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.
C.U. Curricular Use.
C.V. Developmental Values

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New Titles for Children and Young People


Ad Gr. 6-8. It had taken some time for thirteen-year-old Lyn and her stepmother, Dora, to love each other; after years of Dad's girlfriends, Lyn was ready for a mother, but Dora was introverted and shy. When it became clear that Dad was now attracted to their pretty next-door neighbor, Mrs. Maclean, and then even clearer that he was trying to keep the mutual attraction secret, Lyn was worried and heartsick. That is the situation Adler explores: to whom does Lyn feel allegiance when it is clear that the marriage is crumbling and Dad wants to move away? Does her love and sympathy for Dora take precedence, or should she move away with Dad? Who needs her? Dora and Dad are imperfect people, and Adler depicts them with candor and understanding, as she does Lyn and her ambivalence. This makes for a perceptive story, but the focus on emotions and relationships is not balanced by plot momentum, so that the story has an uneven, often slow, pace. ZS

D.V. Father-daughter relations; Stepparent-child relations


R Gr. 7-. Although the focus is on Siberia, Anderson provides enough background information to make the policies and changes in that vast area a comprehensible part of Russian history as a whole. The writing is solid, on the dry side, but it is direct and clear, and the text is well-organized, with a good balance of specific facts and interpretive analysis of the politics, programs, and leaders who have played a part in Siberian history. Some of the old photographs are hazy, but most of the illustrations are useful; one map fails to clarify textual references. A relative index is provided but no bibliography. ZS

C.U. History—Russia


Ad 4-7 yrs. Taking as inspiration Andersen's "The Little Match Girl," (but supplying a happy ending) Anno evokes two worlds: ours, and Shadowland, the place where all the shadows go in winter. The cold and lonely girl strikes a match for warmth and makes her shadow appear, which calls the watchman of Shadowland, who comes and lights more matches, throwing shadows everywhere. In the meantime, the inhabitants of Shadowland, whose story is told on facing pages, are in a panic, unable to find the watchman who tells them when it's time
to return to the world. The precise logic of Anno’s mathematical books is needed here—if all the shadows are in Shadowland, why are they appearing when the matches are lit? The match girl’s world is a wintry medieval town drawn in Anno’s familiar style; Shadowland is filled with bold black silhouettes, and younger viewers will enjoy guessing the shapes. Here again, though, we could use a touch of Anno’s celebrated cleverness: the shadows (of animals, people, and buildings, including a pyramid) bear no discernible relationship with the people and buildings of the town, a lack of parallel that renders the book rather flaccid. RS


R 5-8 yrs. A picture book set in the Daintree Rainforest of northeastern Australia, this features innovative art work—“relief collages . . . constructed from a multitude of materials, including modeling clay, papers, textured materials, preserved natural materials, and paints”—without becoming gimmicky. Colors, textures, and shapes are meticulously and tastefully superimposed for striking effects. The simple text of several lines per page is a first-person narrative about a young boy who boats through a reef with his father to the rainforest. There, he imagines what he would have seen a hundred million years ago, and children will relish finding the shadowy dinosaurs and other creatures that lurk in the tangled trees. After the beauty of these scenes, the last page is provocative. The boy, imagining a real estate development imposed on the area, asks, “But will the forest still be here when we come back?” A silhouette map and brief explanatory note on the Queensland wilderness will prove helpful in establishing the context. BH

C.U. Illustrations—collage
D.V. Environmental concepts


M Gr. 4-6. Although many of the characters, including the protagonist (Vinnie Ream, who sculpted a bust of Lincoln) are real, the focal events are fictional. Adequately written, this ends with the “what if” preventive capture of John Wilkes Booth, and a mere page and a half about what would have happened had Lincoln lived. The subtitle is therefore misleading: very little of the book is about what might have happened had Lincoln lived; the series title is also misleading, since the familiar facts about Booth and the assassination present little mystery. A closing seven pages are devoted to “What Really Happened.” An unsubstantial effort from an author who has done better. ZS


Ad Gr. 3-5. Like other Springboard books by Ellen Conford and Lois Duncan (reviewed in the April issue), this is calculated to tide kids over the quantum leap from easy reading materials to fiction. There’s lots of game play here as the main character realizes, through two baseball games, that cheating doesn’t pay and honesty does. In the first game, he drops a ball, getting credit for catching it but losing his sister’s respect; in the second, he misses a base and acknowledges it, forfeiting a wager but gaining stature—and getting back his little brother’s prize
possession, taken by a rival player. This is predictable in theme if not in plot (Barry’s team loses), but kids will get the reading practice they need on a subject that’s palatable and popular. BH

D.V. Honesty


Prince Cinders, victimized by three big hairy brothers who dance at the Palace Disco, is visited by a klutzy fairy with a Star of David wand. After several misbegotten attempts, the prince is transformed into a gorilla, which scares a princess waiting at a bus stop. She believes that the prince who suddenly appears at midnight actually scared away the gorilla. The frightened prince leaves his trousers behind in his rush to get away, but of course he’s found by the fit, gets married, and enjoys watching his brothers turned into housework fairies. More slapstick than satire, this will appeal to kids overfed with cliched Cinderellas, though it doesn’t measure up to wittier creations by Jay Williams and others. The watercolor cartoons show the same goofy exaggeration as those in Cole’s *Princess Smartypants* (reviewed in the June, 1987 issue). BH


Unlike the paperback romances, which at least make a pretense of the heroine having some other interests, this book is all about romance, and love, and how you can tell the difference, and whether it makes a difference. Single-minded narrator Kelly, a high school junior, has never had a date, but she sees romance all around her: brother Park is dating teen queen Wendy, their father is always bringing home sentimental gifts for Mom. To stave off the Saturday night lonelies, Kelly begins to design a romance board game, which, in time and through trouble, finally leads to a boyfriend. Around this bound-to-be-appealing plot, Cooney has built a lightly toned but serious novel that questions and affirms convention at the same time. Park is unexpectedly dumped by Wendy; father’s hearts and flowers routine masks deeper concerns on the part of both parents. Kelly’s first (blind) date—to a prom, in a limousine—is a quiet disaster. “I told Daddy all. It was a quick sentence. ‘He didn’t like me, Daddy.’” One of the squares in Wendy’s game reads “Just like life! With no explanation whatsoever your date dumps you for good. Cry all night,” and Cooney excels at conveying the not-knowingness of both one’s own and other people’s heartaches. But that romance is indeed wonderful is still the book’s hopeful message, and the story ends like a Frank Capra movie, with the whole town playing Wendy’s romance game. RS

D.V. Boy-girl relations


Line and spreading wash pictures, a bit repetitive and a bit comic, tell a very slight story of sibling rivalry that ends, predictably, in accord. A small girl is irritated when her sibling (crawling stage) seizes and cuddles a favorite stuffed animal. Altercation is followed by tears, tears lead to a scolding by mother and removal of the toy, shared desolation leads to harmony. Quite believable, but on the sweet side. ZS

