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* 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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Editorial

It seems slightly odd that in an era so conscious of literacy, high interest/low vocabulary ("hi-lo") trade books for teens have all but disappeared. There are books "recommended for reluctant readers," but there is quite an important distinction between "reluctant" and "poor" readers; to make the first a euphemism for the second would be folly indeed.

Collier/Macmillan has brought out a new series of old-fashioned hi-los. Called "Fast Fiction," these four (so far) rack-size paperbacks are brief, about ninety pages apiece, have print that is slightly but not embarassingly larger than usual, and are illustrated with black-and-white drawings.

The illustrations are unfortunate, both for their amateurish lack of distinction and for their very presence. Nothing makes a hi-lo look more like itself, and to be seen reading a "dummy" book is one more stigmatizing burden that poor readers can do without. The cover photographs are emblematic rather than illustrative, and won't give potential readers a clue as to what the stories are going to be about. Brief annotations on the back covers ("Jo thinks that finding her mother—her real mother—will solve all her problems. But her search isn't as easy as she thinks it will be—and what Jo finds isn't what she expected") are far more enticing.

The stories themselves are varied, having in common only short sentences and a sensible preference for action and conversation over description and introspection. Jo's Search by Paul Kropp is a generic adoption story, reminiscent of problem novels of the early 1970's. Jo wonders about her "real" mother; her adoptive parents don't want to talk about it; through a fortuitous and contrived series of circumstances Jo finds her mother, visits and likes her, and comes back to her "real" family. Everything happens too easily, but the book has a direct simplicity and inherent suspense that will keep poor readers interested.

"Eating dog food used to gross me out." Well it's a grabber, and its appearance on page two of The Last War by Martin Godfrey prepares readers for even more entertaining bits further on—attack dogs, cannibalistic rats, etc. The Last War is a post-nuclear survival story; Paul Kropp's Death Ride is an equally sensationalized (and heavily didactic) story about a boy who discovers that hanging out with the fast crowd doesn't pay and that drinking and driving don't mix. "Drinking, drugs, and death. I was the one who put them together. Three people were dead because of me." A worthy lesson, perhaps, but the book reads
like a drivers' ed. movie. With lurid plots and illustration, both books are the kind of hi-lo fiction that doesn't give poor readers enough credit. Action and conversation need not mean explosions and screaming.

In John Ibbitson's *The Wimp and the Jock*, wry humor, natural suspense and a self-deprecating hero combine for a welcome touchdown in hi-lo fiction. Randy isn't any good at sports ("I hadn't *meant* to kick the baseball") and he hates phys. ed. class: "They make you take your clothes off in front of people you may not even like." His problem is compounded by the fact that he's dating the coach's daughter. So when big jock Kurt sneeringly challenges Randy to stand on his own two feet, Randy announces ("I pulled back my shoulders—such as they were—and raised my head") that he's going to try out for the football team. It's a hard summer's work, but Randy makes it, only to spend most of his time warming the bench. "But at least it gives me an excuse to wear the uniform. I like the uniform. All that padding makes me look like I have *really* big shoulders."

_The Wimp and the Jock_ challenges stereotypes about the hi-lo genre and its intended audience. It shows that simple can be subtle, and that poor readers deserve books that don't patronize their sense of humor or reality. _The Last War_ and _Death Ride_ seem intent on making themselves as made-for-TV as possible, and such books beg an unspoken corollary question: Why bother to read?

_Roger Sutton, Associate Editor_

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**New Titles for Children and Young People**


*R Gr. 3-5.* Using as setting a Middle Eastern oasis much like the landscape in *Wolf's Favor* (BCCB 10/86) Testa illustrates twenty of Aesop's more familiar fables. His paintings of Wolf, Fox, Lion and the rest have a surreally formal quality, posing stylized animals and foliage in front of rounded, naturalistic backgrounds. Framed with abstract borders, each illustration has the quality of an iconographic portrait. A handsome presentation and a good selection of fables, but none of them conclude with the traditional moral appendages, despite the book jacket's claim to the contrary. _RS_


*R 5-8 yrs.* A welcome addition to the picture-book folklore collection, this will be a logical companion to present with the many available
versions of Noah and the Ark. After an introduction to the Andean people of Peru, the narration picks up the Quechuan story of a great flood, about which a llama dreams and warns his owner. The two of them, with the owner’s wife and child, take food to the top of the highest mountain, Willka Qutu, where they find animals of every kind already gathered. “Almost at once the sea began to overflow and they all remained stranded there. . . . Only the top of Willka Qutu remained above water. It is said that the water even reached the fox’s tail and turned it black. It is still that color today.” When the people and animals descend, they find an empty world that they must repopulate. A note explains the background of the story and some of the artist’s graphic motifs, which she attributes to “several pre-Inca cultures such as the Wari and the Moche.” The full-color wash drawings are vivid even if the human figures are somewhat stiffly drafted, and the rocky landscapes are expressive—literally, when parts of the terrain take on the aspect of faces. BH

C.U. Storytelling


R Gr. 4-7. If Fulvio Testa’s version, reviewed above, seems to ignore a basic ingredient of Aesop’s fables, Anno might be accused of not leaving well enough alone. Aesop’s fables here are a book within a book; they are accompanied by Mr. Fox’s running commentary as he reads the fables to son Freddy. Actually, Mr. Fox doesn’t seem to be doing much reading, preferring instead to make it up as he goes along, using the pictures in Freddy’s book to spark a few lessons of his own, inverting, extending, or ignoring the traditional precepts of the tales (which are printed in full). “The Dog and His Reflection” becomes a mathematical puzzle; “The North Wind and the Sun,” coupled with “The Shipwrecked Man and the Sea” is, Mr. Fox says, an insurance ad that illustrates the point that “every cloud has a silver lining”; “The Grasshopper and the Ants,” unlike people, “look after one another, you see.” While Mr. Fox’s recastings of the forty fables included often have an ironic twinge entirely in keeping with the spirit of the originals, the device becomes self-indulgent, relying on extraneous details in the pictures or dragging on in a shaggy-dog style that leads nowhere in particular: Mr. Fox sounds (entertainingly) like an armchair eccentric trying to keep himself as amused as his young listener. While the illustrations are gerrymandered to fit both Aesop’s and Mr. Fox’s fables, we can see why Mr. Fox finds so much inspiration therein—both schematic and dramatic, the ink-and-watercolor paintings are filled with details and devices, recurring motifs and characters (including, of course, one exceptionally wily fox) that bring an inventive progression to the fables. While Anno’s edition, like Testa’s, is no substitute for a solid picture book Aesop, its clever extensions will provide some provocative entertainment for older children already familiar with the fables. RS

R 4-7 yrs. A child’s love for her toy bear is not an unusual theme, but the West African setting is, and the warm paintings individualize a universal situation. Amoko plays devotedly with Efua Bear, tying Efua on her back to visit the market with her father, making Efua a pillow-bed while she and her father cook mutton and yam stew, and holding Efua in her lap while the family eats. When Auntie brings a new drum, however, Amoko forgets the stuffed animal, which is almost torn apart by dogs in the night but—after a tearful reunion—is washed and sewn together by Amoko’s mother next morning. With never a trace of contrived travelogue effect, story and art impart many details of Amoko’s life style, including her parent’s loving involvement in her everyday activities. The two-dimensional, vividly colored art concentrates on clean, simple compositions to capture nuance of landscape and household interiors. The very lack of barriers between outdoors and indoors is noticeably different from what young U.S. listeners will have experienced. Figures are stylized in posture but expressive in facial depiction. A satisfying visit abroad.

