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.
D.V. Developmental Values.

* * *

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New Titles for Children and Young People


R  5-7 yrs.  Brilliant watercolors in camouflage hues of green and brown illustrate an East African tale with some familiar motifs. Twice Rabbit robs Lion’s honey store and gets away by trickery, as do his fellow thieves Bush-rat and Turtle. Finally, Lion hides in Rabbit’s house but falls for the old ploy of answering Rabbit’s “How-de-do, Little House” while trying, of course, to sound more like a house than a lion. Aardema cites her source (*Zanzibar Tales*, 1901) and injects the adaptation with her style of sound effects, always fun for reading aloud. Both the art—a vigorous balance of line and color—and the story are full of action, a healthy addition to story hour sessions. BH

C.U. Storytelling


R  Gr. 5-7.  Despite the fact that some of the photographs are of poor quality or are uninformative, this compilation of “business successes that began with a lucky break” is one kind of nonfiction many children read avidly. In part, the allure is achievement; in part, the facts about the development of such familiar products as Kleenex, Baby Ruth candy, and Kellogg’s Corn Flakes have inherent interest. Aaseng’s style is crisp and clear, and each section is brief and well-organized, with length varying from 4 to 10 pages. A useful device in this series (other titles published at the same time are *The Problem Solvers, The Rejects*, and *The Unsung Heroes*) is the inclusion—in the inside margin and in small type—of explanations of such business terms as supply, demand, market, premium, and partnership. Separately or together, the books provide a good introduction to the business world. Each of the books includes a reading list and an index. ZS

R Gr. 3-5. This biography of the first black man to play on a major league baseball team is clearly written, admiring but not adulatory, and succinct without being terse. About half the page space is used for black-and-white pictures that are competently drafted but stiffly composed. There are no photographs; there is an index. Adler does a good job in covering the highlights of Robinson’s career and maintains a balance between facts about that career and about Robinson’s personal life; the information is accurate, the tone subdued, so that any tension and action speak the more volubly for themselves. ZS

D.V. Courage


R Gr. 5-8. Like Vesper Holly’s *Illyrian, El Dorado, and Drackenberg* adventures, this one is a swashbuckling affair in which the narrator, Vesper’s guardian Brinnie, relates their dangerous but always triumphant travels during the 1870s. Vesper is a superhero, and here she has met her equal in a chieftain (there’s even a hint of romance between them) who helps her cross a desert, free the walled city Bel-Saaba from its despotic ruler, and save a street magician who has eloped with a sheik’s favorite daughter. This, and more, is all done by way of returning a rare old library book that Vesper’s father had borrowed, before his death, from a scholar in Bel-Saaba. Arch villain Dr. Helvitius proves, of course, to be the power behind the despot, and his scheme to build a flying machine that will drop explosives and so win him the world is foiled only by Vesper’s instant grasp of aeronautic principles. Alexander’s fictional worlds are always inventively imagined and his stylistic capsules easy to swallow (“He was the sort of fellow who should be a governor-general and seldom is”). The whole series is valuable in that it bestows elegant writing on unsuspecting young readers looking to gallop through books with familiar characters and lots of action. BH

D.V. Bravery


R Gr. 4-7. Similar in format and appeal to the author/photographer team’s *Trapped in Tar: Fossils from the Ice Age* (BCCB 6/87), this focuses on Utah’s Dinosaur National Monument, with stunning color photos of bones from the quarry and a competent description of how they were discovered, identified, and preserved. Since the site includes “more than half of all the known types of dinosaurs that lived in North America during the late Jurassic Period,” the book is a natural choice for aspiring young paleontologists. The subject itself has dramatic appeal, which is intensively heightened by Hewitt’s varied shots of models, scientists at work, and reconstructed skeletons,
often from ingenious perspectives. The continuous text is well organized, its
diverse information blended with unobtrusive transitions. BH

C.U.  Paleontology

Asimov, Isaac. *How Did We Find Out About Microwaves?*; illus. by Erika
6837-7. 63p. Library ed. $12.85; Trade ed. $11.95.

R  Gr. 5-7.  From the time that Isaac Newton examined the light
refracted by a prism, and pondered on the nature of light, scientists have held
differing theories about the phenomenon. Straight-line particle movement?
Waves?  Subsequent research showed the variation of wave-length and of heat in
different parts of the spectrum and led to pure research (the Big Bang theory) and
applied research: masers, lasers, and the use of microwaves for cooking. As
usual, Asimov is accurate, direct, and sequential in his examination of a
scientific phenomenon, demonstrating both his prowess as a science writer and
his communicative awareness of the nature of science research, that pool of
knowledge to which so many have contributed. Diagrams are clear; an index is
included. ZS

C.U.  Science

Bernal, Richard. *'Night, Zoo*; written and illus. by Richard Bernal.

NR  2-4 yrs.  Lacking the beguiling irony of Montgomery's
*'Night, America* reviewed below, this companion volume may fulfill its fall-
asleep function far too effectively. It bids 'Night to big-eyed and Disneyfied
chimps, gazelles, a woodchuck, penguins, etc., many of whom come equipped
with such indispensable accoutrements as nightcaps, blankets, milk and cookies,
and teddy bears. 'Nix. RS

Boyd, Brendan. *Hoops: Behind the Scenes with the Boston Celtics;* by
Brendan Boyd and Robert Garrett; illus. with photographs by Henry Horenstein.
128p. Trade ed. $14.95; Paper ed. $7.70.

R  Gr. 5-9.  While Haskins' biography of Magic Johnson,
reviewed below, focuses on a star, Hoops spotlights an entire team and what's
involved in staying on top in professional basketball. The players, of course,
are key, and there's plenty of attention given to Larry Bird and his teammates.
It's clear, though, that this—and every—team has special characteristics
determined by the coaches, owners, managers, home base, and historical
traditions. While the text describes drafting policies, practice, equipment,
training, conditioning, strategy, court preparation, game procedures, road trips,
and common experiences among rookies and veterans, black-and-white
photographs (some grainy in reproduction) bring the inside action to the reader.
Though many of the specifics will change—coach K. C. Jones has already
retired—the family style of this team makes it a stable choice for a look at high-
powered professional sports. Young (and reluctant) readers will enjoy browsing
through the smoothly written, liberally illustrated coverage for a look behind the scenes and faces that are familiar from televised games. BH

C.U. Physical education
D.V. Teamwork


Ad Gr. 2-4. Like Burton’s previous set, How Your Pet Grows! (BCCB 6/88), this quartet is probably more browsable than useful. Each book is gathered around a central theme, but that’s about it as far as organization goes. Warm and Cool enumerate, through a series of captioned photographs, the ways different animals seek and find comfortable temperatures; Safe features natural defences; Clean, various washing and grooming habits. The excellent color photographs include both familiar and exotic animals, although little attempt is made to show where each animal lives, and the descriptive often tips into the anthropomorphic: “The yellow-fronted Amazon parrot spreads her wings as she enjoys a shower. She flaps, dances, and screeches with glee.” Despite the inappropriate preschool format, strange animal facts always appeal; Safe, with its stingers, prickers, and poisons, will find an especially wide audience. RS