M  Gr. 6-9. Following the usual format of this “Food and Drink” series, first published in England, this gives two introductory chapters that hastily review geographical, historical, cultural, agricultural, and meteorological backgrounds—in ten pages. Most of the text is devoted to what the Japanese eat, and how it is grown (or otherwise produced). Recipes are included. The writing is fraught with generalizations: “A thousand years ago...the lords and princes of Kyoto developed a wonderful and refined culture, spending their time writing and discussing poetry.” The syntax is at times odd: “As a country of islands, the sea has always been very important in Japanese life.” The color photographs are of good quality and some are informative. This gives a modicum of information but neither style nor coverage seems adequate. A one-page index, a half-page bibliography and a glossary are provided; the latter includes some surprising entries: apprenticeship, dormant volcano, fertilizers, and meditate. ZS


R  Gr. K-3. Watercolor illustrations, more spare of line than is most of Zemach’s work, are “inspired by the paintings of two eighteenth-century Korean genre painters, Sin Yun-bok and Kim Hong-do,” an endpaper note states. The soft colors and sly humor of the pictures echo the quiet tone and humor of Ginsburg’s retelling of a Korean folktale. When a villager returns from China with a strange object that mimics his actions (nobody knows what it is: a mirror) the members of his family take turns looking at the piece of glass. The wife is jealous because she sees a picture of a pretty young woman, her mother-in-law is confused because the “picture” is that of an older woman, while the father-in-law is even more baffled, because the picture isn’t that of a woman at all. No moral here, unless it is that things aren’t what they seem, but the message to the reader is one children appreciate: you are smart enough to understand although the characters in the story are not. Nicely done. ZS

C.U. Storytelling


R  Gr. 3-6. “What would it be like to live with the animals?” is a perennial childhood question—and it was Jane Goodall’s, who describes in this autobiography her early passion for Lofting’s *Doctor Doolittle* books. In describing her childhood and first thoughts of vocation, Goodall seems uneasy writing for a young audience (whom she addresses as “you”) and is occasionally patronizing. In discussing Konrad Lorenz’s work with geese, for example, she writes “They fall in love, marry, and stay together until one of them dies.” Her account loses awkwardness when she tells of arriving in Kenya to work with Louis Leakey, and beginning her own research with the chimpanzees in Gombe. David Greybeard, Goliath, Flo and her children are all here, and may be familiar to children from Goodall’s TV specials. Always using anecdotes from her work, Goodall cites the importance of close observation, detailed record-keeping, and patience, concluding with a passionate chapter explaining the importance of the humane treatment of animals. RS
Many high school students (and the rest of us) make "reading plans" (usually involving Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, or both); few actually follow through. At fifteen, Kendall Hailey, daughter of playwright Oliver Hailey and novelist Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey, decided to graduate early ("I will have somehow to manage to take Beginning Painting and Advanced Painting simultaneously") and devote herself to the pleasures and rigors of "auto-didacticism," self-teaching. Beginning with the Durants ("I'll read Will to get an overview and then works of the age to decide if I really like these people") this book is a memoir of three years immersed not just in books, but in painting, acting, and old movies. "There is nothing as good for dieting as a Carole Lombard movie." For many teens, this will have the appeal of a realized fantasy. Hailey writes with showy cleverness, but coupled with enough self-awareness that the overall effect is charming (there's really no better word) rather than annoying. The tone is far from the self-glamorized alienation of most teen writers; in fact, there's an innocent coziness to Kendall's slightly eccentric family that calls to mind books like Cheaper by the Dozen and Our Hearts Were Young and Gay. While published for adults, the diary-like format and authentic teenage voice guarantee a young adult audience. RS

D.V. Education, valuing and seeking; Family relations

Gilly is the narrator, and Victory (new resident in the apartment building where Gilly's best friend Franny and Gilly's wimpy admirer Arnold live) is the catalyst for troubled change in a teenage novel that is run-of-the-mill structurally, adequate stylistically, and enjoyable for its rather self-conscious humor and for the universality of many of its problems and concerns. Gilly is the narrator, upset because conventional Franny becomes jealous of nonconformist Victory, and more bothered than she would have expected to be by the fact that the ever-dogged Arnold seems swept off his feet by Victory, who is quick to let him know she finds him physically attractive. Gilly and Franny make up, and Gilly accepts the shifts in relationships, including the end of hostilities between her and her father's inamorata. This first young adult novel shows some potential if not great promise. ZS

D.V. Friendship values; Jealousy, overcoming

What threatens, in the first few pages, to be another teen-girl-school-boyfriend story changes, cleverly and shockingly, to a strong novel of suspense. Freshmen Patty Meely and her best friend Kimmers, waiting after school one day for Patty's father to pick them up, are discussing Patty's Mark-or-Larry boyfriend problem. Dad soon arrives—and is immediately surrounded by three gray sedans and a team of federal agents: "They stuck their pistols in the back of his neck." Dad is arrested, Patty taken away to be interrogated, where she learns (although the agents believe she's known all along) that her real name is Patricia Pelling and that her father escaped twenty years ago from prison, where he was being held on an espionage conviction. After terrifying confrontations with
the agents and a seedy foster family, Patty runs away and joins her father, who has escaped (again) as well. In character and theme this bears resemblance to LeCarré's *The Little Drummer Girl*, as Patty slowly recognizes the amorality of her father and gradually becomes his accomplice, reluctantly learning elusion, deceit, cynicism, and the many paradoxes in her father's character. Hawks handles complex questions of morality and identity ("I was Karen Peterson. I had a driver's license to prove it") with smooth craft, allowing them to inform but not overwhelm a terrific thriller. RS

**D.V. Father-daughter relations**


R 5-7 yrs. A hilarious conglomeration of poems, stories, fables, and diary entries gambols with many of the animal characters and themes that have appeared in Heine's past picture books. The first verse-tale embroders on the folk motif of a creature who eats everything that comes along, but here the featured crocodile neither bursts nor gets cut open: "He burped and then was heard to say/ 'I don't need much more food today.'" "The Great and the Small" celebrates the triumph of woodworms in toppling a mighty king's throne. "Seven Wild Pigs" reveals Heine's penchant for playing with art and reality—a painter gets into trouble when his images come to life. "Mail in a Bottle" is a wild fantasy about a shipwrecked pirate's adventure from the point of view of the bottle which he uses to send a message (his mother comes to the rescue in a motor boat). An ironic epigram concludes the story of the champion ostrich that breaks its neck in a sudden descent ("Here all may see my body lie,/ But not my soul, for that can fly!"). Occasionally, Heine parodies himself, which is a touch self-indulgent and sometimes obscure, especially in the amorphous "Diary of Johnny Mouse." However, for the most part, both text and watercolors are originally and enjoyably irreverent. BH


R Gr. 7-10. In a future time in which interplanetary travel is common, the students in a senior high school course in Advanced Survival are given the chance to do a field test. Rod Walker, despite parental objections, chooses to go and is transported to a wild, uninhabited planet; others also go, one at a time. While this has a science fantasy matrix, it is basically a story of survival and civilization, as other adolescents join Rod to pool their skills, build a protected settlement, and learn to cope with the human foibles that militate against orderly government. Like most Heinlein books, this has depth as well as action and a graceful—at times witty—writing style; for some readers, the man/woman-against-nature will be lure enough. Reissue of a 1955 title. ZS

