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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New Titles for Children and Young People


In a sequel to the humorous/picaresque *The Illyrian Adventure* (reviewed in the April 1986 issue), the intrepid young Philadelphia heiress, Vesper Holly, goes off to the small country of El Dorado, in Central America. The time is the 1870’s, the narrator is Vesper’s guardian, the bemused and scholarly Professor Brinton Garret, or Brinnie. It is Alexander’s humor and his zest for the outrageous that make this tale enjoyable, for the plot romps from one frenetic villainy to another, as Vesper rebuffs evil foes, charms the Chirica Indians whose home lands she is saving, and effects enough escapes from captors to rival Pearl White. The wit, the humor, and the doughty protagonist will appeal to readers; the style, the firm characterization, and pointed digs at the foibles of humankind will give them substance. ZS

D.V. Courage


Because Andersen at his best had a keen wit and ready word, the number and nature of adaptations that appear is puzzling. Mayer’s version is smooth, though it makes some unnecessary substitutions and peels away some of his appealing quirks of phrase. “And Mother Duck let them look to their heart’s content, because green is good for the eyes” becomes “Look all around you at the wide, green world.” An episode of the ugly duckling’s living in a poor old woman’s hut is cut and the end truncated to exclude the swan’s happy new self-reflections. (“But he was not proud, for a kind heart is never proud,” one of Andersen’s vintage epigrams, is gone.) Locker’s paintings are characteristic of both his strengths (dramatic landscapes) and his weaknesses (some stiffness in drafting). At best, the scenes have depth in composition and color, but there is an occasional static quality as well. Overall, this is a handsome edition in a field with many competitors. BH

D.V. Individuality, expressing


Although the title is slightly misleading (much of the text applies to old as well as new zoos) this is a careful compilation of facts about zoo history, zoo policies and problems, and other matters (conservation, breeding in captivity) with which zoo staffs are concerned and in which there is great public interest. Anderson describes the newer zoos in which animals appear to roam freely, and she discusses such aspects of animal welfare as medical care, exercise, diet, and protection of endangered species or individuals.
Nothing new here, but a careful overview that is competently written is always useful. A brief bibliography and a relative index are appended. ZS

D.V. Animals, kindness to


Both of these books are smoothly written, with an involving balance between focus on an animal and generalizations about the species. The first book starts out with a couple's adoption of a young orphaned gray kangaroo named Sport, which is raised with the family dog and then released into a nature preserve. Between descriptions of Sport's antics, readers learn about the history, habits, and reproduction cycle of various kinds of kangaroos. Excellent color photography features the animals in both a tame and wild environment. The second book opens with the mating of Frangipani, a three-year-old koala that subsequently has a baby named Karen; both text and photography follow its development from pouch to independence. Here, too, are the facts of marsupial life, with characteristics and diet explained, along with notes of warning about the effects of civilization on wild habitats. Two examples of solid, inviting information. BH

C.U. Nature study


To the hearing-impaired and to those who wish or need to communicate with them, signing—communicating by the position and movement of hands and fingers—is a boon. This book, meant to be used by adults working with young children, is an effective tool for teaching signing, provided that adequate explanation is given of the illustrative devices used to show motion and direction: the drawing of an extra, shadowy hand to show change of position, or the diagrams that indicate movements by heavy lines and arrows. A double-page spread is used for each letter of the alphabet, and each is shown in upper and lower case. A few drawings on each page show words, illustrate them, and show the sign. Explanatory material, including sign descriptions, a diagram of the manual alphabet, and a letter about the author's experiences with a hearing-impaired child are appended. ZS


When an earthquake shatters their home (maybe in California, although setting and time are unclear), 12-year-old Carson uses the opportunity to take his younger sister Caryl away—Caryl, whose "strangeness" has driven their mother to drink. Caryl is spoiled rotten and telekinetic to boot, and Carson is the only one who can control her. Carson's quirky motivation for the trip is unconvincing, and the journey itself is confusing, with bewildering passages about terrain and topography that will make the reader long for a map. The two end up at a strange cult community, where they are also pursued by bandits and a mysterious group called the Logran Organization. Long discussions about the nature of cults, slavery, and free will sound more like the author than the characters talking, and slow down an already belabored story. RS
Following a brief introduction on the storytelling and culture of the Six Nations of the Iroquois are sixteen folktales with some haunting themes and images. Consistently woven through them all is the close relationship of human and animal, as well as ubiquitous magic powers upon which mortals often call to combat extraordinary forces. In one story, twin brothers retrieve their uncle's eyes from a quilt that two witches have made in cloudland, a "quilt of eyes, all alive and winking." In another, a child whose stepfather has abandoned him in the forest survives with the aid of a porcupine and is adopted by a mother bear, who pays for his life with her own and her cubs'. These tales are easy to read and taut enough to tell, each sustained with the suspense of life and death situations. An appendix lists sources and other works containing information on Native American folklore. BH


The use of first person lends some verisimilitude to the story of a thirteen-year-old girl who tries, in her protracted despair, to win back the boy who's grown tired of her, but it's a long, slow, and therefore dull stretching of an episode into a book. Calla is cross with her family, rude to her friends, and disruptive in school because she's so unhappy. Eventually, she adjusts. A believable situation is posed in adequate writing style, but the plot is thin, the characterization shallow, and the pace slow. ZS


Lots of publicity shots accompany a level-headed, easy-to-read account of Tina Turner's life and music, touching briefly on her childhood in Nutbush, Tennessee, and dwelling on her performance career, first with husband Ike and later on her own. Busnar emphasizes (too repetitively) the hard work, intense energy, and growing independence Turner has shown in shaping her own material and demanding her own terms. No great insights here, but adulation of talent that doesn't fade at 50. BH


A third story about the engaging characters of The Not-Just-Anybody Family and The Blossoms Meet the Vulture Lady is just as funny without being slapstick, just as sweet without being sentimental. Here the members of the Blossom family, as well as several friends, rally to support the ambitious project of the youngest, Jason. His inventive mind has come up with a home-made UFO, concocted of string, air mattresses, garbage bags, day-glo paint and the helium a friend manages to procure. This has vivacity and color, fits nicely with but does not depend on the two books to which it is a sequel, and manages to make the improbable both convincing and entertaining. ZS


The script is predictable from page one, when Abigail, "the bossiest girl in all Australia," waits for the stagecoach beside a poster reading "Wanted for highway rob-