R* Gr. 5-7. Fans of The Burning Questions of Bingo Brown (BCCB 4/88) need not worry about Byars letting them down with this sequel. It’s just as authentically characterized, while the writing builds on the humorous use of free association without losing control. Bingo’s true love Melissa has moved to Bixby, Oklahoma; her best friend Cici likes Bingo, but Bingo’s macho neighbor Billy has a crush on Cici; and to top it off, Bingo’s parents are acting immature about their own relationship because, it turns out, Bingo’s mother has become unexpectedly pregnant just when she’s secured a job she loves. If the plot sounds popularized, the style is singular. Bingo’s first (unnecessary) shave is a classically funny rite-of-passage scene, and the issues of sexual maturity are treated in witty but age-appropriate ways. When buxom Cici finds Bingo cooking dinner as part of his restitution for a $54 phone bill to Melissa, he tries to ease her out of the kitchen: “You will have to excuse me now, I am preparing, er, chicken chests.” Enjoy. BH

D.V. Boy-girl relations


Ad Gr. 2-4. A posthumous publication is illustrated by line drawings that have humor rather than wit, and that often are in the macabre mode
that distinguishes so much of Ciardi’s poetry as well. Here the limericks are grouped under catchy rubrics like “Iron Men and Wooden Ships” or “Heights made him dizzy,” with a sometimes tenuous relationship between rubric and selections. Limericks are a popular form; these include some that are pointed or funny and some that seem labored. ZS

Clément, Claude. *The Voice of the Wood*; tr. by Lenny Hort; illus. by Frédéric Clément. Dial, 1989. ISBN 0-8037-0635-9. 24p. $14.95. SpR Gr. 4-. An old Venetian craftsman makes his finest cello from a beloved tree that had “made music” for him many years before dying at the end of a hard winter. He finishes the instrument on the eve of a carnival, but the famous masked musician who comes forth to play can evoke nothing but “brutal, grating noises, like crocodiles chewing and clawing their way across the floor.” Only when the musician hurls off his mask and celebrity can he begin anew, whereupon the cello magically sprouts leafy branches and magical music with “the voice of the wood.” The art is impressive but studied, with surreal canalscapes and costumed dancers posed in the manner of a still life. The grains and textures of the varied surfaces are dramatic yet subtle, creating patterns of contrast in what might otherwise become static compositions. This is a mystical fable that will captivate adult philosophers more than picture book listeners, but older children may be persuaded to consider the artistry. BH D.V. Creativity

Cobb, Vicki. *Getting Dressed*; Library ed. ISBN 0-397-32143-0; Trade ed. ISBN 0-397-32142-2. *Keeping Clean*; Library ed. ISBN 0-397-32313-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-397-32312-3. Each book: illus. by Marylin Hafner. Lippincott, 1989. 32p. Library ed. $11.89; Trade ed. $11.95. R Gr. K-3. Brightly colored illustrations (some showing enlarged details) contribute to a light tone that makes these two nonfiction books enjoyable as well as informative. In the first book, Cobb focuses on those inventions (buttons, zippers, sticky tape) that make it easier to get clothes on or off and that keep them fastened when the wearer is active. The second book describes both the implements (combs, toothbrushes, soap) that help keep people clean and the reason for hygienic procedures. Occasionally there’s a comment one might challenge (“But brushing only became a habit in this country after World War II,” Cobb says when discussing dental hygiene) but for the most part the text is accurate and competently written. ZS

Cohen, Susan. *When Someone You Know Is Gay*; by Susan and Daniel Cohen. Evans, 1989. ISBN 0-87131-567-X. [180p]. $13.95. Reviewed from galleys. R Gr. 7-12. While it’s billed as a “book written for straight teenagers on the subject of homosexuality,” gay teens will find much here to inform and reassure themselves as well. Writing in a casual, sympathetic voice, the Cohens discuss the nature of homosexuality and its existence throughout history; theories as to its causes; the relationships of gay people with their families, friends, and churches; and the special concerns of gay youth.
Controversial topics such as gay parenting, promiscuity, and AIDS are addressed fairly and responsibly, and throughout there are welcome touches of pithy humor: in responding to the question as to whether homosexuality can be cured, the Cohens write "You can make someone miserable but you can't make them straight." Occasionally, the tone gets a little too laid back (calling Lord Alfred Douglas an "upper-class twerp," for example). A reliance on those handy "experts" who "say" is no substitute for attribution and footnoting; in one case where the experts are named, one would still like to know how Drs. Ellis and Ames arrived at their definitive conclusion that "sexual orientation is determined between the second and fifth months of pregnancy." Far more enlightening (and engaging) are the anecdotal quotes from gay teens as well as kids whose friends or parents are gay. There is neither an index nor a bibliography, although a directory of gay organizations and a list of books and movies of gay interest are appended. Despite its technical flaws, this commonsensical treatment of a controversial topic is the best YA book on homosexuality currently available.

RS

C.U. Sex education
D.V. Friendship values


Gr. 4-6. Lil and her parents had just moved to a small town where Dr. Adams had begun a busy practice; like many other services and commodities, doctors were in short supply during World War I. In part this is a story about Lil's adjustment to a new place and to her fifth-grade classmates, but the focus is on her misguided patriotism, for Lil suspects too many people of being spies. Her readiness to accuse old Mr. Panzi, the cobbler (a Jewish refugee from Russian pogroms) just because he is dour and speaks another language, leads Lil to what begins as a Halloween prank and ends with her shame at the resultant violence when the elderly man is threatened by a crowd of agitated adults. Corcoran supplies appropriate period details, and she makes her messages about war and mob psychology in wartime very clear. She is also a competent writer, and her style is smooth and controlled. Although the characterization is believable, most of the characters tend to be typecast: Lil's quietly liberal father, the bigot who delivers ice, the "Mornin'-to-youse" Irish maid, the classmate who's a natural bully. The story ends with Lil and her friends pretending, while playing a code book war game, that peace has come, a finale that invites approbation but is arrived at rather abruptly. ZS


Gr. 6-9. Readers who share Nick's interest in fantasy games should be the primary audience for this English story, but the deftness of the writing style and the insight into motivation, ethics, and group dynamics will no doubt draw other readers. Nick becomes involved with Joseph Fisher and his sister Ruth when he finds Joseph's wallet in his own sports equipment bag and, in the wallet, a note that seems to contain directions for an adventure game.

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What creates a problem—and a crisis—is that Nick’s older brother Terry is part of a rough gang and they want Nick’s cooperation in setting up a robbery of the shop that provides a meagre income for the Fisher family. Nick’s ambivalence is painful, as is his guilt; his expiation is believable as he works through the misery of divided loyalties. Characterization and relationships are established with strength and perception, and Cross has done an unusually fine job of blending the actions and reactions of her characters with the structure of a taut story. ZS

D.V. Ethical concepts; Friendship values; Loyalty


R Gr. 5-8. Stephen and Sylvia Czerkas are “paleoartists” who make scientifically accurate models of dinosaurs for museums and movies. Dinos, model-building and special effects are three sure appeals, of course, and like other entries in this series, the autobiography includes a lot of professional detail, such as digging for dinosaur fossils, restructuring skeletons and reproducing skin texture, and researching dinosaur anatomy and behavior to find realistic poses for the models. While the Czerkas relate their story with some over-breeziness (“This was our dream. And it has all come true”) they also show the pleasure to be found in painstaking and meticulous work: no glue gobs on *these* dinos! Photos of models, a list of dinosaur museums, and a reading list are included. RS