D.V. Courage; Self-reliance


R Gr. 7-10. Beginning with an old woman's letter to her great-great-granddaughter, this tells how the Scottish narrator, Jean, was caught up in the mid-eighteenth century struggle between Prince Charlie's Highland rebels and the troops of King George's brutally repressive son, William of Cumberland.
Although Jean is only eleven through most of the book, the style and content require an older readership. The narrative is heavy with brogue and the plot entails historical background, details of sometimes tragic hardship, and a budding romance which eventually leads to Jean's marriage with one of the rebels she rescues. Historical fiction aficionados who have enjoyed Mollie Hunter's books can appreciate the subtle treatment of folk beliefs in Jean's fishing village and in the gypsy prophecy that comes true. BH


Ad Gr. 3-5. Black-and-white photographs illustrate a text narrated by Jenny, blind since birth, who has recently transferred from a special school to a mainstream school. Jenny describes some of the training for independence that has prepared her for her new school, and she refers several times to the cane that is "almost like a magic wand" in helping her move about on her own, indoors and out. After some comments on the adjustment problems in the new school (being treated as different by classmates who were "too nice"), Jenny delightedly reports on an incident that has made everybody realize her capabilities rather than focusing on her limitations. The writing style is a bit flat, but the text is clear, candid, and appropriate in length and concept for the middle grades reader, although it gives little information that is not included in other books designed to explain training and mainstreaming of blind children. ZS

D.V. Handicaps, adjustment to


M Gr. 3-4. Eight-year-old Gillian, who tells the story, bemoans the fact that older sister Krista has to come home from college when their father loses his job. Gillie and her pal Hank start a dog-walking business to earn money to send Krista back to college, since she seems to Gillie a bossy pest. Urged to get a job, Krista practices her singing and dancing. By fatuous coincidence, a famous Broadway producer (user of the dog-walking service, secret resident of the same apartment building as Gillie and Hank) loses his star, and the children introduce him to beautiful singer/dancer Krista. She gets a role. Father gets a job. Gillie does not get her bedroom to herself. This is, if often amusing, a trivial pursuit. Characters are superficial, contrivance is rife, and the writing—although adequate—is flawed by unlikely bits of dialogue and by such dubious references as Gillie's (twice) mentioning the fact that some of the girls in her third grade classroom at a private school wear "rhinestone dresses." ZS

D.V. Sisters


Ad Gr. 5-7. A purposive sequel to Just Like a Real Family (reviewed in the April, 1983, issue) tells what happens when June and her mother move in with Franklin, who had been June's school "project" in a nursing home. While June had grown accustomed to Franklin's quirks of age and bad humor during visits, her adjustment to them in a day-to-day situation is much harder, especially when she begins to develop a relationship with a boy. Even her mother finds it difficult to continue giving piano lessons when Franklin's rudeness drives students away. The
characterization is competent and the situations of encounter and embarrassment seem real, but the style is sometimes clichéd ("What Suzy wanted, Suzy got") and the message of acceptance labored. BH

D.V. Adaptability; Older-younger generations


Ad  Gr. 5-7. Starting with a one-page introduction to "The True Story" of Roanoke colony, this fictionalizes a legend of about Virginia Dare, the first English child born in the "New World." When hostile Indians destroyed the settlement, Virginia was supposedly taken to Croatoan Island, where friendly Indians raised her after her grief-crazed mother walked into the sea. A medicine man claimed her when she became marriageable, but she ran away with the brave she loved, was killed, and ever since has haunted the Great Dismal Swamp as a ghostly white deer. This is a minimally developed cross between history and folkloric magic, and the combination is not always convincing. Like the text, the full-color paintings are glamorized and somewhat stiff, but despite these drawbacks, the drama, romance, and mystery of the situation will appeal to readers who are beginning to study American history. BH


M  Gr. 5-9. Baseball has never had a more colorful personality, and seldom a better pitcher, than Satchel Paige, so any book about him of necessity has impressive statistics, amusing anecdotes, or—given the length of his career—a sizeable amount of baseball history. Unfortunately, this is so adulatory and so repetitive as to lessen the impact of the great black star's life story. Coming from an impoverished childhood that included five years in a reform school, he had years of team play and barnstorming in the Negro Leagues. Because of his late appearance in the Major Leagues, he was not eligible for the Hall of Fame until rules were changed. Several pages of career statistics are provided, as is an index and an odd bibliography that seems to consist of arbitrary choices of titles, five fictional and eleven informational, that have to do with baseball and presumably with Paige in some cases. ZS

D.V. Intercultural relations


R*  Gr. 4-6. As she did in her masterly story, *The Wicked One* (reviewed in the June, 1977, issue), Hunter combines fiction and legend to the enhancement of both. The heroine here is young Anna Anderson, who faces down a temperamental mermaid to save her fishing village from the vain creature's fierce whims and to bring her grandfather home from an exile forced by the same mermaid. Each character is briefly but vividly drawn, the two principal females in living color (sea-green eyes, hair of red). A clever plot makes folkloristic use of gifts for rescue: a comb, a mirror, a conch shell, a knife, a length of silk—each fits into the pattern of resolution foretold by a witch-like herb woman. There are even, in
the end, three wishes, each one granted in a most satisfying way. With alluring cover art to send it on its way, this is briskly paced for reading aloud or alone. BH

D.V. Courage


Ad Gr. 5-8. Fifth-grader Maggie’s parents are divorced, and tension grows when a) Mom discovers Dad has a new girlfriend; and b) the parents each give Maggie conflicting advice on how to handle a school bully. This has more humor and interest as a school story than as an adjustment to divorce story: while Maggie’s teachers and schoolmates are sometimes overdrawn to the point of burlesque, they have a liveliness not extended to her parents, who are never really defined beyond their conflicts with each other. The revenge plans for the bully are very funny, particularly the evil suggestions of Maggie’s best friend Iris, whose attention-seeking capers land her in the principal’s office almost as often as they put her firmly at center stage of the story. RS

D.V. Divorce, adjustment to; Friendship values


R Gr. 3-5. “Which is the better way to live, by doing good or by doing evil?” That’s the pivotal question posed in this Ukrainian folktale (no source given), both for the plot and the theme. To resolve a wager, twin brothers (one good, one wicked) pose this question to three men, who all agree that evil seems to get one farther in the world. Paali, the good, loses all his possessions and eventually his eyes to Pavel, but all (and virtue) are eventually restored, with the wicked Pavel turned into an evil spirit. Mikolaycak’s handsome paintings are vigorously colored, intensified by black outlining, and brightly patterned, including the margins of the text, sometimes resulting in a gorgeous but overwhelming confusion. This is controlled somewhat by placing text blocks over some of the action, which both relieves the eye and provides visual suspense. As in some previous books, the artist solidifies light and liquid; silly in a picture of a gushing fountain, dramatic in the sweeps of flames and evil spirits. RS