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The expectation of this encounter, however, only adds to the suspense, as Abigail bosses the horses, the passengers, the driver, and inevitably, Flash Fred, who retreats in defeat from her railing, a shamed and broken man. The pen-and-wash drawings are textured with a mixture of fine hatch and color strokes; they're full of action and appropriately ludicrous postures. Anyone who has or knows a bossy child will love reading this aloud with tongue firmly in cheek. BH


It's 1996, and the country has been taken over by the Armed Forces and renamed the United Secure States of America. There are New Police and electronic killer birds everywhere, the national anthem has been changed to "God Bless America," and, most outrageous, rock music has been banned. Eddie and his friends decide that something must be done. They are helped in the struggle by the Denim Guy, an elusive combination of Bruce Springsteen and the Lone Ranger, most notable for being in the right place at the right time. Despite its political pretensions, this is comic-book stuff: naive, simplistic, and condescending. The promotional material for this "groundbreaking" series ("It's action. It's adventure. It's provocative reading for young adults! Sounds too good to be true?") threatens heavy advertising, a club for readers, and school visits by the "creative geniuses" who came up with the idea. RS


Called by Carl Sagan "the great explainer of the age," the prolific and popular writer has been recognized for his science writing, for forays into the history of words and worlds, and for science fiction for adults and children. In a biography that is respectful rather than adulatory, Erlanger gives a good balance of information about Asimov's personal and professional life. A list of his awards in the field of science fiction and a partial bibliography of his books for younger readers are appended. ZS


Haunting in both art and narrative, this sophisticated modern elaboration on "Sleeping Beauty" will appeal to adults as much as it will to precocious juvenile readers. It opens with the shower of a young couple, Jack and Gillian, to be wed the following Sunday. Jack's old nurse is not invited, but an anonymous gift—an old map—arrives addressed to Jack, who becomes obsessed with following it. Along city streets enshrouded with fog, down a river, through a dense forest full of human bones, Jack makes his way to a castle and kisses the sleeping woman awake; but his marriage to the princess superimposes on his wedding to Gillian, and he is left married to both the homely real and the romantic ideal. Keeping's black pen-and-wash drawings are mysterious and sinister, projecting the power of Garfield's densely packed writing with a relentless force of their own. The book is deceptively formatted in the size of a large picture book. Illusions of time, allusions to literature, and some terrifying graphic images make it a supernatural tour de force for an audience with a taste for the Gothic. BH


In a quiet story about two young creatures who grow and change, George describes the small boy whose gosling, separated from its parents, becomes a constant companion. The gosling, Boomer, grows rapidly; William, growing at a slower rate, yearns to
Eventually he does, and each day the two swim together. The author-artist's paintings are impressive; the composition is simple and effective, the use of line and color delicate but controlled. Not an exciting story, this has the appeal of everyday life experiences and the soothing quality of a still summer day. The ending is unfortunately abrupt. ZS

D.V. Pets, care of


Like Gibbons' other information books for young children, this is in cartoon format with flat, stylized figures demonstrating the activities explained in captions and diagrams. The book is divided into four sections, one per season, which treat different kinds of weather as they're observed, recorded, and reported at a weather station. The information is clear but fragmented, jumping back and forth between general descriptions of a meteorologist's or forecaster's regular work and conditions for specific developments such as a hurricane or snowstorm. The other drawback is the failure to locate the weather station: one learns that a hurricane is approaching from the south, or that the first snowstorm of the season has arrived, neither of which would typify the seasons in many parts of the country. On the other hand, there's plenty of material here in a form palatable to primary-grade students who inevitably have curriculum units on the weather and who will enjoy the book as a bright, factual introduction. BH

C.U. Science


A fine example of pictorial history recounts the only incident when Indians wrecked a train—a Union Pacific freight derailed by Cheyennes on August 7, 1867. The brief introduction dispels the movie myth that trainwrecking was a constant Native American activity and sets the stage for the story, which begins with a Cheyenne prophet's dream of whites stripping the earth and covering it with iron bands. The ensuing settlers' and soldiers' destruction bears the dream out; when several villages are burned and scouts bring word of an Iron Horse threatening their camp, a group of warriors determines to destroy it. Their raid has both humorous and tragic aspects: they derail the train without realizing quite how they've done it, leave several of the crew dead, and raid the shipment of many products that have been withheld or sold too dearly to them by traders. They keep the coins for decoration and throw away the paper money, galloping wildly across the plain with bolts of cloth streaming behind them in a game long remembered by their people. Their triumph, of course, is shortlived, and the last picture makes a telling statement with an Amtrak train speeding across a littered landscape surmounted by fighter jets. Goble's art is all the better for a new infusion of non-folkloric subject matter. The landscapes here are stunning, one double-page spread green with a stippling of locomotive smoke rising among the trees, the next dawn gray with silhouetted shapes of the war party facing a white circle of light from the engine. The angles of the wrecked cars are echoed in the body of the dead crewmen, while later, the flowing cloth flies as wildly as the warriors' excitement. A different view of history, socially and aesthetically. BH

C.U. History—U.S.—Pictorial presentation


In a sequel to *New Guys Around the Block* (reviewed in the April, 1983 issue) Imamu Jones, now living with his lonely, insecure mother in Brooklyn, is eighteen and is content with his job as a grocery delivery boy. He dotes on his foster sister Gail, but finds his
thoughts dwelling on the white woman (his mother’s age) who lives in the Maldoon mansion where he makes deliveries. There’s a murder, and the trustee of the estate accuses Imamu; the detective in charge of the case does not arrest the young man (they’ve been involved in other cases together), and it is Imamu who confronts the criminal and solves the case. This is less cohesive than the earlier book or than the first book in the series, The Disappearance. The story line is contorted, and the verbosity of New Guys here becomes divergences that ramble, with repeated actions or gestures (Imamu, in moments of stress, pulls a toothpick from his pocket for eight instances of chewing). There are some strong black characters, but the author uses them too often as sounding boards for ideas that seem grafted on to the characters rather than emerging naturally from them. ZS


R Named for the city of her birth, twelve-year-old Talley (the narrator) has been sent, over her protests, to stay with Uncle Dave and Aunt Thelma while her childish mother, Liz, goes off on a motorcycle, bound for Hollywood, where her latest boyfriend “knows people” in the film industry. Hahn gives a vivid and convincing picture of Talley’s resistance to recognizing the fact that Liz has dumped her, to the fact that Liz (albeit loving) is irresponsible and selfish, and to the fact that her aunt and uncle are doing their best to adjust to having a child in their lives. Talley finds a best friend, discovers who her father was (he was a war casualty) and grandmother is. She accepts all these things slowly but staunchly in a story with strong characters, good pace, and solid structure. ZS

