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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 Center for Children’s Books. Betsy Hearne, Editor; Roger Sutton, Executive Editor; Zena Sutherland, Associate Editor; Deborah Stevenson, Editorial Assistant. An advisory committee meets weekly to discuss books and reviews. The members are Alba Endicott, Robert Strang, Elizabeth Taylor, Kathryn Pierson Jennings, and Deborah Stevenson. Reviewers’ initials are appended to reviews.

Subscription Rates: 1 year, institutions, $32.00; individuals, $27.00; $24.00 per year for two or more subscriptions to the same address; Canada, $39.24. In countries other than the United States and Canada, add $5.00 per subscription for postage. Japanese subscription agent: Kinokuniya Company Ltd. Single copy rate: $3.00. 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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New Titles for Children and Young People


*Ad Gr. K-3.* In this story of a child spending a weekend at an isolated lake with her great-uncle, the “whopper” is a large fish that Maggie finally catches, but then tosses to an old, marauding bear so that the animal won’t come near Uncle Ezra, dozing in his chair. Her heroic intervention serves to resolve both her fear of the bear and a parallel fear of her beloved uncle’s advancing age. Colored pencil and wash art, often hazy except for the intensely hued foreground figures, echo the quiet mood of the text. ZS

D.V. Animals, kindness to; Uncle-niece relations


*R Gr. 6-9.* Mary, thirteen, begins the story (and is subsequently heard from intermittently) by describing her trip from New York to Toronto with her grandmother in 1896. They are going to visit Gran’s old friend Bethlehem Reid, who is ill. Gran and Bethlehem, in turn, tell the story of their meeting, their flight north from Virginia, and the events that made them loving friends. This inner narrative, set in 1855, is forceful and dramatic; Gran, newly orphaned, had been sent to live with an uncle in Virginia and Beth was one of his slaves who couldn’t bring herself to trust a white girl, even one who appeared to hate slavery. By the time Gran and Beth’s journey as runaways was over, their trust and love for each other were profound. Armstrong’s novel has pace and suspense, characterization that is solid and consistent, and a crescendo that builds to a logical yet dramatic climax. The story of Gran and Beth is deftly folded into the quieter but effective framing narrative. ZS

D.V. Courage; Friendship values; Interracial understanding


*R Gr. 5-8.* Vithy and his older brother Mang have escaped from the “Big Paddy,” a collective forced-labor farm set up by the Khmer Rouge after their victory in Cambodia. But Mang soon disappears, and Vithy, remembering his brother’s injunction to “head for the lines,” heads alone for the Thai border, always hoping to find his brother. Vithy’s journey is a perilous balance between
adventure and escape, as he constructs a bicycle out of abandoned parts, visits Angkor Wat, and seems safely on his way only to have the bike taken from him by a woman with a knife. Vithy does make it to the border and a refugee camp, and here the novel veers off from its exciting realism to something more cozy. In the camp, Vithy is befriended by an Australian doctor, Betty, who helps him look for Mang, and, that failing, takes Vithy back with her to Sydney. Guess who’s waiting at the airport? Readers may enjoy the reunion even as they distrust its unforecasted optimism. RS

C.U. Social studies
D.V. Brothers


Ad Gr. 9-12. It’s a pity that the cover illustration, from a painting done during her lifetime, depicts Margaret Fuller as a turquoise-eyed and -clad dumpling, giving no hint that this woman was probably the most important female American intellectual of the nineteenth century. Balducci chronicles Fuller’s life with meticulous diligence, beginning with her studious childhood, through her professional writing career and involvement with the Transcendentalists, to her days of love and defiance in Rome during the Revolution of 1848-9. The problem with a life so crammed with incident is that it can make dull reading if treated completely, and this book, although informative, is pretty heavy going, with an assumption of a sophisticated reader (there’s not much background given for the American and Italian politics discussed) that may not be warranted. The style sometimes becomes turgid (“President Adams’s early exit seemed an omen of the sudden evaporation of the political power of his fellow Jeffersonians over the issue of slavery which Democratic-Republicans like Fuller opposed”) or sentimental (“His gentle, dark eyes and his aristocratic, almost delicate features assured Margaret that he was trustworthy”), but it’s really just that Fuller knew too many people, and the continual listing of names slows the pace. Still, this account of the life of a proper Bostonian feminist who had an illegitimate child with an Italian revolutionary and died at sea is worth reading—if not for the presentation, then for the fascinating facts. DS