BH

D.V. Family relations; Love for toy


Ad Gr. 6-10. Focusing on the Nunn family, whom the author previously interviewed in *The Vanishing Border* (BCCB 3/88), Ashabranner examines the contemporary situation of ranchers, and, to a lesser extent, farmers, in southwestern New Mexico. While the empathy that the author and illustrator consistently demonstrate with their subjects is usually a strong aspect of their books, here the fellow-feeling falls into an idyllic, adulatory tone—Ashabranner usually asks tougher questions than the ones posed here. Scant attention is paid to the Mexican-American inhabitants of Luna County—it is not until the end of the book that we are told Hispanics constitute half the county population. The ranchers never mention their Hispanic neighbors or employees, and the book glides over problems of ethnic relations. Although Ashabranner is usually better at providing social and political context (as in *The Vanishing Border or Dark Harvest*), his (and Conklin’s) gift for detail serves them well when describing the actual work of a ranch: branding, corralling, selling cattle, and always praying for rain.

RS


R Gr. 2-4. A winner for young horse lovers who aren’t ready to read more technical riding and training books. With various breeds described and pictured, Attmore adds tidbits on how to measure a horse’s height in hands, how to tell a horse’s age from looking at its teeth, how to identify the parts of a horse, how to groom and tack up (including the complicated bridle), how to
mount and position properly for different gaits, and, for armchair admirers, how to draw horses and start scrapbooks. The nonstop, full-color illustrations and businesslike tone will keep this galloping off the shelves. With glossary and index. BH


R Gr. 4-7. Sixth-grader Kelly wants to get involved in the school production of *Cinderella,* but she knows her mother will disapprove. Mom doesn’t like Kelly to do anything that smacks of her own mother’s rather bohemian behavior, and theater is the biggest taboo: when Mom was little, Gram once ran away to act in New York. This is a once-over-lightly blend of intergenerational conflict and school-play story with lots of appeal, both in the scenes of school jealousy and feuding and in the vivid arguments of two mothers and their daughters. While not as immediately funny as Auch’s last novel, *Mom Is Dating Weird Wayne* (BCCB 1/89), this one has the advantages of a fresher idea, more convincing plotting, and recognizable growth on the part of the protagonist. RS

D.V. Mother-daughter relations


Ad Gr. 4-6. Johnny (nice boy) and his pal Fergie (not-at-all-nice boy) go along with elderly Professor Childermass on a trip to Constantinople. Since their mode of travel is a trolley that functions as a time machine, their visit takes place in 1453. The story, febrile in pace, is fraught with danger and consists of a series of crises-and-escapes. For readers who like action, the concept of time travel, a bit of history larded in, and some suspense, this should appeal. It is not strong in characterization, however, and has a plethora of plot; the writing style is adequate save for overwrought dialogue. ZS


Ad Gr. 4-6. Drawings and diagrams are combined on oversize pages on which 1/4 to 1/2 the space is devoted to text printed in columns set legibly against a colored background. The clean-lined paintings are generally illustrative; the diagrams are not always clearly labelled: on facing pages, diagrams of the male and female reproductive systems might lead readers to assume that males have something called a pelvis, but females don’t. The writing is direct, accurate, and comprehensive without being wordy or diffuse. Berger uses a traditional approach: digestive system, respiratory system, reproductive system, the skin, the senses, etc. An index is included. ZS

C.U. Science

M 2-3 yrs. In a publisher's series designed for a specific age range, this focuses on sounds, a phenomenon of which young children are happily aware. The pages are uncrowded, a minimal text and pedestrian pictures printed on heavy, slick paper for comparative durability. What weakens the book is the use, at times, of spelled-out "noises" that are not really like what one hears: even on a metal grid, a child shod in rubber boots is unlikely to produce "Clang! clang! clang!" Useful, perhaps, as a catalyst for talking about—or imitating—noises with a preschool child, but slight as a book, lacking story or humor as it moves from one sound to another. ZS


R Gr. 8-12. A substantial divided bibliography and an intermittent infusion of interview-based citations attest to the amount of research and preparatory work that Bode has done as background for a text that is direct, dignified, candid, and non-judgmental. Racial and cultural differences are seen as insuperable barriers by some of the members of our diverse society; when those who hold the "stick-to-your-own-kind" viewpoint are parents or guardians of teenagers who have different views, a range of problems can arise. Bode gives background material on scientific attitudes toward race and racism, and discusses attitudes and conflicts in general as well as in a series of case histories (also accessible by cases in a relative index) that illustrate a range of multi-ethnic situations. ZS


R 3-6 yrs. Just one short step up from point-and-name, these rhyming riddles couldn't be simpler: "To guess what I am/Is easy as can be./Your sock goes on your foot/And your foot goes into me." Turn the page for one unmistakable shoe. Never tricky and always toddler-tested (keys, flowers, a swing), the riddles provide the appeal of rhyming as well as pride in the accomplishment of figuring out the answer. And, of course, the fun of shouting it out. Tidy drawings on the riddle page provide visual nudges; illustrations of the mystery objects are generic enough to be readily identified while maintaining interest through color (a yellow telephone) and detail (a terrific toy train). RS


Ad Gr. 2-4. Although this follows the same format as Attmore's book about horses, reviewed above, and includes quite a bit of information, it is disconcertingly disorganized. The introduction, for instance, prepares the reader
to find out about ballet's "special language" of movement, which does not appear until several pages later after a look behind the scenes at prop workers and at a professional dancer's typical day. Similarly, going to a special boarding school to train for a career comes before the section on "starting to dance." On the plus side, there are some simple, straightforward descriptions and clear diagrams, though in general the art work is not as fluid as in Attmore's book. Like all the titles in the series, this one has a glossary and index, but the section suggesting activities is a bit patronizing ("Spring might mean walking in the rain to the music of 'Singing in the Rain'"). BH


M Gr. 7-9. Valentine, a teenager who has magical powers, is the narrator of a fantasy in which the realistic matrix seems overshadowed by the fantastic. The plot concerns a pushy, hostile alien, Bosanka, who also has magical powers—but they are not enough to get her back to her home in space, so she demands that Val and her friends join their psychic potential to help her achieve her goal. In the end, Bosanka is horrified by the discovery that her people have all become sea-creatures, but she becomes a dolphin in order to join them. Gran, whose occult powers have been Val's model, dies after a long, comatose illness, but not until Val has had a chat with Gran's spirit. The writing style is adequate, but the plot and the characters are so contrived that the book seems to appeal to only the most ardent science fiction buffs. This is a sequel to *The Silver Glove* (BCCB 6/88). ZS


Ad Gr. K-2. First published in England, a story carried by the comic brio of the line and wash illustrations has the kind of exaggeration young children enjoy, a device that acts as counterpoint to the matter-of-fact text. A lost cause academically, Errol (a city rat who attends a "scruffy school in a drain") is very good at sports and is all set to compete in the Inter-school Ratathlon when his rivals wound him by trickery. Undaunted, Errol (despite assorted bandaged parts) goes into a new training program and wins five events, partly by using his tail for the javelin throw and for boxing. The story is funny if slight; it is weakened by an abrupt ending: "'What a smart rat!' they said. Three cheers for Errol!" ZS


R Gr. 9-12. Angry and afraid, thirteen-year-old Jacob pushes away help after his father is killed in an "accident"—more likely, Mr. Kaiser was pushed from a cliff by anti-Semitic laborers. Jacob and his younger brother Solly, after a brief attempt at running away, are taken by sturdy Mrs. Pearlman to a Jewish orphanage in the suburbs of Sydney. It is 1939 in Australia, and the other children in the Abraham Samuelson Memorial Home are refugees from Europe, many of them waiting for their parents to escape. For Solomon, Hitler
and the Holocaust are far away, and he is resentful of the European Jews, yet at the same time intrigued with their devoutness and rituals, so different from his own seedy, secular background. "The word [kosher] had a different connotation when mouthed frequently by Uncle Siddy. Deals were kosher, the man who bought the scrap gold was kosher, the woman he was currently living with was not kosher." While occasionally distanced by the author's reminiscent perspective ("My first few months in the Home were a mixture of pain and pleasure, of resentment and acquiescence, of loneliness and jealousy . . .") Jacob's alienation at the home and later, when apprenticed to a printer and living in a boarding house, is hard and honest, mitigated by complicated and tentative bonds with his brother, foxy Uncle Siddy, and others. The progression of Jacob's sexual and religious awareness is carefully traced as well, from frightening yet erotic dreams and a half-comprehended bar mitzvah to exciting discoveries—romantic and political—in Sydney's communist and Zionist youth groups of the time. The ending is a bit neat, and occasioned by some unnecessary melodrama, but the journey to it is genuine. RS