R* Gr. 5-8. Be careful what you wish for . . . . Morosely discontented Alison Allbright evidently never heard this particular piece of advice, and the elegant, friendly, rich Mrs. Considine seems to be the answer to many prayers. Lonely for her own daughter “away at school in Switzerland,” Mrs. Considine gives Alison everything she wants: clothes, status, admiration. But even the besotted Alison realizes something is odd when Mrs. Considine begins to call her “Camilla,” her own daughter’s name. “I wouldn’t even tell your family about the game we play. It’s just a whim of mine.” Related in a cool, sinister tone, this novel has an irresistible combination of dream indulgence and unsettling nightmare, perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the scene where Alison/Camilla “savours” her own memorial service, kindly arranged by Mrs. Considine after Alison has supposedly drowned in the lake. While it is a contemporary realistic story, old fairy tale motifs abound: Mrs. Considine is a scary, wicked witch, but complicated in her ambivalence toward the daughter she re-creates; Alison is a transformed princess who finds her castle becoming a prison. This is the kind of instantly appealing novel you won’t want to booktalk without multiple copies on hand. RS

R Gr. 4-6. Meticulously lined and handsomely shaded pencil drawings illustrate a text that characterizes "deep sleepers" (bears are the best-known example), "in-between hibernators" (skunks, raccoons, etc.), and "daily dormants" such as hummingbirds and pygmy mice. The descriptions are very clear—a chipmunk's burrow sounds downright inviting—and the seasonal sleeping patterns of bats, birds, cold-blooded sleepers (lungfish, snakes, frogs), as well as animals' dream lives, comprise information not always easy to come by. The book is indexed and well-designed with a roomy format. BH

C.U. Nature study


R Gr. 7-12. Describing the accomplishments as well as problems of women in the world's most impoverished countries, this is also a useful introduction to women's lives in non-western cultures. Chapters focus on childhood and adolescence, marriage and motherhood, education, health care, and work, including agrarian, industrial, professional and political contributions. A wide spectrum of situations is shown, with the author's synthesis of research personalized by profiles of successful individual women. A smooth blend of sociology, anthropology and economics filtered through a commonsensical feminism. RS

D.V. International understanding


R Gr. 5-8. Sent to stay at his grandparents' farm for a year while his mother works in Mexico, Ance, a twelve-year-old city kid, begins to question the circumstances of his father's death five years before. His dad had disappeared while on a walk in the wilderness near the farm, and while Ance's mother is sure he was killed in an accident, both grandparents seem to believe their son Russell still lives: Grandfather believes Russell ran away; Grandmother insists he has amnesia and will return. "I read about that happening to this man just the other day in one of my magazines." The novel isn't a mystery so much as it is an exploration of the family's attempts to come to terms with the absence of a man they loved. Grandfather, bitter and afraid, keeps himself aloof from Ance; Grandmother, longing for Russell, calls him Rusty; and Ance wanders daily through the wilderness, befriending a coyote and learning what his father loved. The growing bond between Ance and his sad grandparents is convincingly developed through a skillful use of dialogue and plot, and the eventual revelation of his father's fate is cathartic without being melodramatic. Never a tear-jerker, this simple story comes honestly to its considerable emotional effects. RS

D.V. Animals, respect for; Grandparent-child relations

R  Gr. 1-3. This begins with the death of an old Plains Indian woman whose spirit climbs away from her family, up a high ridge into the beautiful land and outstretched arms of her dead ancestors. The rest of the book describes, with several poetic quotes, some Native American rituals of burial and beliefs in the Spirit World. Goble's illustrations—angular in a double spread of gray rocks, smoothly surfaced in a skyscape of flying vultures—make a dignified context for a moving, direct discussion of death. Goble has managed to make personal what might have been anthropological. There is a sense of grieving that may affect readers too much for group sharing; although the book could serve as a discussion title for study of Indian life, children should be offered the chance to experience it privately. BH

D.V. Death, adjustment to


R  Gr. K-2. Soft colors, amusing details, and plenty of action make Susan Varley's line and wash pictures as entertaining as they are perfectly tailored to the text. Richard Graham's story, published originally in England and comprehensible to a read-aloud audience anywhere, is a gentle spoof of the dethroned child. Jack, who has a very nice older brother, is more than annoyed when the monster—a baby brother—is added to the family. Jack's capitulation and acceptance of the "monster" is predictable, but the consistency with which Jack's viewpoint is maintained; the light, brisk writing style; and the fusing of text and illustration make this a pleasant variant of the often-told story of finding out that the new baby is fun. ZS

D.V. Baby, adjustment to; Jealousy, overcoming


R  Gr. 6-8. The time is 1945, the setting is Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Thirteen-year-old Mattie and her family have just moved to the community because her father is participating in the top-secret work that led to the first atomic bomb. Mattie is not happy when her cousin Virgil, twelve, comes to stay with them although she first tolerates and later becomes fond of him. Their relationship, and the rejection of Virgil by his parents that has won Mattie's sympathy, are the armature for the story's broadening, but—as the title indicates—the time and setting are of major importance. Although the pace of the book is uneven, the author gives a good picture of the period and of the atmosphere of the sealed community in which she herself spent her childhood. ZS

D.V. Family relations
Ad Gr. 7-10. Pages filled with very small print may daunt some readers who enjoy mysteries; the fact that this English story, set in 1885, is written with some of the ornateness and circumlocution that are typical of the literary style of that period may be a further limiting factor. Jessie, a thirteen-year-old slavey who has been working for the dour, miserly Mr. Dobson (twelve hours a day) is jailed; she is accused of having murdered her master, who was so stingy that the townsfolk called him "Throttlepenny." There are also two adult suspects, hints galore, Dickensian drama, more than a soupçon of sentimentality, and never any doubt that little Jessie is innocent or that she and her beloved John will be reunited. Just a bit too turgid in style and too deliberate in pace to have the suspense and momentum a mystery needs, this is interesting as a pseudo-period piece, although it may be of more interest to adult than to adolescent readers. ZS

R 4-7 yrs. Any parent who has tried to cling to sleep despite the prattling of a small child, and any small child who has lingered at a parental bedside and prattled, should recognize the wry humor of this picture book. Line and wash illustrations in pastel tones are also amusing, especially in the depiction of Dad's face as he resolutely keeps his eyes closed while his daughter chats. Sample: "Dad... Are you asleep, Dad?... I can tell you what time it is if you want me to... Wake up, Dad... Can we go to the zoo today, Dad? I can nearly play a tune on it," both Dad and Mum sit bolt upright and shriek "NO!" Soon all three are snuggled together. Mission accomplished. ZS

D.V. Father-child relations; Everyday life concepts

Ad Gr. 7-9. A useful, if flawed, survey of the work of bacteriologists, physicians, biologists, and immunologists who have contributed to the body of knowledge and to the advances in research, diagnosis, and therapy that continue today. Gutnik has tried valiantly to cover science history; occasionally he is repetitive ("Gymnasium" is more than once defined as a secondary school) and occasionally obscure (what is meant by referring to Paul Ehrlich as "historically brilliant" or Elie Metchnikoff as "the Russian eccentric")?). The text is sprinkled with odd sequences: one chapter ends, for instance, with "He died on August 20, 1915," speaking of Ehrlich, and the next chapter starts, on the facing page, with "With the twentieth century just ten years away . . . ." Still, there is a great deal of information in the book, and the provision of a glossary, a chronology of major contributions, and an index add to its usefulness. ZS

