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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.

THE BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS (ISSN 0008-9036) is published monthly except August by The University of Chicago Press, 5720 S. Woodlawn, Chicago, Illinois, 60637, for The University of Chicago Graduate Library School. Betsy Hearne, Editor; Zena Sutherland and Roger Sutton, Associate Editors. An advisory committee meets weekly to discuss books and reviews. The members are Alba Endicott, Robert Strang, Elizabeth Taylor, Kathryn Pierson, Ruth Ann Smith, and Deborah Stevenson.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 1 year, $24.00; $16.00 per year for two or more subscriptions to the same address; $15.00, student rate; in countries other than the United States, add $3.00 per subscription for postage. Japanese subscription agent: Kinokuniya Company Ltd. Single copy rate: from vol. 25, $2.50; vols. 17 through 24, 50¢. Reprinted volumes 1-35 (1947-1981) available from Kraus Reprint Co., Route 100, Millwood, New York 10546. Volumes available in microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Complete volumes available in microfiche from Johnson Associates, P.O. Box 1017, Greenwich, Conn. 06830. Checks should be made payable to The University of Chicago Press. All notices of change of address should provide both the old and new address. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS, The University of Chicago Press, Journals Division, P.O. Box 37005, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE. Address all inquiries about subscriptions to The University of Chicago Press, Journals Division, P.O. Box 37005, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE. Review copies and all correspondence about reviews should be sent to Betsy Hearne, 1100 East 57th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

Second-class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois.

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Beginning with a daffodil in bud, and closing with a triptych of expectant mother, baby, and little boy, both the text and photos in this multi-leveled concept book demonstrate the premise that "all things go through changes as they grow." Kids will especially enjoy the photo sequences of the same subject seen at different times, such as the pair of identically framed photos of a swamp in winter and spring. Caterpillars to butterflies, blossoms to apples, eggs to baby birds to a flock in flight—these natural transformations will be recognizable to almost any child who's been outdoors, and the changes beg discussion in both literal and metaphorical terms. The text is unobtrusively poetic; the color photos are sunlit and well-placed on the spacious pages. Perfect for nature study, new-baby talks—even Sunday school. RS

C.U. Nature study
D.V. Perceptual acuteness


Dog lovers will pore over this full-color photodocumentary that follows a puppy's selection, growth in a family setting, and later training at the Guide Dogs for the Blind campus in San Rafael, California. Honey, a golden retriever, makes an irresistible subject for the natural, sharply focused pictures. The continuous text is geared to a younger audience than Kuklin's *Mine for a Year* (BCCB 7/84) and could even be read aloud to a picture-book audience. At the same time, there's plenty of information here to start kids off on reports or 4-H projects of becoming a puppy foster-parent like the girl who raises Honey for work with a blind partner. BH

D.V. Handicaps, adjustment to


With as simple an ecological theme as Brown's *The World that Jack Built*, reviewed below, Baker's wordless sequence of collage tableaux offers a lot more to look at. Each double-page spread, save the last,
offers the same view out of a boy’s window into the Australian landscape beyond. When the boy is a baby, the window offers a look into the bush; by the time he is four, a street and neighbors have appeared; by the time he is in his teens, graffiti, housing developments, and a McDonald’s have rendered the original wilderness invisible. With a thematic rhythm akin to Joni Mitchell’s “Circle Game,” toys, papers, hobbies, and birthday cards make way for each other on the windowsill, giving a personalizing perspective on the larger context. The last spread shows the now-grown boy with his own baby, looking out a different window where a “House Blocks for Sale” sign has already appeared amid the trees. As in her previous environmental meditation, Where the Forest Meets the Sea (BCCB 5/88), Baker’s meticulously constructed collages employ an astonishingly diverse collection of materials, and their three-dimensional effects are well-captured. Children will enjoy tracing the changes from page to page, an activity that can easily be applied to a consideration of the theme. RS D.V. Ecological awareness; Perceptual acuteness


R 5-8 yrs. Fresh watercolor paintings and an effectively designed, double-spread format combine to showcase birds that thrive in city environments: pigeons, sparrows, finches, owls, nighthawks, killdeer, barn swallows, crows, and peregrine falcons. Although pigeons and falcons have had handsome photodocumentaries of their own (by Miriam Schlein in Pigeons, BCCB 9/89 and by Mike Birkhead in The Falcon over the Town, BCCB 6/88 respectively), this keen-sighted picture book leads children along an alluring path of general observation, inviting them to explore the air next time they walk, with suggestions as to where to look and what they’ll see. Bash’s text is as perceptively direct as her visual perspectives. “To the pigeon, the city may look like a wilderness full of high cliffs and deep canyons”—the illustration into which this sentence is set shows an aerial view whose vertical shapes and distant objects on the ground vividly reflect an urban scene from bird-flight heights. Street and traffic lights, statues, roofs, overpasses, trestles, fire escapes, windowsills, chimney crevices, landing fields, skyscrapers, and bridges will take on a new dimension for children watching their environment more closely for the kinds of avian wildlife revealed here. BH

C.U. City life; Nature study


NR Gr. 5-12. The Go Ask Alice title and dramatic cover photo of a young black woman will certainly lure readers; so will Berger’s prefatory assertion that this is “the absolutely true [tape-recorded] account of Patty’s addiction to alcohol and drugs and her efforts to get straight.” One does not need to question the veracity of the account to greet with skepticism the didactic sensationalism of its treatment here. Patty was abused by her foster father; why, there’s even a photo of her cowering on the bed while he enters the room. Who do you suppose was holding the camera? In any case, it wasn’t all bad: “I got slapped so hard by my father that I saw stars. That was another thing. I was
I guess, nowadays, you’d call it child abuse. But I think it made me a better person. If you did something wrong, you got punished.” At eighteen Patty leaves for college (Photo caption: “College means drinking and partying to Patty, who is not used to the freedom”), falls in with a pot-smoking crowd, goes to bars (Photo: “The bar scene”), is raped (no photo), and gets into crack (Photo: “Crack changes Patty’s life forever”). The situations, circumstances, and the voice are too true, but the narrative is rambling and somewhat incoherent, the details of the downfall more memorable than the wrap-up moral: “Don’t start. Because one drug leads to another, as you can see. I started with the drinking. Then I went to smoking a reefer. Then I went to crack. I’ve excluded quite a few other drugs, because I was scared. But the whole bottom line is, just don’t do any of it!” This book will certainly find readers—what they in turn will find in it is another story entirely. RS


Ad Gr. 6-9. Scott, a teenaged loner, spends most of his weekends at the public library. After noticing a strange man sporting a crow on his shoulder, Scott discovers at the library a doorway into another world. The other world is simple and rustic, but Scott learns that the strange man, Tomeas, is trying to improve conditions by using Earth’s knowledge that he’s gotten from the library. The narrative becomes burdened by the implications that Scott’s involvement in Tomeas’ projects somehow has something to do with what a louse his father has been—an unnecessary psychological twist to the plot. The action begins when Scott learns there is an evil side to Tomeas’ plans for technological advancement. The adventures of Scott and his uninvited girlfriend, Tully, are not particularly original but they are written with suspense. Danger and action combine to spice up this thinly-disguised allegory of people’s attitudes concerning technology versus the environment. KP


Ad 3-5 yrs. Adrian and Paula set off with anticipation, driving to a lodge for a weekend visit to the country with their parents. They make so many stops that the lodge is full when they arrive, so they sleep in the car. Ah well. “Half the fun is getting there,” Paula says, and Adrian adds a closing line. “And the other half is being all together.” While the cumulative story portrays a happy bear family and features some straightfaced, childlike dialogue, the illustrations are awkwardly drawn and often crudely colored, with a sedate pace that diffuses the low-key humor of the text. ZS