D.V. Brothers; Religious understanding


R Gr. 4-6. Ivan may be a noodlehead or a trickster or a bold hero; in Russian folklore there are myriad Ivan stories and, in this appealing new compilation, they are retold with wit and a strong sense of the oral tradition. The illustrations, both those in color and those in black and white, echo the comic quality of the retellings, more suave than stark, yet starkly dramatic in visual effectiveness. Lovers of the genre, young or old, will recognize familiar tales (Baba Yaga intercedes in "Three Brides for Three Brothers") and enjoy Slavic variants of others, as in "Ivan Gets It Wrong," an entertaining companion to "Epaminondas." ZS

C.U. Storytelling


R* Gr. 7-12. Daughter of a prominent primatologist, 13-year-old Eva has grown up around chimps, "and now she was one herself. Okay." Her body destroyed in a car accident, Eva's "neuron memory" has been transplanted into the body of a chimpanzee named Kelly. Where is Kelly now, Eva wonders, and Dickinson uses this question to frame both narrative and thematic impetus in a dramatic science fiction story about an experiment that may or may not have gone wrong. Able to talk with humans via an electronic gizmo, grooming and chattering with the chimps, Eva becomes a controlled, contract-bound celebrity in an overpopulated world obsessed with 3-D television and chimps, who, living in zoos and research enclosures, are almost the only wild animals left. Both theme and plot will be familiar to SF movie fans, but Dickinson's story of Eva's transformation is never melodramatic, and his theme of the rights of animals is understated, allowing the chimps' behavior to speak for itself. His literal anthropomorphism of Eva/Kelly, in fact, serves not to show us how alike
the animals are to ourselves, but how different. "Looked at with human eyes, thought about with a human mind, felt with human emotions, [a picture of the chimps] almost cried aloud . . . Uh-uh, thought Eva. People. They'll never understand." But perhaps it is because we are people that the last scene is so moving: a dying Eva, who has been living wild with the escaped chimps for years, gives her voice box back to the humans. RS


Ad Gr. 7-10. April's peaceful, perfect world is shattered when she and her family are forced to assume new identities after her father, working undercover for the FBI, has testified in court against some dangerous drug smugglers. While Duncan seems to be incapable of writing something that is not a page-turner, the suspense here is vitiated by naggings of implausibility that undermine her premise and plot development. The family hides for two weeks in a hotel, never leaving their room. When taken under the wing of the Witness Protection Program, they simply disappear, change their names, move to Florida, get contact lenses for little brother Bram (whose eyes are two different colors), and April's mother gives up her career as a noted author of children's books, all without much of a peep on the part of neighbors, media, or Mrs. Corrigan's editor. While April keeps learning the lesson that "real life isn't Cinemax," the novel is framed in terms of the world of the paperback romance: for April, the worst thing about the Witness Protection Program is losing her boyfriend; in the end she finds another. Duncan is usually more complex and careful than she is here, but her talent for suspenseful pacing and melodrama remains unparalleled. Author recognition, the fright-night title, and the cover photo of a gloved hand gripping another hand gripping a phone guarantee absolutely no need for booktalks. RS


R Gr. 5-7. Buzz Troy's big eighth-grade ambitions are to be anonymous in class and conspicuous in the swimming pool, where he yearns to win the butterfly and freestyle relay. Both goals look hopeless after a crusading censor picks his mother's book to target in a "Clean Up America Campaign." Mrs. Troy's book is historical fiction with some explicit sexual scenes, and Buzz's friends harass him in the locker room while the town divides into pro- and anti-censorship groups whose antagonism erupts into violence at a rally. The situation and repercussions of book banning make a dramatic plot. The characters, while not deeply probed, are smoothly presented, and the style is consistent. At a few points, the case study aspects show, as in an English teacher's raising questions about censorship, but this is an accessible book to have on hand for classroom discussions of controversial titles. BH
Anne Fine writes some of the funniest—and truest—family fight scenes to be found. Kitty's room is a bit, well, disorganized. Or, as mother's boyfriend Gerald (nicknamed Goggle-eyes by Kitty for the way he looks at mother's legs) prefers, the room is disgusting. "He put his foot in it right there. It was quite clear from the expression on Mum's face that, for the moment, she had heard enough from Gerald Faulkner about his views on natty housekeeping." But Gerald is tenacious, pointing out to Mum that her defence of Kitty is "utter baloney," and soon Mum is completely taken in. "‘Take care, Gerald,’ she giggled. ‘Mind what you say! You’ll end up in terrible trouble with Kitty.’" That's just one skirmish in an on-going war; perhaps even more pointed is the scene where staunch conservative Gerald accompanies Kitty, little sister Judith, and Mum to an anti-nuclear demonstration witnessed only by the police ("It's not as easy as you might think to get arrested") and some sheep. Contemptuous of their politics as he is, Gerald nevertheless takes Kitty and Jude home when Mum is arrested, and Kitty finds herself beginning to love him. In a benignly barbed family comedy peppered with Hepburn-and-Tracey repartee, readers will empathize with Kitty's step-by-step acceptance of Gerald while at the same time finding this self-described "boring" man magnetically charming from the start. RS

D.V. Devotion to a cause; Family relations


R Gr. 4-7. "At cockcrow I got out of bed and stepped on the tail of Aunt Katy's one-eyed cat, Jibboom." Readers will feel themselves in the hands of a master storyteller from this first sentence of a tale crackling with pirates, ghostly appearances, and treasure hunts. On Oliver Finch's twelfth birthday, he expects to welcome his father, for whom he's waited through three years of a whaling voyage. Instead, Oliver is kidnapped aboard Captain Scratch's mysterious ship, taken on a long hard voyage, and ordered to find the ghost who guards a hoard of gold. The plot and characters are inventively cut from the best stuff of tradition, the pace never lags, and the style is quickened with resounding adjectives such as wrathful, twistical, grandacious, and dubersome, or verbs like gulch, scarify, and difficulted. The whole crew, from first mate Jack O'Lantern to a Fiji islander named Cannibal, are caricatured but never hyperbolic. First published in 1965 and now re-issued in a new format, this book laughs at itself without missing a beat of the action. A treat to read aloud. BH


R Gr. 3-5. Swan Lake is a romantic tragedy, a "Beauty and the Beast" in which both hero and heroine die untransformed. Here the author and artist have attempted to capture the tale without benefit of the major reason for its sustained popularity—the ballet itself. Between Hyman's choreographic
drawing and Fonteyn's feeling for the drama, they've done an admirable job. In
the story, Prince Siegfried has fallen in love with Odette, a queen turned swan by
an evil owl-magician. When the owl-magician's daughter appears at a ball
disguised as Odette, Siegfried pledges his troth, only to discover the deception
too late. He and his true love cast themselves into the lake, breaking the
magician's hold over the other swan maidens "by the strength of a love that
feared nothing but separation." Fonteyn's note on the history of Tchaikovsky's
music and the dance productions through the century that followed are technically
detailed, and the illustrations are effectively theatrical, if conventional—there are
no visual surprises here. Grace, however, is Hyman's hallmark in overall
composition, drafting, portraiture, and page design, with magical blues and
moonlight whites dominating full-page paintings. A prerequisite for preparing
children to see the ballet. BH
C.U. Dancing

