- PRODUCTION NOTE

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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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A frothy concoction in which Jeffrey, Laura, and their friend Bradford, a 200-year-old ghost that has starred in other books of the series, ferret out two con artists at a carnival. The villains are cheating at contests and selling fake raffle tickets. Their exposure ends in a grand pie-throwing scene that tops the other popular ingredients of the tale: a bumbling magician, disguised bad guys, quick-thinking good guys, competition for prizes, and of course the easy magic of an invisible ally. The style is choppy, but it's also easy to read, making this a serviceable book for unsteady readers ready to tackle fiction beyond beginning material. BH


Along with black-and-white photographs of models and reconstructed skeletons from the George C. Page Museum of La Brea Discoveries, an enthusiastic text describes the kinds of fossils found in southern California tar pits. The processes of recovery and paleontologic research are the real emphasis here, but these reveal more than a glimpse of animal and plant life in the Ice Age. In addition to the inherent child appeal of the subject and the clear explanations, the book has a lively format, with pictures dramatically featuring young museum visitors in involved inspection or even hands-on experience of the displays. Closeups of scientists working with bones in excavation pits and laboratories lend a sense of excitement that will inspire students working on prehistoric units and time lines. BH

C.U. Paleontology


An efficient, competently illustrated report on futuristic designs for aviation, including descriptions of test models for personal, commercial, and military use. An introductory chapter on the steps involved in creating a new airplane gives some background principles and definitions, which are extended in the discussions of specific aircraft currently on the drawing board for the next several decades. Technical terms such as drag or canard are italicized when they first appear in the text, and details of construction, speed, transport capacity, and special engineering features are briefly mentioned for earlier planes such as the U.S. Air Force Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird as well as for those, like the solar-powered HAPP (High-Altitude Powered Platform), that are in the planning stages. An attention grabber for future pilots. BH
These first four books in a graded series are intended for beginning readers' home use. The "Step 1" book, *Noah's Ark*, is not an entirely fortuitous choice of subject, since there are so many fine picture book versions of that Bible story and since the text includes words as difficult as *wickedness*, too hard for the cited "preschool-Grade 1" audience. Many parents, however, will appreciate an easy, large-print edition enough to help children over the occasional word barrier. The Step 2 books, *Norma Jean, Jumping Bean* and *The Best Little Monkeys in the World*, are bouncy stories with a lot of child appeal and manageable texts. The first focuses on a kangaroo child who has to learn when it's appropriate to jump and when it's not (something with which human children have equal difficulty); the second features two monkey children who get themselves into and out of a great deal of mischief without their parents or negligent babysitter ever finding out. The best book is the Step 3 *Titanic*, which tells in a straightforward but involving style how the ship set sail and capsized, with a chapter on the locating of its hull in 1985. All of the books have competent wash drawings in full color, ranging appropriately in style from jovial to dramatic. Based on these first four samples, the series has some uneven spots but offers plenty to practice on. BH

**C.U. Reading, beginning**


Another in the Coven Tree series of good-hearted townspeople against the forces of the devil, represented this time by Dr. Dredd and his monstrous helpers. The latter come in threes, of course, and include a supernaturally strong wrestler, a black knight of destruction, and an egg that hatches a fire-breathing dragon. The odd man out in this collection is young Calvin Huckaway, an orphan who can make rain and who has been used as a slave by Dr. Dredd. Calvin escapes into the capable arms of feisty Ellen McCabe, and together they persuade the citizens of Coven Tree to support Calvin and reverse the bargain they've made with Dr. Dredd to bring rain to their parched countryside, a bargain that would have cost them—they finally realize—their souls. Although Brittain's plots are becoming formulaic, they are still a treat, as are the consistently bumbling, gently satirized characters that inhabit his small rural world. The narrator, Stew Meat, has a nice, off-hand style for spinning yarns. Children who enjoyed *The Wish Giver* and *The Devil's Donkey* will like this just as well. BH

**D.V. Friendship values**


D. W. goes to her first gymnastics class and discovers that a forward roll is not as easy as it looks. She practices at home, returns to class to demonstrate her prowess, and is taken aback when the teacher announces the next assignment: backward rolls. The plot is slight, the moral clear, the milieu one that
should appeal to most of the read-aloud audience, and to some beginning readers. The line-and-wash pictures are uncluttered and light in mood; the characters have human figures with faces that resemble animals to some extent and whose only clearly bestial features are protruding ears. ZS

D.V. Perseverance


This starts out as quite a chewy tale: Celeste has her new baby under a tree (she takes her crown off, but not her dress), and little Isabelle turns out to be an energetic addition to the family ("She likes to throw her toys at her brothers and sister"). As the story meanders toward a plot, however, it gets into trouble. Isabelle has a habit of wandering off and, though scolded, she leaves a family outing, finds a secluded valley, and spends the day playing with "two gentlemen" who appear at the door of an elegant house. When Babar appears on television begging her to come home, she and her new friends hang-glide back to the palace and into the arms of their grateful family without so much as a remonstrance from anyone. The full-color, literal illustrations have their characteristic appeal, and children perpetually clamor for more details of Babar's family. It's just that theme of straying off for a great time with strangers that may deter some. BH


A picture-book version of the choose-your-own ending adventure recounts a family's catastrophic breakfast with a "green-spotted, cereal-coated, mess-making frog" brought home by the young narrator. The reader is offered four concluding choices: in the first, the narrator is punished with a ban on bringing home anything ever again ("no more worms, snails, caterpillars, stray dogs, slugs, slimies, cockroaches, crickets, snakes, mice, tadpoles, ferrets, sick birds, one-eyed cats, or frogs!"); in the next, the baby catches and squeezes the "slippery, slimy frog so tightly" that it shoots up and bounces off the ceiling; in the third, the sister kisses the frog and transforms it into a prince; and in the last, it escapes to safety after the angry father takes a swipe at it. The text depends entirely on the gimmick, but children will enjoy the slapstick humor and word play, along with the casual watercolor cartoons. Although the book is basically for sharing aloud, it could double for beginning readers who can handle a mixture of simple and multi-syllabic words. BH


Sarah is fourteen when her alcoholic father, without a job in the Depression Era, commits suicide. As the story begins, her dreamy, clinging mother's brother has come to Detroit to drive them back to the home town of both Sarah's parents, a mining community in Kentucky. This is an interesting first novel, overburdened with too many themes and sub-plots as are so many first novels, but strong in characterization, establishment of setting, and authorial voice. Sarah learns to accept the fact that everyone knows the circumstances of her father's death, she forms new and sometimes uncomfortable bonds with members of her extended family, she experiences a first love, she adjusts to a new milieu. The pace is a bit uneven and the ending melodramatic, but it's still a good read. ZS

