized frameworks for a series of exercises (one author is a toy designer who created the bear, the other is an exercise instructor) led by two bear characters who do exercises and inspire zoo animals to join them. The colorful illustrations are attractive if repetitive; the fictional embroidery may add interest for some members of the read-aloud audience; the exercises are simple, sensible, and clearly explained.


There have been many books published that describe the history, operation, usefulness, and potential of the computer. Few of them are as clear and precise as is this book, which also has easily readable—albeit not too simplified writing. The text draws a clear distinction between the analog and digital computer, giving adequate historical background; as the title suggests, computer memory and robots are discussed, and so are many other facets of computer function: encoding, storage of information by laser beams, and artificial intelligence. A glossary and a relative index are included.


Soft pastel paintings capture the glow of day's end to accompany a gentle story with a quiet note of humor and an unusually affective depiction of the relationship between a boy and his stepfather. Young Alex's offers to help Jake as he splits wood and brings a load into the house are turned down; Jake's not unkind, but he's intent on what he's doing. However, an unexpected bond is created when Alex spots a spider on Jake's clothes, learns that the big ex-cowboy is afraid of spiders, and conducts a strip search. It's a fragment, but a warm and touching one that ends in bonhomie, and it has an ingenuous, direct style that is appealing.


Keller's illustrations show good control of mass and color but a weakness in draughtsmanship; her animals are not very convincing. The simply written text should be useful for the reinforcement of environmental concepts, noting the warning signs of a rainstorm, followed by a hard, brief rain and then the return of the sunshine.


Based on the author's childhood, this is a tender, funny, realistic story about a small girl and her family in an English village in the years before World War II. The structure is episodic, but the material is linked by familial relationships, sustained themes (Annie's longing for a kitten, her fear of the well in which her brother said a dragon lived) and Annie, the narrator, as commentator and analyst. For older
readers, this well-written book will probably have nostalgic appeal; for the middle-
grades reader its appeal is more likely to be based on the universality and timeless-
ness of Annie's interests, concerns, and revealed joys.

D.V. Fear, overcoming


Victoria is fifteen, in this story of a London schoolgirl who is pretty, does fairly
well at school, has boy and girl friends—and is miserable. Her parents quarrel con-
stantly, and there is clearly a major rift the nature of which Victoria doesn't under-
stand. Into this contemporary problem novel, perceptive and often biting, the author
inserts a time-travel element with surprising success. It's the old clock she got for her
birthday, Victoria discovers, that propels her backward in time for one day; a fright-
ening experience the first time, but one she later experiments with, including one
horrendous trip into the future (she's married to a domineering sexist) that helps
Victoria understand herself just as the trips backward in time have helped her under-
stand the rancor between her parents that has engendered her bitterness toward
them. Kennemore doesn't use the time-travels for effect, she uses them with dra-
matic efficiency to forward her candid, powerful story.

D.V. Parent-child relations


In a story in which Sean Abrahms is the thirteen-year-old narrator, he and his
friend Marc get into trouble through a perfectly innocent incident. Marc can't con-
vince his parents that his pretty sister (age eight) would make a successful model, so
he takes pictures of her to convince them. It's hot, she happens to be wearing a
bikini, somebody who sees the prints suspects commercial pornography. The boys
are exonerated, but it proves to be an ordeal; Sean's excitable and critical father is
proud of the way Sean handles it and says so when he speaks at Sean's bar mitzvah.
The chief plot thread is interesting although it's handled rather heavily; otherwise the
writing is very good: smooth, well-paced, convincing as the voice of a bright young
adolescent. The book is given color by minor plot threads, including Sean's first
substantial relationship with a girl and his militant sister's successful campaign to
have the bar mitzvah conducted by a female rabbi.

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Father-son relations

0-394-54079-4. 115p. illus. with photographs. $12.95.

Illustrated with good quality photographs, this is a compilation of taped interviews
with nineteen girls and boys whose ages range from seven to sixteen. Their back-
grounds and life styles are diverse, and they show a range of reactions to stepparents
or half-siblings, and they don't always agree about the success of joint custody or
other arrangements for seeing both parents, but there's one noticeable area of agree-
ment: almost all the children think that if their parents were not happy together, it's
better that they be divorced. The interviews are forthright, often touching in their
candor.