R Gr. 4-7. Haskins is almost as practiced a hand at biography as Earvin Johnson is at basketball, so Magic’s amiable personality and enviable skills get a smooth introduction. The first half of the book is the most interesting, since it covers the major portion of Johnson’s development. Gameplay comprises most of the second half, with an emphasis on Johnson’s value as a guard in the rivalry between the Lakers and the Celtics. Black-and-white action photos spice up the coverage, which reveals some of Johnson’s hard times as well as highlighting his success. No surprises here, but fans will appreciate the easy-to-read information, enjoy the book’s season recaps, and, like Magic, pass it to their buddies. BH

C.U. Physical education


R Gr. K-3. Meant to be used by adults working with or caring for young children, this has large type, black-and-white illustrations, and—as explained in a prefatory note—additional information, in smaller type that is meant to give more detailed or complicated facts to older children or to adults. Included in the text are profiles of two children who have AIDS. This is a book designed to give facts and to evoke sympathy; it achieves both goals, and it manages to reassure children about the danger of contracting the virus while pointing out the ways in which AIDS may be contracted. Although featuring two kinds of type for two audiences seems only to make the book less appealing to either, it’s nonetheless useful, as is the appended material that precedes the index. A page listing health care precautions also includes organizations that will provide further information, a page headed “What we can do about AIDS,” a list of resources, and a bibliography, all of which are addressed to adults. ZS

C.U. Health and hygiene


NR 5-7 yrs. While it’s as easy to read as Hayward’s version of *Noah’s Ark* (BCCB 6/87), this adaptation of the bulrushes story suffers from both omission and addition. It does not mention, for example, that Moses was an Israelite, only stating that “His mother had to save him from the wicked Pharaoh.” Invented material includes the animals who comment upon the baby (“Was the baby safe? ‘Not yet!’ said the snakes that wiggled in the sand”) as he sails down the river, and Pharaoh’s allowing the baby to live “because he loved his daughter.” The pink skin and rosy cheeks of Moses and Pharaoh in the awkward watercolor illustrations add to the ahistoric aura. RS

C.U. Reading, beginning

Gr. 5-7. With a degree in geology and experience as Director of Publications at the American Geological Institute, Jackson shows a solid grasp of gemstone lore as well as mineralogy. Transitions are not always smooth; there's a discommodulating jump, for instance, between a citation of the curative powers supposedly associated with gems of various colors in the Middle Ages and the gems associated with the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. There are also a few vague definitions: “To be considered a gemstone, a material must be attractive enough to be used for personal adornment.” However, readers can get quite a bit of background and specific information through browsing or tracking down specific facts through the index. Maps and a glossary are helpful, as are the color photographs in a center gallery. Unfortunately, the black-and-white photos are sometimes useless; while the garnets and dark tourmaline crystals are clearly visible by shape and contrast with the rock in which they're imbedded, for example, the turquoise and peridot are unidentifiable by a novice. Nevertheless, the book is useful as an alternative source to encyclopedias and adult guides and for reference on birthstones and state gems; a list of books and periodicals for further reading is appended. BH

C.U. Geology


Gr. 4-8. Returning to the coastal village she wrote about twenty years ago in *Gussuk Boy* and *Dwellers of the Tundra*, Jenness found many changes in Scammon Bay: new houses, telephones, electricity, snowmobiles, an airstrip. Concentrating on the lives of the Rivers family, this photoessay explores how these changes have affected the traditional practices of the Eskimo community, such as seal hunting, now done with rifles instead of harpoons, from motorboats instead of kayaks. As Billy Rivers says, “I teach my boys the way I’ve been taught, the way my dad taught me. What [sic] I think that’s wrong, I try to do better than my dad. And when I make a mistake, I try to correct it to my boys, so they’ll do it better than I did.” More descriptive than analytical, the book includes details of hunting, fishing, trapping and skinning, schooling, family life, and recreation, which includes both women’s basketball and traditional dancing. The writing is generally clear although sometimes oddly constructed, and the many black-and-white photographs lack captions but are usually well-placed. While this may be a bit of an idealized portrait—the town seems to have no real problems to speak of—there is no easy sentimentality for the “old ways,” and the depiction of a community attempting to maintain customs and practices in the face of (and often with the aid of) rapid technological change is edifying. RS

D.V. Intercultural understanding

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Ad  Gr. 4-6. After her father's death, Emily and her mother move to the Wisconsin countryside, where Mother is running her childhood home as an inn. Emily, 12, is depicted as a selfish and lazy girl who is rude to the guests, not much nicer to her overworked mother, and very sorry for herself. She finds and cares for an injured Canada goose, eventually letting him fly away when he has recovered. Rather abruptly, at the end of a story in which, alas, the pieces of the picture never quite fit, Emily begins to understand her mother better, partly through finding and reading her mother's girlhood diary. The writing style is adequate, as is the characterization; what the story lacks is the impact that can come only when there is cohesion. ZS

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


Ad  Gr. 5-8. Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager's historic 25,012 mile non-stop flight around the world has inherent drama and appeal that will not be undermined by this just-serviceable account. In a plain, sometimes dull, style, Kaufmann explains how the Voyager was built, the aeronautic principles of its design, and technical and financial setbacks. A concluding account of the trip itself is brief but thorough. While budding pilots and plane designers will enjoy the technical details, there may be too much of this for readers more interested in the perilous adventure aspect of the flight and feat. The book design is uninspired, with a dreary cover, only a few black-and-white photographs, and some informative but textbookish diagrams. RS


Ad  Gr. 5-8. As H. M. Hoover does in *The Dawn Palace: The Story of Medea* (BCCB 6/88), Keaney builds his historical fiction on the transitional tensions between a goddess-cult of the Great Mother and a cruel god imposed by a war-like, patriarchal dynasty. The setting is King Minos' court on Crete, and the protagonist is the princess Ariadne, who develops from a victim to an independent woman responsible for helping Daedalus, Icarus, Theseus, and the High Priestess escape from Minotaurian tyranny. The feminist impatience with traditional heroism makes a modern foil for conventional versions of mythology, and Ariadne herself is a sympathetic character. There's too much plot for such a brief book, however, particularly with Keaney's overambitious addition of Daedalus and Icarus as visitors from a future time. Ultimately, the reader feels a kind of thematic manipulation at work, but the action will hold students who want to explore ancient history from present perspectives. BH

C.U. History—Ancient
R Gr. 3-5. True to its title, this is full of ghastlies (“With his hand-cranked freezer Weems/ Makes the ghastliest ice creams:/ Chocolate toothpaste, cherry chunk/ [Chock full of pits], vanilla skunk . . . “); and goops (“While filling cones, Disgustus Goop/J Leaned down so deep to take a scoop/ He fell headfirst with dreadful shriek/ Into the flavor of the week”); and just plain groaners (on dinosaurs—“if they’d just laid a fresher grade/ they wouldn’t be eggs-stinked”). The sixty-two poems include limericks, extravagantly stretched rhymes, and nonsensical verses, most of them inventively wacky. Many adults will not be able to read them all the way through without feeling verbally bounced, but children will enjoy the carnival cadence. BH C.U. Reading aloud