D.V. Adaptability; Aunt-niece relations; Mother-daughter relations


R An original fairy tale cleverly blends archetypal devices into a new story about a Medieval Irish king seeking a husband for his daughter, Orla. After inviting haughty princes from Leinster and Ulster, King Desmond finds himself more comfortable with a humble prince from a poor northwestern kingdom; the lad’s name is Brian, and he joins the suitors in a test of seeking the most wonderful bird in the world. After a year, each brings back a bird characteristic of his own traits: one, a fierce-eyed eagle; another, a beady-eyed peacock; and Brian, a nightingale that fills the air with music and wins Princess Orla. The writing here has a subtle grace that hues to folkloric grain without becoming selfconscious (“Although a year is long, it is soon gone”). The structure is neat, with a resounding end: “The nightingale flew away.... But that didn’t bother Prince Brian, for he came from the west country, and there they like to do the singing themselves.” The king and his daughter are a vivid pair generally matched by the full-color illustrations, although here and there the drawing seems stiffer than the proficient design and coloration. The attention to detail in castle and cast and the sense of humor pervading both text and art (King Desmond’s patched socks go well with his homey disposition) make this a jovial addition to picture book fairy tale collections. BH


R As usual in a Hoban book, the color photography is superb and the illustrative objects are familiar. In this combined alphabet book and introduction to coins, bright lines divide the oversize pages into squares; the alphabet goes in one direction, the coins in another, meeting in the center. Squares show letters and objects (Aa, airplane; Bb, bicycle on the first page). Starting at the back cover (or is it the front?) the pictures show
bright digits and coins; first it's pennies, then the reader can see that either five pennies or a nickel have a value of five. Ingenious, useful, attractive. ZS


In this latest installment of his memoirs (*Bunnicula*, etc.) Harold goes with the Mon- 
roes, Chester the cat, and puppy Howie on an overnight camping trip. It's spooky St. 
George's day, so none of the animals are surprised to meet the two menacing thugs, Bud 
and Spud, and their sinister dog, Dawg. While the humor rarely rises above weak puns 
and groaners, there's a fresh air of burlesque surrounding all the scary goings-on, and a 
marvelous interior story told by Chester, "Once upon a time in Transylvania," that 
purports to tell the origins of the vampire rabbit *Bunnicula*. RS


Four more stories about Chips and his family; best friend Jessie makes a few cameo 
appearances. The first and last (a spooky camp-out, a misbegotten Christmas-caroling) 
are done in comic-book style, with small, tidy drawings and ballooned dialogue, and are 
funny but insubstantial. The other two (a visit from tiresome Cousin Waldo, trouble 
from cat Albert when a kitten appears on the scene) have more text, and more depth in 
the humor. The longer stories have many illustrations as well: placed imaginatively on 
the page, these clever vignettes (also cartoon-style) provide a fresh anecdotal tone. RS


Lucas Cott is one of those not-always-endearing characters who seems to appear in 
every class: the wise-cracker, the cut-up, the kid who reacts too fast for his own control 
system to censor. Hurwitz has done a good job of developing her protagonist's person- 
ality, situation, motivations, and, ultimately, change for the better through the graces 
of a third-grade teacher who cares—and persists. Lucas' rivalry with a bright classmate, 
Cricket, slowly turns into a friendship after she dares him to keep quiet one whole day 
and he succeeds. His younger twin brothers turn into friends as he proves himself both 
playmate and helpmate (in one especially telling scene, he throws a series of wrestling 
holds on them to keep them still in the barber shop chairs). Most of all, he gains confi- 
dence by appearing in the class play, a mini-circus that was his idea, not as a clown but 
as a substitute ringmaster (the real ringmaster's last-minute tonsillitis is a bit fortuitous). 
The author has a knack for catching the exuberance and anxieties of this age group in 
light, selectively detailed fiction. It's no mean feat. BH

D.V. Self-control


Newly moved to California, Dana has made friends quickly in the high school where 
she is a sophomore; her brother Bill, a soccer star and a National Merit scholar, is a 
senior and he seems lonely and distraught. Bill's behavior patterns become increasingly 
eccentric and he is hospitalized, his illness diagnosed as schizophrenia. Hyland gives a 
vivid if depressing picture of Dana's painful adjustment to her brother's illness, of the 
anguish it causes her parents, and of the embarrassment with peers, an embarrassment 
that is paired with guilt about feeling it. Dana finds some of her new friends are under- 
standing, some are not; eventually she gains perspective. This is a sympathetic, percep-
tive story, not to heavily laden with clinical details, candid about the havoc and the heart-
ache that mental illness can bring. ZS

D.V.  Brother-sister relations


An ample and varied collection of contemporary poetry explores human relationships in their diversity of mood and involvement. Some, like Richard Shelton's "My Love," treat of intimacy; others, like Henry Treece's "Conquerors," of the connection among strangers—in this case, soldiers finding the body of a child. The many poets represented include Nikki Giovanni, Ted Kooser, Jim Wayne Miller, Mark Strand, and Elizabeth Jennings. The 132 poems are well balanced, with notes of the humor as well as the tragedy that commonly touch everyday life. Janeczko has the energy and resources to find poems that are not frequently anthologized, and he clusters them so that transitions are smooth between selections. There is an accessible tone consistent with Janeczko's other books, although on the whole this one seems less intense, more wide-ranging, and sometimes more adult in focus. BH

D.V.  Inter-personal relations


Color photographs of variable clarity illustrate a text that is crisp, accurate, and sequentially organized. It has been adapted from the original Japanese title written by Yuko Sato. The first half of the book is devoted to a clear explanation of the yearly cycle of deciduous trees and the process of photosynthesis. The descriptions of why leaves fall, how the buds for the leaves and flowers of the following spring are formed, and how the various colors of autumn leaves occur are direct and lucid. A glossary and an index are provided. ZS

C.U.  Nature study; Science


This introduction to bees is more comprehensive than most for children, including information on bee diseases, keeping, and hunting, as well as reproduction, anatomy, and social organization. While the information is sound, this is repetitious, with an overly enthusiastic use of the exclamation point ("Bees make wax!") and a winsome tone: "Perhaps for a few fleeting seconds, the triumphant drone enjoys his victory." The author's instructions for finding and retrieving wild honey are fascinating but overconfident: they involve chopping down a tree, rescuing the queen, and finding another hive to put her in. "The other bees will follow." A glossary, bibliography, index, and some recipes using honey are appended. RS