C.U. American Literature


Ad Gr. 3-7. In 1845 Sir John Franklin led an Arctic expedition to search for the Northwest Passage; none of its members ever returned. Over the years bits of information, some early graves and remains, and a journal have turned up, making it clear that the men all perished but still leaving many questions unanswered. Owen Beattie’s anthropological work on the buried bodies of early expedition casualties (documented also in Beattie and Geiger’s adult book Frozen in Time and a Nova program) found lead poisoning, which would have caused the weakness and irrationality that eventually led to the crew’s deaths in the frozen north. This account is somewhat strangely organized—
Beattie starts out by telling you what he found, but it's not until chapter 6 that he really describes what was lost. Yet the story of science and tragedy is still gripping. Less interesting than the historical and scientific detective work, the chapters devoted to a fictional account of a young lad aboard one of the doomed ships nevertheless give a sense of the explorers' place, time, and dilemma. This fictionalization also seems a tad ghoulish, since the young lad's good friend appears alive in the story, text, and illustrations on one page and then is clearly very, very dead in a contemporary photograph a few pages later. Some illustrations are impressive, including reproductions of evocative period art and haunting photographs of Canadian landscape and anthropological work in progress (grisly exhumed corpses, not for the faint of heart); the modern-day illustrations, unfortunately, are stiff in comparison. The Beattie discovery is a great story, as good as any fictional mystery, and it demonstrates how absorbing applied science can be; a glossary, chronology, and bibliography are appended.

DS
C.U. Anthropology; Science


Ad Gr. 4-7. Marc Chagall is not only one of the most important artists of the twentieth century, but also one whose glowing colors and dreamlike visions make him particularly attractive to the young. In this biography of Chagall's long life, Bober chronicles the artist's Russian Jewish roots and upbringing, his war-enforced and chosen wanderings after leaving the country of his birth, and his gradual attainment of artistic recognition. Chagall's first wife, Bella, is depicted rightly as his great love and inspiration, although the portrait of his second wife seems less than sympathetic. Chagall's closeness to his Jewish roots and use of them in his art is a particular focus; unfortunately, only four small color reproductions are included, so the reader has little sense of Chagall's art. The writing style tends to be pedestrian ("How happy he was when his uncle agreed to take him along in his jolting cart") with occasional oddities ("his strange, doe-shaped eyes"), but overall this is a competent and easy-to-read biography of an important artistic figure. A glossary of artistic terms, a chronology, and an index are included; occasional black-and-white pencil drawings are jarringly coy rather than Chagallian in nature. DS
C.U. Art appreciation


Ad 4-7 yrs. Megan's Mom is the town librarian, a situation Megan likes, especially when the sitter can't come and she and her baby brother get to go to work with Mom. Megan likes to help out at the library, picking up the toys, watering the plants, "putting away the children's books." You might find the last activity rather alarming, since the focus of the story is the fact that Megan does not yet know how to read. It isn't clear how old Megan is, but she does go to school, and is patiently waiting for the day when all her reading effort pays off. It does when, one frantic day at the library, baby Nathan pitches a fit during story hour and Mom has to comfort him—leaving Megan in charge.