D.V. Divorce, adjustment to

Author of a Singer biography for adults, *Isaac Bashevis Singer: The Magician of West 86th Street*, Kresh has done a capable job of again describing the author's life; although no printed sources are cited, the author's acknowledgements make it clear that he has had ample opportunity to interview both the subject and other members of the family. Son of a scholarly and impractical rabbi, Singer lived in various Polish towns and cities before coming to New York to join the older brother who was a dear friend and mentor (the author Joshua Singer). Kresh gives full and balanced coverage to personal and literary aspects of Singer's life, including recent material and writing in a straightforward, capable style. A divided bibliography of Singer's writings is provided.


An expert on inter- and intra-family relationships, LeShan discusses almost every conceivable situation, attitude, problem, behavior pattern, and danger (as well as pleasure) in grandparent-child relationships. Her tone is casual and intimate and straightforward, and her suggestions for understanding why grandparents have divergent or fluctuating behavior, for bringing problems into the open or, if one feels too uncomfortable talking about a problem with a grandparent, confiding in a parent or other adults, are sensible, practical, and constructive. Although there may be all kinds of problems in different families, the reiterated emphasis is on grandparental love, and the special feeling that often exists between grandparent and child.

D.V. Grandparent-child relations


Awkward at sports, uncomfortable with his classmates, aware that he's a disappointment to his baseball-loving father, Stanley Applebaum yearns for prowess and popularity. Well, acceptance, at least. When his grandmother becomes coach of a newly-formed fifth grade team, Applebaum has his chance. He never does improve as a ballplayer, but he's a great runner, so that the one time he does make contact (hard contact) with a ball, he has time to respond to his screaming teammates and run the bases the right way after having sped around them backwards. Fans of *Ernie and the Mile-Long Muffler* will recognize and enjoy the lively group of children who here, in the same light vein, amicably squabble, work, and play together.

D.V. Age-mate relations


Culled from five out-of-print volumes of Livingston's poems, this collection is geared for the read-aloud audience, logically grouped, and attractively illustrated with black and white drawings. They were fine poems when they first appeared, and are fine poems now especially and wisely selected for younger children.

C.U. Reading aloud
A little rabbit tries to think of just the right present for his mother; he doesn’t have enough money in his bunny bank to buy jewelry, he doesn’t like the suggestions various friends make (Dog suggests a bone, Frog suggests a fly, Squirrel suggests nuts, etc.) and is disconsolate. When he is chased by a fox, and then (Potter-derivative) scolded by a farmer for foraging in the vegetable garden, Little Rabbit runs home, exhausted. Turns out that the thing Mama likes best of all is a birthday hug. Illustrations are of pedestrian greeting-card quality, the story has action and animals as appeals but is derivative in structure. Useful for the beginning reader, this is otherwise run-of-the-mill.

C.U. Reading, beginning

Bertram is intelligent, not bad looking, not disliked but barely tolerated; his classmates either ignore or tease him. He thinks of himself, despondently, as a nerd. It doesn’t help that Mike bullies him or that the lovely Louise laughs at him. But wimps and worms turn, and Bertram devises a marvelous ploy to get revenge in the eyes of the whole school, gaining Instant Popularity. This is funny, occasionally touching, and it’s written with good pace; the group dynamics of high school social life are acutely observed, and Bertram’s great spoof, which involves some devious computer programming, should appeal to readers.

D.V. Age-mate relations

Any identification book that consists of pictures-and-captions is useful, and this tall, narrow book can afford pleasant pointing/naming opportunities to young children. It does, however, have some weaknesses. One is an inconsistency of arrangement; in some places objects are grouped, as in a page that shows tools or another that shows food, as opposed to a hallway scene that comprises pets, clothes, toys, a flight of stairs, etc. Another is that sometimes there are qualifying words: both “cap” and “wool cap” are used; a third is that some things are not identified, although they are in the picture, as in a bedroom scene in which “dresser” might be construed as meaning “drawer” which is not labeled.

Not very substantial, but mildly amusing, with bright and fanciful illustrations.