D.V. Adaptability; Death, adjustment to; Family relations

A model hero for children, "Herbert Binns was very small, even for a mouse, but he didn't care. Because Herbert Binns was a most clever mouse." He managed not only to invent a flying tricycle but also to outsmart the spiteful rabbit, rat, and weasel who attempted to sabotage his first take-off by stealing an essential starting pin. The villainy here is a bit trumped up, but the idea of a winged tricycle may prove irresistible, especially as depicted in vigorous watercolor spreads with spidery line work offset by spacious washes. The animals are wonderfully expressive in their old-fashioned attire. Herbert's breathtaking exit into the sunset will start bedtime listeners dreaming of tomorrow's sidewalk adventures. BH

D.V. Ingenuity


Two competent biographies of women who pioneered as female aviators, one independently and one in partnership. Earhart is by far the more defiantly untraditional character, and this analysis is not as astute as the more detailed one by Blythe Randolph (reviewed in the May issue) for slightly older readers. Still, it gives the facts, if not the perspective, on Earhart's record-breaking achievements and something of the mystique surrounding her life and disappearance over the Pacific. This is the first juvenile biography of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, and her own writing should provide more automatic access to the private person. It is unfortunate that she could not have been quoted here, at least briefly, but the information on her exhausting work as navigator, radio operator, and co-pilot for a "perfectionist husband" is telling, as is the coverage of her baby's kidnapping and murder and her weathering a lifetime of publicity and controversy. The straightforward texts in both books are illustrated with black-and-white photographs and maps. BH


George and Kate are elephant siblings with a classic older brother/younger sister relationship. When he tells her she will get a spanking if she doesn't clean up her room, she imagines the worst and finds out better. His dire descriptions of school also prove false, as do his predictions that the family is moving. At last, Kate distinguishes fact from fraud: "'George told me,' said Kate. 'But I knew he was teasing.'" Literal-minded listeners will have to notice the bubble frames around episodes that Kate imagines to avoid confusion and to distinguish, themselves, between the realistic and fanciful elements of the story. Once this device is clear, they can relate to a familiar situation and demand why George shouldn't learn to be a little less deceptive while his sister learns to be less gullible. Chorao's vivid, color-pencil drawings are large scale with plenty of white space backing scenes of homey clutter. With some adult explanation, this slice of life will appeal to children as successfully as it describes them. BH

D.V. Brothers-sisters; Imaginative concepts


Ten-year-old Kitty Dale is an unwanted child. Her father left the family when she was young, and her self-indulgent mother farms her out to foster homes. During the summer
in focus here, she tries to find her father but ends up with her mother, who is about to embark on yet another honeymoon and so leaves Kitty in the charge of a neighbor. Seething for revenge, Kitty plans to tell her mother's stuffy new husband about one of her previous stepfathers, now insane, but at the last moment, rather mysteriously, lets compassion rule and accepts the reality of her friends' and foster family's affection instead. Although Kitty herself is well-realized, there is some short circuiting of development in the other characters and the situation itself that Cleaver tries to circumvent by description ("She couldn't go on because from some source of gentility and breeding, from some alien well of refinement and intelligence there rose in her something that steppedin and took hold"). Sometimes the stylistic compression is effective ("Aunt Petal was built like a thermometer..."), but at other times it seems abruptly expository. A spunky heroine, nonetheless, and one who will appeal to young readers who love a good orphan story. BH

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


A picture-book addition to the canon of feminist spoofs on the fairy tale genre, this seems a quick study of the more detailed and inventive stories in Judy Corbalis' The Wrestling Princess (reviewed in the December, 1986 issue). It is, however, younger in its slapstick appeal: Princess Smartypants sends a series of suitors to tackle her pet monsters in the hope that the princes all fail. When the last one, Prince Swashbuckle, succeeds, she kisses him into a "gigantic warty toad" and so lives free from further interference ever after. Artist Craig, who illustrated the Corbalis collection with black-and-white drawings, here capitalizes on luxurious watercolor cartooning, rambunctious in action and irreverent in expression. Children will enjoy the tonal break from heavy-duty folklore, even though the author might have done well to restrict herself to the traditional pattern of three rather than getting carried away with repetition of the princess' victims getting clobbered over and over. BH

D.V. Sex roles


A wordless picture book with substantive story and art, this begins with the bedtime of a little girl who clutches a tiny tin soldier and toy angel while she listens to her mother read about pirates. As soon as she is asleep, a miniature pirate robs her piggy bank and captures the soldier, who has tried to stop him. The angel tracks them to a model ship, avoiding the claws of the family cat, and rescues the soldier, retrieves the coin, and sees that they are safely settled back in the child's hands. The drama is just such stuff as dreams are made of, while the fine-textured drawings, formatted in a cartoon-strip layout, have a clarity that derives from delicate lines and lightly varied patterns. An engaging graphic fantastique. BH

D.V. Imaginative powers


Suddenly Emily's life changed when a child ran out into the road and was hit by the car in which Emily and her boyfriend Russ were riding. No way they could have avoided him, yet two teenagers felt almost as much guilt as grief. It was worse for Emily, because the child—who died—was Joey, a small boy she loved so much that she had given up other babysitting jobs so she'd always be available to stay with Joey Bernstein.
The rift that came between Emily and Russ, the hostility between Russ and Joey's teenage brother Chet, the disapproval Emily felt for Russ's pal Danny all form a pattern. It is Emily's mother who helps her see that, like those who condemn her and Russ, she is prejudging and condemning both Russ and Danny. The story deals perceptively (if at times repetitively) with stages of grief and adjustment to death, and it is realistic in reflecting peer relationships and tensions. Characterization is variable in depth but consistent; the plot is uneven in pace and the writing is marred by stylistic errors. ZS

D.V. Death, adjustment to


This is not only a good book for children about thumb sucking, it also sets a fine example for parents of small children who worry about it. Donald is embarrassed when, at school, his method of seeking solace makes other children laugh. His mother is reassuring: he'll stop when he's ready; his father tells Donald not to worry about it. Both parents praise him for accomplishments that indicate he's learning new skills and they are supportive when Donald makes an effort to stop thumb-sucking completely. And he does, not easily but by his own volition and efforts. The illustrations are informal, uncluttered, and bright. Bravo, Donald; bravo, Author. ZS