Girard, Linda Walvoord. We Adopted You, Benjamin Koo.; illus. by Linda
R Gr. 3-5. Age nine, Benjamin Koo Andrews talks about his
life, both what he's been told (abandoned ten days after his birth, left on the
steps of a Korean orphanage, adopted by an American couple and taken to the
United States) and what he has experienced: a loving extended family, the advent
of a baby sister, also adopted (this time from Brazil) and the realization that his
appearance is accepted casually by many but received with varying degrees of
hostility by a few. It might seem ambitious to tackle in one short book such
major themes as adjustment to adoption, cultural adaptability, sibling
relationships, and prejudice. Girard handles this with aplomb, and makes Ben's
voice both childlike and convincing. Perhaps because it eschews both cuteness
and sentimentality, the story is touching without being maudlin, and its tone is
direct and candid rather than being overburdened with Message. ZS
D.V. Adaptability; Intercultural understanding

X. 124p. $12.95.
Ad Gr. 5-8. Susie is miserable when her best friend Kim moves
from Sydney to Melbourne. The two had spent all their time together, sharing
clothes ("I'll wear it Monday to Wednesday and you wear it till Sunday"),
leaving secret messages in a forgotten cubbyhole, spying on the strange "Blue
Lady" who mutters around the cemetery, picking up odd bits of twigs and moss.
The Blue Lady also draws, and after Kim has gone, leaves a picture of the two
friends for Susie in the hiding place. The ache and anger of losing a friend—
"Who will I sit with?"—is rendered with intensity, as is Susie's sickly dread of
her first boy-girl party. While Susie's pain is authentic, its unvarying
expression becomes a bit static until the Blue Lady rescues Susie the night of
the horrible party, revealing herself to be much more than the neighborhood
eccentric. This is a great scene, but readers will wish the two could have spoken
sooner. RS
D.V. Friendship values

R 2-4 yrs. Mixed media illustrations that have action, humor, and a raffish use of flyaway line provide most of the impact in a picture book with a direct text that serves as foil to the pictured excesses of a child's second year. His parents and three siblings repeatedly sound the alarm with the title question; William, increasingly mobile, staggers about getting into minor—usually messy—difficulties. The book ends with William, at the end of a hard day of birthday celebration, hunted yet again and found by his patient parents, curled up asleep in the dog's basket in the kitchen. The catalogue of antics should please the read-aloud audience, who will no doubt sympathize with William's ability to get into trouble with no deliberate intent and no real harm to anyone. ZS

D.V. Everyday life concepts


R 4-6 yrs. In a situation to which every younger sibling can relate, Jamaica follows her brother Ossie to the park and tries to join his game of basketball but is told not to tag along. Stung by the rejection, Jamaica spurns little Berto's attempt to help her build a sand castle, then stops herself and teaches him how to help her. Together, they create such an exciting project that eventually Ossie wants to join them after his game. It's a pleasant conclusion, and the importance of kindness to lesser mortals is clearly stressed. Unfortunately, there's another message, as well, that boys play ball and girls take care of little children. However, that's the way life is in the park. The scenario is realistic and the black and Hispanic cast, portrayed in friendly, effective watercolors, will win the attention of young listeners, who may remember the appealing main character from *Jamaica's Find* (BCCB 5/86). BH

D.V. Brothers-sisters; Friendship values


R 4-7 yrs. Sam is going trucking with his dad in their Mack model R-600. They enjoy an early breakfast, head for the terminal, check the truck and hitch the trailer to the cab, fill the tank with diesel fuel, pick up a load of fish, and deliver it, with the requisite lunch break for burgers and fries at Cindy's Truck Stop. Kids will find out there's more than one meaning for the words reefer (a refrigerator trailer), smokey (a state trooper), log (a record of how far and where the truck goes), and white-line fever (road fatigue). Best of all is the affectionate relationship between a boy and his father, who's known as "Big

R Gr. 5-7. When precocious young Imogene's parents learn that her summer camp has burned down, they pack her off from their New York apartment to her aunt's farm. It's like turning Eloise loose in Iowa. Imogene is a cool number, and she quickly takes measure of mischievous possibilities for a pig talent show and other local events. Cousin Josephine (along with three other fat siblings) is Imogene's equal, as it turns out, and the two not only make peace but also make friends after some very realistic rows. Although the action is occasionally exaggerated to the point of slapstick, there's lots of clean (well, sometimes muddy) country fun in late-night lake expeditions, spying on neighboring rivals, agate collecting, laundry chute sliding, and always, on rainy days, adding to the longest gum-wrapper-chain in the world. The narrative voice is steadily clever, self-consciously so on occasion. With jovial pen-and-ink drawings and manageably sized episodic chapters, this is a good read-aloud to launch the summer. BH

D.V. Individuality, expressing


R Gr. 1-3. Very simple machines: wheels, inclined planes, wedges, levers, and screws. "All of these are simple machines. They don't need electricity to work. You make them work." Using familiar examples, narrative and photographs work well together to explain the principles of these machines. The principles of a lever and fulcrum, for example, are illustrated with a bike brake, hammer, seesaw, and flip-top lid. For inclined planes, photographs clearly show why sometimes we want steps and other times we want ramps. And for when we want a drink—a lever and a screw join forces to open the wine. An exemplary introduction that combines simple explanation with challenging extension: scissors as a lever? Think about it. RS


Ad Gr. 7-10. Hyde begins her examination by discussing in general terms who the homeless are, how they live, what their medical problems are, and so on. Separate chapters then examine different groups: those who have lost their homes, young people who are runaways, street people, the mentally ill, young children. A final chapter, "Taking Action," discusses ways to help the homeless; while Hyde describes, throughout the text, some of the municipal, charitable, or individual efforts to alleviate the plight of the homeless, she gives little attention to the role of legislative and financial support from government
agencies, especially at the federal level. A list of suggestions for seeking help (including organizations and their addresses) is provided, as are a bibliography and an index. ZS
C.U. Social studies


Jenkin-Pearce, Susie. The Enchanted Garden; written and illus. by Susie Jenkin-Pearce. Oxford, 1989. ISBN 0-19-279845-6. 24p. $12.95. NR Gr. K-2. A wordless picture book is framed by ten lines of text: at the start, "November grey/ End of day/ Mist time/ Smoke has run/ The chase is done/ Out of the garden and/ Back into time." In between is a fantasy adventure in which a girl, a dog, and a rabbit move from an urban street to an elaborate garden. Topiary animals come to life, a statue joins the original trio, guests in period attire dance at a castle ball, as do the animals, etc. The paintings are crowded and often fussy, the story line is both contrived and hard to follow, in part because double-page spreads may show a character two or three times. The girl eventually leaves a ferociously florid garden to return to a city street with her dog and with the rabbit that is now a stuffed toy. Details of the illustrations may interest some children, but the lack of cohesion, plot, or humor will limit the book's appeal. ZS

Johnston, Norma. The Delphic Choice. Four Winds, 1989. ISBN 0-02-747711-8. [208p]. $13.95. Reviewed from galleys. R Gr. 7-9. Meredith, the seventeen-year-old narrator, is at Delphi when she meets Brandon (also American, also bound for Istanbul) and he explains the conflict between public and private duty that influenced oracular pronouncements in ancient Greece. Meredith's aunt Felicity is with her, and they are called back to Istanbul when Felicity's husband Mark (Quaker, peace negotiator) disappears. What follows is a taut story of increasing fear and tension as Mark becomes hostage to terrorists who also threaten Felicity and her children. There's plenty of action here, and a setting that has topical interest and some suspense; characterization is adequate if not deep, and the writing has a controlled structure despite the fact that the author has overcrowded her story with so many incidents and characters and—to a lesser extent—descriptive passages that have the aura of a travel brochure. ZS