C.U.  Science (unit)


Kherdian fictionalizes an account of 18-year-old Jim Bridger's journey up the Missouri, initiation into the life of a trapper, relations with Crow Indians, and "discovery" of the Great Salt Lake (long known, of course, to Native Americans). The first-person narrative is smooth and interesting, though the dialogue is sometimes awkward and the dialect uneven. Source notes would have been helpful, too, or some afterword as to what portion of the account is documented and what invented. As it is, this reflects a somewhat romanti-
cized view of Bridger's adventure; there are also a few vague time lapses between vivid scenes; and, as often as not, the commonly held prejudices against "Injuns" (to which Bridger did not subscribe) prevail. The setting, however, is strong. On balance, readers will come away with a sense of the excitement and hardship of opening up a wild, beautiful country. BH

C.U. History—U.S.—Discovery and exploration


Killien takes a standard plot—adolescent girl gets a crush on a handsome newcomer who is a lout—and moves her protagonist to an equally patterned realization that the boy next door is The One for her (braces gone, glasses off, he's handsome), which most of her audience will expect or suspect. This has some awkward phrasing ("I noticed how nicely his watch looked on his wrist..."), but for the most part it's breezy, it has a sustained sense of comedy, and it does a few variations on the old theme—as when MacBeth (the narrator's nickname) mounts a newly-learned karate kick to rescue The One from a bully. Some of the characters are a bit stereotyped, but not so much as to be cliches. ZS

D.V. Boy-girl relations


Friend and supporter of his athletic pal Zan in several earlier books, Arthur Rinehart is in elementary school in this story; he has known Zan only a short time but is almost neurotically (and not believably) smitten by her, sad because she's gone off for the summer. This theme provides a descant to a muddy plot about Arthur's fear of water, his conquering that fear by being in a racing shell bought for him by an indulgent millionaire grandmother who is always referred to as Dr. Rinehart. All of this is mingled with Arthur's passionate interest in birds, a preoccupation that becomes a catalyst for Grandma's teenage chauffeur. All train, and their shell wins the President's Cup Regatta. This is farcical without being funny, with characters that are lampoons, awkward writing style, and contrived dialogue. ZS


Holly, who looks to be about nine, is the narrator in a photo story book with sturdy pages and excellent photographs. The text is simple and direct, marred occasionally by a note of cuteness. Speaking of the other animals' reaction to a prize won by one of Holly's goats at a 4-H Fair, "They were so proud of us," and "goats can be milked just like cows. The only difference is that goats have two faucets instead of four." There is little information here that is not easily available elsewhere, but there's no denying the appeal of a book filled with all kinds of pets: cats, goats, a horse, geese, a rabbit, a puppy. ZS

D.V. Pets, care of


Kuklin describes, in a staccato text, the long process of learning and rehearsing a ballet. In a photographically illustrated text, she gives detailed information about the procedures, the problems, the dancers (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater) and the support staff, and the backgrounds and personalities of the dance company. There's a modicum of dialogue, quite a bit of cited reminiscence (usually about a dancer's childhood and training) and a great deal about the ballet itself, choreographer Jennifer Muller's *Speeds*. Occa-
sionally the text becomes intense or repetitive, but true balletomanes will probably enjoy every detail. A glossary of dance terms is provided. ZS

D.V. Occupational orientation


Although the text mentions other means of pollination (the wind, self-pollination), the focus here is on how animals seeking pollen or nectar effect the fertilizing that insures the reproduction of plants. The excellent photographs, many magnified, are so carefully integrated with the text that only rarely does the lack of labels seem unfortunate. The text is adequately organized, gives a great deal of information about the process of pollination (including many facts about bees) and is accurate; however, it's a bit heavier in style than most of Lauber's books and is in a dull format. A relative index gives access to the contents of the book. ZS

C.U. Science


Developed around the motif of the artist whose creation comes to life, this is the story of a Chinese magistrate who commissions a painter to decorate the new village wall with a dragon. The painter agrees, with the stipulation that the painting be accepted unconditionally. The finished art is breathtaking, but, in spite of warnings, the magistrate insists the artist add eyes to the dragon, whereupon the dragon shakes loose from the wall and flies away in a storm. Young's compositions are sweeping, his textures consistently soft, but the pastels are sometimes jarring in color contrast. The spreads that are well-blended, however, have a dramatic, surrealistic effect that projects the fantastic elements of the story. BH


Nearly a hundred poems are organized into nine sections on various aspects of friendship, including loneliness and yearning for a friend, first and other stages of friendship, animal companions, fights and reconciliations, and parting. As in most of Livingston's anthologies, there's a careful balance of tone and style here, with many well-known poets, a few not so commonly represented, and occasional translations to give some intercultural flavor. Many of the selections are light, with autograph verses, a taste of Lear's nonsense, and jovial rhymes from the likes of Dennis Lee, X.J. Kennedy, and Russell Hoban setting the pace. Most are brief, Randall Jarrell's four-page "The Owl's Bedtime Story" being a lovely exception. A traditional collection with which teachers and parents will feel comfortable and in which young readers will find popular choices. BH

D.V. Friendship values


Comic wash drawings have a lighter line than Margot Zemach's but have the same kind of robust peasant humor, and very appropriate it is for the adaptation of one of the early classics of English theater. The lively pictures echo the biff-bam pratfall humor of a farce in which a clever rogue, Diccon the Bedlam sets Gammer Gurton and several other neighbors to brawling and shouting about a lost (or stolen, Diccon says) needle while he himself takes advantage of the turmoil to eat and drink their provender. Hallowed by time, perhaps, but this has the pop culture appeal of a comic book. ZS

The illustrator uses big, bold letters and big, bold pictures to achieve the impact of poster art in this inventive alphabet book that reflects her interest in letterforms. On each verso page are the paired upper and lower case letters, then some frames in which the letter changes shape to become a visual foreshadowing of a part of the picture (with label) that is on the recto page. For example, the circle of a Q opens, in four stages, and spreads to echo the wingspread of the quail on the opposite page. An intriguing presentation that may encourage the observer's powers of observation but that does not interfere with the book's function, this is effective and attractive. ZS