First published in Great Britain, this is a novel in which the realistic and the supernatural are deftly blended and in which the consistency of viewpoint, establishment of setting, and interplay of characters are impressive. Daisy, the protagonist, is thirteen when she goes with her best friend, Bridget Graham, to spend a month in a Scottish vacation community. Mrs. Graham has invited another guest, Clementina, an older girl from a Children's Home. The events of the past seem, to a frightened Daisy, to be influencing a path toward tragedy that is a repetition of the tragic history of a local family. Question: is Clementina a reincarnation of an 18th-century girl of the same name? Despite some moments of lagging, the tension and suspense carry the story along admirably. ZS

D.V. Friendship values


Fifth-grader Bertha Zuchelli has a bad reputation; that is to say, she has such a perfect record that all the kids in school ostracize her as a teacher's pet. Her father is too proud of her to be of help and her mother is dead, but just when it looks like there's no help in sight, a dingy-looking character materializes and hands Bertha a calling card saying, "Myrna C. Waxweather, Fairy Godmother-at-Large." Myrna's three gifts are a fan, a boa, and a black satin camisole with white rabbits appliqued across the hem. With these unorthodox items, Bertha manages to change her status and, eventually, the rules in her rigid school. As a fantasy, this has credibility problems: Myrna is not developed beyond her sudden, glitzy appearances, and the authorities are farcically overdrawn as villains who suddenly transform at the end. Bertha's problems seem real enough to deserve less superficial treatment, though children may enjoy the lampoons and light plotting. BH


The oversize format of this detailed history of the Alamo gives ample opportunity for
large-scale maps, reproductions of old prints and photographs, and some of Fisher's own distinctive and dramatic scratchboard drawings. Although no sources are cited, Fisher has clearly done intensive research, so that—although he begins with Santa Anna's attack on the Alamo—the text contains a great deal of background information about past events, and also describes the various uses to which the site was put until it was declared a national historic landmark in 1960. The tone is serious, the writing style sober, the material dramatic; an index gives access to the contents. ZS


This is sort of like listening to the DJ's patter on AM radio—enthusiastic, exuberant, entertaining (and intermittently annoying), but lacking real information or substance.

Starting with Chuck Berry and winding up with Bruce Springsteen and "We Are the World," Fornatale covers major names and events in rock history and does a good, if superficial, job of tracing innovators and influences. However, the overblown claims and excessive laudatory adjectives are not supported with evidence, and there is little sense of the music itself. We are told, for example, that Dion "is one of the best male vocalists that rock 'n' roll has ever produced," but we aren't told what his music sounded like. For fans and true believers only. RS


A story that is at once terse, easy to read, and grippingly developed begins with brief scenes quicksketching the contrasting families of the 12-year-old narrator, Michael, and his friend Tannenbaum. It is clear that Michael's father is distracted, and Michael finds out the reason when he eavesdrops on a phone conversation: his father is having an affair. Michael's reaction is intense and suspenseful. He tries to tell his mother but can't; he tries to get Tannenbaum to make a threatening call to his father's girlfriend but ends up confronting his father himself. After a climactic scene in which Michael's mother guesses something is wrong, Michael disappears until late and takes the rap for upsetting the family with general adolescent irresponsibility. Michael's mother never knows, Michael's father breaks off the affair, and Michael is stuck trying to understand and forgive a father who has suddenly been exposed in a state of weakness and remorse.

The triumph of the book is the peace Michael makes with his father. The boy's vulnerability, desperation, anger, and forgiveness are equally convincing. This is a masterpiece of mini-scenes and dialogue, both of which seem casually natural but are in fact intensely revealing. The phone chat between Michael's father and his lover, the way Michael talks to Tannenbaum (which captures the humor of junior high banter without becoming glib), the brief appearances of Michael's mother all reveal secondary characters who are nice people with limitations—just like the rest of us. Moreover, this does justice to both the child's pain and the adult's perspective. Michael's family survives to become a happier one; there are no absolute solutions except a love that can bend in the wind. There is no preaching here, either, but some insightful, accurate perceptions into the human family. The implications of Michael's own guilt for breaking the rules of privacy are hinted but never directly addressed. Large print and simple vocabulary will make these complexities particularly accessible for discussion among readers who can't handle higher reading levels. BH

D.V. Father-child relations; Forgiveness

"Roger is staying at home with his little brother, Nelson. . . . 'Don't worry,' " says a friend of Roger's mother, " 'My daughter Flo is always good. She'll keep an eye on them both.' " Well, that's the set-up, and Gretz' funny, full-color illustrations fine-line three yrs. pig children as they subsequently get in and out of trouble. Flo, a bossy show-off, wins at all the games until finally getting her comeuppance at "hide and seek" (she ends up in the garbage can just as her mother arrives). Most of the fun for listeners will be the games: they can try "I spy" right along with the characters, as Roger desperately guesses at Flo's objects and misses the most obvious ones. Exuberant child's-play. BH


Although 16-year-old Casey shares her mother's passion for dog breeding and shows, she has become uneasy and irritated with their closeness, needing to grow away and find her own life. Mom, too, knows that it's time to let go, and their two perspectives alternate during this account of a weekend spent together at a dog show. It's a fine premise, but the author relies too much on talk and interior monologue to develop it, and, since both mother and daughter know exactly what the problem is, there isn't much dramatic tension. Still, readers may get some insight into a parent's vulnerabilities, and the dog show background adds interest. RS

D.V. Mother-daughter relations


It is not war or pollution that has decimated the world's population in this science fiction story, but a chemical accident, the Green Mist, spontaneous and deadly. Most of the survivors are children, and 12-year-old Pokey is one of them; like the many other children housed in the abandoned IRS building in Washington, she knows from constant reassuring telecasts that the authorities will take good care of them. But while they are on a journey broken by a visit to Harpers Ferry, Pokey begins to think for herself and runs away. That is the beginning of the small rebellion (two children, four elderly adults) that saves the next "excursion' group from being sent to hibernation chambers. The characters are firmly limned, courageous in their fight against corrupted power. Pace and style are crisp, suspense-laden and smooth-flowing. ZS