Ad Gr. 4-6. Beverly Sills has accomplished a great deal, both as a singer and as a promoter and popularizer of opera in the United States. Kerby gives these achievements their due but also includes an excessive number of cute, and pretty much beside the point, anecdotes. “In her wildest dreams, Beverly never expected a wink, a matchbook, and a smoky fireplace would lead her to marriage. But in a way, that’s what happened.” The inclusion of such material may be an attempt to humanize the diva, but too often it seems unintentionally to belittle its subject. That the author attempts to explain the joys of opera to a young audience is laudable, but definitions are sometimes unclear or inaccurate: “[coloratura singers] often trill, or rapidly sing two notes over and over again,” “an operetta is an opera which is sung in English and is often funny.” On the other hand, it seems unnecessary to gloss “Italian”: “[Italian is the language people speak in Italy].” But Sills’ musical (as opposed to marketing) contributions have often been slighted, and Kerby must be credited for remedying that balance. Perhaps readers will take the author’s suggestion to listen to Sills sing. RS C.U. Music

Ad Gr. 2-5. Like the first two volumes in this series (Ballet and Horses and Ponies, reviewed last month), these brief books treat popular topics at an easy-to-read level. However, they also suffer from a somewhat disjointed organization, especially Jet Airliners, which tries to deal with everything from descriptions of turbofan action to air-traffic control (and includes an invitation for readers to write their observations in the book). Out in Space has more logical transitions and better focused information on rocket power, space travel, satellites, and shuttle missions. Both books have copious color drawings and diagrams, along with glossaries, indexes, and suggestions for projects. BH
These are really "play pretend" more than informational books. Although they are accompanied by color photographs, each projects a kind of cleaned-up fantasy version of what it's like to be a farmer or fire fighter. In *Farmer*, a boy describes his parents' work day on a potato farm, including an introduction to the brooder ("Peep, peep, baby chicks. I see you"), the turkeys ("Gobble, gobble, gobble!") and the geese ("The gander sticks out his neck and hisses at me. Go away, gander. He goes away"). Nathan rides in Daddy's air-conditioned tractor cab and ends the day with dinner ("Baked potatoes! Grandma and Grandpa come over for dessert") and with Daddy reading aloud. In *Fire Fighter*, Holly talks about her father's work as a volunteer fire fighter, shows off his equipment, tries on his uniform, and demonstrates procedures for getting out of a burning house. This is a more straightforward, cohesive text than *Farmer*; the photographs in both books are clear and well-reproduced. Other titles have explored both vocations better, but preschoolers will enjoy browsing through the pictures here, especially in conjunction with day care or nursery school discussions of family occupations. BH

D.V. Occupational orientation

Like Lattimore's *The Flame of Peace* (BCCB 1/88), this is a story put together from several versions and translations. It is based on the *Popol Vuh*, a Mayan book hidden from the Spaniards and found 150 years later by Padre Ximénez. The first Creator God, Hunab Ku, tires of the noisy animals he has made and tells the Moon Goddess and Lizard House, who argue constantly about which god is greatest, to help him form a creature that will worship properly. Both fail, but the quiet Maize God, who likes the earth because "that is where his magic works its wonders," manages to demonstrate the potential of two human spirits. This is a complex myth which, with formal watercolor paintings depicting Mayan art motifs in stone gray and muted earth colors, will generate discussion among students of folklore and Central American history. The book design is occasionally obtrusive; elaborate designs, while handsomely drawn, distract from the full page illustrations in cases where the color and shapes have not been balanced. A brief author's note gives background on the text, and endpapers depict Mayan symbols. BH

C.U. Mexico (unit)


R 5-7 yrs. A variant of the friendly dragon theme, this is a beautifully written story of two children who discover that the dragon terrifying their town with screams of "RRRAAAH HHX! RRRAAAHHHX!" is really...
hungry for rocks. Since everyone hides from the fire and brimstone in Rocky Pond, it is only natural that Min (who floats because of her plumpness) and Podo (who sinks because of his shortness) act on their intuition by throwing stones from the pond into the air. The dragon snaps them up mid-air, the townspeople follow the children's lead and provide plenty of rocks. The dragon "got heavier, and cooler, and rockier, until it did not move at all. . . . All its fire and hunger had been filled up, and it was only stone." The paintings, which are thickly textured and filled with brashly colored, rounded shapes, are dramatic without overshadowing Le Guin's carefully crafted words. The double-page dragon is fiery, and the last spread, with the two children watching a sunrise from a dragon-shaped hill, makes an organic accompaniment for their closing song: "Dragon brightness/ feeds the earth./ Mother darkness/ gave us birth./ Sun is fire,/ Earth is stone./ Sing together/ at the dawn!" BH

D.V. Fear, overcoming


Ad Gr. 4-6. Beginning with a two-page introduction on the fallacy of considering Columbus the discoverer of the New World, Leon outlines the Ice Age and the migration of Asian tribes across the Bering Strait. He also describes archeological evidence for the North American settlement by these peoples before he goes on to discuss exploratory voyages by the Irish and Vikings to North America and, possibly, by Africans, Arabs, and Egyptians to South and Central America. The treatment is brief and impersonal, but the writing is smooth, and Leon is careful to distinguish between legend and documented fact. This is a useful curriculum supplement, with black-and-white photographs, a bibliography for further reading, and an index. BH


Ad Gr. 3-5. While the combination of mystery and magic ensures that this easy chapter book will find readers, Kate and Max's second performance lacks the freshness of *The Case of the Gobbling Squash* (BCCB 11/88). Kate is desperately seeking a Mother's Day present that will take Mom's mind off previous well-intentioned but misbegotten gifts, so she and Max decide to put on a Mother's Day magic show. This isn't as funny as the first book and contrivance reigns, but kids will enjoy the magic tricks (explained in the back of the book) and the bumpy ("Maybe we can do a trick that makes my family disappear—forever") but happy relationship between Kate and her mom. RS


R 5-8 yrs. Poets of the past (Lear, Rossetti, Stevenson) and even more contemporary writers of children's poetry are represented in a carefully chosen mini-anthology for the read-aloud audience. Poems are loosely linked by subject: a group of poems about wind and weather, or a sequence of insect
poems. Soft, scribbly black and white illustrations, most of which are humorous, fit nicely into the uncrowded pages. The selections vary in length and mood and form, but all are appropriate for the intended audience. ZS

C.U. Reading aloud


Gr. 4-6. "What a day to look forward to tomorrow!" says a small book ghost, epitomizing the spirit of this happy potpourri. The same ghost later gets mixed up with a cake and leaps out to scare the assembled family. "Perhaps it's a sort of volcano cake," the father suggests. "It tastes haunted!" the children maintain. In Mahy's nonsensical world, a cat spouts verse after eating a poetic mouse. A couple who can't settle on a pet ("But, Mr. Delmonico, my love, horses don't have eight legs. You're thinking of spiders") get a big surprise. A word witch adds curses to her grocery list, but a benevolent monster belies his appearance ("He had a lot of teeth, this monster, many of them green and all of them sharp"). Interspersed between the short stories are nonsense verses: "My sister's remarkably light,/ She can float to a fabulous height./ It's a troublesome thing,/ But we tie her with string,/ And we use her instead of a kite." Quentin Blake's offhand pen sketches are quite batty enough to complement this light and lively concoction. BH