D.V. Perceptual acuteness


During his summer vacation, Andy watches as the wooded lot next door is cleared and a house constructed by a builder named Red. Andy hangs around the site, talks with the workmen, and builds a treehouse of his own with left-over scraps and help from Red. The story takes a reader or listener through stages of digging a foundation, raising walls, wiring, plumbing, wall-boarding, and so on. Full-page paintings facing each page of text show attractive, impressionistic scenes that personalize the labor, as Andy's dog stretches out in the cool dirt of the cellar excavation or noses the carpentry crew's lunch boxes. Pictures featuring bulldozers, concrete mixers, trucks, and structural work are especially strong. The human figures seem posed, and the concluding arrival of a new family with a boy just Andy's age is pat, but this will inform and appeal, especially to boys, most of whom would envy just such an experience. BH


Meltzer is known as much for his carefulness in doing research as for his dependable competence as a writer; here, however, his text lacks that sure note of authority that is found in his many sociologically-oriented books. The facts are accurate, the subject is intriguing, and the coverage is adequate, but the first part of the book seems overladen with undocumented case studies and the last part of the book with the warping of history by inadequate recordings. Still, the discussions of what and how the human brain remembers, and of the reasons it fails to remember, are excellent. There is a strong chapter on Alzheimer's disease, but not full attention to amnesia, with no mention of the phenomenon of transient global amnesia. The author makes interesting observations on strategies for memorization and makes perceptive comments on the importance of memory to the individual. A bibliography is provided, as is an index. ZS

C.U. Science


Munro's gallery of watercolor paintings do indeed offer enticing glimpses of the U.S. Capitol, but alas, each building is just captioned by name without explanation or description. Adults sharing the book with children will be solely responsible for saying, "See, there are the nine justices of the court in their black robes..." etc., or "Look at all the people going into the Organization of American States." For parents taking children on a trip to Washington, this provides a good focus for discussion and preparation. . .if they themselves are already prepared. The perspectives from above, below, and beside buildings are dramatic, the construction detail impressionistically vivid, with low-key black pen line work and full-color highlights. Page sequences are carefully coordinated, as in the
case of a father handing money to a vendor for his children's ice cream, a scene that precedes an impressive picture of the room where money is printed inside the building. Aesthetically pleasing, this could have been outstanding with a simple supporting text. BH


Cicely, the fifteen-year-old narrator, comes to help her cousin Millicent run a vacation home on the New England coast. The house had been called "Odin's Eye" by Millicent's grandfather (a crusty ex-naval man) because he'd installed a porthole window for telescopic viewing. Cicely and Geoff (a peer who becomes a friend) get involved in a detective mission, hoping to solve an old murder and a current mystery that seems to involve espionage. The plot is a bit stretched and the characterization is of variable quality, but the twin attractions of action and suspense should appeal to readers. ZS


Eleven episodes unfold a Swedish boy's experiences during the summer that he and his brother spend on their grandparents' farm while their parents build a house in the city. The point of view is all: adults and their activities loom large and sometimes incomprehensible to a lonely but self-reliant child who awakens before everyone else, makes a party for the pigs, grieves over the butchering of the old sow but eats the bacon anyway, runs away just to make sure his parents miss him as much as he misses them, and imagines the chicken coop is an airplane that soars around the world. The first-person narrative has a quirky but childlike voice. Sometimes the prose is choppy, though that's not entirely out of keeping with the protagonist's age and individuality. These don't get high marks on plot, but they have a personality and setting of their own that will endear them to readers or listeners with an appreciation for quiet, wry detail. BH

D.V. Adaptability


A fresh, quick sequel to *Maggie, Too* and *And Maggie Makes Three*, this takes Maggie on a Christmas visit to her movie producer father and his new 21-year-old wife in Malibu. Maggie and dad have always had trouble getting along, she's leery of the new wife, and, all in all, she'd much rather have stayed in Houston with Grandma. While this is a light story, mostly focused on Maggie's detective work to trap an unscrupulous talent agent, Maggie's problems with her irritable dad remain, and the problems of youthful stars (and would-be stars) add depth and texture. The characterization of Kiki, the young wife, is refreshingly free of cliches: while beautiful, she's no bubblehead, and the affection and respect between her and Maggie is rewarding for them both. RS

D.V. Father-daughter relations; Step-parent-child relations


Young people's taste for ghost stories has been more than gratified lately with several epicurean collections from Aidan Chambers, Joan Aiken, and now Philippa Pearce, eleven of whose stories are gathered here with a tonal range from scary to sympathetic. Pearce's strong sense of place permeates each story, whether it takes place in a basement apartment converted from an old mansion in which, long ago, the cook's son poisoned a pudding with hate ("A Christmas Pudding Improves with Keeping"); or in a field in
which an ancient grove of trees stymies the destructive intentions of a greedy heir ("The Him"). The protagonists—mostly children—are as vivid as the ghosts that haunt them. Little Joe's fear of his cousin in "Who's Afraid?" is palpable, and his rescue by a 100-year-old greatgrandmother leaves a memorable impression. The last story, "The Yellow Ball," is ingenious and warmly satisfying as two children bring together the ghosts of a dog and its ball. Sure selections for reading aloud or alone. BH


Natalie, the narrator, is in eighth grade, and she's not sure whether she wants to go on living with her father or move to Colorado to join her mother. The house in Chicago is where she's always lived, even if it has become a nursery for the quintuplets her Dad and her stepmother have produced. Natalie arrives at her decision logically in a story that has good balance, with relationships and experiences with peers, at school, and at home with the babies rounding out her lively, convincingly told story. ZS

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


Phifer's prose is direct, with a neat balance between addressing young people's common concerns and explaining scientific reasons for various growth patterns. Bone growth, genetic factors, environmental influences, and behavior modification all get coverage, with typical case histories and a few Guinness World Record-type examples to hook attention. The latter is balanced by a commonsensical tone and some background coverage of historical trends and statistics that show research groundwork but that could have been better documented. The cartoon illustrations are less interesting than the text, although they occasionally show a flash of invention. Still, this offers a brief, smooth, but solid introduction to a subject not aired as often as it is anguished over. BH

C.U. Physical education


Martin, the narrator, is the third of four children, none of whom is drawn in depth in an episodic story that is alleviated minimally by a humor that would be more effective were it not frequently forced. Martin, in second grade, deplores the fact that he's teased about his surname (Snodgrass) and that he's dull while his siblings are either achievers or charmers. The one positive aspect of the story is Martin's friendship with an elderly neighbor, although readers will see that Martin's a "nice guy" type. The situation is credible, but the plot and characters are tepid, and the writing style has a self-conscious volubility. ZS