D.V. Courage, Responsibility


A well-wrought complement of first-person narrative and evocative art describes the lives of an Ohio coal mining family during the Depression. The text, framed in a square of colored paper that matches the background of the facing full-page pastel illustration, is spare but telling. Papa "'was always covered with grime and dirt, but I could see the whites of his eyes smiling at me.'" The picture here is rendered vivid not only by the color contrast but also by an imaginative detail: the child narrator, running to meet her father, is brightly reflected in the miner's mirror crowning his begrimed hat. Other illustrations, all set against and dominated by subtle earth tones, have a similar delicacy of conception, rendered poignant by the bleak setting of a coal mining town. The memories, too, are light in the midst of hard labor and poverty. The seventy-five children who live in the Company Row of ten houses gleefully play "'king of the mountain'" on dirt and gob piles. In mood, this is reminiscent of Rylant's *When I Was Young in the*
Mountains, and the two picture books would make good companions for discussion of America's past. BH

D.V. Pride in background and heritage


Well illustrated with abundant black-and-white photographs, this mentions some of the myths and superstitions surrounding snakes before proceeding to scientific background on their evolution, characteristics, habits, and species variations. There are occasional instances of disjointed transition in the text; this problem is often a function of continuous informational texts, however, and on the whole, the organizational flow is smooth. Nine pictures showing snakes killing or swallowing their prey are repulsively graphic but pertinent to the biological facts. Detailed instructions on catching snakes caution readers that "poisonous snakes should never be taken as pets." That warning is perhaps not strong enough. Like mushrooms, snakes should not be collected at all without a knowledgeable adult to help with identification. BH

C.U. Biology


Despite the light tone and lively style of the writing and the comic flair of the equally lively paintings, this doesn't come off as successfully as previous books by Hoban and Blake. First published in Great Britain, this picture book fantasy is weak in plot and development: a boy thinks he hears a rag-and-bone man calling "Rainy numbers up," and follows him into the aqueous blur down the road to begin a series of improbable (and, alas, not very plausible, even within the parameters of the fantasy) events. ZS


The time is the distant future, the setting an Earth that is only partially settled, since most Terran descendants have lived for generations in space ships or space colonies. Toby is attending an Earth school and is unhappy because her domineering grandmother has decided to transfer her to a school on Mars. With a younger friend, Thaddeus, and the highly intelligent old robot Orvis, she decides to visit the great-grandmother who lives near Lake Erie and whom she's never seen. Thus begins the journey that turns into danger and disaster, as the children and Orvis set off but are trapped by hijackers and abandoned in the wilderness. It is Orvis who is the hero, rescuing the children repeatedly before they reach the haven of Great-grandmother's home. Hoover is deft and consistent in her creation of a not-so-brave new world; her characters are solidly defined by their words and actions, and she maintains a brisk pace while subtly incorporating some thoughtful comments on human behavior. ZS


First published in England under the title Italian Family, this has better textual balance than most of such series books, since it gives adequate attention to adult members of the family and therefore represents a more complete picture than do books that focus on children's school, games, and other interests. Francesca is eight, lives in a modern cooperative apartment house in a town near Florence, and visits her grandparents on their farm. This is successful because it is succinct (it doesn't try to give full historical background or a smattering of facts about Italian industry and agriculture),
because it is written in a brisk and direct style, and because text and color photographs are nicely integrated. A glossary is followed by a few "Facts about Italy." ZS

C.U. Social Studies


A revision of the 1986 title (reviewed in the May, 1986 issue) is a testament both to the rapidity with which new information about AIDS has been garnered and to the responsible competence of the authors. The revision has been careful and thorough, with a more logical arrangement of chapters, revision and updating of material within chapters, and infusion of information based on new research findings and records. Most of the changes are in the introductory chapter and in the chapter on "Medical Progress." As in the first book, the authors maintain a calm tone and a scientific attitude. Appended are a glossary, an index, a list of groups offering AIDS information and support, and—a new feature—a copy of the Surgeon General's report on AIDS. ZS

C.U. Health and Hygiene


11-year-old Ricky's family has just moved into an old house, and one night he awakens to the sight of a bat, hanging upside-down on the bed frame, staring at him. The bat (named Voron) has come to warn Ricky to convince his parents to move out... or else, reinforcing his threat with subsequent visits, accompanied by more bats. While the style is pedestrian and the plot development arbitrarily contrived, the situation has enough intrinsic scariness to keep kids interested and reading, probably under the covers with a flashlight. RS

D.V. Moving, adjustment to


Three elderly men, one of whom is an alcoholic Vietnam veteran (Doc), and a grouchy bag lady (Nellie) are already ensconced in a hideaway beneath a Los Angeles freeway. Two young people, Joshua and Chancy, each escaping a miserable existence, are added, along with a dog and cat, brought together at the end of separate credible journeys. It is Chancy, fifteen, who pulls it all together and, with the help of her two other friends, arranges for a new place to live and some earned income that will make a family of this representative group of street people. The situations of each have drama, and the writing style has good flow and pace; what weakens the story are the aura of purposiveness (too deliberate a broad representation of the usual causes and problems of street people) and the overdramatization in some of the incidents. Jones does not glamorize her street people, but she does show sympathy and understanding. ZS

D.V. Self-reliance


Watercolor paintings are light, clean, and spacious, with naivete in the drawing of human figures (round faces, eyes that are dots) and little animation. Still, the art is used deftly to help tell the story of a boy who mourns the death of an old, beloved dog and who resists the charms of a new puppy. Keller does a nice job of showing the anger Ben feels
about Max's death, the guilt and grief. Mother is gentle and understanding, but it isn't until he can reminisce about Max with a friend, and laugh fondly at these memories, that Ben can accept the new puppy. Touching without being somber, this can serve to prepare or assuage children who have had or who face similar experience. ZS

D.V. Death, adjustment to; Pets, care of


Klass uses his own experience as an English teacher in a Japanese high school to give validity to the setting and to the details of Japanese life and mores. His protagonist/narrator is an American teenager, Tony, who is living with an affluent family in Atami; Tony records in his journal his adaptation to another culture, his growing affection for the daughter of his hosts, his grief at finding out that his parents are getting a divorce, and his interest in soccer and other sports. He learns to accept differences just as he struggles to become accepted by his classmates. There is some awkward phrasing, occasionally, that mars an otherwise capable writing style, and the book is not strengthened by a faint aura of travelogue, but the pace, setting, and characterization are good enough to hold the attention of readers, especially of those who are soccer fans. ZS