D.V. Family relations


Ad 5-8 yrs. “The house that Jack built” is a vernal beauty, all awash with daybreak colors and surrounded by lovely trees, flowering bushes, and a bubbling stream. The meadows (“that border the stream, that flows past the trees that grow by the house that Jack built”) are lush, as are the sheltering woods and hills that surround it all. Next valley over, however, is a different
story, for here is the *factory* that Jack built, and the woods there are dark and dead, the meadows cracked and dry, the stream bright with unlikely colors and gases. Like Van Allsburg's art in *Just a Dream* (BCCB 11/90), Brown's paintings of ecological horror are more intriguing than those of the pretty but prosaic valley next door, an irony that tends to subvert the intended moral. Still, the message is clear and Mother Goose has been appropriated for causes less worthy than this one. RS

D.V. Ecological awareness


R 4-7 yrs. Joseph's father had said that things were going to change, but is this what he meant? The tea kettle is turning into a cat, the bathroom sink is growing a face, the armchair has become a Gorilla (BCCB 11/85). All of these changes, of course, are occasion for Browne's big and striking paintings, immaculately fine-lined to a hyper-realistic level. Their matter-of-fact confounding of the everyday with the out-of-place, all brightly lit and colored, is more menacing than shadows. To escape the changes, Joseph even goes to his room and turns off the light and shuts the door—which soon opens again to reveal just what Joseph's father meant: a new baby (who in her own right bears an uncanny resemblance to the Duchess' pig in Tenniel's *Alice* illustrations). Home alone no longer. RS

D.V. Baby, adjustment to; Perceptual acuteness


R Gr. 3-5. The author-artist describes a summer spent on her grandparents' ranch in Argentina, and while the setting should be of interest to all readers, it may appeal particularly to girls who are horse-smitten. Since Susanita, a younger cousin, lives at the ranch, the narrator has a companion whose skills set an example. There's no strong plot line, but the anecdotal form works well, due to the informal writing style and the details of the unusual setting. The human figures are awkwardly drawn, but the color and vitality of the illustrations are attractive. ZS


Ad Gr. 7-10. Fifteen-year-old Rachel MacCaw has a lot to be angry about: her mother has left the family, and now her father has parked her in the city with an unknown Aunt Irene, in a creepy old house filled with alarming old people. It's clear that the house's residents, whom Rachel terms the Fossils ("Sometimes joking helps. Sometimes it doesn't"), are hiding something from her: her Warnings, or alarmingly accurate premonitions of danger, are coming strongly, and a ghostly presence appears her in her isolated attic bedroom. With the help of an enthusiastic neighbor boy and the gradual trust of the house members, Rachel learns that the elders of the house are part of a Guardian Circle who need her help to prevent an evil ancestral spirit from seizing a magical Stone of power. Although the real-life scenes are less convincing than the
eternal, the book's atmosphere generally lives up to the promise of its terrific read-me cover, with some of the most unusual (and viscerally unappetizing) beneficent elders a supernatural mystery ever had. The last part, unfortunately, fails to live up to the rest of the story; the showdown with the malevolent spirit has too much explanation crammed in and not enough chills. The well-crafted ghostliness of most of the book, however, should keep junior spook fans in happy shivers. DS

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Father-daughter relations


Ad Gr. 7-10. As in Caraker's previous novel *The Snows of Jaspre* (BCCB 3/89), the setting is the main character here: Ceti is a small, low-gravity planet with one side a desert that perpetually faces the sun, and the other a dark and cold wasteland. Maya and her family are among the first Earthlings to colonize the planet; her father is one of the first to die, after eating the poisonous jade plant that is the only vegetation. The sighting of kangaroo-like animals gives the settlers hope for food, but Maya believes the "hlur" to be sentient, capable of telepathic communication, more valuable as an ally against the harsh climate than as a food source. Although there are some credible and exciting scenes, especially when Maya and her boyfriend journey with the hlur to the dangerous Darkside, the story is all over the place, conflating interplanetary invasion, bad-guy hlurs, ecological catastrophe, and romance. Plot turns are jump-started rather than organic, and with so much going on it is difficult to fix on a focus. However, the picture of a new society attempting physical survival and social harmony is well thought out, and readers will admire Maya's bravery in facing the assorted dangers of man, beast, and weather. RS

D.V. Animals, respect for


Ad 5-7 yrs. In a story with strong echoes of the Grimms' *Fisherman and His Wife,* it's hard not to expect some kind of feminist update. However, this fable of a fisherwoman who dreams of dressing up and dining among the wealthy ends with her being humbled once more. Only when her wish is finally granted (through a magic urn that she pulls up from the sea) does she discover the emptiness of greed. Brierley has made a beautiful book of it; full-page illustrations face pages of text set off by brown ink drawings, all against buff paper. Coral and burnt sienna tones dominate the art, which smooths over the heavy message with organically rounded shapes and varied perspectives. BH


R Gr. 4-6. History becomes immediate and real in Columbus' actual journal accounts of his first sail to the New World. This slim volume is an edited version of *The Log of Christopher Columbus,* recently translated by
Robert H. Fuson. The translation/adaptation is conversational and interesting—"[Martin Pinzon] is a fine captain and very resourceful, but his independence disturbs me." Since the book consists only of journal entries, in which Columbus makes some of his famous blunders ("I am certain now that Cuba is the Indian name for Japan"), this will make provocative partnering with historical accounts. Hanson's watercolor and pen illustrations vividly show moods of the weather in both sky and sea, but the depictions of people are unevenly drafted. This will serve as an engrossing addition to a unit on Columbus, particularly as the 500th anniversary of his famous sail draws closer.

KP
C.U. History


R Gr. 6-8. "Stevie huddled on the narrow cot with her feet pulled up under her, the baseball bat held tight in her hand. She thought she heard a rat, but it was a huge cockroach that scuttled across the floor." What's a nice Iowa farm girl doing in a dangerous New York city rooming house? Fending off rats, prostitutes, and drug pushers, waiting for her father to come home with a job, Stevie worries about the abandoned children next door. When her father gets a job in Alaska and sends Stevie off to New Hampshire to live with unknown relatives, she decides to take the two kids, Eddie, a Jewish kid from Brooklyn, and his young half-sister, Fawn, along. When their train tickets are stolen and the kids are dumped off in the middle of nowhere, they happen to stumble on Alex, who agrees to take them to his hideout, an abandoned summer camp. Corcoran writes with a tough realism that mitigates the too-fortunate happenstances in the story. The adults are evenly divided between the indifferent or cruel and the kind. Stevie's father, selfishly absorbed in his new life in Alaska, is unwilling to have her join him. Helpful adults (including a nice librarian, and an elderly lady who eventually adopts them) are present but not overwhelming, leaving the children to overcome their personal demons. Eddie, in particular, must face his fear of the wilderness and his understandable distrust of authority. His conversations with his dead grandmother, held as if over the radio, provide a gauge of his changing emotional state. While the happy ending is somewhat predictable, it is not overly sweet. This is a natural for a book talk. RAS


Ad Gr. K-2. "Picnics are a way for teddy bears and children to enjoy cooking, eating and spending time out of doors," ... and cookbooks for this age group seem created to charm children and give them something with which to pester their parents, who have to do most of the work. This one, no exception, has six menus for both indoor and outdoor picnics (the "Warm Wintery Picnic," for example, consists of Stuffed Baked Potatoes, Honey Hot Chocolate, and Graham Crackers, with recipes for the first two items included), each introduced with a paragraph about teddies' picnic pleasures. The recipes are formatted for easy reading and are generally appropriately elementary in cooking level if not in explanation: for instance, one calls for a grater among the utensils but never requires its use, merely listing "grated cheese" in the
ingredients; another suggests testing pasta for doneness by eating it, without
warning about checking for burn-temperature heat first; and one employs the
word "serrated," a term unlikely to be known to children of an age to find teddy-
bear adventures absorbing. Still, readers will enjoy the picnic concept, and
Day's artwork, from vivid watercolor portraits of characterful teddies to eye-
catchinglly festive section headings on pastel-bordered pages, makes for a tasty
setting. Appropriate notes about hygienic and environmental responsibility are
included, as is advice to obtain (indispensable) adult assistance. DS

DeArmond, Dale, ad. *The Boy Who Found the Light;* ad. and illus. by Dale

R Gr. 3-6. Of the three Eskimo tales handsomely illustrated and
formatted here, two are about rite-of-passage journeys and the other pokes fun at
a common north Indian trickster. Raven's vanity proves his downfall in a neat
parallel with Aesop's fable, while "The Boy Who Found Light" makes fine
company for other cultural heroes who fetch fire or light for humankind. "The
Doll" echoes Tom Thumb and similar magical children who are materialized by
wishes and who bring their families prosperity—in this case creatures from the
"sky wall" for the hunting of all. The linear movement and rhythmic designs of
the black-and-white woodcuts keep them from ever seeming heavy; they fairly
dance across the text. In fact, the whole book has been attentively designed,
from dark gray print to thick, spaciously white paper. A glossary helps with
unfamiliar words, but a source note for the stories should have been included to
tell readers how the folklore has been adapted. BH

C.U. Eskimos
D.V. Courage

dePaola, Tomie. *Bonjour, Mr. Satie;* written and illus. by Tomie dePaola.