Ad Gr. 7-9. As a producer/director of films, broadcasts, and recordings, the author of this biography shows an expectable familiarity with the milieu of the music business. Unfortunately, he seems less qualified as a writer, indulging in hyperbole, generalities, and peculiarities of phraseology or syntax. However, the information is accurate (albeit interspersed with interpretation) and the coverage adequate; the subject is well worth the reader’s time, since Gershwin was a prolific and brilliant composer. A substantial reading list follows the final chapter, which serves as an annotated discography. ZS

Ad  Gr. 5-7. An adequate biography of the great inventor is illustrated by reproductions of grainy early photographs and prints. Lampton’s material, which emphasizes Edison’s work rather than his personal life or his personality, is capably organized but stiffly written, with some repetition and some adulatory comments. Preceding the index are footnotes indicating the use of three sources, and an exceedingly brief list of “Recommended Reading” that gives the same three sources plus one more. ZS


R  Gr. 5-7. In a competent overview of the subject, Lee discusses the history of donor banks, the way they function, new techniques for coping with organ rejection, and the medical, legal, and ethical concerns involved. The text makes clear the rapid advancement on this medical frontier, and it closes with a brief description of the growing need for donors as transplant surgery becomes refined, the reasons there are so few donors, and the safeguards and circumscriptions that should encourage donors and convince them of the importance of their contributions. This isn’t written by an authority in the field, but the author is a careful researcher and writer, and she provides a useful glossary and a list of sources of further information, as well as an index. The weakness of the book lies in the often-useless photographs. ZS

C.U. Health and hygiene


M  Gr. 4-8. Eight children relate first-person anecdotes about growing up in a family where one or both parents are alcoholics. Illustrated with photographs, this has the look of Krementz’s *How It Feels* . . . books, but these are fictional narratives and the photos are of models, distinctions that will probably be lost on young readers. Different patterns are represented, from physical and sexual abuse by a drunken parent, to a child who only knows about his father’s problem because father told him. An unfortunate limitation of the child’s-eye perspective is that causes of alcoholism are not discussed, and many of the parents seem to be bad people, their alcoholism a moral failure. While the book may be comforting (“You are not alone”) to children of alcoholics, it is definitely not subtle—the ambiguities of loving an alcoholic parent, probably the hardest aspect of the syndrome for children, are only addressed in one anecdote about a father who has stopped drinking. There is, however, good information on AA, including what an Alateen meeting is like, and where to find out more about the organization. The melodramatic cover—a photo of a house torn in half—may scare off those kids who most need the information. RS


R  Gr. 2-5. Twenty poems, some commissioned for this book and others reprinted, form a kind of thematic portrait of the love and trust common to motherhood in spite of personal and cultural differences. There is an easy flow to the selections, many of them informal free verse, punctuated occasionally by
rhymes such as X. J. Kennedy’s funny “House Noises,” N. M. Bodecker’s delicious “Pippin in the Evening” and Felice Holman’s jovial “One, Two, Three, Four M-O-T-H-E-R.” The way in which primary images often focus on the sensory creates natural stylistic connections: a cool, comforting hand in the hot dark (“when the dark opens up for her like a flower,” from Liz Rosenberg’s “My Mother’s Face”); a voice humming, rocking (“like a boat/ in the waves/ of her song,” from Deborah Chandra’s “Mama’s Song”); the gingerbread mother in Lucille Clifton’s “My Natural Mama”; licking chocolate in Jim Thomas’ “Chore Boy”; mint, rosebuds, apples, and sugarfields in other poems. Ray’s line-swept drawings with blue and peach tones capture feelings of closeness—and, occasionally, distance—between the figures of mother and child. A May bouquet.

D.V. Mother-child relations


**Ad** Gr. 1-3. Mike and Sarah’s family are facing losing their farm. Other families are moving to the cities, the school is going to be closed, and Dad is worried that they won’t be able to stay much longer, given the low prices for corn and milk. The children hit upon a solution—raising pumpkins and flowers—that saves the farm, a resolution that may be satisfying to young readers but that seems sentimentally improbable. This warm glow is also characteristic of much of the illustration, which is self-consciously picturesque, referring more to the conventions of early nineteenth century landscape painting than to the story itself. The pictures of trees, for example, look more like pictures of pictures of trees, and to place a tractor in their midst only intensifies the anachronism, an uneasy juxtaposition that extends to the book as a whole. In some of the illustrations—a gentle portrait of the children seated on a bed, the family walking through a snow-streaked field—Locker frees himself from stylistic mannerisms and comes more into his own. RS

D.V. Ingenuity


**Ad** 3-5 yrs. Beautifully detailed and textured paintings of fauna and flora, some of the latter lavishly crowded, illustrate a low-keyed story about a house mouse that meets a field mouse. Oscar is delighted by the beauty of the outdoors and enjoys meeting other animals and seeing such wonders as pond, greenhouse and chicken coop as his new friend Alfie gives him the grand tour. Quite pleasant, but save for a few incidents (encounters with other animals) this is so sedate as to be tedious. ZS


**Ad** Gr. 7-10. An adolescent version of Cleary’s *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, this is a series of letters from 14-year-old Terry Blanchard, whose parents are getting divorced, who suffers agonies of awkwardness with girls, and who harbors impossible musical ambitions to become a rock star. The psychological projection onto Springsteen is pretty obvious from page one (“Hey, know what I just figured out? That you’re old enough to be my father. In fact, my old man and you must be about the same age”). What finally stops the letters to Springsteen is
Terry's establishment of a correspondence with his own father after a desperate trip to make contact with him. Readers will sympathize with Terry's failures at dating, his protest against his long-suffering mother's having a boyfriend, and his success at staging a rock concert benefit, which seems to solve most of his social, school, and self-confidence problems. This is one of those books which breaks no new or unusual ground but which is calculated, inconsistent slang and all, to appeal to an adolescent subculture. Alas, it will lose its punch as Springsteen's songs fall from the charts, but the book's circulation, meanwhile, may be worth it. BH

D.V. Father-son relations


Ad  Gr. 6-9. George, the narrator, lives in a small New Jersey town not far from Manhattan, and he's content with his town, happy with the prospect of working in his father's beauty salon, and secure in his plans to marry Julie, who had been his girl since they met at age twelve. Two terrible things happen: there is a breach with his father, who has sold the building in which Julie's family lives, and then there is a breach with Julie, who doesn't share George's commitment to "forever." Through a computer dialogue, George comes to know Rosemary, who lives in Manhattan. The story ends with a happy relationship with Rosemary and a rapprochement with Dad. Mazer is a good storyteller: his characters have depth and consistency, and their behavior patterns are psychologically sound. Despite this, and a writing style that is nicely fluent, the book doesn't quite jell; it's like a collage in which the glue is showing. ZS

D.V. Father-son relations


Ad  Gr. 5-7. Set in Wisconsin at the turn of the century, this historical novel is based on reminiscences of events in the author's family. Thirteen-year-old Hughie (Ellen Hughes Riley) is the oldest of six children in a family that is given a house free in return for boarding a team of ice cutters. McCall does an adequate job of knitting together the themes of Hughie's lost locket (just received as a gift), her budding, shy romance with a classmate, and her fear of molestation by the one nasty member of the ice crew. What lessens the impact of the story is the sedate writing style, which slows the pace despite the drama of a few incidents, and the rather flat predictability of the plot development. ZS