D.V. Adaptability; Age-mate relations; Divorce, adjustment to


In a sequel to Robot Romance (reviewed in the May, 1985 issue) Leroe again uses as narrators sixteen-year-old Bixby (the whiz kid who built the lovely humanoid, Ally) and Max (Maximum Integrated Systems), Bixby's long-suffering robot school administrator. Added here, the voice of Bixby's girl Frani. This is less cohesive than the first book, and more predictable, as gullible Bixby falls into the toils of a blond beauty who is part of an evil group that wants to wreck a Mars Mission. Intentionally extravagant, this is still funny, as Max and Bixby and Ally and Frani thwart the villains who are trying to sabotage a secret mission that the government is running out of a basement hideaway at M.I.T. ZS


So that they can have a brief vacation, Marcus and Dawn's parents leave them with an octogenarian great-uncle, Uncle Doo. Through the shifting of a sundial, the children are able to call up a surly man who can grant them their hearts' desires via timeshift visits to the past and future. Eventually, they succeed in changing events, although not drastically, so that it is Doo, not Dawn, that plays the flute. This is less successful than Lindbergh's previous fantasies, partly because of a repetitive pattern, partly because the children are so often unpleasant and selfish in their bickering, and partly because of occasional inconsistencies in exposition. ZS


A natural for cat lovers, this is a wry combination of verse and illustration. The best example is John Ciardi's "The Cat Heard the Cat-bird," which plays with readers' perceptions of a bird before and after the appearance of its predator ("—What bird, dear?/I don't see any cat-bird here"). Meanwhile, in the full-page black-and-white drawing opposite sits a wickedly smiling feline with two feathers sailing past its fat stomach. The feathers, with Hyman's inimitable artistic mischief, precisely echo the curves in the cat's tail and the shades of its patchy fur. Valerie Worth, X.J. Kennedy, and William Jay Smith...
are among the popular poets contributing to the nineteen selections here, but Jean Cocteau puts in a surprise appearance, and there are strong entries from J. Patrick Lewis ("A Tomcat Is") and Rosalie Moore ("Catalog"), as well. BH


Like her fine time-travel fantasy, *The Root Cellar*, Lunn's new book has a richly detailed historical setting, this one in 1815. Mary Urquhart is a fifteen-year-old Scottish sheepherder who responds to a psychic "call" she feels from a beloved cousin in Canada by making the hard voyage across the Atlantic to find him. What she finds is that he has died and is haunting her with a summons into the lake waters where he committed suicide. The major part of the story is Mary's establishment of relationships within a pioneer community, her adjustment to different customs, her pursuit of independence and reconciliation with the gift of "second sight," and finally, her marriage to a neighboring lad. This is an ambitious number of elements to incorporate into one novel, and the realistic aspects are most convincing, although the ghostly ones have an eerie ambiguity. Readers are never sure whether Mary is intensely superstitious or supernaturally intense. Whatever the case, she is a strong protagonist and her story a satisfying one. BH

McClung, Robert M. *Whitetail*; illus. by Irene Brady. Morrow, 1987. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-06127-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-06126-5. 82p. Library ed. $11.88; Trade ed. $11.75. A nature narrative with unusually good balance between storytelling and factual information recounts the life cycle of a male whitetail deer from birth to maturity. The occasional meetings of Star (named for the mark on his forehead) with a boy on a nearby farm lend a human interest element without becoming contrived, and the deer's brushes with death on the highway or during hunting season are typical but suspenseful. At no time is anthropomorphism allowed to impinge on a naturally interesting subject. This is a good read-aloud suggestion for classes that have enjoyed *The Yearling*, a title included in the brief bibliography at the end of the book. Brady's fine-line black-and-white illustrations are patiently detailed, accurate, and alluring, as is the spacious format. BH

C.U. Nature study

Milne, Lorus J. *A Shovelful of Earth*; written by Lorus J. and Margery Milne; illus. by Margaret La Farge. Henry Holt, 1987. ISBN 0-8050-002-3. 114p. $12.95. Although there have been several recent books on soils and their composition (notably *Earthworms, Dirt, and Rotten Leaves: An Exploration in Ecology* by Molly McLaughlin), this is more comprehensive in treating both biological processes and variations of geographical environment. The first half of the book covers plant and animal life by ground layer, and the second touches on special adaptations in evergreen, tropic, desert, Arctic, and alpine regions. The writing is not always smooth (the preface begins with a misplaced modifier), but the text is straightforward and generally well organized by chapter and subsection, with an index for access to specific topics. The fine-line and stipple pen drawings are meticulously accurate as well as attractive. A glossary, bibliography, and list of research questions are appended. BH

C.U. Physical Geography

Namovicz, Gene Inyart. *To Talk in Time*. Four Winds, 1987. ISBN 0-02-768170-X. 154p. $11.95. Suffering from paralyzing shyness, 12-year-old Luke is unable to talk to anyone outside of his family and closest friends. This is the reason, in fact, his family his moved
away from their small island community, hoping that Luke would be forced to speak
more readily in a large city. But it is during a vacation break on the island with his older
brother that Luke must bring himself to talk—a friendly passing stranger may have con-
tracted rabies and Luke has to find him. While Luke's is a convincing characterization,
the basic situation of his excessive shyness never seems quite plausible, and events in the
story are too dependent on the existence of this problem, making its solution overly
cortived. Still, Luke's pain is clearly and effectively conveyed, as is his loving but
troubled relationship with older brother Paul. RS

D.V. Handicaps, overcoming

Naylor, Phillis Reynold. *The Baby, the Bed, and the Rose*; illus. by Mary Szilagyi. Houghton/

Baby Molly wants something—but what? She's dry, she's fed, and offerings of
stuffed toys don't do the trick either. But as Molly learns to crawl, then stand, then
( Shakily) walk, her family discovers that the coveted object has been in plain view all the
time: the rose painted at the foot of the crib. While trying to find out what baby wants is
a situation that will be familiar to big brothers and sisters, it is unlikely that Molly had
to master walking in order to get to the other end of the crib. Szilagyi's pictures are
warmly colored in springtime pastels, but the figures (especially Molly) are stiffly
drawn. RS

0-396-08918-6. 30p. $12.95.

Paintings of awkwardly-proportioned children illustrate a story in which some of the
text appears in balloons within framed strips of pictures. Mrs. Whitey, the substitute in
a second-grade classroom, becomes increasingly exasperated by the obstreperous
behavior of some of the students. Oppenheim focuses on a sustained comic gag, the
children's literal interpretation of words and instructions for a spelling test. This
iteration may pall, but most primary grades readers will enjoy a story about a familiar
situation. The style is adequate, the length and vocabulary level nicely appropriate. ZS
C.U. Reading, beginning

illus. with photographs. $12.95.