R* 5-8 yrs. An artistic and narrative departure from dePaola's
signature style, this is a story within a story in which sophisticated Uncle Satie,
visiting from Paris, tells two midwestern children about a salon encounter
between Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. Uncle Satie is a cultured cat, his
partner an amiable rat, the children are feline—and this book's child appeal is as
sure as its satirical resonance. Although young listeners may not recognize a
witty send-up of Picasso's blue period, for instance, they'll love the rich color
and composition; and whether or not they recognize any of the expressively
portrayed artistes at Gertrude Stein's gathering, they will certainly respond to the
childish bickering that goes on there. "Pablo is brilliant! Henri is boring! . . .
Henri is a genius! Pablo is weird!" When Mr. Satie judges the ensuing contest
between them to be a draw, Gertrude and Alice B. Toklas march the crowd down
a boulevard "to the café, where they had a party." This is an irreverent
celebration of art that will grow on children as the years and exhibits go by, and
will offer teachers a chance to introduce the masters with a sense of humor;
comparing Picasso's guitar player with dePaola's is bound to bring a smile. The
cat-characters themselves conclude the book by sojourning to paint, and young
listeners may be similarly inclined. The book also spoofs contemporary stardom
and prima donnas in general. But best of all is the fluid movement of fresh
lines, deep hues, clever caricatures, and shapes that echo both Matisse and
Picasso: a purple chair furnishes the gallery below Matisse's painting of a
purple chair; a double-spread cityscape reflects the geometric angles of Picasso’s showing “things from different sides all at the same time.” Very daring, Mr. dePaola. À bientôt, Mr. Satie. BH
C.U. Art
D.V. Creativity


Ad 2-4 yrs. Oversize pages and large-scale pictures make this a useful story hour book for the youngest, who will like the simplicity and pattern of Rosy’s responses (“Rosy do it”) when Mum brings home a plastic wading pool. Rosie and Sam, who seems to be her brother, inflate and fill the pool, and are joined by friends who are twins. They play. They eat. Rosy goes to bed. Not much story, but enough action to hold the audience. The watercolor illustrations are cheerful, with bright hues and a breezy line. ZS
D.V. Everyday life concepts


Ad Gr. 3-5. A first-person narrative tells the story of Joe’s trip to Georgia, U.S.S.R. A native of Georgia, U.S.A., Joe is a handsome boy who looks eleven or twelve. The scenes of everyday life in Soviet Georgia are described in many color photographs as Joe’s hosts take him to shops, to school, to a playground, even to a video arcade. The emphasis on featuring Joe everywhere creates an imbalance in the story—Joe’s narrative mentions that he traveled with his family. Mom and Dad are pictured once on the plane going over, his two sisters (mentioned once on the first page) apparently weren’t there at all, and Joe is shown alone boarding the plane for home. The text makes other odd omissions—if the second shift of school starts at 3:00 P.M., when does it end? Who is Paata Shevardnadze, the author of the foreword? The one-paragraph history of Georgia is choppy and confusing. On the other hand, much of the information packed into this slim volume gives a vivid portrayal of a child’s life in the Soviet Union, and of friendships everywhere—Joe’s new friends are obviously charmed by his infectious grin. KP
C.U. Social studies
D.V. Friendship values; International understanding


R Gr. 3-5. *Aliens for Breakfast* (BCCB 12/88) fans will be pleased that tiny Aric is back for another meal, this time appearing in a bag of pepperoni-flavored microwave popcorn. He once again needs Richard’s help: the Earth’s supply of XTC-1000 is threatened by intergalactic hooligans, and, as Aric says, “No XTC-1000, no dessert. No dessert, no peace.” While the story isn’t as tightly focused as the first book was, the same kind of non-stop action and bumptious repartee is much in evidence, and nutritionists will be pleased at
the role green vegetables play in the downfall of King Boobrik the Heavy.
Dumb but fun—what’s for dinner? RS
C.U. Reading, reluctant


This prequel to *Wise Child* (BCCB 2/88) recounts the childhood and spiritual initiation of Juniper, who will in turn pass down the secret teachings of the *dorans* to Wise Child. The two books are in many ways similar, and readers will again enjoy the details of herb-gathering, spell-casting, and mystic rituals. Juniper's teacher, Euny, is far fiercer than Juniper herself will be with Wise Child; the tension between stiff-necked, often harsh, Euny and her recalcitrant novice sustains the sometimes predictable plot. Two other witches, one good, one bad, add fairy tale drama to an atmospheric story that will both satisfy confirmed fantasy fans and involve readers new to the genre. RS


"Swashbuckler," "satin," "chocolate," "token"—the etymology of words connected with St. Valentine's Day or just romance in general is discussed in a lively text. The information is often fascinating, as in the origin of the phrase "sense of humor" or in the chart of ancient gods and goddesses of love. Unfortunately, the usefulness of the information is sometimes obscured by the author's self-conscious effort to write for young readers ("Have a heart!" and "Maybe all three theories add up to one big mushy triangle!"). Although there is plenty of historical evidence given to back up assertions ("As late as the 1880's in England, twelve women were sold as wives for eighteen pence and a glass of beer"), no notes are included to back up the evidence. The good index, plenty of cartoon drawings, and a liberal sprinkling of quotes from famous love poetry make up for all the bad puns. Which are, after all, in the spirit of the season. KP
C.U. Holidays; Language arts


This introduction to the major orchestral musical instruments is spaciously designed and cleverly illustrated. Each page is devoted to a different instrument, shown being played by some formally dressed animal or other. The text is both factual ("The oboe plays that single note to which the whole orchestra tunes just before the concert begins") and fanciful ("Its voice may remind you of faraway castles at sunset, autumn leaves, and the sadness of saying goodbye to someone you love"). Unfortunately, the whimsical imagery can be self-consciously subjective, and may confuse young listeners who don't "almost see puffs of smoke coming out the top" when they hear a bassoon. The trombone, bass drum, and snare drums are shown in the illustrations but not mentioned in the text, and purists may quibble at the inclusion of the piano. With the aid of a demonstration or recording, let kids make up their own associations for the instruments. The blue- and beige-washed watercolor

R 5-7 yrs. This color photodocumentary will take young listeners on a quiet canoe ride to observe a lake teeming with wildlife and birds, among them a pair of loons “dancing” on the water and nesting. The clear, sometimes striking nature shots show the animals in their natural setting as well as in framed close-ups. An afterword includes some information on pollution threats to the loon, which “has come to symbolize wilderness for many people.” An inviting pictorial accompaniment for environmental discussions with children at home or in school. BH

C.U. Nature study


R Gr. 7-10. Jessie, fifteen, has had a wild and rebellious year (“You’d think no one had ever rolled a car before”), and as a result her father has shipped her off to a wilderness experience group in order to “rediscover the wonderful girl you used to be.” Among the group of troubled teens, dubbed “Hoods in the Woods,” Jessie finds six others who think the strict control of the program stifling, and eventually they break loose from their guide and raft alone down the Grand Canyon. The white-water scenes (and there are enough of them to satisfy action enthusiasts) are vivid, fast-paced, and convincing, and Hobbs makes the group dynamics compelling as well, adding an authentic touch of Lord of the Flies-type menace as the struggle for power becomes more important than the struggle for survival. The adventure is handled so well that the occasional slip into sentimentality or cliché hardly matters, although the anticlimactic ending is a trifle disappointing. Nonetheless, the book should appeal to a broad readership; Jessie is a tough heroine in a genuinely exciting story. DS