D.V. Family relations


Ad  Gr. 5-8. Wolf and his tribe of hunters and gatherers are used to seeing occasional strangers in the forest, but what to make of this dark-haired tribe who keep animals in pens and dig holes in the ground? Upon mutual discovery, the tribes engage in fierce battle, from which Wolf saves a pretty young girl of the farming tribe, and the two build a friendship. The dialogue is sometimes Hollywood-wooden ("'What are your thoughts on this, Ploughmaker?'") and details about prehistoric customs and technology are artificially worked in, sacrificing mood for information. At the same time, though, these details have inherent interest for many children, and even if the friendship between Wolf and Bright
Dawn does have a twentieth-century feel to it, the pair provides a sympathetic focus to an alien setting. RS

C.U. History—prehistoric
D.V. Intercultural understanding


R Gr. 5-8. The link in this time fantasy is a stove, a "ghastly old thing" that Daniel and his parents find behind a wall in the old country rectory they renovate after a move from London. The stove seems to call Daniel, eventually taking him back to 1835, when the house was still a rectory, and another Daniel (whose body and mind Daniel assumes) is a kitchen boy in charge of blacking the stove. The time-slip is handled capably if with little ingenuity; this might have been even stronger as straight historical fiction. In the time and place where Daniel has arrived, agricultural unionism and Methodism have begun to shake the privileges of the landholders, and Daniel's best friend and father figure George is one of the secret organizers. The book has much to say about the conflict between the needs and wishes of individuals and those of humanity, and the struggle is intensely personalized through Daniel's own relationships: with George, who gives up his courtship of a girl to stump for the union; with his master the rector, caught between Christian morality and the power of the gentry; and with the other Daniel he has become, who sees the hard lives of his friends, but is afraid to escape the security of his kitchen fire. RS

D.V. Loyalty


M Gr. 2-5. On a topic that many children study in school, this offers information and photographs but with the disadvantages of poor organization and editing. The misconceptions that accrue almost cancel out the benefits, as in the following passage, which implies that aborigines never speak: "Not all language uses spoken words. Australian aborigines make a clicking sound to talk to each other. They also use message sticks." While pictograms and demotic writing are adequately covered, with diagrams and photos, the section on "Discoveries" leaps wildly from a paragraph on the Rosetta stone to one on the Dead Sea scrolls to Ventris' deciphering of ancient Greek tablets to Cretan hieroglyphics. Pictures often appear on a different page from the text they illustrate, and the glossary defines symbols as "things that stands [sic] for something else." Few other treatments are available at this age level, however, so this may have to serve in collections where the curriculum puts demands on the subject. BH


Ad Gr. 3-5. Maudie, who is eight when the story begins, is the middle child of seven, either too young or too old for everything, she feels. And, since she is a lively child and often in trouble, she despairs of ever being appreciated, or being special in any way. This turn-of-the-century family story is based on the childhood of Lura Reynolds, Phyllis Naylor's mother, and it's adequately told and structured
but expectably episodic in the way most reminiscences are. Intermittently, this is a bit sugary, but it's an amicable period piece. ZS

D.V. Family relations


NR Gr. 6-9. In contrast to Paulsen’s other books about survival and perilous journeys (of the soul and otherwise), this one takes place almost entirely on a safe, tiny island in northern Wisconsin. Wil finds the island soon after his family has moved away from the city; his discovery begins in routine geographical investigation but soon becomes an intense (to him) inner journey to the sources of creativity. This novel is heavily thematic and unrelieved by action: while we are given to understand that Wil’s meditative retreats and observations should be action enough, the narrative is static, and the insights banal and padded. “And after a time, after all of time, she nodded, because she had touched his temple and read about his grandmother and the herons and the loons and seen the paintings; she nodded and said she would help him, would help him, would help him.” Paulsen seems more interested in expounding his rather sentimentally mystical ideas about art (“I am a painting,”) than in telling a story. While Wil’s essays about his grandmother, the heron, etc., sound like the author talking, each chapter begins with a long quote from Wil that demonstrates an entirely different voice, one with considerably more humor, genuine perception, and vivacity. These anecdotes reveal a Wil, and a Paulsen, that readers would like to meet. RS


Ad Gr. 5-8. Sent off to stay with relatives for the summer (while her parents work out their divorce) 12-year-old Patricia is miserable: about her parents, missing Toronto, her unfriendly and all-too-capable cousins. One day, though, she finds an old watch that, when she winds it, sends Patricia back in time to when her mother was twelve, and, like Patricia, an outcast. This owes more than a nod to Pearce’s *Tom’s Midnight Garden* (acknowledged in the epigraph) although lacking that book’s structural complexity, and the inevitable rapprochement with Mom and cousins is too obvious. What Pearson manages very well is the tension between family members who are supposed to like each other and don’t, and the pain of a child who does not fit in. Simpler than most time fantasies, and written in a plain and gentle style, this is good wish-fulfillment reading for kids in the summer reading club who, like Patricia, would really prefer to be someplace else. RS

D.V. Divorce, adjustment to; Family relations


R Gr. 3-6. Part of a series on art and craft techniques, these books on crayons and paints feature a list of equipment and materials preceding an introduction to the medium and preparations for using it. There follow various projects including, for crayons, “resists” of water and wax base overlays, batik, color cutting, chalk and crayon transfer, and rubbing. *Crayons* is the more imaginative volume and shows the most attractive results. *Paints* involves using
various objects to achieve different textures, marbling, combining collage with acrylic colors, and making bubble patterns. Both books use clear, full-color photographs to illustrate each step of instruction, with general comments confined to a brief text. There is a thematic emphasis on young artists combining techniques for new effects, and an afterword gives further information on obtaining supplies. Index. BH

C.U. Art—study and teaching


R 4-7 yrs. "I came headfirst into this world/ eighty years ago./ Inside, gas lamps and firelight:/ outside was white with snow." This grandma-remembers verse-story, while nostalgic, is saved from saccharinity by a lilting rhyme scheme and softly-colored illustrations done in period style and filled with details of the changing times. From her birth to the present day—through childhood scrapes (throwing mudpies into Mrs. Morgan's pantaloons), marriage and the birth of her own child—the narrator tells her story with economy and grace. The pictures add story ("when Grandad went away" is illustrated by a young Grandma waving to a departing soldier) and the rhythms of the verse are nicely varied by changing line lengths and page-turns that often reveal a rolling long line to end the stanza. RS

D.V. Grandparent-child relations


R Gr. 5-9. Starting on August 22, 1940, this long novel in diary format tells the experiences of a pre-adolescent Jewish girl in occupied France. Renée Roth's family has fled from Alsace to find safety in Paris, but the Nazi restrictions and round-ups force her parents to send their three daughters to a convent in Normandy, where they're lonely but cared for in relative comfort until caught in the bombing that fronts the Allied invasion. Many of the chatty entries describe Renée's interactions with her sisters, friends, and the nuns in charge. The last entry, Friday, September 1, 1943, finds them reunited in Paris, with news that their grandmother, aunt, uncle, and cousins in France have survived. The extensively developed scenes and characterization have more flavor of fiction than of first-person witness, but the tone is gentler than that of many autobiographical novels of the period and may thus reach young readers unready for more historically horrific accounts. BH