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And, despite a few hitches, she reads her favorite book, *Fly up High*, to a spellbound audience. The story may raise questions—and eyebrows—among librarians who've never enjoyed this particular variety of day care, but struggling beginning readers will savor Megan's triumph despite the all-of-a-suddenness of the victory. Line and watercolor illustrations of the library are sunny and sometimes crowded, jiggling with a clutter that is familiar and endearing. RS

C.U. Story hours


R Gr. 7-9. The title refers to the jeans worn by the narrator, fifteen-year-old Hope, who is plump, usually inarticulate, and totally lacking in the self-confidence shown by her older sister Heather. Since she has a crush on Dr. Rogers, the teacher who has had enough faith in her to place her in an honors program, Hope really works at participation, and she's doubly a beneficiary because of it. First, she makes friends and even has enough courage to ask one boy, Tuy Nguyen, to a dance; second—and even more gratifying—she gains self-confidence to the point where she is articulate and excited about learning and gains insight that helps her to understand the intricacy of other people's problems and to be more compassionate about them. This is a fine rites-of-passage story, intelligent in its insight and observations, leavened by the convincing voice—often tremulous, often excited—of a teenage girl. ZS

D.V. Self-reliance; Teacher-student relations


Ad Gr. 5-8. After the death of her mother, twelve-year-old Bryn moves with her father to a tiny town in Ontario, where her mother's sister has a farm. Bryn, angry and hurt, doesn't know what to make of her gruff aunt Pearl or her cousin Winnie, who has Down's syndrome. While Bryn struggles with her new schoolmates' cruelty to her and Winnie, she begins to feel at home on Pearl's farm and gradually begins to accept her mother's death. Characterization is uneven, but Bryn, her father, and Pearl are credible as people in stages of grief and adjustment, with Bryn's occasional nastiness to Winnie offputtingly authentic. The writing tends to be artful at the expense of clarity (it's difficult to tell what actually has happened in a scene where a little girl falls into a river) and occasionally miscalculated in its effects ("Thoughts bounced off me like dead flies"), but is generally evocative of the changes of rural and emotional seasons. Despite the flaws, this is a truthful and quietly told story of the forming of a family in the wake of tragedy. DS

D.V. Death, adjustment to; Family relations


R Gr. 2-4. This brief novel is convincingly told by Lawrence (half of a tight interracial friendship) and is direct, simple, and deeply touching without being sentimental. An elderly man in a Los Angeles neighborhood fixes bicycles and encourages boys and girls to sign them out for the day. Free.
Lawrence has a favorite bike and is indignant when a newcomer (who signs out as “Abrehem Lincoln”) takes that bike and doesn’t return it. When Lawrence and his buddy force the new boy to return the bike, they realize what the Bicycle Man has known all along: what “Abrehem” (actually, Leon) is doing is looking for attention from male peers and adults, since he is without a father—or a grandfather. Quiet, subtly shaded pastel and charcoal drawings have fidelity of details, balance of mass, and sage placement in composition. ZS

D.V. Ethical concepts; Older-younger generations


R* Gr. 4-8. Betsy Byars could no more resist telling a good story than fly—well, actually, she flies, too, as we learn in this inventive autobiography. Weaving back and forth between her recent experiences with snake-watching and her childhood and career, Byars eschews the usual chronology in favor of a more freely associated sequence of episodes that all bear, ultimately, on her writing. Early on, we get a plot summary in one of the book’s many lists: “1. The writer, Betsy Byars, comes to know a snake, Moon, and blah . . . blah . . . blah . . . blah.” The process of writing itself comes under close scrutiny, as in this calculation: “Walk to refrigerator . . . 11 seconds. Take Miniature Snickers from freezer . . . 3 seconds. Warm Snicker in microwave . . . 16 seconds. Return eating Snicker . . . 11 seconds. Total elapsed time . . . 41 seconds.” Other lists, such as the one inserted into an hysterical story about a childhood project gone awry, cast light on the past: “Here’s what went into the First Skateboard in the History of the World: One board. Forty-two assorted nails. One roller skate.” (Added up, a prescription for disaster.) Byars uses the element of surprise, injects it with humor, and blends in information at the same time. With an informal, even colloquial, style that will recruit young readers into an immediate I-thou relationship, she serves up characters and incidents here with all the aplomb of fiction, including dialogue and dramatic details. The book itself is imaginatively designed, and a gallery of black-and-white photographs documents the inviolable truth of it all. Betsy Byars really does have her pilot’s license. BH