D.V. Age-mate relations; Self-reliance


R 3-5 yrs. Marilyn, chronicler of the activities at a preschool day-care center, is called “Meatball” by her affectionate teacher because she’s “round and yummy.” This is preschool as it really is, presented in faithful detail from the joys of the block corner and the felicity of friendship to occasional squabbles or the indignity (tactfully handled by the teacher) of pants-wetting. The drawings are bright, clean-lined, and sprightly, with plenty of space to set off both print and watercolors. This should encourage the child who’s ready for playschool and appeal to the child who’s a seasoned participant. ZS

D.V. Age-mate relations; Teacher-student relations

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Although Jussim's writing style is not distinguished, his book is more than adequate in other ways: it covers a range of important topics, it has an objective tone and presents both sides of controversial subjects like abortion or the right to die, and it provides footnotes, additional sources, and lists of appropriate organizations for each chapter. Inevitably, in a book that discusses cases that are current or in litigation, some topics are not up-to-date, but this does a solid job of coverage, devoting separate chapters to each major issue. A comprehensive index is provided. ZS

C.U. Health
D.V. Ethical concepts


Bright endpapers illustrating the Dewey Decimal system frame a historical introduction to printing, reading, and libraries, from the cave paintings of Lascaux to the Library of Congress. Like the author and illustrator's *Maps and Globes* (BCCB 3/86), this book has a mix of the simple, the over-simplified, and the complicated, all in a picture-book format that is attractive but somewhat young-looking for the information presented. Historical developments are hastily presented, with the Sumerian leap from pictographs to symbols covered by the word "later". But the general drift is correct, although Dewey is allowed the last word in classification, with no mention of the LC system. With topics arranged in chronological double-page spreads, this is a good if scanty outline perhaps best consumed in excerpts. RS

C.U. Library instruction


A potentially valuable asset to celebrating—but not necessarily understanding—a traditional Jewish Sabbath, this invites young listeners to shine candlesticks, make hallah, light candles, and partake of special foods. Unfortunately, the text never explains why this is all going on, except for the vague reference that "Shabbat is a special day for Jewish people." The childlike aspects of the book are vivid, and the black-and-white photos candid in depicting children's sensual delight, from handling sticky dough to drinking wine that "slurps and slips and glides into the cup." However, since none of the religious derivations or cultural meanings of the rituals are described at even the simplest level, the book will be limited to anticipation or evocation for the initiated, right through to the abrupt concluding injunction to "sniff the sweet smelling cloves." BH

C.U. Holidays

Ad Gr. 5-7. The setting is Manhattan during the 1930s, the narrator is Danny, older child in an Irish Catholic family, and he begins with "I'm not gonna pretend like I'm no angel or anything," a bit of dialogue that is an indicator of the continuing use of folksy dialect. Although the plot is credible the pace is slow, as Danny worries: about Pa, who's gone away to seek work, and about Ma, who is pregnant. And about his first date. And, after learning that Pa has died, about Ma's marrying the roomer, who had hitched and hiked from Oklahoma after he lost his farm. Believable but banal, this offers few fresh twists to conventional fiction about the Depression era. ZS


R 5-8 yrs. First published in Canada as *Frank and Zelda*, this tale of too much of a good thing focuses on a small ramshackle pizza parlor. Frank and Zelda, the owners, get their wishes granted (as recompense from a cash-poor customer) and find that their increasing success brings its own problems. "'I wish I had a paying customer,' said Frank. 'No, make it a thousand—every day and forever.'" Illustrations are casual, friendly, Mom-and-Pop style pen and watercolor, with creamy backgrounds and gentle tones occasionally punctuated with some great comic visuals: the team of red-gerseyed basketball players scrunched into too-short restaurant chairs, or the endless line of tuxedoed waiters, each complete with Poirot mustache, supercilious smirk, and snowy linen napkin, yet each somehow an individual. Frank and Zelda are generously rotund and cuddly, looking a bit pizza-ish themselves. The luck-run-amuck story is a familiar one (and has a few unnecessary complications here) but the irresistible setting and the appetizing illustrations make this version worth a carry-out, and pass the Parmesan, please. DS


R Gr. 7-10. In a far-future society that "expires" anyone who is physically damaged, Andra's only chance for survival after being blinded in an accident is to receive a brain graft—from Richard Carson, a boy who died two thousand years ago in 1987. Andra has always been a rebel, and her operation makes her more so, giving her a vision of what life was like before humans were forced by nuclear devastation into underground cities governed by "benevolent" totalitarianism. Lawrence's portrait of Sub-city One is as involving as the characterization of Andra herself, a beautiful, angry girl whose indignation is fed by her glimpses of the twentieth century and the books she reads from the past. "Tell me why I want to go up and see the sun." While the theme is didactically driven, the teenaged rebels will appeal to readers, and the chief antagonist, Shenlyn, Director of Sub-city One, is a complicated villain, more mistaken than evil. The plotting is standard but suspenseful, and the surprising ending leaves little possibility of a sequel. RS

**R** Gr. K-2. Bright, strong colors in a mixed-media (collage and paint) picture book tell the story of a mouse, the only child of a pair of attic-dwellers. Taken to an art museum with his class, Matthew is entranced; later, back in the dusty attic, he realizes that the pictures he has seen have helped him find line and shape and color even in the attic. That's how Matthew becomes a painter and eventually gains fame. The handsome pictures and the enticing combination of an animal hero and an appreciation of artistic creativity has a strong appeal. ZS

D.V. Aesthetic discrimination


**R** Gr. 5-7. Anastasia Krupnik is now thirteen and is intrigued by a magazine entry: “SWM, 28, boyish charm, inherited wealth, looking for tall young woman, nonsmoker, to share Caribbean vacations, reruns of *Casablanca*, and romance.” Deciding that she is certainly tall and young, as well as a nonsmoker, Anastasia begins a fervid if deceptive correspondence, sending an old snapshot of her mother when SWM asks for a photograph. Most of the book has to do with Anastasia’s ingenuous interpretations of her pen-pal’s remarks, some of these seeming naïve even for a thirteen-year-old. The book has the component of humorous skirmishes with a younger brother and lively conversations with parents that fans have enjoyed in earlier books about Anastasia. To some extent, therefore, the appeal of this story will be in the comfort of a format that’s expectable; as is usual in the series, Lowry provides a twist-of-plot that should amuse most readers. ZS


**R** Gr. 9-12. Luenn has created a fantasy world by combining man-eating birds, medieval European trade guilds, the goldsmithing techniques of ancient Greece and South America, and a passion for rock-climbing. In a society that revolves around the working of gold, fifteen-year-old Aracco is unhappily apprenticed to a goldsmith. Aracco’s typically adolescent search for his “true gift” is interwoven with action and exotic rites. The cultural traditions of his village, Meged, are both believable and fantastic—Aracco is surprised by his desire for his old childhood friend in a powerful scene where the young girl (momentarily naked except for a film of gold dust) is honored for her “first blood.” When the livelihood of the whole village is threatened by eirocs (birds that attack the people who climb cliffs in search of gold), Aracco vows to find a solution and goes off on a solitary quest. Luenn’s use of Aracco’s quest and other high fantasy elements (help from a grateful animal, stylized language patterns) is not overdone but instead creates a pervasively magical mood for the narrative. Some of Aracco’s self-realizations come in time for the end of the book, but no doubt he’ll discover new problems as his journey continues. KP
If your papa went off to war,” begins a picture book apparently set during the Civil War, “he might get hurt, and your mama might go to fetch him.” This unusual use of the second-person conditional tense continues throughout, as the boy left behind waits for his parents’ return and grapples on his own with the realities of farm life. The fear and worry of a child left behind are accurately depicted, but the actual events of the story are not clear—some of the things that “might” happen contradict others, although it seems that papa, having lost an arm, does come home to the relief of his son. Catalanotto’s watercolor paintings utilize looming perspectives and some truly mesmerizing sun-dappled effects but are frequently evocative where one wishes them to be substantive: they don’t help the reader distinguish imagined scenes from “real” scenes; and some symbols of time passing will require adult explanation, as in the illustration that shows many suns at different points in the sky, or several eggs at different stages of development. Although it’s more a mood piece than a story, the mood is well-evoked, and the final message that a disfigured parent would be loved “because you’d know he was still your papa” is a gentle assurance of emotional constancy in the face of physical change. DS