D.V. Interreligious understanding


R 4-7 yrs. Annabelle figures she's got kindergarten licked. Big sister Lucy has let her in on the trade secrets, "the fancy stuff," like globes ("This is the world, Annabelle. This is geography"), colors, and questions: "Remember to ask lots of questions, Annabelle. Teachers like that." But the teacher, Mr. Blum, is a little confused at some of Annabelle's answers the next day: when, for example, Annabelle calls out "Blue Desire!" as the color of a lollipop. Colors from Mom's makeup table are not the same as those in the kindergarten concept corner, it
appears. Faithful Lucy, though, is there for a recess pep talk, and Annabelle triumphs when she counts the class milk money, $1.08, without a mistake—addition lessons courtesy of Lucy. This has a lot more verve than most adjustment-to-kindergarten stories, and the funny, deadpan tone is tempered by the strong loyalty between Lucy and Annabelle. As with Beezus and Ramona (whom this cannot but recall) Schwartz’s book will be enjoyed by big and little sisters equally, and parents, especially, will appreciate Schwartz’s illustrations; with both nostalgia and wit they evoke a 1950s California suburbia-land where being chosen milk monitor could really make a person’s day. RS

D.V. Sisters


Ad 3-5 yrs. Stumpy figures and cartoon humor in line and wash drawings give animation to an otherwise labored story about a boy who repeatedly forgets one thing. Dressing, he forgets his shoes; giving the dog a bath, he forgets that he’s never supposed to do that indoors. His mother forgives all when he remembers her birthday. Slight in concept, not much stronger in execution. See also the Stevenson book below, noting that the title is identical. ZS


R Gr. 6-9. You won’t need much booktalking here: seven junior high students, all “second-besters,” decide to wreak revenge on the seven other kids who keep them out of first place; thus, the birth of The Shadow Club. “We all hate somebody.” Class beauty Vera finds pages of her diary plastered on the school walls; first trumpet David sees green slime explode from his horn; leading actress Rebecca is greeted by a garter snake in her thermos—all courtesy of the club. Relatively harmless pranks, but soon more serious and life-threatening stunts befall the stars, and The Shadow Club pleads innocent. Jared (second-best track runner) tells the story in retrospect, a narrative technique that does not allow the story to develop fully its potential intensity, dispelling suspense through an overly portentous tone and had-I-but-known hindsight. However, there is complexity in the characterizations of both the bests (some of whom, one feels, get what they deserve) and the shadows, whose hatred of their betters is transformed into a frightening loyalty to each other. The mystery is well-constructed, with a logical yet unexpected finale that provides moral weight as well as plot satisfaction. RS

D.V. Jealousy, overcoming


M Gr. 7-10. One of a series designed to “enhance a high-school student’s understanding of public affairs,” this is a good example of an informational book which has well-organized facts based on research (Smoke has published several adult books that bear on the subject) but which is presented in a format that militates against holding the reader’s interest. Smoke is a university professor, and he tends to write down to his audience, repeatedly overexplaining, prefacing each
chapter with questions ("When did the American monopoly end? What is the meaning of 'deterrence'? Why is it important to be sure an attack would succeed? When was the hydrogen bomb created?") and ending each chapter with a summary and review questions like "In what month and year did the White House announce that the Soviets had tested an atomic bomb?" etc. The focus is on U.S-Soviet relations, and the text concludes with the 1986 meeting at Reykjavik, "the capital city of Iceland." "Personality Profiles" of some leaders of the two superpowers are interspersed; appendices include descriptive notes on activist organizations, a glossary, reproductions of treaties, a bibliography, and an index. Lots of facts, weak presentation. ZS

C.U. Social studies


Ad Gr. 4-6. Seven stories center on adventures of tiny folk called Tiddlers, who avoid human STOMPERS except for the rare occasion when a brave Tiddler like Trinket Tooley takes an abandoned doll for her friend Dimity, or when Nipper Tooley and his friend Tuck save a lost baby. Several of these stories poke fun at adults, as in the story of Nipper and Trinket's mother getting fed up with a visiting fairy, or their father's frustrated ambition to become a cowboy. There are some funny bits (In Grumble language "M-M-M-rumph" means something like "fat chance") and word play (one story about chickens prefixes "qu" in front of cock, hen, and chickie to feature quocks, quens, and quickies); but there's an overall precious note and some obvious contrivance. The principal reading appeal will be the secret world of diminutive people. BH


R 3-5 yrs. As in the Sheldon book above, this has a protagonist who has trouble remembering, but who—at the end of the story—gains approval when he remembers his mother's birthday; both books are entitled *I Forgot*. Here the illustrations, amusingly scraggly line-and-wash pictures of platypus characters, have more variety and vitality. The examples of what Arthur Platypus forgets also have variety, and the story is given more substance by inclusion of the ways Arthur tries to remember. ZS


R Gr. 2-4. Double-page spreads dominated by stone-gray tints, styled after Egyptian art, and framed with hieroglyphs elaborate this story about the origins of the Sphinx. The Pharaoh, Kafre, commands his vizier to design an "eternal" monument in addition to his pyramid. The vizier happens upon a stone carver, who, during a moonlight walk with his family, sees a lion and conceives of the design for the Sphinx. Both the Pharaoh and the stonecarver die before the work is completed, but the stone carver's son finishes it. This is long for a picture book, but children who have been studying Egypt will be familiar enough with the setting to keep up with Stolz' sophisticated nuances of style. The stonecarver gets in some democratic digs at the vizier, who in turn harbors a twentieth-century irreverence for the Pharaoh. As historical fiction, the book would have benefitted
from a note of background distinguishing the factual from the imagined. However, as a graphic and fictional production, this will fit handsomely into ancient history units and feed children's fascination for mummies and all things tomb-like. BH

C.U. History-ancient


R* 5-7 yrs. A lively story richly told, this relates the dilemma of a farmer in changing times. His ducks have always crossed the road to the river in the morning and returned at night. With the city expanding, cars rush headlong in a collision course with the birds despite warning signs. Even a bridge over the road crashes, with ducks aboard, before the onslaught of a speeding truck. Finally, the farmer's youngest daughter, who has suggested several sensible solutions, conceives of a duck pipe under the road, through which the ducks waddle safely through the year. "In winter, when the rain poured down and the water swept out of the pipe in a torrent, they came skidding and skiing, swimming and splashing in a wild, rollicking rush—a waterfall of ducks." The descriptions of the birds (like jewels in a fairy tale), the stylistic rhythm and repetition invoking the seasonal landscapes, the humorous commentary on hurried and harried humans (sentences describing the Germanic Mr. Schultz occasionally invert verbs to the end of the sentence) all make this a fitting companion to *Make Way For Ducklings*. Meanwhile, Milton's illustrations are the essence of duck, right down to the medium of watercolor, in which she captures the birds' staid anatomical design, comical varieties of stance, and quizzical stares to feathery perfection (the cow isn't bad either). An unforgettable visit to the Onkaparinga River in South Australia.