D.V. Imaginative powers

Sara, the narrator, is very shy and self-conscious, and she is miserable when her fourth-grade teacher decides to put on a play in which every member of the class has a part. To make matters worse, Sara's mother can't understand how deep Sara's aversion to making a public appearance is: she insists that Sara try to enjoy it, and argues with her husband, who sympathizes with Sara. The dreaded evening comes, Sara gets through it, does not do very well, does not enjoy it—but concedes that Mom is right; she can do it if she has to. The sub-plot has to do with whether or not Sara's best friend will move or stay in town. That has a happy outcome, so the story ends on a positive note at a realistic level. Perceptive, restrained, at times quietly funny.

D.V. Age-mate relations; Shyness, overcoming


Mordden does a good take-off on Milne's writing style, but the whimsy just doesn't come over quite as well when it focuses on exercise, which is less appealing to small children than the small adventures of the original Pooh books. Quotations from these are included, as are many of the original Shepard drawings.


Bright, sturdy pictures of animals illustrate the familiar Mother Goose counting rhyme; Stobbs occasionally uses half-pages (in the style of John Goodall) to make a scene change between full pages. The attractive paintings should appeal to very young children, but this isn't a very substantial volume, and the rhyme can be found in many other well-illustrated Mother Goose collections that also have other rhymes.


Ten one-act plays are included in this collection, none making heavy demands in the way of scenery, properties, or costuming. Production notes for each play include playing time and any special lighting effects or offstage noises needed. The quality of the plays is adequate as to motivation and dialogue, while the plots and their development are a little shakier; at times they seem to depend on contrivance or coincidence. However, given the appeal of the genre and the constant need for dramatic material for group production, this should prove useful and, for participants and audiences, enjoyable.

C.U. Assemblies


Lively cartoon style pictures illustrate a very simple story, slight but amusing. Envyng his friends who were selling things at stands in front of their homes (worms, kittens, flowers) Max conceives the idea of selling mud. He makes only a few cents, but he and his friends emerge gloriously bedaubed with mud. The three boys hose
each other off, and when Max's mother comes outdoors he asks "Would you get
mad if I sold mud?" "Mud! Don't you dare!" Grinning, Max says "OK." Despite
the lack of substance, this should appeal because of its familiarity (getting muddy,
not selling mud) as a childhood experience and because of the blithe tone.


Dinah, eighteen, tells her story almost entirely through the therapy sessions she's
agreed to just to pacify her father, who worries about her decision to leave Barnard
in order to be with Gary, the man she loves. Dinah feels that she's perfectly happy
and knows her own mind, but as her sessions with Dr. Schneck go on, Dinah dis-
covers her fears about losing love, fears engendered by her parents' divorce years
ago. Orgel creates the atmosphere of the consulting room: the initial resentment,
the growth of trust, the increasing ability to face oneself and maintain perspective.
Characters and relationships are strong, and the story has good pace and momentum.
Moving and positive, this is an impressive novel.

\[\text{D.V. Divorce, adjustment to} \quad \text{Palatini, Margie.} \quad \text{Capricorn & Co. Pacer/Putnam, 1984. ISBN 0-399-21186-1. 155p. Paper, $1.95.}\]

Formula fiction at its most trivial, this addition to a series of books about the girls
who belong to an astrological club is both dull and patterned. Each girl has a differ-
ent sign; Gail, the Capricorn, is infatuated with Andy although most of her friends
think he's self-centered and doesn't care for Gail as she does for him. The plot
develops in an expectable path: Gail finally sees that Andy is a heel and gives him
up. The characters are cardboard, the writing style mediocre.


A weighty one-volume encyclopedia is intended, according to the jacket copy,
primarily for family use. The basic layout is a three-column page, with the inside
column narrow, used for augmentations of entries in very small print. For example,
an entry for Adonis uses a triangle to indicate more information is in the inside col-
umn. This has the advantage of keeping the main entry simple and the disadvantage
of separating linked information. There are cross references, but they occasionally
seem capricious; for example, there is a reference (indicated by a capitalized word)
from "Flying Fish" to "Plankton" but there is no reference from "Herring," fish
that also eat plankton. The format is at times broken by the use of double columns
or large illustrations. Weaknesses tend to be in inadequacies or deviations from
standard format rather than in errata.

\[\text{Pierce, Meredith Ann.} \quad \text{A Gathering of Gargoyles. Little, 1984. 84-12195. ISBN 0-316-70737-6. 263p. $13.95.}\]