Margaret Mahy is nothing if not imaginative, and these nine short stories stretch into the surrealistic—without ever becoming self-consciously whimsical—by the sheer power of invention. The title tale, one of the best, follows the fortunes of a young trapeze artist and a prince who’s been magically affected by walking in a wood called the Riddle Chase. The writing is poetic, but not at the cost of the story’s movement: when the two main characters make their final exit, “the air knew Aquilina was its true child, and it held both of them up, opening and closing around them like silk.” Part of the collection’s superb balance results from Mahy’s commonsensical humor, which keeps the magic from going fey, as in this art critic’s reaction to a birthday cake: “It’s a statement in its own right. My dear, it’s got such passionate equilibrium.” Fans of Mahy’s *The Changeover* (BCCB 9/84) will find these fantastical concoctions lighter but just as lively. BH


Color photographs are carefully placed in relation to textual references in a book that should have wide appeal because it is both informative and inherently dramatic. Marston describes most of the major kinds of rescue operations that are mounted on land or sea to deal with accidents. The continuous text deals with the work of paramedics or medical technicians who handle emergency situations such as fires, swimming or boating accidents, road accidents, falls, etc. (medical emergencies such as strokes or cardiac arrest are not covered.) There are descriptions of special services, details of medical treatment, facts about rescue vehicles, and information about some of the special devices (a

Like Mayer's *The Golden Swan* (BCCB 2/91), which was drawn from the Mahabharata, this has been freely—and more comfortably—adapted to fit into a series of fictionalized folklore. The source is "Kate Crackernut," a tale popularized by inclusion in Joseph Jacobs' nineteenth-century *English Fairy Tales* and several recent feminist fairy tale anthologies. Because the object here is to expand a folktale familiar in its conventions rather than to compress complex literature from an East Indian tradition, Mayer seems more at home, describing two devoted stepsisters on their journey to free one of them from a jealous stepmother's curse. The poor girl must somehow rid herself of the sheepshead that has replaced her own. To do so, her stepsister Kate must free a prince as well, which she does here by holding onto him through the frightening fairy changes featured in "Tam Lin" (the traditional, commonsensical Kate fooled the fairies by rolling nuts to their babe, stealing their caged bird, and cooking it to such a turn that the savory smell woke her prince). Mayer's style attains stretches of poetic simplicity: "Let the black horse pass, my lady, and ignore the brown. But quickly grasp the silver-gray steed and pull his rider down." With Pels' glamorous Art Nouveau illustrations, this is a romanticized telling that will hook readers reaching beyond the brief fairy tale form.


"When I was a boy, I lived by the Wind River. My grandfather always told us kids a special story each time a full moon rose . . . ." This series of thirteen brief stories embodies a Native American way of life honoring strong environmental and spiritual traditions. The themes are openly philosophical, but the voice is natural and flowing enough to hold an audience for, say, one story a day, with ensuing discussion likely. A particularly valuable aspect of the book is its cultural context and ritualistic aspect; too many folklore collections exist in limbo for today's readers. The second part of the book, suggestions for applying the morals to everyday life, is more didactic and less skillfully rendered, graphically as well as textually. While the brown-toned art accompanying the first section of tales is imaginatively stylized and striking in design, the later illustrations are stiffer in both concept and drafting. However, adults working with children will appreciate the continuity between a parable about hunting only as many deer as are necessary and the suggested "experience" of pausing to consider and thank the source of food before eating (even in a restaurant). Especially valuable for reading aloud during units on Indian peoples and on alternative value systems, this will also lend itself to family sharing.

R* 5-8 yrs. According to an author's note, the hill once known as Roxaboxen still exists in Yuma, Arizona. Roxaboxen looked at first like "any rocky hill—nothing but sand and rocks, some old wooden boxes, cactus and greasewood and thorny ocotillo—but it was a special place." Marian and her sisters and friends turn—or reveal—Roxaboxen into a town, where each inhabitant has his or her own plot demarcated by lines of stones; where the currency is a special kind of small black pebbles; where there are stores and cars ("All you needed was something round for a wheel") and horses, and even wars, boys against girls. The imaginations of these children (especially Marian, Roxaboxen's mayor) are unlimited, fed by the debris on a small hill in a Southwestern desert landscape. Cooney's intensely hued crayon drawings show the cycle of the desert seasons and changes in the sky; the stone, bottle, and wooden-box culture of Roxaboxen is rendered with down-to-earth detailing that glows with sympathetic magic. The story appears to be set around half a century ago, but today's kids may find that any hill or vacant lot offers possibilities of its own. RS

D.V. Imaginative powers


Ad 3-5 yrs. A black cat (Sid to one family, and answering to five other names in a row of six houses) eats dinner at each of the houses; each household thinks the cat is their pet. Not until a veterinarian becomes suspicious, when six owners bring in the same ailing cat, does the secret come out. Sid quietly takes up residence on another street, but this time the six-in-a-row households know what he's up to, so they don't mind the fact that their cat eats six dinners. Crayon drawings are nicely composed, with a strong textural quality and a touch of humor. The story is not as effective as the art, although the lap audience won't notice the improbability of the plot. ZS


R Gr. 5-8. A World War II adventure story set in Vichy, France, this centers on a young shepherd, Jo, who becomes involved in smuggling Jewish children across the border from his mountain village to Spain. Morpurgo has injected the basic conventions of heroism and villainy with some complexities of character—especially in one of the German soldiers who befriends Jo, and in Jo's father, who returns from prison camp to become, briefly, a depressed and abusive alcoholic. The ending is a mixture of tragedy and triumph, reflecting the capricious fate of wartime victims. Independent readers will appreciate the simple, clear style and fast-paced plot of the book, which will also hold up well in group read-alouds, commanding attention to ethics as well as action. BH

C.U. History—World War II

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R Gr. 6-9. Henrietta didn’t know what kids did in China. When her father was appointed “Foreign Expert” (or exchange professor) at the university in Beijing, Henri learned that she would be doing lessons through a correspondence school. What about friends? Friends are important in early adolescence. It was a lonely time until Henri met Minyuan and, eventually, his parents. Because of them she was deeply troubled by the already-worrisome conflict between the government and those who were demonstrating in Tienanmen Square. Emily Neville hasn’t lost her touch; the sociopolitical background is kept in narrative proportion to Henri’s personal story, which focuses on her friendship with Minyuan, her worry about her mother’s health, and her realistically restrained assimilation into another culture. ZS C.U. Social studies D.V. Friendship values; International understanding


R Gr. 8-12. Melissa Cord’s senior year increases the tensions that have frayed her ties with both family and friends. The central strain is her determination to go to college, of which her religious uncle and Grandmother fiercely disapprove; Melissa’s mother had defied tradition to try college but had gotten pregnant by a fellow student, married, and deserted in quick succession. Melissa’s childhood friend Jim, now her romantic interest, hates school and clearly won’t wait around for Melissa to get educated (there’s already a rival on the scene, and Melissa has reservations about her own feminine appeal). Nevertheless, with the help of a school counselor and the support of her increasingly independent mother, Melissa goes for a scholarship. The relationships here are convincingly developed—so much so that the focus becomes somewhat diffuse in the absence of dramatic action. While Uncle Tate and other secondary characters change subtly, Melissa’s brilliance is more often told than shown, for instance, and it comes as a surprise to find that the title question refers to Melissa’s father, who has not established even a symbolic niche in the story. However, these diffractions are more than offset by a sure narrative style, natural dialogue, and a realistic situation with which YA readers can strongly identify. BH D.V. Boy-girl relations