C.U. Writing for children

D.V. Creativity


Ad Gr. 4-6. Set in Brooklyn in the 1920s, this is the story of a boy (Abel, an orphan who lives with his sisters and grandmother) who aches to have his sister move out so that he will have his own room. Grandma, a stereotypical bossy/sexist tyrant, says the older sister has to marry first, that it’s a rule; the older sister is a doctor who doesn’t particularly want to marry but is pleasant enough to the suitors who call. What suitors? The three that Abel’s friend Hilda has found in the files of her father, a matchmaker. A repetitive sitcom, this caricatures rather than characterizes its cast (except the doctor/sister) and relies on Grandma and her stubborn ways for its humor. Mildly amusing, but not Clifford’s best. ZS

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**Gr. 7-10.** "Funnybone" is the name Christine gives to the mischievous, "trickster" part of her imagination, and Funnybone comes up with many pranks designed to wreak revenge upon Christine's enemies. He prompts her, for example, to send a forged love note from a disliked teacher to Christine's brother Walt's girlfriend (also disliked). In tandem, Christine sends an anonymous note to her brother telling him where to find the love note. The schemes are all devious and mean spirited, sometimes stretching credulity but usually entertaining. (It's different, too, to see a girl perpetrating such trouble.) Unfortunately, the novel, which has, plotwise, suspensefully revolved around Walt's disappearance, becomes an oppressively didactic sermon about addiction and recovery, as Christine finds out about Walt's drug problem and realizes her own reliance on Funnybone to solve her problems. A teacher, a friend, a private detective, a recovering alcoholic— all deliver lengthy speeches designed to show the reader, as much as Christine, the light. The angry parts of the book are genuinely fierce; the redemption isn't nearly so compelling. RS

D.V. Brothers-sisters


**R 4-7 yrs.** In a sequence of crafty cut-paper collages, Alexander the monkey escapes from his desolately monochromatic jungle into a world of colors, one at a time. Beginning with yellow, each double spread features a landscape of colored objects ("Yellow daisies,/ Yellow bees,/ Yellow bananas up in trees") set off by shades and shadows from the colored background. Each spread also includes a die-cut hole through which Alexander and readers get a peep at the next color: orange, blue, red, green, purple, white, and finally a full-colored ménage revealed in the last spread. Dodds' casually rhyming text invites chanting along ("Blue sky/ Blue sea,/ Blue dolphins, 1, 2, 3"), although the reiterated "everywhere" ("Purple, purple, everywhere") is often belied by the pictures, which accent the focus color with hues that rightfully belong on other pages (plus, the "black black" page is actually brown brown). Kids, however, will enjoy pointing all this out. RS


**R Gr. 7-12.** These days, current events often strain at the confines of a hardcover book; think of the several biographies of Nelson Mandela that appeared just before his release from prison. However, the Berlin Wall is down, a fact that will remain significant no matter what happens next. Epler's tidy history of the Wall ends with German reunification; it begins with the economic and political disruption of the Weimar Republic that led to Nazism, World War II, and the subsequent determination by the Allies that Germany would never again be a threat. Clearly outlining the postwar tensions which led to the building of the Wall, as well as those exacerbated by the wall itself, Epler provides a comprehensive context for the Wall's destruction. The writing style is efficient and accessible; photos (some particularly exciting escape shots) add
drama and witness; notes, chronology, index, bibliography and reading list round out an impeccable research resource. RS
C.U. Social studies


**R** Gr. 4-7. Twelve-year-old Jake is the narrator, and he begins his story just after his father's burial; the setting is the Old West, the plot is a romping spoof of the adventure tale, and the characters range from early Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford to Mae West and W. C. Fields. *Jim Ugly* is Dad's dog (it takes the whole book for him to become Jake's dog), and he contributes to the action when Jim follows a trail that leads him to a chase by villains, the discovery that Dad is alive, the answer to the mystery of some missing diamonds, and a snippet of love interest: Dad and the lovely actress Wilhelmina Marlybone-Jenkins. Lively, clever, and humorous, this must have been as much fun to write as it is to read. ZS