BH

D.V. Animals, kindness to; Resourcefulness


NR Gr. 9-12. This begins with a typical Thompson flourish: 17-year-old Maria ("Muh-rye-a") inherits untold millions from a father she's never known (or even heard about) and decides to buy a town for teenagers. It's to be a "space to put the time in," namely, time not spent pleasing and obeying them, namely grownups. This, too, is a familiar Thompson never-land, and most of the adults in the story are stereotypically silly, patronizing, or, like, evil. The teens, of course, are cherubs, so the conflict is clear if not terribly interesting. Maria herself is meant to be an admirably Modern Woman, but she's really a post-feminism male fantasy: beautiful, rich, intelligent, aggressive—and she hems the tablecloths, and she has a tattoo on her butt. Thompson has a vigorous voice that can be sly and joyful in turn, but it is too easily distracted by its own sound, wasted on coy and pointless asides, sacrificing complexity for cuteness. Like the two sympathetic teachers in his novel who tell the kids "We are the exceptions, please believe me," Thompson sets himself up as an advocate for youth and its attendant innocence, but he is underestimating his audience, who (one hopes) knows better. RS

Ty's mother is changing her name again. Born Martha Lynn, she's been Faith, Eowin, Jane, Lucy, Sunshadow, Jasmine and now Jordana, a name chosen for her when she becomes a True Servant of The Kingdom, an Old Testament cult led by mesmerizing Brother Daniel. Ty (Tie-Dye, renamed Tobias by The Kingdom) wants no part of this, but figures his mother will tire of it as quickly as she did her other hippie vagaries. When she doesn't, and when Ty experiences the torture and control (he is manacled to a tree for comforting a younger "Servant" after a nightmare) that underlie the outwardly peaceful settlement, he decides to get out. While not as complex or probing as other novels on cults such as Peter Dickinson's *Healer* or Robin Klein's *People Might Hear You*, this has the ready appeal and drive of a good made-for-TV movie—complete with, in Ty, a hero so improbably plucky and ingenious and wise beyond his years that he easily manages an unlikely salvation. RS

D.V. Mother-child relations


R Gr. 6-9. Set, as are so many novels of the future, in a world that has lost its technological knowledge and reverted to a simpler society, this tells of a group of children from Greece who go on a quest. If the setting is familiar, the development is fresh in a story with nuance and suspense. Cal and Dio have agreed, in a deathbed promise to the old Guardian, to take on the quest of finding the "Games" for which he had been guarding the torch. Readers will recognize, as Dio and Cal and the other children move through a series of dangerous adventures, references to the Olympics or variants on names and terms from the past. There is one fantastic element, the torch that dims or lights again in response to their behavior as they search for the place and race that feels right. An intriguing adventure story is written with the author's usual flair, nicely knitting history, legend, and quest. ZS


NR Gr. 4-6. Both of these books are calculated to address the problems of substance abuse. At first glance, they are straightforward and innocuous, but a closer reading reveals errors in fact and style. Some mistakes are simply grammatical: "After smoking cannabis, the pulse rate increases ..."; "Many will continue to use them until their physical and mental health are affected"; "every [sic] very small amounts of alcohol can affect judgment ...". The book on alcoholism does not discuss recent research on inherited tendencies. There are also incidents of misleading illustration, especially in the drug book: AIDS is listed beside a human silhouette with a pointer toward the liver; a diagram of illegal drug profits has no basis of measurement; a photograph illustrating "stress" shows a crowd of well-dressed people on their way to work; another, showing a slumped body with black streaks on it, is labeled "the tell-tale marks of solvent abuse"; most of the drawings are overdramatized. Buried under this is some factual information that should be in the hands of young people, including a list of organizations, with addresses and phone numbers, of places to get help. BH


R 1-3 yrs. This litany of trouble focuses on a cat, but it might as well be a toddler and will thus evoke sympathy from youngest listeners. On Monday,
Cookie falls into the toilet ("There was water everywhere!"). On Tuesday, s/he knocks a plant off the windowsill; on Wednesday, upsets the trash can; on Thursday, gets stuck in a kitchen drawer and on Friday, in a closet; and on Saturday, climbs the curtains. Since tomorrow is Sunday, "Maybe Cookie will rest!" However, given the bee that's bombarding him, it's doubtful. This is the simple stuff from which chants are made, and de Paola has loosened his style for some lively action and low-down perspectives against broad-stroked watercolor backgrounds. A welcome change of pace. BH


Ad *Gr. 7-9.* Rob begins his story with a dramatic description of a suicide attempt; he is talked out of jumping from the roof of a building by elderly Kurt Doyle, who takes the boy home to live with him. Gradually, trust and affection replace Rob's suspicious attitude, so that by the time his abusive, rejecting father (a thief and a liar) turns up, the boy realizes that Kurt has become a caring surrogate father. There's a dramatic climax, as Kurt gets into trouble (suspected of conniving with thieves) and has a heart attack; rescued by Rob, Kurt recovers enough to make readers feel that all will pull through. Wartski has created sympathetic characters and an adequately structured plot, but the story has a padded quality, with too many slow-moving episodes about sailing, with a romantic interest that never moves toward more than peripheral importance, and with several instances of bland contrivance. ZS

D.V. Older-younger generations; Self-confidence


Ad *Gr. 7-12.* Opening with Lee's decision, in 1861, to resign from the U.S. army rather than accept an offer to command it, Weidhorn flashes back with a brief overview of the Virginian's life. The rest of the book is devoted to Lee's leadership of Confederate forces throughout the Civil War, with two final chapters on his "reconciliation" and years as a college president. Weidhorn's admiration for Lee as a person and a general borders on adulation but is well substantiated, though without footnotes or source documentation. His enthusiasm for tactics seems abstract in face of casualty statistics, which are supplied steadily but without real reference to the context of human suffering. This is a traditional military history, in which "various actions and movements, in the intricate design or ballet that is a battle plan" are elaborated with fervor. What's missing in an otherwise detailed assessment are the flesh-and-blood effects when Lee "moved [his forces] around like pieces on a chessboard." With that reservation, and in spite of a stiff, sometimes choppy style, Weidhorn's is the best young people's biography of Lee available. BH

C.U. History—U.S.—Civil War


Ad *Gr. 8-12.* While herding sheep up on the fells, 17-year-old Ralph discovers, hidden in a cairn, a space-age coffin containing the remains (and weapons) of a human-sized cat, clearly from another planet. Although Ralph decides to rebuild
the cairn, hiding the coffin and his "friend, dead among the stars yet here on earth
to touch," he is forced to investigate further when his village is prowled by human-
sized (and genuinely spooky) dogs. The plot sustains interest and credulity through
this point, but from there becomes too unlikely, even within the boundaries of its
premises. Ralph's girlfriend convinces him to send some artifacts found in the
coffin through the mail to be sold; the postman is zapped into space, the dogs rob
the post office, Ralph is zapped into space . . . and throughout are scattered
irrelevant diatribes about how badly man treats his planet and fellow animals. This
is based on a short story of the same name first published in Aidan Chambers'
collection Out of Time and Westall's own Rachel and the Angel and Other Stories.
The short story, and the first third of the present novel, do a marvelous job of
evoking the moody fells and Ralph's sense of awe in confronting evidence of a
stranger universe than he had previously known, but the rest of the novel is packed
with too many incidents and contrived resolutions. There are some suspenseful
moments, though, and diehard SF fans will enjoy the death ray shoot-'em-ups
between the cats and dogs. RS