NR 5-7 yrs. Question of the month: why did it take three competent authors to put together one piece of trivializing didacticism? Slippery Slick the cat tempts Clever Kitten with all kinds of fun: a motorcycle ride (with a stranger), pills (“to make you feel happy”), cigarettes, and a wine cooler. In a particularly lurid bit, Slick offers Clever Kitten a hypodermic needle to use as a flagpole for his sand castle. But Clever Kitten is worthy of his name, each time replying “No way, Slippery Slick. No way!” Cartoon illustrations are crude but
colorful—readers will especially enjoy the picture of the puppy swigging away at the wine cooler. Any kid old enough to read is also old enough to feel patronized. Just say no . . . way. RS
C.U. Safety education


R Gr. 5-8. Five long short stories project the supernatural with a fictional force that will make readers feel right at home—or rather on edge—in the Australian settings. In the first tale, a boy’s anger at being abandoned takes the form of a mournful, brown-eyed blob that appears whenever he gets on an elevator. In another, the spirit of a disturbed man haunts all the subsequent drivers of an old touring car in which he drowned himself and his family. The most powerful tale centers on a fur collar that comes alive at night and bites what it doesn’t like. The young human protagonists are mainly discontented by some family situation, and their characterizations are sharp and true. The author of *Playing Beatie Bow* (BCCB 4/82), one of children’s literature’s finest time-travel novels, continues to give fantasized fiction the hard edges of believable realism. BH
D.V. Fear, overcoming


R Gr. 5-8. “The boy,” though only five years old, knows that his mother works at a factory not because they need the money, but because she’s bored. He knows too, that the strange man she brings home with her from work is not really his uncle. When he discovers the two of them on the couch “making sounds he did not understand but did not like,” the boy is packed off to his grandmother’s, who works as a cook at a lumber camp in northern Minnesota. Set during the second world war, the story has a timeless quality. In deceptively simple, occasionally poetic language, Paulsen conveys the boy’s feelings of helplessness, and his sense of wonder in his new surroundings. Particularly amazing to the boy are the nine men who work at the camp: “They were so huge as they came in that he couldn’t help moving in back of his grandmother’s dress until they were all seated.” While the boy’s relationship with his grandmother is the focus of the story, the descriptions of the workings of a lumber camp will sustain the interest of younger readers. As if transported to a masculine paradise, the boy joyfully “helps” each of the workers with his daily tasks: “Carl let him drive the truck again and spit out the window, and then all the other men seemed to want him, and he rode in their trucks as well until he knew them all.” The amount of food required to feed the workers and the comfort the boy derives from his grandmother’s cooking are described in striking detail. Dedicated to the memory of the author’s grandmother, the book has a strongly autobiographical feel to it, especially in the concluding chapter. RAS


R Gr. 7-12. Christened Merry Moonbeam sixteen years ago when her parents lived on a commune called Woodlands, “Beamer” still finds her past
at every turn. The bait-and-tackle shop her parents own is the social center/emotional emergency room for all the now-dispersed “Woodies.” This first novel depicts the ’60s counterculture and its heirs with a depth and respect unusual in the YA genre, which generally boils down the movement to flaky moms who neglect their children. Beamer is well cared for by her parents as well as by the other former commune members; her resentment of their well-meant meddling is natural, as is their good-humored acceptance of her rebellion. “Whatever it is you pathetic old hippies had and whatever it is you think you’ve got now, I don’t believe in it. And I hate my damn name!” The store and its inhabitants and visitors are a well-realized milieu for Beamer’s story, which is in some ways a conventional teen tale of a romantic triangle. Who should Beamer love: local boy Andy (steady but slightly dull) or visiting college intern Martin (rakish and attractive)? The amorous complications and discussions will please romance fans; the more unusual aspects of Beamer’s “family” give the story depth and individuality. RS

D.V. Parent-child relations


R 4-7 yrs. “Cozy” and “familiar” seem to be the current temper of the realistic picture book but this one appeals through its old-fashioned sense of adventure. Salty (previously of *Salty Dog* and *Salty Sails North*) and his master Zack have sailed to Alaska for the winter where they both get jobs at the local airfield, Zack as a repairman, and Salty as “copilot” on Jarman Curtis’ plane. “‘Not so lonely with you along,’ Jarman told Salty.” During one especially stormy flight, atmospherically evoked in Rand’s watercolors, Salty falls out of the plane and is lost—overnight—in the wilderness. The drama and tension are scaled just right for the readaloud audience, who will of course also appreciate the canine protagonist. The Rands never anthropomorphize Salty beyond reason; his genuine dogginess is a big part of his appeal. The watercolors are skillfully executed if a bit copybook in their effect, with human faces that are capably albeit blandly depicted. But the detailing is otherwise good, with a literal accuracy that reinforces the real-life drama of the story. RS


R 5-8 yrs. Vigorous acrylic paintings based on one of the artist’s story quilts project the fantasy of eight-year-old Cassie, who dreams of flying above the George Washington Bridge from her nighttime rooftop. Free associating to the bridge, Cassie tells how she was born the day it was finished, how her father worked on its steel girders but couldn’t get into the union because he is black, and how her imagined flights will get everything her family needs, from employment to ice cream. Like the folk heroes in Virginia Hamilton’s *The People Could Fly* (BCCB 7/85), Cassie eventually initiates someone else, her little brother Be Be, into the magic. Ringgold has met the challenge of transferring images from one medium to another by a skillful adaptation of techniques. Her figures in the picture book art appear larger, the compositions more spacious, and the colors vital but carefully focused for the movement and emphasis of each double spread. A bottom frame of photographed patchwork is...
separated from the main compositions by a strip of buff canvas that grounds the
text and keeps the total effect from becoming too cluttered. This is more
evocation than story, but wish fulfillment supported by innovative illustration
adds up to striking effects. BH
C.U. City life
D.V. Imaginative powers

Rodowsky, Colby. *Dog Days*; illus. by Kathleen Collins Howell. Farrar,
Ad Gr. 4-6. Rosie Riggs is bored by the prospect of a vacation
without her best friend (who's away for the summer), her favorite babysitter
(who took another job), and her Mom (who has just started working full time).
What's left, besides a whining younger sister and a skinny classmate foisted on
her by the exigencies of fate? Not much, until a famous children's book writer
moves in next door along with her super dog Sandy, star of a popular series.
Rosie waits for something super to happen, but nothing does—for far too long a
time—until the power goes off in a storm and, in an unrelated incident, Sandy
gets lost and found, so that the children's book writer finally warms up to her
admiring audience. The plot is forced, and the characterization has none of the
internal urgency of Rodowsky's subtler work for older readers; however, the
situation has enough popular ingredients to draw its fair share of readers.
Howell's black-and-white drawings are competently drafted but more literal than
imaginative. BH
D.V. Neighborliness

Simms, Laura, ad. *The Squeaky Door*; illus. by Sylvie Wickstrom. Crown,
Library ed. $13.99; Trade ed. $12.95.
Ad 3-6 yrs. If only someone would oil that squeaky door! Then,
maybe the little boy would stay in bed and his grandmother could get some
sleep. Adapted from a Puerto Rican folktale, the story relies on dialogue and
visual humor for its appeal. At wit's end ("You're driving me crazy. I can't get
any sleep!"), grandma decides to put a cat in the boy's bed so that he won't get
scared. When that fails ("The little boy jumped under the bed and started to
cry—waaa waaa waaa! And the cat jumped under the bed—meow meow
meow!"), she adds a whole menagerie of animals, one by one, each with its own
sound effect. The challenge of a cumulative tale is to repeat the growing chorus
details without running out of steam. Although this has at least two animals
too many, and the ending is anti-climactic, Grandma's comic diatribes ("I'm
going to pull out every hair in my head. You're driving me crazy. I'm mad,
mad, mad") help punctuate the repetitive pattern of the text. Simple watercolor
cartoons capture the disaster humor. A glossary provides some of the story's
originally Spanish words and phrases. RAS