D.V. Father-son relations


**R** Gr. 1-3. The Seaway and its attendant system of locks are an excellent choice of subject for Gibbon's schematic style, which is here enlivened by bubbly waters and a gently rolling landscape; the maps and diagrams have a light, casual touch that does not belie their clarity or accuracy. Gibbons' account of the Seaway begins in 1535 with the French explorations; she goes on to show the early canals, settlements, and the first lock, built in 1779. The four-panel demonstration of how this lock works is a good introduction to the more intricate (if essentially the same) operations of the system today, shown through the experience of one large "laker" as it progresses from the Atlantic, through the fifteen locks of the Seaway, to Gary, Indiana. The progression is neat, as are the visual and textual explanations. RS

C.U. Transportation


**R** Gr. 4-6. Koya's sister Loritha, and Dawn, friend to both sisters, have quarreled, and Koya's caught in the middle. This tale of sixth-grade feuding is enlivened by a frisky protagonist: Koya mugs and makes jokes and is constantly exasperating her friends and families with her desire to keep everyone happy, even at the expense of her true feelings. Loritha says, "You make me sick. You always have to be so . . . so good. Miss Good Girl." The fight between the sisters is complicated not only by the double-dutch jump-rope tournament that started the whole thing, but also by the fact that the girls' cousin Del, a pop star, is coming to visit. Although the theme of Koya's denial of anger seems imposed upon the story rather than growing out of it, the book is a good mix of exciting and ordinary events, and the happy—if rushed—conclusion will appeal to genre fans. Along with Emily Moore's *Whose Side*...
Are You On? (BCCB 10/88), this is one of too few school-and-family stories to feature a black cast and community. RS D.V. Friendship values; Sisters


Ad 4-7 yrs. A preface in which the author/photographer mourns her loss, at age eleven, of her own father is written at a much more sophisticated level than the book proper, which is a simple litany of the wonderful things that daddies do and are and have: "Daddies have shoulders to stand on, bellies to sit on, backs to climb on, hands to hold." The sentiment is admirable, the black-and-white photos are affectionate, but the book is more a coffee-table catalog for daddies needing a pat on the back than it is a picture book for children. RS D.V. Father-child relations


Ad Gr. 9-12. Sarah and Cathy, like their mothers, had been best friends. Now Sarah’s mother won’t speak to Mrs. Johnson, and Cathy, eighteen like Sarah, runs with a fast crowd that has no room for Sarah, a serious student at Julliard. Despite these conflicts, Mrs. Johnson invites Sarah to join her, Cathy, and Cathy’s friends for a few weeks on Cape Cod in the lovely old home of Mrs. Johnson’s mother-in-law. This is a look at middle-class black culture that’s rare in YA books, and, equally rare, Guy confronts the painful discrimination sometimes visited upon darker-skinned blacks (Sarah and her mother Lottie) by those who are lighter (Cathy and company). Cathy’s viciousness is convincing but entirely unrelieved, in the end dipping the novel into Lois Duncan territory; Cathy’s grandmother even offers a “bad seed” theory for the girl’s murderous disposition. The break between the girls’ mothers is more subtly conveyed: while readers at first will give all their sympathies to Mrs. Johnson, events will show that appearances can be deceiving. Unfortunately, the story is often confusing, particularly whenever characters relate past events that have bearing on the present; it’s hard to figure out, for example, exactly how Sarah’s sexy love interest Jean Pierre got into the picture. With the exception of the girls’ mothers, characterization is oversimplified, something that cannot be said about the prose, which is often gawky (“Fog smothered the rays of the soon-to-be-setting sun with the wispiness of multicolored chiffon that made the air hazy”) and occasionally unintelligible ("Sarah wondered what Lottie had said to Mrs. Johnson when she had gone to see her and had told her of her daughter’s near-tragic end?”). Still, all the emotions are fierce, and Sarah’s outside status is intensely rendered. RS D.V. Self-acceptance