D.V. Family relations; Self-confidence


This collection of mostly familiar action rhymes includes both verses and directions, the latter conveniently printed in small italic type at the bottom of each page. There are rhymes for jiggling ("To Market-To Market"), tickling ("This Little Piggy"), face and hands ("Here Sits the Lord Mayor," "Pat-a-Cake"). Stock's full-color illustrations and
decorations have a springtime flavor, with rollicking scenes of cavorting animals, and a few tender portraits of babies and mothers (and one Grandpa) enjoying the rhymes. RS


Instead of stretching one story thin, which is a picture-book trend these days, Rayner has packed seven hilarious short stories into a collection about the pig family. With ten children, there's a rich field to mine: William's mischief gets a special feature ("Wicked William"), as does Benjamin's bad day ("Lettuce Is Too Flat") and another of Garth's close calls with Mrs. Wolf ("Bathtime for Garth Pig"). "Piglets and Pancakes" settles, once and for all, the question of whether boys or girls are stronger and should do prescribed chores. Surprising things grow in "The Potato Patch," and toys that are left out by a tired Mrs. Pig stymie a fox burglar in "Mrs. Pig Gets Cross." After all of the piglets slip into their parents' bed one night, in "Father Pig Sleeps On," Mr. and Mrs. Pig take refuge in the deserted bunks. These are very much family read-aloud stories, true to the humorous experiences of everyday life and embellished with imaginative flourishes of phrase and watercolor illustration. The behavior and dynamics of the siblings are graphically detailed: an older sister's convincing a cranky toddler to do something by suggesting that he not do it, for example, or the youngest eating the pancake he's supposed to flip in a race, or two brothers planting the week's supply of bananas in the garden. Young listeners and adult readers will both recognize themselves here, and be all the better for sharing the spectacle. BH

D.V. Family relations


Amy can't stop eating, is easily tired, and is embarrassed and secretive about the frequency with which she needs to use the bathroom. Not until she collapses and is rushed to the hospital is it even suspected that she has diabetes. This is the story of her adjustment to the knowledge that she has an incurable disease, of learning to live as normal a life as possible, of coping with her own apprehension, the attitudes of other, and the reactions of the members of her family. The story is written smoothly and has sturdy characters whose interactions are consistent and believable, but the book is weakened by the large doses of facts about diabetes—so that, although Roberts provides some balance (peer relationships, family problems) there's an aura of purposiveness that stresses the "support" rather than the "fiction" of the subtitle. ZS

D.V. Handicaps, physical—adjustment to


These watercolor illustrations have a naive quality; they are strong in their simplicity of composition but less effective in the use of colors, which tend to be dulled. The text is patterned: child who cannot sleep imagines that her parents are having fun (one time it's eating ice cream, another time it's high jinks with play dough). After a few trips out of bed, finding that her parents are reading or working, little Hannah sits with them until she becomes sleepy. The concept may appeal to readers, but the execution is static and not substantial. ZS

D.V. Parent-child relations
These easy-to-read mini-stories offer a perfect medium for Rylant's style of poetic compression and repetition mixed with sensitive selection of detail. They also have some warmly funny, down-to-earth child appeal that is boosted by clean watercolor cartoons featuring an enormous, comical dog named Mudge ("he weighed one hundred eighty pounds, he stood three feet tall, and he drooled"). The friendship between Mudge and his young owner, Henry, has its ups, as in the reunion after the two get lost from each other in the first book; and its downs, as in the moment when Mudge eats the flower Henry has waited so long to pick, in Puddle Trouble. The latter book is most lively, with a triumphant scene of Henry's father joining the boy and dog in an oceanic mud puddle and, later, an exciting climax in which Mudge defends a nestful of kittens (named Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—"Henry loved planets, too"). With a series in the works, this duo has a dynamic future.


Bradley Chalkers is the quintessential class outcast, and he makes sure that no one gets near enough to change his status; when he's sure of failure, there's no risk of being unable to succeed. Then a new boy arrives who weatheres Bradley's obnoxious front, and a school counselor breaks the rejection cycle by convincing him that she finds him interesting and intelligent. Slowly Bradley works his way toward normal—if individualistic—behavior, which is almost immediately threatened by the counselor's leaving. This is a funny book, not in the flip way implied by the title, but in the slightly sad sense that touches all true comedy. Neither Bradley's family nor the school authorities are cast into a villainous role; they are simply unable to deal with a boy who is his own worst enemy. Bradley's retreat into friendship with his ceramic animals is touching, as are many of the scenes of his mishaps and misdemeanors. Readers will cheer during his triumphant attendance of a girl's birthday party (he is in fifth grade and has not been invited to a party since he sat on someone's birthday cake several years ago) because the author has managed to show both Bradley's point of view and the reasons for his classmates' low expectations of him. Sachar has also imbued everyday details of school life, such as a book report, with the kind of weight they carry for children. The personality of the counselor is occasionally overdrawn, along with a few parent reactions against her in a farcical example of PTA-type meetings; but those notes of exaggeration fit in with the absurdist, catch-22 tone of the whole book.


A warm, funny portrayal of Imogen Rogers, who is contending with allergies, a height of five feet ten, a family who won't work for a living, heavy demands on her time as a babysitter (she's gifted with children), and a crush on an older man in the apartment upstairs. Sachs allows none of these problems to get too heavy, nor, on the other hand, does she exaggerate for slapstick effect. Instead, she juggles a handful of kind and quirky characters in an upbeat pattern of dynamics. Dialogue, double-talk, daydreams, and quick-sketch scenes enliven this first-person narrative by a protagonist whose intelligent
observations lead her to some honest conclusions about who she is and what to expect from her friends and family. BH

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Family relations


In order to cover the activities of a subject in perpetual motion, Saunders has rushed through a great deal of information with varying success. She does include negative aspects of Mead's need for attention and difficulty with close relationships, including three failed marriages; and she airs some of the criticism that surrounded Mead's anthropological work. On the other hand, there are some glib generalizations that reflect the popular-culture adulation that Mead's charisma seemed to inspire ("No one was more in step with the larger world than Margaret"). Given the confines of the brief format, however, this offers a readable introduction, peppered with quotes, to a complex, provoking figure who "left ideas 'lying around like pencils.'" BH