Ad 3-6 yrs. Whose dream is it? A little girl and her larger-than-
life cat take a moonlit trip to the Milk-Pool where he drinks and she swims.
Other pet paradises include the Bone Gardens, where children and dogs alike dig
up old bones; the Grassy Plains, where snakes and kids can roll and tumble; the
Hamster Holes; “and at Cricket Creek one little boy sat with his pet.” There is no plot here, the somewhat elliptical text being but a thread on which to hang Smith’s lavish surrealistic landscapes. Invitingly and eccentrically detailed, each spread shows a little spot in the cosmos where kids and pets share dreams and fellowship among the airbrushed sweep of stars. The nighttime mood, strange and safe, is atmospherically evoked, and young children may forgive the lack of a story for the sake of staring at the pictures. RS

D.V. Pets, love for


R 4-7 yrs. “There’s a witch under the stairs and I know it,” says Frances, the narrator of this heartening tale about conquering fears. And she’s right—the witch waits under the basement stairs, reaching up through the gaps between the planking whenever Frances descends. Our heroine tries research, trickery, and cajolery, but the witch finally leaves only when Frances boldly plunges (well-armored, of course) into her enemy’s very lair in order to rescue a fallen stuffed elephant. The illustrations, tidily droll pen, pencil, and watercolor, are particularly appealing in their homely minutiae, especially one double-page spread depicting, with Anno-like detail, a cross-section of Frances’ busy house. Although the witch is appropriately scary, this is a gentler, more reassuring treatment of the situation than Eyles’ Well I Never (BCCB 3/90). Smith’s story wisely allows Frances to solve the problem on her own with no adult assistance, which young cellarphobes may find particularly encouraging; the lively protagonist should appeal even to those to whom such encouragement is superfluous. DS

D.V. Fear, overcoming


R Gr. 3-6. As much an art book as a poetry collection, this collaboration between Smith and Hnizdovsky features 29 poems and 32 woodcuts with letterpress printing that offers a textural dimension. Both verse and graphic images are funny but no less skillful for their lighthearted tone. The sheep looks like a snarled ball of yarn with spindly legs and a tiny head whose “Blank face staring out/ From a gray woolen heap—/ Goes over the fence/ When I go to sleep.” About half of the poems are new, the others having appeared in the author’s Laughing Time. The creative bookmaking, popular rhymes, and distinguished illustrations combine to justify a high price on this one, for personal or library purchase—it will be a collector’s item. BH

C.U. Language arts


R Gr. 5-8. After witnessing his father’s kidnapping by a helmeted knight, young Tymmon escapes the castle and makes his way through a medieval landscape of heartless outlaws, oppressed peasants, and avaricious lords. Drawing on conventions from both fantasy and historical fiction, Snyder
takes yet a third path of legendary chronicle, much as Lloyd Alexander did in his
Westmark trilogy. Troff, the huge, ugly dog that guides Tymmon on his
journey, so resembles a gargoyole that Tymmon believes him to be a fantastical
beast, and indeed he seems so; yet nothing he does is totally beyond the
capabilities of canine intelligence and strength—not counting the conversations
Tymmon believes he has with Troff. Between forest frights, vengeance oaths,
and endearing orphans, the action here is nonstop, with solid characterization and
practiced style. The adventurous plot more than makes up for occasional slips to
cliche ("... a tingle of nervous excitement raced up his spine. What would
Dame Fortune have in store for him today in the great city of Montreff?").
Although the setting is medieval, the viewpoint is modern, with the young hero
coming to realize, as his father did, that it is more humane to become a court
jester than a knight errant, something for children of any time to consider while
pursuing their own quests for survival and glory. BH
C.U. History—Medieval
D.V. Courage

Solomon, Chuck. Major-League Batboy; written and illus. with photographs by
R Gr. 4-6. All is grist to the young baseball buff’s mill, so this
rather plodding text will doubtless have great appeal, since it describes what
batboys do behind the scenes as well as on the field, and since it is illustrated by
color photographs. Text and illustrations explain details of the hours of pre-
game preparation, duties of a batboy while the game is in progress, and
procedures of tidying the dugout and the locker room after the game. Most fans
will never get this close to the action. ZS

Stanley, Fay. The Last Princess: The Story of Princess Ka‘iulani of Hawai‘i;
$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.
R Gr. 4-6. Although the eleven-year-old Princess Ka‘iulani was
heir to the throne of Hawai‘i, her mother had a deathbed vision of Ka‘iulani’s
future: “You will go far away from your land and your people and be gone a
very long time. You will never marry and you will never rule Hawai‘i.” These
prophecies would all eventually come true, but not before Princess Ka‘iulani, at
the age of seventeen, convinced President Cleveland of the United States to block
his country’s annexation of her kingdom. (It would, however, occur after
Cleveland left office.) Ka‘iulani makes a strong focus for this usually glossed-
over piece of American history, and readers will be enlightened by Ka‘iulani’s
quiet determination in standing up to colonialism. The tone of the text is
sometimes adulatory and the depictions of Ka‘iulani are facially inexpressive, but
both the text and the full-page facing illustrations have intensity and dignity.
Larger, bolder, and simpler than her pictures for Good Queen Bess (BCCB
10/90), Stanley’s portraits of Ka‘iulani use strong patterns and have an almost
ceremonial—if somewhat mannered—composition. A map, bibliography, and
note on the Hawaiian language are included. RS
C.U. History—U.S.
D.V. Devotion to a cause

R 3-5 yrs. Companions to Stock's previous holiday books, *Christmas Time, Halloween Monster,* and *Thanksgiving Treat* (BCCB 11/90), these three again present a toddler's experience of celebration. A little black girl makes a valentine for an elderly neighbor; a boy learns that the best birthday present isn't necessarily the one you'd choose for yourself; another boy has his first Easter egg hunt while on a country weekend. Ordinary and immediate, each book is a pleasant introduction to special times (although *Easter* is a little too mild-mannered even for the gentle texture of the series), and Stock's watercolors are once again light, bright, and fresh. RS


R* Gr. 5-8. A catastrophic comedy, set in Australia but uproarious anywhere, finds two antithetical schoolmates, Belinda and Joe, the heirs to a bad-tempered sheep left them by an equally bad-tempered old woman whom they have interviewed on a school assignment. Agnes butts all comers, especially the greedy relatives (bad-tempered, of course) planning to sell Agnes for dog meat and turn Mrs. Carpenter's estate into a parking lot. The recipe for disaster would boil away to slapstick were it not for Taylor's witty style, which instead turns the whole cast on a satirical spit. No one is spared, and the climactic scene of chaos, reported in the local papers under the headline "Wild Sheep Runs Amok in Supermarket," serves up parody as well as pace. This laugh-out-loud read-aloud will also serve as a springboard to studying satirical literature. BH

C.U. Reading aloud
D.V. Older-younger generations


R* Gr. 8-12. Fourteen-year-old Gray has been raised by a household of women: her grandmother, her grandmother's cousin, her great aunt, her great aunt's grownup daughter, and a black friend who nursed her sick grandfather and whom Grandmother later financed through medical school. This cast subtly emerges with distinct individuality through the story of Gray's working out old feelings of abandonment resulting from her father's murder and her mother's leaving to run a business and establish a new life. The classic journey of maturation comes with a trip to the city, where Gray learns her mother's side of the story. Several problems complicate Gray's situation. One of her relatives is dying of cancer, and her best friend suffers cruelly from a domineering father. The attraction she feels for a local boy leavens the tone of crisis, and the storytelling (a household teatime ritual) becomes a motif that adds perspective without diffusing the intensity, which is sustained by naturalistic dynamics and a strong style. BH

D.V. Death, adjustment to; Self-appraisal

*Beethoven R/Mozart Ad*  
Gr. 4-7.  
“Composer’s World” is an apt series title, as Thompson makes a greater than usual effort to detail the political and social forces that affected the lives and work of her two illustrious subjects. The tone is occasionally pedantic, and, in *Mozart*, the text dutifully catalogs his life while almost ignoring his music. Beethoven, on the other hand, inspires the author to write a dramatic, often moving, account of the man and the music, with an eloquent employment of contemporary quotes: “‘I have never seen a more energetic or intense artist,’ wrote Goethe. ‘I understand very well how strange he must seem to the world.’” Too bad, though, that the quotes aren’t documented. Both books include sizable extracts from the composers’ most famous works, arranged for easy-intermediate piano (the binding is relaxed enough to allow for music-stand use). Period prints and paintings are well-reproduced and placed, breaking up the stodgy format of the double-column text. Each book concludes with a glossary and list of important works. RS  
C.U. Music