R Gr. 3-6. Illustrated with black-and-white photographs, this is a detailed description of a typical day in a busy newsroom. The Hautzigs’ research was done at WRGB in Schenectady, New York—the first television station and home of the first TV national newscast. Although the photos don’t have
captions, the design of the book coordinates prose and illustrations nicely. There
is no glossary, but the textual definitions of equipment and personnel are easy to
understand. There is an exception—at one point it is difficult to determine
whether a scanner is an instrument or a person ("Scanners provide information
about local events"). Familiar analogies (a conductor and orchestra, or pilots in
a cockpit) help to describe how the studio employees manipulate equipment in
order to produce a perfectly-timed newscast. For young non-fiction readers who
"just want a good book," this is a likely candidate. KPJ
C.U. Journalism


Ad Gr. 2-4. Leona and Eddie, her next-door best friend, have
planned to pretend illness, have a wonderful day eating what they like, and work
on their rock collections. Nothing works as planned. Eddie’s mother drives him
to school (he hasn’t been able—as Leona has—to drive his temperature up
because the night light bulb had burned out) and Leona is stranded. She does get
into Eddie’s house via tree branches but is almost caught by Eddie’s mother
when she returns. And that’s just the beginning of a long day for both children,
each of whom gets into one difficulty after another. While the story has the kind
of disaster humor dear to primary grades readers, it has so much of it, and so
little else, that the piled-on incidents seem increasingly thin. ZS

Hazen, Barbara Shook. *Mommy’s Office*, illus. by David Soman. Atheneum,

M 4-6 yrs. Emily begins, “Today Mommy’s taking me to her
office, instead of where I go, which is sort of like my office.” Describing each
small activity of the day, she compares Mommy’s office and her own, but lets
the pictures show that her own office is school. The idea that school is a child’s
“job” is nicely introduced, but the sedately paced story may have little appeal for
the read-aloud audience. They may also feel patronized by Emily’s cutely literal
misunderstandings: “Next we go to Mommy’s coffee break.... Nobody breaks
anything and everybody is very polite.” Watercolor pictures have adequate figure
painting but are awkward in the depiction of faces; the use of the same figures on
the bus en route to Mommy’s office in the morning and on the bus at the end of
the day seems contrived. ZS
D.V. Mother-daughter relations; Occupational orientation


R Gr. 9-12. Fifteen-year-old Fran Kelly is tempted by a magical
offer to escape from her harsh life. After fleeing one night from her filthy home
and dysfunctional family, she wanders until “the world threatened to dissolve and
Fran with it.” Near exhaustion, she finds herself strangely drawn to a small
house and enters through an unlocked French window. Inside, she meets
Michael, who seems to be an odd middle-aged magician, and Hilary, the old
woman who owns the house. As she gets to know him, Fran discovers that
Michael is not at all as he first appears, he isn’t even human—a creature from
“the gap between the worlds.” The tale takes on a Tamlin flavor when Michael
promises to make all Fran’s wishes come true in exchange for her eternal
companionship. On her deathbed, Hilary tries to warn Fran about Michael’s 
bargains—"It’s a kind of addiction, life with Michael. The pleasure gets smaller 
and smaller, and you can see the time of payment approaching, but still you 
can’t get free!” Fran’s ultimate decision, based on a vision of heaven, lacks the 
powerful emotion that rescued Tamlin from the fairies, but Fran has no Janet to 
save her, only her own strength. A good story, poetically crafted. KPJ

Hest, Amy. The Go-Between; illus. by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan. Four Winds, 
R Gr. K-3. Tidy, busy (but not cluttered), colorful watercolor 
paintings include some interiors but primarily show the passing scene on New 
York streets. Lexi, who tells the story, loves to get up early and look out on 
Broadway, especially at her friend Mr. Singer’s newsstand. Gram, who shares 
Lexi’s room, has known Mr. Singer since they were children playing street 
baseball together. Lexi begins carrying notes back and forth, acting as go-
between, and it will probably not surprise readers when Gram becomes Mrs. 
Singer. The tone is light, affectionate but not sentimentalized; the plot is 
structurally solid and moves at a brisk pace. ZS
D.V. Grandparent-child relations