This does have, if not *all*, at least quite a bit of information about whales. It also
features some first-class black-and-white photographs. There are also a few blurred
shots, however, and some that are difficult to make out, as in the picture directing
readers' attention to a blowhole "on the left side of the tip of the ‘nose.’" Partly
because of the abundant photographs and partly because of the frequent page headings,
the organization seems somewhat fragmented. Students looking for facts, however, will
find them accessible through this design format; the subject is a popular one for reports,
and the overall combination of text and illustration is energetic. BH

galleys.

Joining the sophomore class as a newcomer in a small town, Chelsea (only child,
narrator, intent on obscurity) urgently insists that her mother's new job—which has
brought them to the town—mandates secrecy about their relationship. Far into the story
it is revealed that Mom is a school counselor, working under her maiden name. The
tension between mother and daughter is a major facet of the story and is handled with
conviction. Chelsea is swept into a charmed circle of lovely Ashley, the high school's
chief social star and its supreme manipulator. Chelsea doesn't see this, just as she
doesn't see how shallow handsome jock Craig is. Mom sees, but Chelsea resists any-
thing Mom says. The story ends with tragedy: Craig, who has been selling liquor to his
classmates and imbibing it, is brain-damaged and paralyzed after a driving accident.
Through it all, Ashley struggles desperately to stay cool, be in command, continue as
the leader, the princess. Serious but not morbid, this is a book with good style and struc-
ture, with perceptive development of relationships, and with well-delineated characters
that include Chelsea's nonconformist friend Pod, who provides (through dialogue) a
refreshing humor. ZS

D.V. Adaptability; Age-mate relations; Mother-daughter relations


The subject of mummies is endlessly fascinating, and although there are other good
juvenile books on the subject (*Tales Mummies Tell* by Patricia Lauber, *Wrapped
for Eternity* by Eileen Pace), there's always room for one more in a collection children use
for history reports or personal browsing. Here, Perl incorporates a good deal of infor-
mation on burial customs, religious beliefs, and historical background along with
specifics of the mummification process and the archeological finds that have kept the
study of the dead a dynamic one. Without getting too wordy, Perl has included spe-
cifics: examination of bone development by X-rays, for instance, documents the
average life-span of the short-statured ancient Egyptians to be about 40, but King
Rameses lived to the age of 90 and was six feet tall. The discovery of Tutankhamen's
tomb is recounted in some detail, and well-formatted photographs, maps, and drawings
in black and white add considerably to the factual descriptions. A bibliography of adult
and juvenile books is included, along with an index. BH

C.U. Archeology

$10.25. Reviewed from galleys.

The 17-year-old narrator, Cydra, conducts readers on a guided tour of her family,
starting with her southern step-grandfather's funeral and ending back at the same set-
ing with a Thanksgiving reunion. The interim period of adjustment allows for intro-
duction to a complex network of relatives in an interracial family, to Cydra's mother
(white), her step-father (black), her younger step-brother Perley (charming), and her
father (neglectful). Although there are literary illusions and folktales woven throughout
the narrative, there is no plot per se. Each chapter revolves around a family incident
memorable to Cydra and usually involving a death, marriage, or birth. As short stories,
these make an interesting series; in novel form, the structure seems rambling. However,
the style is catching and the thematic reflections on racial prejudice, family adjustment,
and life cycles are delivered by a personable protagonist. BH

D.V. Inter-personal understanding

Trade ed. $10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

The hero of *Jacob Two-Two and the Hooded Fang* (reviewed in the July/August,
1975 issue) has turned eight in this sequel, but he still says everything two times out of a
habit acquired to gain the attention of anyone in his large family. In a wild plot vaguely
resembling Steven Kellogg's picture book, *The Mysterious Tadpole*, Jacob acquires a
sixty-five-million-year-old baby lizard that grows into a Diplodicus, which he must save from destruction at the hands of Professor Wacko Kilowatt, the star in Prime Minister Perry Pleaser's think tank. None of the government's array of air and armed forces prevails against Jacob's love and determination as he leads Dippy to freedom in the Canadian wilderness. Farce at its broadest, this makes up for its total implausibility by offering kids a racy read full of their favorite items: slapstick humor, a child victim who prevails over a bunch of ridiculous adults, a dinosaur, and fifty king-size pizzas. Up for grabs! BH


Sturm und Drang in the life of a 16-year-old is revealed by the protagonist, Brie, as she wrestles with the problems of a) having fallen in love with a handsome senior who proves to be a homosexual (readers will probably guess this although Brie does not) and b) being involved in knowledge of a peer drug pusher and his stash. (She knows but can't tell because others—as innocent as she—would suffer.) There's also the up/down relationship with strict Daddy, and the anguished relationship with Kevin, an older brother who is a priest and is thinking of leaving the priesthood. These all give rise to a series of tediously repetitive scenes of introspection or confrontation, at the end of which all problems seem to be solved: purged by confessing, Brie in turn (although not in the confessional) gives Kevin solace and hope; Brie and her quondam love become friends; the pusher calls Brie and says he'll keep her out of it; Brie accepts Daddy's marriage to a woman with whom he has long had an affair. The quality of characterization is variable, the plot is turgid, and the writing style, less controlled than it has been in earlier books by Rinaldi, is unfortunately larded with "wanna," "gonna," "Hadda," and similar phonetic spellings, obtrusive and not always used with consistency. ZS

D.V. Brother-sister relations; Father-daughter relations


Sometime during the 1880s, on an island off the east coast of the U.S., Sarey Ann Littleton watches through a terrible storm as her father struggles to rescue passengers from a wrecked ship and dies in the attempt. One of the survivors is a girl Sarey's age, Faith Wilkinson; she loses her entire family and is taken in by Sarey's aunt (and stepmother), who has raised Sarey and her younger brother Henry since their mother's death. Sarey's grief takes the form of anger against Faith, at the attention she gets from the islanders, at having to go to work with "Aunt-Mama" at the hotel while Faith, Henry, and Sarey's friend Reba play all day. Because the point of view is so persuasively Sarey's, a reader sympathizes with her sense of injustice. Her stepmother and various members of the community do seem to expect too much and bear down too hard, as in their disapproval when she tries to regain her brother's attention by capturing a wild pony. Yet Sarey's reconciliation with Faith is saved from seeming too heroic because of the precedent her beloved father has set for her in his lifesaving role. The dialect is natural and consistent. A few secondary characters, notably a beautiful but nasty guest at the hotel, are slightly exaggerated, but the central cast is memorable and the blend of historical setting and first-person realism a strong one. BH