Juster, Norman. As: A Surfeit of Similes; illus by David Small. Morrow, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08140-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08139-8. 80p. Library ed. $9.88; Trade ed. $9.95. R Gr. 3-6. Clever drawings that are scratchy, often cross-hatched, animated and amusing, illustrate a series of similes-in-verse that are interrupted a few times by dialogue. Although there is an occasional note of aspersion or contrivance ("As drunk as a sailor," or "As queer as a duck") most of the figures of speech are familiar ("As blind as a bat," "As fresh as a daisy") or, less often,
are poetic: "Elusive as tunes," for example. The repetitive form produces deja vu reading, but the book should indelibly imprint the simile in readers' minds; it is more often funny than forced, and the appeals of rhyme and metric lilt make it easy to remember verses and likely that they will be quoted. ZS


Ad Gr. 7-9. "This guy is a serious candidate for Mr. Adequate," says fifteen-year-old Alessandra, immediately smitten by Wyn Reed, who is a senior, a dedicated cellist, a new member of the orchestra. She knows that although Wyn seems fond of her, he's also seeing another girl. On a Manhattan weekend (friend Melissa is covering for Alessandra) that is tensely platonic, Alessandra learns that Wyn and the Other Girl in his life have been intimate. There is a quarrel, Alessandra is despondent; time passes; she recovers to the point of gaining interest in "this junior guy I've got my eye on." The story has little depth of characterization, a slow-moving structure, and a pleasantly conversational style that includes natural-sounding dialogue. ZS


R Gr. 2-5. They wanna talk? Let 'em sink their teeth into these little morsels. Yes, tutors toot and pipers pick and she still sells sea shells by the shore, but this clever collection includes many unfamiliar twisters as well: "Sheila uttered a sharp shrill shriek and shrunk from the shriveled form that slumbered in the shadows" (Funny, but whatever happened to "shrank"?). With forty-odd selections, each illustrated with literal aplomb, there's enough for a whole classroom full of marching munching monkeys to each have a turn. RS


Ad Gr. 2-4. Consciously capitalizing on lower-grade, low-grade humor, Kline continues the story of *Horrible Harry in Room 2B* with four episodes that demonstrate Harry's inventive rascality. Best friend and narrator Doug describes Miss Mackle's "secret pals" project, an antismoking skit about death by tobacco poisoning, the draping of Charlotte's webs all over South School, and the demonstration of how to make green slime. Although the stories never really go anywhere (except the resonant *Charlotte's Web* chapter), they fit comfortably into the genre of light classroom realism at an anecdotal level. BH
M Gr. 6-10. See editorial, this issue.

Ad Gr. 5-9. See editorial, this issue.

R Gr. 7-10. Frightened and angered by her stepfather's sexual advances, 13-year-old Ruth runs away to the New Zealand wilderness where she had spent many happy summers as a child. While Ruth is equipped with survival and sailing lore learned from her beloved dead father and from an inventive, sympathetic schoolteacher, her journey isn't easy, and the author smoothly works in the details of food-finding (and stealing), shelter building, and river-crossing that survival buffs find fascinating. A stalking stranger adds suspense; while this subplot may have melodramatic appeal, it's not nearly as gripping as Ruth's own conflicts. A good suggestion for readers who enjoyed Harry Mazer's *The Island Keeper*. RS

Ad Gr. 2-3. And how would you feel about a new "friend" named Felicity Doll, especially if she had curly hair and always dressed in ruffles? Especially if her idea of friendship ("Friends share") is to take your desk, your pencil box, your lunch? It turns out that first-grader Priscilla's big sister was right. "Felicity Doll is a snake." Every first grade has a snake and Leverich has coiled this one to perfection; even funnier is second grade, when Felicity decides to mend her ways and christens Priscilla (much to her disgust) "Pixi": "friends give each other pet names." The humor is on target, but the delivery leaves something to be desired. Perhaps in an effort to keep this easy to read, Leverich often eschews the use of contractions, which, combined with the short sentences, results in peculiarly stilted dialogue: "'I did not do my homework,' said Felicity. 'Lend me your paper. I will copy the answers.'" Punctuating comments by Priscilla's dog ("'Wrrouu,' yipped Pow-wow . . . 'Wruff!' barked Pow-wow") do little to further the action. RS

R* 5-8 yrs. This sonorous celebration of airplane travel will enhance any child's excitement over flying and make the adult reader rethink what may have become routine. In quick-paced tetrameter of three rhyming lines per page, the passenger prepares ("Good-bye to the airport! Good-bye to the ground! My seatbelt is buckled tightly around./ The airplane is full of a roaring sound") and soars ("Off to the blue of the highest sky/ A thin curl of clouds passes us by./ Ruffled clouds chasing us, up we fly"). An exuberant, lilting
narrative poem simply structured within the framework of a journey, this
describes changing "pictures" out the window and the final thump-down ("Faster
and faster and faster we race./ Good-bye to sky and good-bye to space./ Hello to
Earth in another place"). In suggesting rather than defining patterns of landscape,
Fisher's characteristically expressionistic paintings extend the poetic imagery
without intruding on it. Younger than the author and artist's Sky Songs series,
this is a poetic prerequisite for a child's first flight. BH

0-395-47983-5. 190p. $13.95.

Ad Gr. 7-9. An English girl of fifteen, Faith is left orphaned shortly after coming to the Massachusetts Colony in 1675. The growing
tension between Indians and the white settlers who moved into the lands the
Indians felt were theirs had culminated in the brief but bloody conflict called
King Philip's War. For reasons of convenience, Faith marries the man who had
been her family's guide, and she copes with housekeeping while her new
husband is away. By the time he returns to stay, it is quite clear that this
unconsummated marriage is destined to blaze into burning, passionate love.
This bit of paperback-romance denouement strikes a trite note to end what is an
adequate historical novel that gives a believable if not vivid picture of the
colonial frontier and of some aspects of the conflict between native Americans
and immigrants. Characterization tends to be stereotypical (brave young girl,
stalwart sergeant, all-wise Goody Collins). The pace is uneven, the writing
style competent but also uneven. ZS

Lydon, Kerry Raines. A Birthday for Blue; illus. by Michael Hays. Whitman,

Ad Gr. 2-3. An appended historical note, with map, gives some
information about the Cumberland Road (later called the National Road along
which Blue and his family were traveling on Blue's seventh birthday. The text
is set (legibly) against the colored background of misty paintings in tones of
blue, green, and brown. The story, a bit plodding in style, but simple enough to
be comprehended (both in the sense of concepts and of vocabulary difficulty) by
primary grades readers, describes the details of one day. This doesn't make a very
exciting tale, but it does give a picture of one segment of the pioneer experience
in westward expansion. ZS


R Gr. 6-10. Neither Hector, who lives in an underground
community much like the one described in Maguire's I Feel Like the Morning
Star (reviewed below) nor Diana, who lives with her family at the edge of a
mysterious lake, are prepared for their first sight of each other. Both had thought
no one else was left in the world since "it all happened." Not nuclear war, but
an inexorable breakdown of the earth's resources—a whimper, not a bang.
Gradually learning to trust each other, Hector and Diana become friends when he
escapes the caves and comes to live with her family. Survival within the family

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and as a family is the theme, the “war of love” that is fought among Diana and her parents, and the exacerbating relief and tension that Hector’s presence brings to them. Their Robinson Crusoé-like existence is involvingly particularized; less successful, although suspenseful, is a subplot about the evil machinations of the charismatic leader of the cave community, which is resolved through an insufficiently prepared fantasy element. On the whole, however, this is a fresh conception, with more subtly crafted characterization than most post-doomsday fiction. RS