C.U. Reading aloud


Gr. 2-4. Mickey and her twin sister Kate are again instrumental in solving a holiday mystery; this time the setting is the zoo where one of their fourth-grade classmates is having a birthday party. When it is discovered that the presents are missing and the birthday cake destroyed, police are called in. The combination of the puzzle, the zoo setting, and the perennial allure of twins and birthdays should appeal to readers; however, the nicely paced story is more distinctive for being easy to read than for being well-written, and the fact that the deductions of the twins so often outstrip those of the police is less than credible. Pen-and-ink drawings are adequately placed but add little to the story. ZS


Gr. 2-4. A series that has featured folk tales from India, China, the Amazon, Borneo, Africa, Aboriginal Australia, Sri Lanka, and American Indian cultures now focuses on a tale related to the venerable (but here unmentioned) Scottish ballad Child Rowland. Originally, Merlin directs the rescue of Arthur's daughter from fairyland. Arthur is not mentioned, but Childe Roland is merely introduced as "the young prince" playing with his sister Burd Ellen. When their golden ball flies out of the churchyard, Burd Ellen runs after it and never returns. After seeking Merlin's advice, both her older brothers set

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out after her, but they too disappear. It is the youngest son Childe Roland who obeys Merlin’s instructions to cut off the heads of all he meets in Elfland, to eat nothing while he is there (shades of Hades), and to overcome the king of the Dark Tower. An adventure with ancient motifs, this is smoothly written, though it could have used some note about the context and source of the tale. The watercolor illustrations are openly imagined and well composed, with good drafting and subtle color blends. Perhaps a bit puzzling for preschool picture book listeners (the three citizens of Elfland whom Childe Roland decapitates seem such innocent victims), this would be valuable for children studying hero journeys in folklore. BH

D.V. Courage

Marzollo, Jean. *Getting Your Period: A Book About Menstruation*; illus. by Kent Williams. Dial, 1989. Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-0355-4; Paper ed. ISBN 0-8037-0356-2. 99p. Trade ed. $13.95; Paper ed. $6.95. R Gr. 5-9. Easy to read and understand, this recognizes the fact that a normal biological function signifies a complex rite of passage. In a direct, unpatronizing tone, Marzolo combines information on menstruation with quotations that show a reassuring range of reactions from girls who tell about their own concerns and experiences. Chapters are informally arranged around getting a period for the first time, changes during puberty, the function and stages of the menstrual cycle, taking care of yourself during your period, a question-and-answer section, other people and how they see you. Common physical and emotional symptoms are the emphasis here, but there are brief factual references to PMS, toxic shock syndrome, and sexually transmitted diseases (including AIDS). Introduced by an OB-GYN and illustrated with clear black-and-white anatomical drawings and diagrams, Marzollo’s book should become a standard hand-out. BH

C.U. Health and hygiene; Physiology

Matsuoka, Kyoko. *There’s a Hippo in My Bath!*; illus. by Akiko Hayashi. Doubleday, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-385-26189-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-26188-8. 40p. Library ed. $12.95; Trade ed. $12.95. R 3-6 yrs. A little boy’s bath with Duckie turns out to be more fun than either of them anticipated when the bathroom turns into a menagerie. Duckie takes a dive and discovers a turtle on the bottom; the turtle points out two penguins over in the corner; what seems to be a large rock turns out to be a bubble-blowing seal. . . . The story has a cause-and-effect pattern that lends propulsion to an agreeable ending—all the animals disappear under water when Mother comes in with a nice warm towel. The yellow-washed illustrations glow with bathtub steam, the silky skins of the little boy and his improbable sauna mates have a just-scrubbed shine. A friendly fantasy, and mother doesn’t even scold about water on the floor. RS

D.V. Imaginative powers

5-8 yrs. This fairy tale is probably best known from the Grimm's version, which Mayer has embellished with some romantic changes. The seasoned sailor has become a golden-haired gardener named Peter, and his cloak of invisibility a flower. The old woman who advises him on the road has become a queenly apparition. He prefers the youngest princess, called Elise, rather than the eldest and risks enchantment rather than betray her, where the Grimm hero wins his reward by revealing the princesses' secret to the king. The princes whose heads were cut off in Grimm are here merely held captive in the underground world until Peter's love for Elise releases them. If Mayer's elaboration is elegant, Craft's art is almost overwhelming. While each border, illuminated letter, panel, and full-page illustration is shimmering, the total effect is one of baroque decoration. Faces are unfailingly pretty, scenes idyllic, and designs highly patterned. What's missing here are the rough edges that heighten beauty by their very contrast. Although the bookmaking is lavish and the detail entrancing, the tone sometimes tips the balance from sophisticated to flowery.

BH


5-7 yrs. This lively picture book will serve more as a game for children who are learning to read and spell than for preschoolers working on the alphabet. Each page is dominated by an animal whose name begins with the same letter as the room in which he or she appears. Alligator is in the attic, bear is in the bakery, cat is at the computer, dog is at the daycare center, etc., all observed by a mole clicking photos with his candid camera. In every full-page spread is an attractive assortment of things that begin with the same letter, and children can try to find them all, though they're not listed at the end. The illustrator has gone out of her way to plant some tricky objects: in kangaroo's kitchen, for instance, a bottle of catsup, a head of cabbage, and a bunch of carrots are displayed prominently beside some keys and a kettle. Other tough guesses on the same page include a bowl of what appears to be either kidney beans or cashew nuts. The page design allows enough white framing around the illustrations to keep them from appearing cluttered, and the art itself is cleverly drafted and freshly colored.

BH


Gr. K-2. "Did you ever wonder how a tadpole turns into a frog?" this begins, but the answer a few pages later is confusing. "Frogs swim to the surface [where have they been?] and mate. Wobbly clusters of frog eggs drift to the pond's banks where they hatch into thousands of tadpoles." Well, yes, this all happens, but not at once, which is the impression given by both
text and illustration. This is a cleanly designed and very pretty book, with
delicate watercolors of the pond and its flora, fauna and weather, all accurately if
somehow romantically depicted. But like the picture of the frog cycle, some of
the paintings include too much, are underexplained in the text (what are those
bubbles on the frogs' ears?) or contradict the text (for example, a "wading" heron
who is pictured standing on a tree stump). Perhaps it is perverse to be so literal
about what is meant to be an evocative portrait of life at a pond, but nagging
questions and abrupt transitions tend to break the spell. RS

C.U. Nature study

Miller, Jane. Farm Noises; written and illus. with photographs by Jane Miller.

R 6-18 mos. Like Miller's Farm Counting Book (BCCB 10/83),
this is a clear photographic concept book that does exactly what it sets out to do.
Each page features an animal in living color and characteristic pose, with a few
words to indicate the sounds they make. "Roosters crow: cock-a-doodle-do . . .
Hens cluck. Chicks cheep, etc." Parents or child care workers can dramatize the
noises as much as they like, make a game out of identifying the animals,
introduce a discussion of farm life ("tractors go brum-brum"), or storytell a
nature walk ("streams gurgle"). The book could even serve beginning readers
who need more picture than print. Well designed, simple, and satisfying. BH

48p. (Step into Reading). Library ed. $6.99; Paper ed. $2.95.