A sequel to The Darkangel (reviewed in the July, 1982 issue) in which Aeriel
rescued Irrylath, her love and her prince, from enchantment. Here Irrylath, Aeriel's
husband but not yet her lover, is still bewitched, although he is no longer the Dark-
angel, the winged vampyre; to free him, Aeriel goes on a long and dangerous quest,
to find a sibyl and answer a riddle, to gather the lifeless beasts who will be reborn to serve her and Irrylath's fight against the evil of the world. In the end each gargoyle eats a magical seed and resumes its true shape, and the second stage of the quest is over, awaiting resolution (and presumably a flowering of Irrylath's love) in the third book of this projected trilogy. Like the first, this volume is often eloquent, often elegant, often vivid and imaginative. And, like the first book, it is often crowded with characters and magic and odd names to an extent that the story's movement is slowed and its direction obscured.


An awkward combination of fantasy and realism, this is a story in which even the perennial appeal of animal subjects may not overcome the weaknesses of the writing style (trite), the plot (formula: skittish horse calms down and wins important race for owner), the characterization (both superficial and stereotyped) and the repeated examples of anthropomorphism. The animals talk to each other, with a know-it-all chicken advising the nervous horse, Scarlett, about life, people, harness racing, and Scarlett's relationship with her stall buddy, a mischievous goat.


There will be few surprises here for those familiar with other biographies of Eleanor Roosevelt, but there is a recurring note of warmth as her son writes about her life with affection, respect, and candor. The writing has an easy flow, and there is a good balance between personal and professional matters. Since the years in the White House have been voluminously described, readers may find the final paragraphs that deal with Mrs. Roosevelt's public service after her husband's death especially interesting. A partial list of her books and an extensive index are included.


Although her father told her to play in the mudhole like a good little rhino, Rena preferred to climb: hills, trees, piles of stones, anything that gave her a view of the wonders of her immediate world. She even found a new friend, Gerald, who shared her love of climbing. They built a huge pile of dried mud and climbed it; when everybody came looking for them because they had stayed out playing until after dark, other rhinos climbed the mud mountain—and, in an abrupt ending—"Then Rena's parents and all the aunts and uncles and neighbors kicked off their muddy shoes and they danced with Rena and Gerald at the top of the mountain." The slight plot may be intended to comment on a child's imagination and vision but it's a message few members of the read-aloud audience are likely to receive. They may, on the other hand, enjoy the triumphant disobedience of Rena and the lively if fussy illustrations.

Pencil drawings, softly executed, realistic, and neatly framed, face pages in which a girl, pictured as about eight or nine, comments on her family, her interests and activities, and the homework that led to keeping a journal. Save for siblings, there is no mention of other children. From this placid, almost tepid catalog emerges a picture of a contented and busy child, but readers may miss any sense of direction or action.


Although this is primarily about the project set up in a mountainous Chinese nature preserve, and describes the ways in which pandas are caught for tagging (radio collars) and observed in the wild, it also gives a considerable amount of information that is more general. The text describes the panda’s habitat and feeding habits, the inroads on panda population by destruction of bamboo forests, by natural causes or by people, and the many and often abortive attempts to raise and breed pandas in the world’s zoos. A bibliography, glossary, and index add to the usefulness of an interesting book, well organized and well written.


Like the first book, *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*, (reviewed in the June, 1982 issue) this is an excellent source of short stories for telling as well as for reading. Again, Gammell’s black and white illustrations manage to be both graceful and ghostly; again, Schwartz has picked tales that are dramatically effective, at times chilling. Notes on sources are provided, as is a divided bibliography.

C.U. Reading aloud; Storytelling


In his usual brisk and authoritative fashion, Simon poses a series of statements that reflect popular beliefs about computers, labels each “Sense” or “Nonsense” and explains why. This not only debunks fallacies but gives a considerable amount of information about computers lucidly. It gives facts about function and use and limitations, and even provides some information about programming.


Crowded, animated, scribbly line drawings, blue-tinted, have a surfeit of fantastic details and warped perspective, in a simple but contrived story. Two children are sent into the city to go to a concert, see a doctor, visit their mother’s friend, and bring home some peas for soup. The high point of the day (they omit the visit to the doctor) is the visit to Mrs. Smith (she and her guests are all animals) who is having a
lively rooftop party. A taxi (a flying animal) "drives" up to the roof, picks the children up, and drops them at their door "along with the forgotten peas." Slapdash plot and extravagant drawings may appeal to some beginning readers, but the book is more silly than funny.