Ad Gr. 9-12. This close portrait of a post-atomic blast colony is focused on three rebellious teens: Sorb (“Normal as dishwater. Kind. Lazy”), Mart (“eyes with a purpose, and a heart like an ancient army tank”), and Ella, the steady base of the triangle, held between the two boys. Their community lives in a great underground sphere, safe from nuclear contamination but altogether cut off from the civilization that may or may not still lie above. While Ella longs to find freedom within the supposedly benevolent totalitarian society of the Colony, the two boys—for very different reasons—want to get out. Along with the three well-realized protagonists, many of the other colonists are perceptively drawn; especially good are the offhand characterizations of the young children in Ella’s charge. The story, however, is not all it could be, and what could have been (and is intermittently so) a suspenseful escape narrative is mired in an overabundance of adjectives, philosophical flights, and figurative language. While the imagery is occasionally telling, most of it is self-conscious, making readers pay attention to the phrase while distancing them from larger narrative and thematic concerns of the novel. Some judicious pruning could have done wonders for an intriguing set of characters and a can’t-miss plot. RS


R Gr. 5-8. Amy has the usual sibling tensions with her brother Robbie, and in the book’s opening these center on their love for a puppy that Amy acquires to replace a dog too big for their new home. The focus soon shifts, however, to Robbie’s illness—he is diagnosed as having leukemia and taken to the hospital. Amy feels increasingly abandoned as her parents leave her in the charge of an unsympathetic babysitter in order to stay with him. What keeps this from being just another tearjerker is the singular voice of the narrator, the authentic details of a family in stress, and the smooth development and natural incorporation of secondary situations. Amy has a deep friendship with an Italian girl. She fights with classmates, is affectionate with a babysitter who “rescues” her, takes loving responsibility for the puppy, and, ultimately, for her brother. A fine balance of the ordinary and the heroic. BH D.V. Brothers-sisters; Death, adjustment to

While the series title makes it sound disconcertingly like a make-and-do book, this is actually an introduction to the strategic and technological, as opposed to political, considerations of nuclear deterrence and warfare. The text gives the particulars of strategic and tactical weapons, land- and sea-based missiles, radar detection devices and star wars technology. Throughout, there is much speculation on how a nuclear war might begin and be conducted, a rare slant in books for young readers. The middle-grade format and expected sophistication of the audience are somewhat at odds, and there is really more information than either format or limitations of audience can support. There is no bibliography; terms sometimes go undefined, either in the text or the glossary; and the index is skimpy, with a chunk of it out of alphabetical order. Diagrams and paintings are striking but not always clearly labelled or keyed to the text. RS


A stunning match of color photography and clean writing, this follows a polar bear from her winter hibernation through the birth, care, and training of her cubs over a period of two years. The irresistible subjects will absorb young listeners and lure independent readers as well, and the text is simple enough, without any condescension, to be read aloud or alone. Information about the North Pole emanates naturally from the central focus, and the tone is one of respect for both the animals and the environment. Guravich’s close-ups speak of long, cold vigils and an uncanny command of technology to capture creature habit and characteristics, including some unusually humorous poses. From one frozen Arctic endpaper to the other, this is picture book nonfiction at its best. Children who enjoyed Cutchins and Johnston’s fine photodocumentary *Andy Bear: A Polar Cub Grows Up At the Zoo* (BCCB 1/86) should have a chance to see cubs in their natural habitat. Let’s hope the weak binding holds up to the hard use. BH


“When Mercia Porterhouse died at the age of eight-six, she left her house and its ghosts to her best friend, Miss Amy Steadings.” Unfortunately, no one can find the will, so an estranged nephew rents the house to the newly rich (thanks to a winning lottery ticket) Sweet family, including three terrible children—Zoe, Charlie, and Bonnie. It’s a pitched battle between the kids, who blast all possibilities of Unwakeful Serenity, and the gentle ghost, who enlist the aid of a truly terrifying specter, Oggi Agga Gooth, a Stone Age woman killed by a saber-toothed tiger that apparently joined her after death. Oggi does manage to scare some respect into the kids, but the real turning point comes when they discover a secret room in the chimney. There, Miss Porterhouse’s diary, will, and manuscript convince them of the ghosts’
right to rest. Although it's a bit contrived at points, and stocked with
caricatures, this is capably written, and the slapstick elements will prove
appealing to haunted house enthusiasts. Spoofy. BH

3. 168p. $14.95. R  Gr. 5-7. Not to be confused with the play Pack of Lies, this is
a conservative fantasy in which are imbedded (to the detriment of the matrix) a
series of deft and varied stories. The stories are told by the mysterious M.C.C.
Berkshire, a young man who wanders into the antique store out of which
adolescent Ailsa and her mother eke a bare living. Mr. Berkshire's background is
not divulged until the very end, but the author makes clear to her readers if not to
his employers that he is from Reading, just as he claims; but for that English
town, substitute the word "reading" and you know that he is a tale-spinner. Each
tale, within the larger story, is used as a device to make a sale to an unconvinced
customer. The writing style is witty, the plot ingenious, the characters vividly
etched; for some readers, the interpolated stories may halt the flow of the
Berkshire story, while for others they may seem entertaining embellishments.
ZS

[32p]. $13.95. Reviewed from galleys. R  Gr. 3-6. It's a rather audacious scheme, to cast a first-person
narrative in the voice of the artist, but outside of the question of authenticity
(which may not occur to young readers), it works well here. We learn
something of the artist, his subjects, and his ideas. The conversational tone is
immediate and informative without becoming dry, as much art history
commentary can be. The fifteen paintings, mostly one to a page on the recto,
are center stage, with vivid color reproduction and spacious white frames. Even
second hand, their power is undeniable. The humor in "The Song of the Dog,”
the strength of "Henri Rouart in Front of His Factory,” and the clarity of
"Racehorses before the Stands” are startling in variety of tone and technique. A
well-focused introduction. BH
C.U. Art appreciation

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. Looking at Dolphins and Porpoises. Holiday House,
interesting, this has a combination of spacious format, good black and white
photographs, clear writing, accuracy, and capable organization of material
(logical, sequential) that should appeal to readers in the middle grades or to
younger children to whom the text may be read aloud. An experienced science
writer, Patent avoids extraneous material and gives enough information to
answer questions generally asked and to stimulate further reading. A one-page
index (adequate, given the length of the text) is appended. Dolphins and
Porpoises, also by Patent and published by Holiday House in 1987, covers the
same information but goes into more detail and is for slightly older readers. ZS

This sturdy, spiral-bound pair of oversized board books will certainly attract readers to “poke and look,” but as for learning, there are many problems. Both books have die-cut windows, doors, and cutaway views that seem to promise some kind of cumulative learning as the pages turn, but the holes are actually little more than decorative and are usually confusing, mixing perspectives and dimensions. The colorful, schematic illustrations, although cluttered with extraneous cute animals (and, in *Ships, Friendly Natives*) do point out some of the physical features of houses and ships, and could be useful for object identification. The text, too, has its informative moments but is written at a level far beyond the toddler audience implied by the format. Kids will love to pore over these eye-catching volumes, but any attempt to figure out exactly what the books are trying to show will have adults reaching for the aspirin.


A perfect companion to Appiah’s book *Amoko and Efua Bear*, reviewed above, this is a fresh story in the form of dialogue between Rose and her mother, who storytells her childhood in Jamaica while Rose is in bed with a cold. Describing how she made rag dolls from scraps of material, Mommy admits that she preferred the “chalk dolls” she saw in the shop windows, even the castoff with a missing arm and broken nose. One memory leads to another, and Rose’s mother recalls the condensed milk they used in their tea, the birthday when she received three pennies to buy sweets, the pink taffeta dress her mother could not finish till a month after her birthday, the high heels that school children made from mango pits and tar. The vignettes flow together partly because they are honestly connected and smoothly written, partly because of enticing art and book design. Facing each page of text is a full-page primitive painting ebullient with color and delicately patterned animal and vegetable life. The print is spaciously set, sometimes headed with a title and always decorated with motifs from the stories, which move easily between continent and island settings. The link between past and present is as secure as the bond between mother and daughter.