M  
Gr. 5-9.  
Beginning with an introduction that really needs an introduction, this book is filled with lively observations and anecdotes that suffer from a lack of context and an awkward writing style. The author and photographer apparently went to the city of Changsha in China to interview children and young people, although Thomson makes her presence known only by a couple of obliquely third-person references to a “foreign visitor”; a prefatory paragraph stating how subjects were found and interviewed would have been helpful. Although the focus is on the schooling, recreation, and home life of children, the book gives a comprehensive portrait of a busy Chinese city. Unfortunately, the text (although originally written in English) seems stiffly translated: “In Changsha heavy traffic is a fact of life. And children, who must brave it, talk a lot about the accidents they see and the fear in their hearts over rude pileups inside buses.” Self-conscious word painting frequently becomes confusing and ungrammatical: “The ones who aren’t at this soft form of exercise may be working out with weapons, bony old grannies among them, slashing the air with swords”. The photos are much better, including an adorable sequence of pictures of a toddler using chopsticks. Most readers will find the prose a struggle, but the details of homework, commerce on the busy market streets, and Chinese devotion to Donald Duck, are well worth rooting out. An index is appended. RS  
C.U. Social studies; City life  
D.V. Intercultural understanding

Oliver sure knows how to rub it in: "Too bad you are too little to go to school," he tells his sister Amanda. It's a good thing Mom is still around: "What shall we do together today?" Amanda asks her busy mother. Left to her own devices, the young pig finds time heavy on her hands: "she went outside and played Mighty Pig and the Amazing Baby Pig meet the Bad Guys. But without Oliver to tie up the bad guys and take them to jail, it was no fun at all." Four chapters, each presenting a familiar situation (being alone, being ill, having a messy room, having a bad day), combine gentle humor with ingenuous dialogue. When Amanda is sick in bed, Mother calls her "Poor Amanda." "I am very poor," Amanda eagerly concurs. Soft watercolor and pencil pictures provide a variety of textures and colors that enhance the gentle mood of the text. Preschool children will enjoy this as a read-aloud while young independent readers are sure to empathize with the porcine protagonist. RAS


This autobiographical fiction about a Dutch Jewish family's survival of World War II will appeal to slightly younger readers than does the diary of Anne Frank. Starting with a minor incident of antisemitism at school, the first-person, present-tense narrative marches inexorably through scenes of Nazi occupation, the roundup of Jews, the underground resistance finding Rachel's family places to hide, and the constant fear of discovery. Eight years old when the Germans enter the Netherlands, Rachel relates selected incidents in the next five years of her life. The experience reflects not the drudgery of a continuous account, nor the horror of being caught and deported, but the feeling of being caged, which makes Rachel and her sister sometimes rebellious and sometimes timid. At the moment of German capitulation, when the family goes rejoicing into the streets, Rachel's sister refuses: "I'm not going . . . It's still a little bit light outside." Perhaps the most moving aspect of the book is the least familiar, post-war segment—the sadness of parting with protectors, the embarrassing behavior of a grandfather crazed by camp starvation, the guilt of not having a tattooed number, the Red Cross letters delivering news of the dead, the child's resentment of unremitting tragedy, and, finally, the delayed grief. Not always cohesive, but authentically and effectively detailed. BH

C.U. History—World War II
D.V. Intercultural understanding; Social responsibility


The author, an Australian aborigine, left her home in a Catholic orphanage at the age of sixteen to become a house servant to a white family. Glenyse first learns the difference between herself and her employers when the Bigelows present her with a tin mug while they have their own tea in cups and saucers. She learns the difference again when a furious Mrs. Bigelow orders Glenyse, "her slave," out of the front seat of the car, and then orders her to wash the seat off. As an indictment of racism, this autobiography is heartfelt, but the writing is awkward and naive: "The silverware, placed effectively around the room, glittered vivaciously." The author faithfully reports her life, but casts
little perspective on it. Reminiscent of the proletarian fiction and memoirs of the 1930's, the situation presented here has a certain "Cinderella" appeal in its cataloging of (primarily domestic) injustice, and young consciousnesses will be raised to consider an Australian society beyond Mel Gibson and *Crocodile Dundee*. It is, however, unfortunate that the author lacks the literary sophistication that would provide insight and take her story to a level beyond documentary earnestness. RS

C.U. Social studies


M 5-7 yrs. “My mommy and daddy got a divorce last year. Now there’s somebody new at daddy’s house.” Daddy’s new roommate is his lover Frank, and the young narrator goes on to list what Daddy and Frank do together (work, eat, sleep, shave, etc.) and the different activities the boy and his father and Frank enjoy together, such as going to the zoo, ball games, shopping, and singing at the piano. Upbeat and good-humored, the text offers too much listmaking and too little story to let these loving relationships breathe. First in the publisher’s series of books “for and about the children of lesbian and gay parents,” this certainly fills a gap, although most children (of gay parents and otherwise) may find the book over-idyllic in its cataloging of perfect times. Mom’s explanation of what “gay” means—“Being gay is just one more kind of love”—is vague, especially in its usage of the word “more”. The full-color cartoons are suburban-set and amiable, if somewhat generic in their effect. Like Lesléa Newman’s *Heather Has Two Mommies* (BCCB 2/90), *Daddy’s Roommate* is the kind of well-meaning book that children won’t ask to have read to them nearly as often as their parents might like. RS

D.V. Father-son relations


R Gr. 6-9. Based in part on his family history, Yep’s story of a Chinese American adolescent whose family has just moved from Ohio to a small West Virginia town is set in 1927 and narrated by the protagonist, fifteen-year-old Joan Lee. Contrasting type-faces are used to show that some of the dialogue is in Chinese and some in English. The book gives a forceful picture of the prejudice and persecution endured by the Lee family, and a touching picture of their courage and patience in enduring both. They do have defenders and do make friends, and the story is all the stronger for having acceptance occur in a believable way and at a believable pace. ZS

D.V. Interracial understanding
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The Newbery Medal will be awarded to Jerry Spinelli for *Maniac Magee* (Little). The Newbery Honor Book is *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* by Avi (Jackson/Orchard).

The Caldecott Medal will be awarded to David Macaulay for *Black and White* (Houghton). Caldecott Honor books are “More, More, More” Said the Baby by Vera B. Williams (Greenwillow) and Charles Perrault’s *Puss in Boots*, illustrated by Fred Marcellino.

The American publisher receiving the Batchelder Award for the most outstanding translation of a book originally published in a foreign language is Dutton for Rafik Schami’s *A Hand Full of Stars*.

The Coretta Scott King Award will be presented to Mildred Taylor, author of *The Road to Memphis* (Dial) for writing and to Leo and Diane Dillon, illustrators of *Aïda* (Harcourt) for illustration. The Honor Books for writing are Angela Johnson’s *When I Am Old with You* (Jackson/Orchard) and James Haskins’ *Black Dance in America* (Harper).

The Scott O’Dell Award for historical fiction will be given to Pieter Van Raven for *A Time of Troubles* (Scribner’s).

The Canadian Library Association’s Best Book of the Year for Children is *The Sky Is Falling* by Kit Pearson (Viking). The Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award for illustration goes to Kady MacDonald Denton for *Till All the Stars Have Fallen: Canadian Poems for Children*, compiled by David Booth (Kids Can Press).

The Hans Christian Andersen Awards go to writer Tormod Haugen of Norway and illustrator Lisbeth Zwerger of Austria.

The Carnegie Medal was awarded to Anne Fine for *My War with Goggle-eyes* (Joy Street/Little).

The Kate Greenaway Medal was awarded to Michael Foreman for *War Boy* (Arcade).

The Margaret A. Edwards Award (formerly the SLJ/YASD Author Achievement Award) will be given to Robert Cormier.
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