C.U. Reading, beginning


In an introductory section, Smith describes some of the problems faced by the first women lawyers as they struggled to get their education, get a job, get accepted in a profession that had been traditionally regarded as the prerogative of the male. This is followed by six sketches, most of them mildly adulatory, of six contemporary women who, in one way or another, have made a significant contribution either because of gaining status, gaining new ground, or making career sacrifices for the good of clients. There's some repetition of experiences, particularly in anecdotes about law school or first-job offers, but the book as a whole is interesting and informative. A glossary of legal terms and an index are appended.


First published in Australia in 1981, this oversize picture book is illustrated with bright, colorful paintings of the plump, cheerful Mrs. Arbuckle and the cat who is her consultant. The two trot about the world interviewing candidates who have answered an ad for a pet. Each is unusual (sloth, aardvark, whale, butterfly, echidna, etc.) but each time Mrs. Arbuckle makes a positive response, her feline advisor points out the disadvantage. Finally, they come home and Mrs. Arbuckle takes on the cat as her pet, a predictable outcome. This stretches a bit, but the appeal of the animal subjects, and the pleasant illustrations should hold the attention of the read-aloud audience.


Children should enjoy both the silliness of the tiny Snail wielding a heavy bat during a baseball game, and the thrilling suspense of the last slide, as Snail reaches home plate. In between, the ball travels to the moon, bounces off a pyramid, etc. while Snail makes his slow way around the bases and the manager (a hippo) urges him to move around faster. The nicest kind of silly.


Since he's come to a new town and new junior high, Tony has made only one friend, computer whiz (he says "computer nerd") Paul. Neither that friendship nor the fact that Tony's father works at a nuclear power plant is likely to make Tony popular, so he works on Paul, urging him to participate in sports and social events. What happens is that Paul gets the girl Tony has his eye on, learns to enjoy dancing, and even pays attention to his clothes instead of concentrating on his science fair
project. Tony, meanwhile, makes some friends—partly because of Paul, but partly
on his own merits. This is a believable story, and it's adequately written, but the
characters have little depth and the plot seems a bit forced.

D.V. Age-mate relations; Boy-girl relations

$2.25.

Peg describes the nightmare experience she had when she was an adolescent and
went camping with her father on what they thought was a deserted Mexican island.
Finding their inflatable boat and clothes slashed, their ax and other belongings missing,
having huge boulders hurled at them over the edge of a cliff was terrifying.
They saw a dim figure occasionally but not until the mysterious enemy stole Dad's insulin
did Peg literally smoke the madman out. There are certainly some excitement and suspense in the story, but the pace is too frenetic to make any real impact, and the ending seems flat: Peg goes back some years later and learns that the old man who had attacked them was insane and had been placed there rather than an institution by his son, who had tried to keep them from going to Sweet Friday Island but not told them why.

D.V. Father-daughter relations; Self-reliance

√ Tudor, Tasha, comp. and ed. *All For Love;* selected, edited, and illus. by Tasha Tudor.

In what seems a quite inappropriate picture book format, this is a compilation of prose excerpts, poems, folklore, music, recipes, projects, etc. Anything to do with love. Most of the material is of good quality, but the question is: how interested would someone old enough to be involved with love be in an oversize flat that is heavily illustrated with sentimental pastel pictures that have a faded, old-fashioned look?


Another warm and tender story about Rosa, her family and her friends. Here the big glass jar is empty, the same jar in which money slowly accumulated to buy the chair in *A Chair for My Mother.* It is empty because Grandma is ill, and any money the family can spare is needed for her care. Even in her illness, Grandma is responsive and responsible; she thinks Rosa's idea of playing (with three friends) to earn money is a fine one and fortunately she's there (her first day out of bed) to cheer Rosa and her friends on when they play music for profit, to an appreciative audience, at a friend's party for her grandparents. Softly-framed illustrations are colorful and have an ingenuous spontaneity. A gentle, appealing story.

D.V. Grandparent-child relations
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