An interstellar farce will probably have great appeal for the read-aloud audience, although the monotone level at which the silliness is pegged lessens the comic impact. Bright watercolor pictures have a dashing line that, combined with the depiction of various kinds of alien creatures (all more or less amicable) provides an ebullient mood. A mailman trades places with a
creature from outer space whose ship has stopped for repairs; each has adventures that makes him feel there's no place like good old safe, comfortable home. Exaggerated to the satiation point, but amusing for the age that enjoys—or prefers—this kind of humor. ZS


Ad Gr. 4-6. Joey is in fifth grade and insists that he can read—but he can't, and everybody knows it. Ashamed, discouraged, and angry, Joey turns to hostile behavior to mask his feelings of inadequacy and despair. This is the story of how, through the patient efforts of a reading specialist, Joey does learn—to his disbelieving joy—to read. This is the core of the story, and it is both convincing and touching. Some of the exterior relationships and sub-plots are less substantial and have varying degrees of pertinence: problems with peers, Joey's worries about how his mother or his stepfather (more relaxed and affectionate than Mama) will respond to him, and the relationship with the elderly black neighbors who are patient surrogate grandparents. These facets of the story are adequately knit into the main theme but do not always expedite its motion or buttress its importance. ZS

D.V. Stepfather-child relations; Teacher-pupil relations


Ad Gr. 7-10. In this sensitively written coming-of-age novel, fifteen-year-old Beth faces universal adolescent concerns—parents, friends, tentative sexual exploration—as well as those particular to her place and time, New York City in 1943. Beth loves and admires her father, active in trying to rescue the European Jews, but he remains seemingly detached from her. Her relationships with her stepmother and depressive mother are rocky. Beth's best friend Grace is growing angry and withdrawn since the divorce of her own parents. The novel is stronger in characterization than in plot, and the story seems to stop (with Grace's suicide) rather than to end. However, the family and friendship dynamics are both realistic and dramatic—especially well drawn is the difficult yet hopeful relationship between Beth and her stepmother—and period scene-setting is consistently relevant yet unobtrusive. RS

D.V. Divorce, adjustment to; Parent-child relations


R Gr. 4-6. Launching another useful series from the team that served up drawing lessons in various media with *Pen and Ink* and *Pencil* (BCCB 7/86), this focuses on a subject that is popular for curriculum units and art projects. Each of twelve double spreads treats a different aspect of ancient Egyptian life, with a brief historical commentary, an illustration in full color, and diagrammed instructions for drawing a detail from it. Pharaohs, farms along the Nile, tombs, mummies, and monuments all get a brief introduction while
children practise their drawing techniques. There's a conscientious 
acknowledgment of the differences between ancient Egyptian art and the 
techniques suggested here, which encourage use of frontal and three-quarter 
views along with perspective to show space and shading to show three-dimensional 
forms. A glossary defines words such as Ankh and Ka, and an index will help 
children doing specific reports, though browsing is easy in such a neatly 
organized set-up. A practical purchase for the learn-by-doing department. BH 
C.U. Egypt (unit)

ed. $5.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 3-6 yrs. Would that all the world were as safe and gentle as 
Fred Rogers' Neighborhood, but in these books he demonstrates what comfort 
can be had in two potentially scary places: in the air and in the chair. Both 
books, illustrated with clear and friendly photographs, infuse facts about flying 
and dental visits with radiant benevolence; both assure toddlers that not only are 
grownups there to help, but that they often share similar experiences: "Everyone 
who goes to the dentist wears a bib—even grownups!" Mister Rogers knows 
what we're all afraid of—"dials and instruments tell . . . how much fuel the 
airplane has and which way to go even when the airplane's in the clouds"—and 
capably calms us down. RS

D.V. Fear, overcoming


M Gr. 8-12. Sarah's been looking forward to visiting her mother, 
a famous and dedicated ornithologist now working in New Zealand, but after a 
few days, she has to wonder if her always-busy mother returns the affection. 
Left on her own, Sarah plays her flute and tentatively explores exotic Great 
Kauri Island, coming to appreciate its eerie beauty and its inhabitants: Mako, an 
angry, attractive boy; a mysterious old Maori woman; an injured albatross that 
Sarah nurses back to freedom and flight. That the albatross is a "sign" and 
metaphor is a point made too often and loudly here, and the book as a whole 
suffers from overlush romanticism and overheated prose: "The sound of the flute 
became part of her, soaring through her high into the morning sky. She was 
music! She was the albatross, spiraling into the brightness!" Where the 
exclamatory style does work is in the scenes between Sarah and angry Mako. 
Their sexual tension is palpable; their dialogue ("'I hate you right now,' she 
said. 'I know,' he said simply") the stuff sweet dreams are really made of. 
Savage sets the love story against a real background of Maori tradition and racial 
conflict; unfortunately, the solutions she proposes (Mako is predestined to 
become a great, healing leader) are sentimental, based on a questionable 
adaptation of Maori history and legend. RS

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Intercultural understanding

Ad Gr. 4-6. With a steady, factual style, Schneiderman recounts the main events of Bush's life, beginning with his childhood in an affluent family ("George never really thought of his family as being wealthy, but he was driven to Greenwich Country Day School by a chauffeur, and there were other servants in the house"). His action as a young pilot in World War II, marriage to Barbara Pierce, success in the oil business, and political career are all subject to a kind of game-play reportage, with photographs in color and black and white and with an index for children doing school reports. This is a book that, to be honest, would not be of much interest if Bush had not been elected president. However, he was, and it is. BH

C.U. History—U.S.


Ad Gr. 5-7. Bored in the small Nevada town to which she and her mother had come after her father's death, Kate develops an interest in the Indians who had once lived in the area, and in the artifacts that have been found. Learning that her interest is shared by a peer, Jimmy Fong, Kate explores with him to learn more about those people of long ago; interpolated segments tell the story of a young shaman of that time, Wadat; eventually the time circles overlap. Service uses a side plot, the unmasking of a villain engaged in illegal selling of relics, to give movement to the story. Unfortunately, the two plots seem more competitive than complementary; however, there's plenty of action, a bit of suspense, a fairly vivid creation of setting, the story of an interracial friendship, an element of fantasy, a respectful treatment of a Native American culture, and the always-appealing achievement of a goal without the intervention of adults. ZS

D.V. Friendship values


Ad Gr. 4-6. Since her parents had always worked in oil fields, they had left Angela to stay with her great-aunt, Hilda. Now that they were going to settle down, Angela (eleven) was to join them at the end of the school year, and both she and they hoped that "Ant Hil" would come to live with them. Distrait, Aunt Hilda takes Angela on a long farewell trip, driving about Wyoming and acting so erratic that Angela fears Aunt Hilda has Alzheimer's disease. Chased by a bear, the elderly woman almost walks into a dangerous thermal field at Yellowstone; subsequent examination shows that her odd behavior was due to medication. She'd been—knowingly—taking pills prescribed for somebody else. Aunt Hilda decides she will, after all, join the family. Adequately written, the story loses impact because of repetitive patterning and a resultant slowed pace. ZS