R K-3. Illustrated with appropriately scaled dramatic portraits
that dive across double-page spreads, this easy-reader treatment of a popular
subject leaps with appeal. Milton understands what kids like about whales
("some whales are as big as small islands") and packs a considerable amount of
information into the constraints of the format, covering the various kinds of
whales and their birth, feeding, migration, and communication. The book closes
with a brief section on historical and environmental concerns, and invites readers
to try whale-watching. "Whales seem to like watching people, too." RS
C.U. Reading, beginning

Montgomery, Michael. 'Night, America; written and illus. by Michael
$11.95.

R 2-4 yrs. Daddies, especially, might appreciate this offbeat
bedtime book that bids goodnight to various American institutions such as
prairies, cowboys, astronauts, the Chicago Cubs, and the President ("'Night, Mr.
President"). These brief blessings accompany paintings—dramatic in a
picturesque kind of way—of the monuments at rest: Mr. President with his toy
soldiers left on the floor; the Cubs, whose bats and mitts get tiny beds of their
own. The last picture shows a little boy fast asleep, surrounded by toys that
recall the previous paintings. Saved from sentimentality by its barely ironic
offhandedness ("'Night, Redwoods"), and saved from yuppie slickness by its warmth, this makes the Big and Important seem mighty cozy. RS


R Gr. 6-8. Fourteen, Molly is baffled by the fact that her father will tell her almost nothing about her mother's death ten years before. After seeing a letter addressed to Dad and prying out a few clues from an elderly relative, Molly sees some pictures and makes a contact in the California town where her mother had been killed in a road accident. With the help of her stepmother, Blair, Molly goes west to investigate the accident and to find evidence that Mom was tracing her ancestors and looking for a buried gold nugget from Gold Rush days. The ancestors (characters in an earlier Murrow book, *West against the Wind*) having given clear directions in old letters, Molly and Blair, with the help of a newly-acquired boyfriend, find the buried treasure. Although some of the clues, solutions, and other plot details are a bit too convenient, the sum of the parts is believable, and the combination of suspense, buried treasure, good pace, and satisfactory working-out of small misunderstandings among the characters make a strong, readable story. ZS

D.V. Stepparent-child relations


R Gr. 5-8. Fans of *The Agony of Alice* will stand in line for this sequel about Alice's dating Patrick during the summer before they start junior high school. The dynamics between Alice and her two best girlfriends, Alice's yearning for her dead mother to help with the ordinary and extraordinary problems of growing up, and her invidualistic approach to dating are smoothly blended into a funny, sometimes poignant narrative. Some questions are quickly resolved ("How was I supposed to eat and hold a rose at the same time?"). Others, such as working out a relationship with boys, take longer ("It was comforting in a way to know that I didn't have to squeeze it all into a single summer or all into seventh grade or even do it all in high school"). Naylor has as natural a voice for preadolescent romance from the girl's perspective as Betsy Byars has from the boy's in *Bingo Brown and the Language of Love*, reviewed above. The two make perfect companions for booktalking. BH

D.V. Boy-girl relations


R Gr. 4-6. Retelling Greek myths for children is an ambitious undertaking that puts the author in competition with the likes of Padraic Colum, Olivia Coolidge, and Leon Garfield. This is a lavish edition with twelve stories, almost all of which derive from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Phaeton and Helios, Bacchus and King Midas, Ceyx and Alcyone, Minerva and Arachne, Apollo and Daphne, Echo and Narcissus, Ceres and Proserpine, Callisto and Arcus, Orpheus and Eurydice, Atalanta and Hippomenes, Cupid and Psyche, and Baucis and
Philemon. Although the adaptation does not have the stylistic distinction of some of its predecessors, Osborne’s mix of narrative and dialogue makes for an informal tone that will disarm readers unfamiliar with the tales. The bookmaking is thoughtful, with striking, full-page paintings introducing the stories and pen sketches concluding them. A guide to “Gods, Goddesses and Mortals,” a glossary of “Modern Words with Greek Origins,” a note on “Who Wrote the Greek Myths,” a brief bibliography, and an index add to the attractive format. BH
C.U. Storytelling

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. Where the Wild Horses Roam; illus. with photographs by William Muñoz. Clarion, 1989. ISBN 0-89919-507-5. 72p. $15.95. R Gr. 5-7. While there is adequate background here on the characteristics of wild horses and their herd structure, the real emphasis is on protecting them without over-grazing the environment in which they reproduce so prolifically. Patent is objective in presenting arguments by ranchers, who say the horses threaten their livestock, and organizations (listed, with addresses, at the end of the book) that work against destruction of the animals. The handsome color photographs, including stunning western landscapes, will hook horse lovers, and the indexed text provides students with smoothly written information for reports. BH

Peet, Bill. Bill Peet: An Autobiography; written and illus. by Bill Peet. Houghton, 1989. ISBN 0-395-50932-7. 190p. $16.95. R Gr. 3-6. At a time when it seems that too many illustrators don’t draw very well, it’s refreshing to have this album full of expert cartooning. Bill Peet’s reminiscences of his childhood and career as an artist are accompanied by dozens of drawings, scenes both from his work and from his life. The textual tone is observant rather than nostalgic, and Peet is candid about his difficult childhood with a neglectful father, and about the ups and downs of his tenure at the Disney studios and relationship with the autocratic Walt. While almost all of the drawings are new with this book, Peet recreates many of his sketches for 101 Dalmatians, The Sword in the Stone, and The Jungle Book, revealing his mastery of humorous movement, an animated quality that served him well in his second career as an illustrator. The writing here isn’t as strong as the pictures and the book is too long, but Peet’s many fans will enjoy this generous self-assessment. RS

Plantos, Ted. Heather Hits Her First Home Run; illus. by Heather Collins. Black Moss/Firefly, 1989. ISBN 0-88753-185-7. 22p. $4.95. Ad Gr. K-2. It is Heather’s first year of playing Tee-ball, and she yearns to get a hit, especially because there are two out, with the bases filled, when she comes to bat. Angry at the jeering calls after several strikes, Heather takes a mighty whack. She’s out at home plate, but she does bring in three runs; although the read-aloud audience may wonder why the “home run” of the title, the story ends with the coach saying, “As far as I’m concerned, it was a
"Home run!" Slight, but probably a satisfaction to beginning baseball players of either sex, this is adequately written and is illustrated with bright line-and-crayon drawings that are somewhat like the work of Paul Galdone. Staple binding. ZS


R Gr. 6-8. "Sassy Jo" was what her mother, Joleen, had called her when Sara Jo was a baby. An alcoholic, Joleen had left when Sara Jo was five; now, some years after her father's death, Sara Jo is leaving the aunt who has taken care of her and is spending the summer with Joleen (who no longer drinks) and Joleen's second husband and their two-year-old, Lily. This is a rite-of-passage book as Sara Jo, the narrator, has her first menstrual period, becomes interested in clothes, and falls sweetly in love. It is also a perspicacious exploration of the often painful development of a reciprocated affection between mother and daughter as Sara Jo works through years of anger and resentment at Joleen, only gradually admitting to the latter and to herself how much she wants her mother's love. The two facets of Sara Jo's summer are nicely balanced, lightened by some humor in the relationship between Sara Jo and the younger girl who lives next door, and given conviction both by the immediacy of the narrator's point of view, and by the gradual pace of the changes in an emotionally complex situation. ZS