58151-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-58150-7. [224p]. Library ed. $15.00; Trade ed. 
$15.99. Reviewed from galleys.
Ad Gr. 7-9. Flippant and garrulous, adolescent Gina describes her 
adventures and misadventures when she is on a trip to Italy, traveling with a 
woman working for the yo-yo firm that sponsored the contest Gina had won.
She had learned many tricks ("Shoot for the moon" is one) from her deceased, 
beloved grandfather. She has promised her grandmother that she will go to a 
certain place in a certain town on a certain day—but she doesn’t know what 
she’ll find there. The plot is labored, its development often dependent on 
contrivance or coincidence, but there’s some suspense in the story, a romantic 
interest, and plenty of activity and light banter. ZS

R Gr. 5-8. Jacques has completed the fourth of six projected 
books in his fantasy series set in Redwall Abbey, a medieval society of mice, 
squirrels, and porcupines. Chronologically preceding Redwall (BCCB 7/87) and 
Mattimeo (BCCB 4/90), Mariel of Redwall provides the history of how the 
legendary Joseph Bell first came to the abbey. As the master-mouse bellmaker 
and his daughter, Mariel, escort the bell by sea on its way to its new owner, 
their ship is captured by searats. All the searats are evil and violent, but their 
king, Gabool, is the worst of the lot. He chops off the head of one of his 
captains as an example to the others, throws a couple more of into a scorpion 
pit, and tries to drown both Mariel and her father. The dialects in this series are 
distinctive, including the moles’ cockney ("Burrhooohurr! B’ain’t nothen loik 
music to soften a hanimal’s ‘eart"), the imperialist military banter of the Hare 
Patrol ("Top-hole! See y’ later. Face front now, don’t turn y’ back on the bally 
enemy, old chap. They’ll shoot you in the behind, wot!"), and the pirate jargon 
of the rats ("Vermin after me own dark heart. Haharrhahaharr!"). By now, the
growing ranks of Redwall fans are experts at deciphering the lingo, and they’ll absorb every word in this new book as Mariel risks danger and conquers evil. KPJ


R Gr. K-2. Bently the frog would do anything for his best friend, Kack Kack the duck—even take care of her silly egg when she goes off on a visit. From boredom, Bently paints the egg beautifully, and it is immediately snatched by a horrid boy who mistakes it for an Easter egg. So Bently must go on a daring rescue mission to the nearby house. The pale, close-focus watercolors all center on an animated Bently—the best is of Bently cradling the egg on the brim of a lady’s straw hat while giving the wearer an upside-down, toothy grin. Bently’s simple, frogged determination makes this story charming, and the number of new friends he finds in his selfless rescue of the egg contains a subtle message. KPJ

D.V. Friendship values


R* 5-8 yrs. Young listeners will forever identify with Boots, the youngest and most benevolent of three brothers who set out to seek their fortunes. Boots listens to the advice of an old woman whom the others spurn and thus finds three magic objects to help him cut down a giant oak, dig a well, fill it with water . . . and inherit a kingdom. For several reasons, this is a case of folklore fulfilled in picture book format. First, the selection involves a tale of soul-satisfying simplicity and symmetry. Second, the art projects the drama of a new variant without overwhelming the text. And third, the adaptation is cadenced for reading aloud, with changes logical to the spirit of Asbjørnsen’s source: it’s a minor extension to miniaturize the magic ax and shovel when a mere nut has been the source of gushing waters; and it’s not quite so terrible—but terrible enough—to have dogs set upon the evil brothers instead of having their heads (or sometimes ears) cut off. In a clever twist of Kimmel’s own devising, the older brothers get exactly what’s coming to them—“They can be dogkeepers.” The addition of the wise old woman and the deletion of a princess as part of the reward package seem to be a balanced update. Root’s pictures build suspense with shadowy figures, streaky light, and eerie landscapes dominated by the green that precedes a tornado. The linework is delicate but confident, and the pictures are cleverly framed in the kind of twigs and vines scattered when the brothers cast the old woman aside. An old story newly, and truly, cast. BH