D.V. Aunt-niece relations

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R Gr. 2-5. "Grandmother, I watched an eagle soar high in the sky until a cloud covered him up. Grandmother, I still saw the eagle behind my eyes." Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve's own verse mingles with the other 18 selections here, all brief, orationally rhythmic, and representative of far-flung peoples. Sioux, Omaha, Hopi, Paiute, Zuni, Makah, Crow, Navajo, Apache, Osage, Dakota, and Wintu come together in context of Gammell's expertly designed picture-book framework. Watercolors with pictogrammatic characters, scenes, and motifs vary the pages into which each poem is set. Although some of the art is toylike compared to original artifacts, the total effect offers a visual and oral enrichment of children's background on native American cultures. The list of sources in the acknowledgements will be useful for adults. BH


Ad Gr. 5-7. Describing the building and the way it is staffed, Sullivan goes into considerable detail about social and culinary practices, and describes the ways in which presidents and their families have used the White House, including social, recreational, and practical facilities. While the book sometimes has the tone of a list on which items are being checked off, children will enjoy the "insider's" perspective and plethora of interesting details: the private bowling alley, the Autopen device for reproducing the President's autograph, the decorative planters that double as security barricades. ZS

C.U. Social studies


R Gr. 5-8. Here are clear instructions for constructing barometers, thermometers, sling psychrometers, rain gauges, wind vanes, and anemometers; each project is accompanied with a discussion of how and why it works and suggested experiments. While this is a good guide to making and using weather instruments (although a wind vane made of plastic straws and a coat hanger won't stand up well), it is more than a project book, with some of the least foggy explanations of weather-related phenomena to be found in books for this age group, including a cogent description of that favorite magic-markered poster project, the Water Cycle. RS

C.U. Science experiments; Weather


Ad Gr. 7-12. Beginning with a definition of human rights and various attempts throughout history to codify these rights into law, this is a
comprehensive introduction to past and present limitations of freedom, dignity, and survival. Devoting individual chapters to discrimination and racism, genocide, political prisoners, torture, and hunger, the book closes with an overview of the activities of human rights organizations. The authors' evidence of human rights abuses is overwhelming, often inevitably brutal, but the impact of the book is undermined by repetitive writing and too casual documentation. There are reference notes, but no way to link them to the often controversial assertions of the text. This lack of necessary source information also applies to the photographs, many of which are inadequately labeled. To caption a grim photo with the sentence "A man is being whipped in the Middle East," is to beg the question "Where?"; to label another, even more grim, with "A man is being tortured," is exploitive. However, the historical perspective is valuable, as are the links the authors make between obvious abuses such as murder and imprisonment and those more subtle, such as sex discrimination and hunger. Appended material includes a reading list, directory of organizations, index, and a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. RS

C.U. Social studies
D.V. Democratic understanding


Robyn, the narrator, is one of a foursome that began in childhood; now they are adolescents and she and Zoot accept the fact that the other two, David and Abbey, are serious about their love for each other. Of the many novels that have been published with a focus on a fatal illness, this is one of the most sensitive and most cohesive. Robyn's viewpoint predominates, but through her Ure shows how tragically and poignantly David's illness (cancer, with unsuccessful surgery) affects Abbey, how David's parents react, how classmates and teachers handle seeing David during a period of remission, and how David himself copes physically and emotionally with illness, loss of a limb, and the knowledge that death is inevitable and imminent. The writing style and characterization have polish and depth, and the gravity of the theme is alleviated by a humor that is appropriate because it comes from the resilient young adults drawn by the author with affection and perceptive respect. ZS

D.V. Death, adjustment to; Friendship values


This is a chatty sixth-grade novel framed between two letters to Samantha from the Tooth Fairy (her father) as she loses her twelve-year molars. There are lots of letters interpersed among incidents at school and at home. The title theme promises to concern the strain between Samantha and her mother, a writer who often communicates through notes slipped under the door ("You want me to act like a regular mother, and I am trying. But it is not always easy being invisible"). However, many other elements get equal—and equally light—attention, including Samantha's move to a gifted program, her
unrequited crush on Brian Finnegan ("Sam’s stomach did an odd flip-flop. Liking someone made you feel as if you were getting sick all the time, she’d noticed"), and her friendship with her scientific friend Katy. The characters are clearly delineated and the writing smooth, but the plot is diffuse. Although this never reaches beyond surface feelings, the protagonist’s family is a happy one and her concerns common enough to attract readers. BH

D.V. Mother-daughter relations


R Gr. 5-7. First published in Australia, this is a useful survey of some of the most common disabilities of childhood, from the minor handicap of imperfect eyesight to such life-threatening diseases as cancer or hemophilia. Some of the disabling conditions are inherited, some are congenital, some develop after birth. Given the fact that each disability is discussed (with drawings, photographs, or diagrams taking—at times—as much as half the space) in two pages, Ward has done a good job of covering salient points. The illustrations are of variable usefulness, some being far more clear than others. A good catalyst for a discussion of disability, this stresses such aspects of adjustment as the emotional needs of children with special problems, their desire for as much independence and achievement as is possible within their physical limitations, and the fact that their interests are no different from those of children who do not share their problems. A list of “useful addresses” is appended, as are an index and a glossary that includes, oddly, most of the illnesses discussed in the text, but not all of them. ZS

C.U. Health and hygiene

D.V. Handicaps, adjustment to


M 4-6 yrs. This new edition of a 1976 title published by Peace Press probably says more about changing times than it does about differences between the sexes. Through simple text and pictures, Waxman means to deflate basic, kid-sized stereotypes: “Some people say a boy is someone wearing pants. But Keko is wearing pants. And she’s a girl.” This may have caused a few revelatory “clicks” in the 70’s, but now seems a trifle quaint. The consistent sentence structure is rhetorically twisted; few people, even in the 70’s, would have defined “boy” as “someone who plays basketball.” The author’s point, illustrated with polite but frontal nude photographs, is that the only real difference between boys and girls (and men and women) is that “a boy is someone with a penis and testicles,” and a girl “is someone with a vulva and a vagina.” This difference was true in 1976 and it remains true today, but the book is more cultural artifact than contemporary consciousness-raiser. RS

M Gr. 5-7. Kathy and Deena, fifteen-year-old cousins, are forced to room together when their mothers decide to go into business running the old inn they have inherited from New England grandparents. Deena is conforming, tidy, conservative, and industrious; Kathy is flamboyant, rebellious, hostile, and uncooperative. The expectable ending—achievement of a modus vivendi—is arrived at after a series of incidents that extend and thin a slight plot. The first of a series called "Cranberry Cousins," this has superficially drawn characters, the you-get-what-you-expect appeal of most lightweight series books, and a writing style that is flawed by structural weakness and by florid phraseology, both exemplified by such a sentence as, "It bound them together like the roots of an oak tree are bound to the soil, Deena thought..." ZS


R* Gr. 3-6. Even for those whose idea of a good time is not something that will "run up your arm and poke in your pocket for a treat," Wexler makes pet mice seem like a lot of fun. With a friendly, personal tone, the author explains the details of buying healthy mice, housing and feeding them, training and playing with them, and mating them. "Let's do a little math." Using examples from his own mousekeeping experience, Wexler is frank about problems ("After taking care of my wound, I put my hand back—this time moving more slowly") and contagiously enthusiastic about the pleasures, especially in a remarkable sequence of photographs showing the birth and development of mouse babies. (Unfortunately, a diagram showing how to tell a male from a female mouse is confusing.) The many color photographs throughout are informative, well-keyed to the text, and adorable. RS


R Gr. 2-4. Irresistible color photographs introduce various kinds of seals in their ocean habitat and then follow the rescue of an orphaned baby seal—the mother swims away to feed after its birth and does not reappear for reasons unknown. After several days, the pup is picked up by a marine specialist and taken to an animal care facility. Procedures at the New England Aquarium include medical checks, tube feeding of infant seal formula, weaning to a diet of fish, and pool preparation for several pups' return to the sea. In spite of a few abrupt transitions in the text, there's a lot to learn here, and the information is presented in a palatable, environmentally responsible context. BH

D.V. Kindness to animals

[ 240 ]
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