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


Set a peripatetic pacifist (who wanted to name her daughter Dove-of-Peace, but settled on Dovi) down in a Kansas truck stop, throw in a colorful cook and a (perhaps)
abandoned, wisecracking nine-year-old, and you could have trouble; but Ruby deftly avoids cheap stereotypes or sentiment to tell a warm and funny story. Fourteen-year-old Dovi is the narrator, who, ruefully but forbearingly, follows her mother to her latest venture (Dad has stayed in Wichita to insure the family's solvency), where they are soon confronted with Tag, left at the diner by her trucker mother, C.W. Tag manages to endear himself to everyone by being a total nuisance, and all are dismayed when Tag's mother shows up to claim him—Tag was taken by C.W. in a custody battle. There are no villains here, just Tag's and Dovi's families trying hard to find solutions in the best interests of both parents and children. RS

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


This wordless picture book follows the picaresque adventures of a toy monkey, lost by a little boy and picked up by a pack of rats, a family of hedgehogs, and a large bird. Finally, the bedraggled toy is retrieved from a pond by an old man who is fishing and who takes it home to his toy shop for repair. Boy and toy are reunited on the last page. The story has built-in appeal, but the art is all. Vivid, richly colored paintings in cartoon-strip format feature fine drafting and design. The scene progressions are clear, the animals and people expressively detailed. While the endpapers are composed of inviting, vernal landscapes incorporating the tiny cast at a peaceful distance, the close-ups as the book progresses reflect the scaled-up drama that enriches the ordinary lives of small creatures from a child's perspective. BH

D.V. Love for toy


Alice's grandmother Oma is rather disdainful of Bobo, Alice's new dog. "Dreckhund," she calls him, and, when Bobo refuses to fetch, Oma remarks sardonically "A regular Rin Tin Tin." But Oma does want Alice to win a blue ribbon in obedience class, and slowly, grudgingly, she is won over. "I'm just using up leftovers. And that's all," says Oma when Alice catches her dishing fresh scrambled eggs into Bobo's bowl. This is a fresh portrait of an unlikely friendship that allows room for both humor and dignity. Schwartz's eccentric illustrations have a 50's mood colored by an 80's sensibility, and are filled with witty details and patterns (check out Alice's paisley pedal-pushers) exactly suiting the dry tone of the text. RS

D.V. Grandmother-child relations


While there is sure to be a ready audience for Service's mock heroic ballad of a Yukon miner who wants to die warm, anyway, the (undeniably beautiful) illustrations seem to belong to a different book. Combining naive forms with intense pure color, Harrison's paintings have grandeur but lack humor, working against the tone of the text. In addition, each painting is distractingly captioned with facts about the Yukon or explanations of the illustration, making the whole work better as a souvenir than a picture book. RS

C.U. Reading aloud


In the consistency and credibility of its sustained imaginative play, this is reminiscent
of Zilpha Snyder's *The Egypt Game*, and it, too, develops into a suspenseful thriller.

4-5 Lucy and Rosie, eleven-year-old best friends, have set up as 'psychiatric consultants' in the basement of Lucy's home. Lucy's father is a child psychiatrist, and when one of his younger patients appears at the basement door, the two members of Shrieks, Inc., find her (Cinder, age five, mute and scarred) much more interesting than their pretend patients. The momentum of the story builds as Lucy investigates the children's home in which Cinder lives, and she gets to know both Cinder and the nurse who brings the child in for therapy sessions with Lucy's father. It soon becomes clear that Lucy's well-meant efforts are endangering her as well as Cinder, and there is a denoument, both dramatic and logical, that ends the novel with fine flair. Good characters and dialogue here, a strong and unusual plot, and excellent narrative flow. ZS

**D.V.** Friendship values; Imaginative powers

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Three sisters, 'stuck' with their grandparents while their parents are digging artifacts in Mexico, suffer through Grandma's rigid scheduling by escaping into the oldest girl's stories about garden insects. A lightning bug named Lightey is the main character in these ventures, all of which reflect episodes in the girls' daily lives, but there is a large cast including Drusilla the Fruitfly, Twinky the Monarch Butterfly, Ms. Mantis, Millicent Ladybug, Morris the jolly earthworm, George the centipede poet, etc. Unfortunately, both the bugs and the people are flattened to one or two characteristics, the former tending toward cuteness and the latter to stereotype. The style is awkward, too, both in the narrative ('But when they got to the farm, Grandma told them to work quickly and not eat any berries because they had to fill a lot of pints so the Do-Our-Part Club (which she was running for president of) could make strawberry shortcake for the senior citizens at the Autumn Age Center') and in the child's stories ('And, sure enough, the graceful and gorgeous butterfly fluttered up to them. 'Gee, everyone's awake. That jay is causing quite a stir,' she said, unruffled'). The structure of a tale within a tale is somewhat distracting, with fantasy and realism alternately pulling at a reader's attention. Overall, this is the kind of game that is delightful (and revealing) to overhear children playing but that is hard to translate into fiction without expert, objective crafting. BH

**D.V.** Grandparent-child relations

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Paper John is a gentle, good-humored man of whom 'it was said he could get along with the devil himself. And... he soon had the chance.' While John is making a kite in his lacquered paper house by the sea one night, the fishing poles he has hung out the window hook a devil who demands food and a bed, then follows John to the market place and pick-pockets the populace. When the devil tries to escape via John's kite, however, John folds a paper falcon to bring it down; and when the devil causes a great storm, John folds his house into a boat and rescues the townfolk. Paper John has all the makings of a folk hero, and the story has a quixotic yet solid quality that's well substantiated by the author's watercolor art. Some of the characters and scenes depicted through vividly sequenced illustrations are Dickensian in tone, especially the devil and the town setting. Paper John will hook, along with his devil, any youngster's imagination. BH

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Eunice is twelve, she is devoted to her best friend Joy, and she's agreeable to working
with Joy in starting a business that will make it possible for Joy to pay for private ballet lessons. Alas, Joy gets her first crush on a boy, Eunice feels bereft, and a classmate both girls have detested steps into the breach. Regina is rich, spoiled, and scrawny, a whiner and loner. What happens is not unusual: Reggie turns out to have some good qualities, Joy proves that she still cares about Eunice even if she has new bonds. Not unusual in basic plot, this has a lively writing style despite occasional sagging of pace or character development. A light, pleasant read has a sunny ending. ZS