Careless writing, both stylistic and syntactic, mar a text that is adequately organized, illustrated with photographs of varying pertinence, and devoted to a subject that is both broad and interesting. The authors describe hoaxes of various kinds, both the assumption of false personalities and the sort of literary, historical, or artistic hoax that usually has involved forgery. The hoaxes range from small spoofs to elaborate deceptions, some of which (The Dreyfus Affair, for example) had tragic results. A reading list and an index are appended. ZS


"Winter was big trouble." On dark winter afternoons, thirteen-year-old Rachel has much to brave on her way home from piano lessons—the drunks in front of the cheap hotel, taunting packs of boys, and especially the Devil's Hot Pot, a dangerous worked-out mining area rumored to be awash with ghosts, thieves, and wild beasts. On this particular afternoon (the novel spans only a few hours) Rachel, frightened by the boys, runs into the Hot Pot, where she becomes lost. This central scene is tense and exciting, as Rachel and Eddie (one of the boys who has come to help her) perilously find their way out, Rachel realizing she must help Eddie as much as he helps her. While the beginning does a good job of establishing atmosphere and theme, it is also verbose and obscure, with an occasionally patronizing tone. The ending is also less than clear, shifting the thematic focus from real versus imagined fears to Rachel's guilt over not telling her family what happened on the way home. RS

D.V. Self-reliance

Farm Machinery. ISBN 0-531-10186-X.

Clear color photographs and briskly informative, simple texts characterize this series of six books introducing various kinds of machinery. Each book begins with a generic diagram demonstrating the basic working parts of the machine being presented, then pro-
ceeds to specialized variations, jobs done by the machine, and roles of supporting technology and manpower. Most subjects are allotted 2 to 3 pages, with much of the space given to illustrations. Each book concludes with a double-page history of the machine's development (with pictures), a facts and records page (the largest excavator, etc.), a glossary, and an index. The writing is occasionally choppy and the arrangement of material not always logical, but most of the set, especially *Fire Engines* and *Earth Movers*, will prove irresistible to browsing young machinists. BH


Dramatic, oversize paintings accompany a story based on an animal-groom tale collected at the end of the nineteenth century from the Zimbabwe region of southern Africa.

Two sisters, alike in their beauty but opposite in disposition, are to go with their father to compete for the king's choice of a wife. The mean sister sneaks ahead so she will arrive first, but she is arrogant to three strangers she encounters on the way. The gentle sister, Nyasha, who is kind to the strangers, finds her sister sobbing a story of finding a monster in the palace. Nyasha opens the door and sees the snake that she has long befriended in her garden at home. He turns into the king (who had also taken the form of the strangers) and marries Nyasha. The sister who had ridiculed her then becomes a servant in the new queen's household. The art is deep-colored and lush, with sensitive, realistic portraits except in the case of the cruel sister, whose expressions could have been less exaggerated. Sweeping landscapes, textured with fine crosshatch, are thoughtfully composed, though one forest scene loses, in the gutter, the central figure of a bird. The story and art will make an intriguing accompaniment to well-known European versions of "Beauty and the Beast." BH


Stevenson fans who enjoyed *When I Was Nine* should find equal appeal in this companion volume, with deft watercolor sketches adding vitality (and, often, humor) to the author's reminiscences of his childhood. The read-aloud audience that asks "What was it like when...?" should enjoy this foray into that primitive era when milkmen brought milk in bottles, icemen carried in blocks of ice, and small boys were measured yearly and their height recorded by marks on a door. ZS

D.V. Everyday life concepts


Young adult readers who are concerned with conservation, justice, relationships with parents, and their image in the eyes of peers, should respond to the intensity and nuance with which sixteen-year-old David Morgan fights to preserve the swampland near his home. The Wisconsin swamp is full of distinctive flora and fauna, including the frogs of the title. David is helped by a friend, by his schoolmates, by his sister, and by a retired lawyer in a struggle against a development company that wants to fill in the swamp and build a mall. Unfortunately, David's father is one of the merchants who want to move to the mall. Tchudi creates believable conflict and tension, and his well-rounded characters move to a realistic, bittersweet conclusion at a good pace and in a smooth narrative style. ZS

D.V. Devotion to a cause; Friendship values; Parent-child relations

[ 157 ]

A classic rite of passage/hunting story, this departs from tradition when the protagonist proves his courage not by bagging the game but by springing all the traps after he witnesses the death of a fox. Daniel has a lot at stake in taking fox pelts; he projects his longing to travel far from the grind of farm work (represented by his hardworking parents) onto an adored uncle, whom Daniel sees as living a glamorous, adventurous life. But the sight of that same uncle knocking a trapped animal unconscious and smothering it sends Daniel home to his beloved dog and to the realization that he is more like his parents than he thought. The longstanding tension between Daniel's father and uncle, newly focused on Daniel, is well drawn. The resolution therefore represents hard-won understanding rather than an easy peace. The writing is attentive to detail and dialogue, but selectively, so that the effect is one of a tightly extended short story. A natural for classroom reading aloud and discussion. BH

C.U. Reading aloud
D.V. Animals, kindness to; Father-son relations; Uncle-nephew relations


The acid touches of Thompson’s generally merry lampoon of academic life create a believable if exaggerated background for the story of a college freshman, Simon Storm. Simon, pure of heart, is handsome, perceptive, and intelligent; he has only two problems: as a precocious fifteen-year-old, he feels socially handicapped; for the same reason, he is pessimistic about his college love life. If any. He does find a girl, he does evade a trap set by a power-hungry faction of students (led by a power-hungry professor), and he emerges as a sort of non-boring Billy Budd. Much of the book is concerned with curricular aspects of campus life, and in the breezily irreverent and yeasty story, much has to be taken with a grain of salt—between snickers. ZS

D.V. Ethical concepts


Big Daizo and Little Suki terrify the mice and birds that inhabit their pine forest in Japan, but one day they turn their wrath on each other in a fight over who gets the larger of the two rice cakes they find beside a stream. Finally they seek judgment from a wise old monkey, who brings out a scale and, in order to equalize the cakes, takes bites from first one and then the other—till they’re all gone. Based on a Japanese folktale, this develops the foolish friends and trickster archetypes with simple narrative and some dialogue. Zemach’s illustrations are a departure from her characteristic style; the heavy black outlines borrow from the tradition of Japanese painting, as do the shapes and even compositions. The watercolors are delicate, with plenty of white space. The smaller cat looks vaguely like a dog, but the exaggerated expressiveness of all the animals suits their stylized stances. Children will enjoy the story but may not be able to resist asking, as the hungry cats are depicted carrying their rice cakes in their mouths over mountain and marsh, why they don’t just chomp down and eat them! BH