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


R 4-6 yrs. As every boy, girl, man, and woman knows, clothing with no pockets can be a grim fate when there are so many tempting tidbits to pick up. Moreover we take pockets for granted and very often don't value them till feeling around for them and finding them not there. That's what happens to Peter when his mother fits him with new pants just in time for a walk with Uncle Nick. Fortunately, Uncle Nick has pockets aplenty for the feather, marble, ribbons, nickel, button, and ball that Peter collects, and Peter's mother has just the solution—she sews bright new patchwork pockets up and down the legs of his new pants. "No pockets? Who ever heard of such a thing!" Parker's sturdy, rounded shapes and colored-pencil shading conserve the simplicity of Rice's story, which characteristically—and successfully—portrays the world from a young child's viewpoint. BH

D.V. Ingenuity


M Gr. 1-3. Like Eloise, Olivia Sharp has it all. A penthouse apartment, three telephones, a pet owl, a chauffeur and limo, and her folks are in Paris. But she's bored and lonely, and so sets out on a career as an ace problem-solver, starting out with depressed Duncan, who's lost his best friend Desiree.
Beginning readers may enjoy the contrived (and superfluous) extravagance, and the solution to the problem has a wry twist, but the wisecracking humor tries too hard, and much of the detail (like the owl) is irrelevant. While pen sketches have an appropriately satiric edge, the picture book size and format will discourage those old enough to get the jokes. RS


R Gr. 7-10. "Dissident" is a fancy name for how 15-year-old Derek sees himself—left out, contrary, "obnoxious"—but it's an appropriate name, given his lonely life as the son of the American ambassador in Moscow. Derek went to Moscow after his father was killed in a car accident, and he is convinced (rightly) that his mother, who didn't even come to her ex-husband's funeral, doesn't really want him around. The novel explores serious family concerns via an almost flip tone that, rather than trivializing, enhances the feeling of desperation that lies just beneath Derek's outrageous rebellions, like playing a little one-on-one with a statue of Lenin in a Soviet park. Derek's dissidence gets a fierce test when he becomes involved with Anna, the daughter of a real Soviet dissident who has been exiled to Romania. Anna wants to join her father, and Derek believes he is the one to help her. Both emotional and narrative tension are well-maintained throughout the story, and although the climax tips over into contrived melodrama, it is resolved by a nicely ironic fillip delivered by the General Secretary himself. While readers won't feel they know Anna well enough to understand Derek's passion for her, and his sister (a brat) and mother (Iron Lady) are two-dimensional, Derek's own pain and longing for his father are powerfully realized. As he also demonstrated in last year's The Shadow Club (BCCB 5/88), Shusterman is a strong storyteller and a significant new voice in YA fiction. RS

D.V. Parent-child relations


R 2-5 yrs. Like so many books for toddlers, this spiral-bound volume with laminated pages poses creative questions for the library processing department; for example, where to put the date due slip. However, those questions are well worth answering for this strikingly simple edition of the Duke of York, whose men were down when they were down, up when they were up, "and when they were only half-way up, they were neither up nor down." Sowden illustrates the brief rhyme with bright, imaginatively patterned photographs of wooden soldiers he made for his own children. While all the soldiers are constructed in the same vaguely clothespin-like shape, each one is decorated with ersatz military regalia of stars, stripes, flags, cigar rings and the occasional moustache. The Duke himself is graced with a monocle. Young children will enjoy finding the differences, and those with more patience than this reviewer will also enjoy spying out those instances where the photographer has placed the same soldier twice in the same picture. Get a couple of bags of wooden
Clothespins, some shiny paint, and various glueable odd bits and you'll be in business.


Ad Gr. 7-12. Certainly one of the most complex and mysterious subjects in American literature, Emily Dickinson is a challenging choice for any biographer. There's evidence of research here, but it has not been digested to the point of a consistently organized presentation. This is especially evident in transitions from one paragraph to the next: a leap, for instance, from Emily's winning a bread-baking prize at a cattle show to her becoming a charter subscriber to the *Atlantic Monthly*, from her romantic interest in Charles Wadsworth to her father's scorn for Abraham Lincoln, from a discussion of bustles to the death of Helen Fiske Hunt's son Warren. To her credit, Thayer develops the theme of tension between a woman's traditional role and Dickinson's genius, though most of the discussion of her poetry is confined to quotations in the last chapter. What students will find here is a substantial amount of information, indexed if slightly disorganized, along with black-and-white photographs of Dickinson's family and contemporaries. There's also a bibliography of adult books for further reading. BH

C.U. Literature—poetry


R Gr. 6-9. Loyal to the elected Mexican government of Lerdo de Tejada, Judge Cayetano Treviño was sent into exile in Baja California when Lerdo was deposed by a military coup. The judge, with his daughter and son (the "El Güero" of the title, who was the author's father-in-law) and their wife and aunt, work to build a home in the then-desolate outpost of Ensenada. The judge also tries to establish a system of justice, but is foiled by the military commander, who eventually puts Treviño in jail. It is the son who, with the help of two friends, reaches the commandante of Baja California after a dangerous trek, a mission that results in his father's release and in the arrest of the power-hungry, evil Captain Alanis. The story, based in part on fact, is capably told and gives a good picture of the rough frontier of the late nineteenth century, and of the relations between missionary fathers and some of the Native American tribes of the lower peninsula. Family figures are seen kindly, but not to excess. ZS

C.U. History—Mexico; Social studies
D.V. Courage


Ad Gr. 4-6. Can Eddie and Marie save their mother and father? Parents Norton and Marigold are a pair of argumentative, hapless inventors, and
the fights don't stop when they manage, via their Proton Enlarger, to shrink themselves to the size of two-and-a-half inches tall. Most kids love to see parents put into precarious positions via their own stupidity, and the silly but forced story should provoke some easy laughs. With an appealing-if-perennial premise and attractive paperback format, this could be fun to use around science fair time. RS


NR  Gr. 2-3. Detailed, textured pictures of animals, overwhelmed by busy backgrounds and a crowded page design, illustrate a series of jingly rhymes that are seldom informative, possibly misleading in some cases, and almost always too cute. Examples: "The elephant/ is huge and wise/ With lots of secrets/ in its eyes," or "This dog has eyes/ that seem to say/ 'Come on! Hurry up!/ I want to play.'" ZS


NR  Gr. K-2. No doubt about it, zero is a tricky number, and a fascinating one for the younger children for whom this book seems to be intended. Unfortunately, the book is both over-ambitious and underexplained. Beginning with the concept that zero can mean "NONE AT ALL," the idea of zero meaning "SOMETHING," as for example, its place in the numbers twenty or one hundred, is then introduced but not explained beyond the statement that "these zeros mean something." Then comes estimation and round numbers, but the assertion that "numbers that end in zero are often called round numbers" is backwards: round numbers usually end in zero. The distinction between the letter O and zero is a good one; the paper odometer project is fun but pointless, given the lack of explanation of zero as a placeholder; the sequence on other names for zero begins reasonably but becomes ludicrous: "In tennis, LOVE is another name for ZERO. LOVE sounds like the French word L'OEUF, pronounced LUF. It means THE EGG. A zero looks like an egg." Zero gravity, arithmetical operations, tic-tac-toe, and un-American temperature-taking ("Water turns to ice when the temperature is just ZERO") are all touched upon; some riddles are included. A smattering of concepts that doesn't add up to much. RS
C.U. Arithmetic; Counting
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