D.V. Friendship values; Jealousy, overcoming


In picture book format, the story of preparation and performance on the occasion of a new production of *Hansel and Gretel* at the Metropolitan Opera House (so announced on the jacket flap if not the title page) is described. The author, long involved with scenic design, gives a full picture of the many services and effects created by the staff as well as of the work of creative performers. What weakens the book are the facts that the descriptions of behind-scenes activities often refer to work done long before production day (lessening the opening-night effect), and that the illustrations, attractive if misty spreads that often have obscure details, may be understood more by those who are experienced opera buffs than by children who are not familiar with the sets, props, and decoration of a large-scale production. ZS

C.U. Music—Study and teaching


Stedman gives good background for her discussion of the two virus-caused illnesses with which most readers will be all too familiar. She describes clearly the functioning (or malfunctioning) of the upper and lower respiratory tracts, explains how viruses attack body cells and how the body fights back, and elaborates on what causes the symptoms of the common cold and of influenza. Illustrative diagrams are adequately labelled; a final section on "Taking Care of Yourself" precedes the glossary and index. ZS

C.U. Health and Hygiene; Science


Pedestrian illustrations give some historical context for a fictionalized first-person account of the career of the first woman doctor in the United States. Steelsmith writes simply but often awkwardly as she describes the determined young woman who overcame the obstacles to training and practice that were caused by prejudice against women in medicine. A useful book, but adequate more for its subject than its style. ZS

D.V. Perseverance; Sex roles


A sequel to *Rock 'n Roll Nights and Turn It Up* continues the story of the rock group "Coming Attractions" in which four young people (Gary, Susan, Karl, and Oscar) had worked hard to achieve success. *Wildlife* begins with a sell-out performance at Madison Square Garden, and it chronicles the fatigue, disillusionment, and abrasion that presage the breaking up of the group. Gary, founder of the Coming Attractions, is the protagonist, and it is from his viewpoint that Strasser reacts to the various ways each person leaves: Susan has simply lost interest, Karl becomes a religious convert while in a drug...
rehabilitation program, and Oscar starts his own group. Like the other books, this is both informative and candid about the world of rock music; the writing has pace and momentum, the characterization has depth and consistency, and the story line is balanced by Gary's thorny love affair with a college student who wants no part of the erratic life of a rock musician. ZS


Seventeen-year-old Carla has always looked up to her older brother Kevin, always considered him a dear friend as well as enviably gifted. This is her story about Kevin, who comes home from college for the summer to take part in a local musical comedy and to wait for a promised movie role in the autumn. Long before her parents become apprehensive about the physical and emotional storm signals, Carla is sure that Kevin is having problems. When he buys a gun, she fears he plans suicide, and she insists that they talk about it; eventually, after calling a suicide hot line for advice, she talks him into getting therapy instead of shooting himself. This is not unrealistic, but it's a bit heavy-handed in its purposiveness, as though it were a case-history fictionalized rather than a fictional account of suicidal depression. Adequately written, the book has consistent characterization, a soupcon of love story (Carla's) for contrast, and an uneven pace. ZS

D.V. Brothers-sisters


Only at each end of this fragmentary celebration of summer is there text. It states, "It was the first day of summer," in very large type at the start; this is followed by pictures of the field-and-pond activities of a family. Not until night-time is the silence broken (a page of "bang pong clang clonk" or "kady.did katy.did katy.did" or "ho hoo-hoo," and so on, as night falls. The final page shows the family's tent with a "Do Not Disturb" sign. Mildly amusing but neither substantial nor informative, this has paintings on a scale that make it a good choice for group viewing, but it's more a base for discussion than an evocation of summer. ZS


An intriguing novel about eleven-year-old Raisin Stackhouse tracing her black community's history through stories about those buried in a local South Carolina graveyard. The writing occasionally rambles, but that very quality accounts for some delightfully fresh passages of dialogue. The characters are vividly individualized and the setting immediately realized. The ending, when Raisin receives a surprise community service award after some stiff resistance from church and political leaders who haven't wanted to stir up trouble with old memories of racial problems, seems a bit tidy. But it will be satisfying for young readers, who can enjoy this as a leisurely, expansive reading experience on the levels of informal first-person narrative, family story, and black history. BH

D.V. Pride in Background and Heritage


Any book that helps prepare a young child for the advent of a sibling who looms as infant rival is useful; this one is marred not by grievous flaws but by a tepid quality and
equally tepid ending. First published in England in 1986, it is the story of a small black girl whose mother is close to term and helps Janine understand that there will be some changes when the baby comes; when Mummy goes to the hospital, Auntie Carlene takes over. She and Janine buy gifts for the baby, and when they pay a hospital visit, Janine is sure that her baby sister has smiled at her. The illustrations have variety and vitality but are often distractingly busy with details and splotchy use of color. ZS


After overhearing his parents wonder if he might not be too old to sleep with his bear, Humphrey has his usual dream of sailing away for an adventure on the high seas of fantasy. After a storm, Humphrey and his bear are washed up on an island, but the bear, grown larger than life, is ever ready with hot chocolate and furry comfort. Humphrey awakens to see his father holding the toy and to hear him remark, "I used to sail with him, too." Some of the compositions are a direct tribute to Van Allsburg and Sendak; and Humphrey and his parents look remarkably like George and his parents in *George Shrinks*, also illustrated by William Joyce. The tone of the art is totally different, however. Where the earlier book had crisp, bright colors, these are dark and spellbinding in their graphic imagery. Yet the pictures are reassuring, memorably in the spread of the child enfolded in the arms of his toy, which has grown in stature to equal its symbolic importance. This double-page illustration is nicely echoed in the last cameo of the father cuddling his son, who is cuddling his bear. A warm, embracing bed-time book. BH

D.V. Love for toy


The narrator is Rita Formica, who is sixteen, weighs two hundred pounds, and is five foot three. She has been deeply, hopelessly smitten by Robert Swann, the golden youth who is a member of Sag Harbor's wealthy summer colony. Rita joins a health club just to be near Robert, who simply doesn't see her. He does, however, see her French friend Nicole, who has volunteered to act as bait; her proposal that she trap Robert and then give him to Rita doesn't work, for Nicole and Robert have a torrid affair that ends in marriage. Readers will have noticed, before Rita does, that someone else is in love with her. Arnold is her employer, twice her age, a gentle nonconformist who manages for a time to resist Rita's sexual invitations once she recovers from her crush and realizes that she loves Arnold. This is a frank, cheerful, sophisticated but romantic comedy. Rita is an engaging character, shrewd (save when smitten) and sensitive, whose story is just poignant enough to be touching without being maudlin. ZS
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