C.U. Storytelling


A historical survey of the composition and key cases of the U.S. Supreme Court opens with *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* (the initials of the juvenile defendant) to hook readers’ interest in the issue of students’ constitutional rights. Then Weiss goes back to the Judiciary Act...
of 1789 and observes the system of checks and balances in operation during the next two hundred years, including periods when the court was criticized heavily by presidents, Congress, and the public. The last chapter discusses current issues before and pressures on the court, as well as Chief Justice Warren Burger's suggestions for reform. The text is not lively, but it is smoothly written and organized for students seeking information for reports. Appended are diagrams of the federal and state judicial systems, a listing of the U.S. Supreme Court justices with their terms and appointing presidents, a brief list of books and periodicals (all but one citation is from *The New York Times*) for further reading, and an index. BH

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


Like *A Visit to William Blake's Inn*, the poetry here reflects the spirit and tone of an earlier writer's work with an injection of Willard's own buoyant imagination. Drawing from Stevenson's 1887 diary of a voyage to America, Willard spins light quatrains in the same rhythmic patterns and rhyme schemes as those Stevenson uses in "The Swing" and other favorites. There are also echoes of nursery rhyme images: "... the lively baboon has run off with my spoon/ and the horses are neighing for more." Willard's verse is full of inventive surprises, as in the scene where a stallion from the cargo barges into Stevenson's cabin: "I groped back to bed but encountered instead/ a horse who admired my clothes/ but decided my vest was too hard to digest/ and my socks too involved with my toes."

The Provensens' paintings, brush stroked in buff, brown, and blue, are mannered, with a restrained humor based on a juxtaposition of the mundane with the unreal. A delight to read aloud, this will need some background explanation from adults but will make an especially effective accompaniment for selections from *A Child's Garden of Verses*. BH


Previously published in 1980, "this has been redesigned with a revised text," according to the publishers. One wonders if the effort was worthwhile, despite the Woods' previous and much more successful *Napping House* and *King Bidgood's in the Bathtub*. The story is one of those overwritten, idyllic fantasies that adults nostalgically associate with the state of childhood. A little girl named Firen demands to know what the Moon has done with her sleep. The Moon sends her a flute that magics her away on an airy search over town, country, sea, jungle, and back to bed, where her parents appear to tuck her in after her dream. The narrative relies heavily on description and will have more than Firen yawning. The drawings are delicate and spidery; the paintings, dominated by blues and greens, are slick in style, with some awkward insets of scenes depicted from a different perspective. Not the Woods at their sprightliest. BH


Kelly Mackenzie's drive to be a long-distance runner brings her directly into conflict with her father, who forbids her to train without an A in algebra. But then, almost anything can trigger her father's violent anger, from Kelly's mispronunciation of a word to her not eating enough at dinnertime. Increasingly, his rage becomes physical abuse, creating a climate of fear through which Kelly, her sister, and her mother tiptoe with only occasional respites—the rare intervals out on their sailboat when Mr. Mackenzie seems at peace and can show his gentler, humorous side. His drowning in a boating accident leaves
Kelly to reconcile her relief and sorrow, her love-hate relationship with him and her pursuit of a new life. Although the writing style is sometimes too obvious and the father's death in some ways a convenient device, the characterization is strong in projecting Kelly's conflicts, her father's dualities, and a black coach's quiet support. Secondary characters are less believably developed; a boyfriend's sudden betrayal and Kelly's mother and sister's complicity of silent avoidance when Kelly is beaten are not quite convincing. Nevertheless, Kelly's struggles seem real and her resolution hard won. BH

D.V. Death—adjustment to; Father-daughter relations


A witty, sophisticated collaboration between author and artist results in a mystery-spoof of Sherlock Holmes vintage. Piggins, the portly butler at Mr. and Mrs. Reynard's wealthy home, welcomes the guests one night at a dinner party arranged to show off—and sell—Mrs. Reynard's diamond lavaliere, reputed to have a curse that brings bad luck. In the midst of the soup course, the lights go out and the necklace disappears. Even Inspector Bayswater finds only a few disparate clues. Piggins however, is not stumped. He collars the thieves, Lord and Lady Ratsby, plucks the lavaliere from the chandelier, and finishes the evening as he had begun it, trit-trotting up and down stairs to finish his chores. Both the narrative and art contain nuances that lend depth to rereadings. In addition to consistently elegant drafting and watercolor detail, the pictures characterize each of the guests in perfect coordination with the verbal descriptions. Professor T. Ortoise, who "is famous for his conversation," introduces the evening with a comment on the weather. The "world-famous explorer Pierre Lapin" has three unmarried sisters and mutters, after the dining room commotion, "In my youth, I stole into a farmer's garden and made much too much noise." The rats, particularly, are expressive in showing their greed as they pocket the cheese hors d'oeuvres and scamper toward the table before the rest of the company. Yolen's pacing and use of the present tense add an immediacy that counteracts any off-putting effects of the elitist tone, which listeners will actually enjoy once they catch on to the setting. Dyer, too, has taken special care to reflect the upper-crust atmosphere in costumes, furnishings, and design touches such as the shadow profiles facing several full-page illustrations. This has all the appeal *Upstairs Downstairs* had for adults, plus notes of humor and suspense that flavor it for a child's palate. BH

D.V. Detective powers
The reviewers disagree about

JULIAN F. THOMPSON

AGAINST

"Thompson's attempt to deal with important issues is undermined by unbelievable characters and an improbable plot.... Tongue-in-cheek aside to readers and an abundance of strong language seem transparent efforts to popularize the novel."—School Library Journal (A Band of Angels)

"The author's painfully self-conscious narrative (with an irritating overuse of parentheses) slows the story to a crawl and the characters are not developed to the point where the reader cares about what happens to them...."—Santiago Library System, California (Discontinued)

"Characterizations are weak and two-dimensional.... the plot is superficial.... the ending is flat and disappointing."—School Library Journal (Discontinued)

FOR

"Thrilling.... A fascinating story that draws the reader on to the very last page.... a booktalker's delight."—Association of Children's Librarians, Oakland, California (Discontinued)

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