Wexler, Jerome. Flowers, Fruits, Seeds; written and illus. with photographs by Jerome

Even simpler than the botanical introductions on which Wexler
has collaborated with Millicent Selsam, this has from one to four lines per page
describing different kinds of flowers, fruits, and seeds. The book is organized by
the primary function of each: flowers produce fruits, fruits produce seeds, seeds
grow new plants. Unfortunately, the terminology is not always precise (a tomato
is called a "vegetable plant," a bean is called a fruit) and the difference between
principle and example is not as clear as in Selsam's texts. The color photography
is exemplary in composition, clarity, and variety. One memorable page contrasts a
bluet the size of a person's thumbnail with a succulent whose flower extends to the
ends of a 12-inch ruler. The last page, showing the flowers, fruits, and seeds of a
pear in circular photographic insets joined by a thin line, is a typical example of
Wexler's ability to project concepts graphically in spite of some textual confusion.
BH

C.U. Botany

$13.88; Trade ed. $13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

This really could have been entitled "Free Association," and it's
an excellent replication of a dream . . . for what that's worth to the picture book
audience. Unlike many books of this kind, the artist has made a clear transition
from reality, showing the boy asleep with a subsequent double-page spread fading
from blanket to landscape. There follows a sequence of a chessboard becoming a
medieval setting, complete with castle, knights, and a dragon that the child
overcomes. Then the pages of the book reshuffle themselves as he escorts a
caravan, glimpses a familiar cityscape, and falls through the air into images of
breakfast. Spilled juice suggests water, including swans and fish, and the boy
wakes up to see his goldfish and other objects from the dream highlighted by
sunshine. These are skillfully rendered transitions; the question is one of
reception. Although there is progression, there is no plot, and the concept may be
more appealing to adults, who can analyze it, than to children, unless they can
perceive it as a game. BH

**Ad**

Gr. 2-4. Stringbean and big brother Fred (joined en route by Potato, Stringbean’s dog) take a car trip from their home in Kansas to the Pacific Ocean, and their pilgrimage is recorded herein in the form of a mock photo and postcard album. Messages on the cards (written in Stringbean’s and Fred’s handwriting) reveal small adventures and continuing dramas, like the search for a clown whose giant shoe Stringbean picks up in a campsite. The postcard art is pretty campy itself, done in a variety of faux naïf styles—most of the cards are “advertisements” for various rustic concerns (“Janis and Jeannie’s Giant Vegetables”) and tourist attractions (“Come Visit Harlee Hawkins’ Buffalo Ranch”). Kids will enjoy the found-objects aspect of the book and the detailing (best and wittiest are the postage stamps on the cards), but there’s a trying-too-hard air to all the versimilitude, and a randomness to the images and comments that renders this trip about six postcards too long. RS


**R**

Gr. 5-8. With her customary and sometimes uncanny sense of the Australian wildlife and countryside, Wrightson builds a situation, sometimes too slowly, from a seemingly minor ecological imbalance. The “flying foxes” (bats), turned out of their traditional habitat by humans, raid the fruit trees upriver, which causes a shortage among bush rats and bandicoots, who start a war. Gradually the entire environment is drawn into the conflict, until one of them—a young wallaby—calls on a mythical moon man to help resolve the problem. The key figure in all this is Blue, a dog that witnesses the action and plays a crucial part in it. The plot is of minor importance compared to the characterization of the cast, which involves a good deal of humor as well as sensitive articulation of animal behavior. Often the animals try to avoid problems by laying low (“I am not here. I was never here. I am somewhere else”). There are certain codes of behavior that Blue maintains in his relationship to his master, but he is not above lying and trickery when the occasion requires it. Afterwards, he is penitent; his apologies and contradictory excuses after becoming injured in a fight with Red Dog form an unforgottably funny passage. This will frustrate readers who need a quick start and fast pace, but animal lovers will revel in the patient development of creature communication. BH

D.V. Environmental concepts


**R** 5-8 yrs. It’s hard to take a detective by surprise, as the aristocratic fox family tries to do here with a party on Piggins the butler’s birthday. After a leisurely, Edwardian picnic, Pierre Lapin and his sisters (who appeared in *Piggins*, reviewed in the April, 1987, issue), get into a great flap about one of the missing fox kits. Piggins, however, silently considers the clues and concludes it’s not a crime but a happy-birthday hoax. The “fox hunters” appear to cut the cake, and they all return to their fancy manse, shown in the doll-house perspectives familiar from the previous book. This is better as a continuation of Piggins than an introduction to him; the plot is not quite as tight as the diamond robbery that
preceded it—one misses the villainous Ratsbys. However, birthdays are a friendly theme, and the tidbits of humor are appealing (“If Rexy’s gone missing, can I have his piece of Cook’s Surprise?”). Dyer is as proficient at idyllic landscapes as she is at elegant interiors, so this will be a treat for Piggins fans. BH


M Gr. 4-5. This does give facts about Mozart’s life and, to a lesser extent, gives an impression of his personality, but it is a weak biography because of the tedious style, the occasional gushing, and the deplorable punctuation. (“Although Nannerl... was herself an accomplished performer, it was Wolfgang who... ” or, “Perhaps, she was a little biased, but... ”) The two-column format is broken by photographs and watercolor illustrations. A chronology, a glossary, a bibliography of six titles (not all of which are age-appropriate) and an index are included. ZS


Ad Gr. 2-4. Mr. Rose tries an experiment in a class of ten children to see who can pack an egg so securely that it will not break when he drops it from a second-story window. Six of the children succeed, with materials including a pillow, tennis ball, parachute, and several boxes with various packing materials. Mr. Rose’s egg and several others break messily, and the class adjourns to discuss (and eat) eggs. The suspense here is inviting and the experimental approach valuable. The text could have been more systematic about categorizing what worked and what didn’t (it’s hard to remember all the children’s names in association with their materials) and more conclusive about the properties of eggs. The black-and-white cartoon faces are clichéd, but that won’t keep kids from wanting to try this. It’s a readable, inspiring idea for hands-on science, one of a series by the same team (Worm Day, Trip Day, etc.). BH

C.U. Science—study and experiments


Ad Gr. 4-8. From simple sundials and hourglasses to more complex water and mechanical timepieces, this guide to clock building has clear, step-by-step instructions, includes good diagrams, and requires only easily obtainable materials like pop bottles, sand, and string (and, for the more complicated projects, plastic tubing and pulleys). Occasionally the focus seems to shift from how to tell time to principles of mechanics and physics, and details of time concepts are too sketchy and incomplete—one experiment that purports to show why shadows are longer in the winter only in fact shows the difference between night and day. No index or bibliography. RS

C.U. Science—study and experiments

Note: The title of Ellen Conford’s Poor Jenny Archer, reviewed in the April issue, has been changed. The new title is A Job for Jenny Archer.
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