D.V. Kindness


R 5-9 yrs. When a troll kidnaps a farm couple’s beautiful baby, she leaves behind her own, “big and ugly, with bristle-like hair, teeth as sharp as
nails, and a claw on its little finger.” Despite the mockery of the servants, and
despite the farmer’s many efforts to lose or kill the changeling, his wife holds
onto it with maternal protectiveness, feeding it rats and spiders when it refuses
delicacies. “The truth was that the more she suffered for the sake of the
changeling, the more protective of him she became.” And when the farmer’s
wife loses everything—house, husband, almost her sanity—her own child is
returned. The happy ending is welcome but almost pallid in contrast to the
suffering that has gone on before. Winter does not avoid the cruel incidents, but,
through rhythmic, quilt-like patterns and naive coloring, she clearly places the
story within a folkloric landscape that allows distance. The forest is Christmas-
treed and -green with salmon accents; the fire—set by the husband?—in which
wife and troll almost die has the literal stylization of an icon. Kids won’t be
fooled by the cartooned quality of the characters’ expressions and gestures;
instead, they’ll recognize the figures as actors, the setting as scenery, both
comforting masks for a scary story. While the text is long, it is smoothly
translated for reading aloud. RS

D.V. Mother-child relations

Lasky, Kathryn. Think Like An Eagle: At Work with a Wildlife Photographer;
illus. with photographs by Christopher G. Knight and Jack Swedberg. Joy
galleys.

R Gr. 4-7. From the wintry woods of New England to the
swamps of Florida and back north to the Alaskan coast, this photodocumentary
stalks one of the most elusive animals of all, a human at work photographing
animals. Ex-hunter Jack Swedberg is a veteran wildlife photographer of 30
years, a past master at hiding in blinds, floats, and other devices that allow him
to wait and watch for the right moment. Several such moments are captured in
both pictures and text as Swedberg photographs two eagles fighting over a deer
carcass, another eagle diving for fish, alligators in conflict, a beaver smacking
the water, a turtle considering the fly that has settled on its eye, a series of
elegant water birds, a bear, a whale, and a deer. Although Lasky’s prose has
characteristically lyrical moments, she has tightened it for a you-are-there quality
and has maintained concentration on the subject rather than on information about
the various creatures and their habitats. In fact, one of the more vivid moments
is Swedberg’s human error of forgetting the condensation that would form on his
lenses in transferring them from an air-conditioned van to a muggy lagoon.
Faced with the stunning combination of Swedberg’s nature shots and Knight’s
location shots—all in full, well-reproduced color—kids can pursue the all-
important question: who needs a gun? BH

C.U. Nature study
D.V. Occupational orientation

Leedy, Loreen. The Monster Money Book; written and illus. by Loreen Leedy.
galleys.

Ad 6-9 yrs. Kids love money, and Leedy’s goofy glut of monster
characters (and their human friend, Sarah) makes an appealing cast for a
discussion of such topics as allowances, savings, budgets, banks, and interest.
Unlike the author/illustrator’s previous introductions to letter-writing (BCCB
12/91) and newspaper production (BCCB 5/90), this financial how-to doesn’t offer much in the way of projects unless, as in the case of the Monster Club, readers are faced with the delicious agony of deciding what to do with $54.00. (And while Sarah gives the monsters tips on how to “save, spend, and give” their money, we never quite find out what they decide to do). Although the concepts are sound and the cartoons eccentrically appealing, there’s a bit too much information for the younger kids (interest rates?) and not enough for those actually old enough to open a bank account or have a cash card, both possibilities mentioned in the text. RS C.U. Money—acquisition and use


R* Gr. 5-8. With her uncanny sense of metaphor and experienced capability for supporting images with ordinary detail, Mahy centers a psychological thriller on the tunnels, or underrunners, created by the earth’s seasonal expansion and contraction. Seeking escape underground are Tris, a boy still troubled by his mother’s long-ago desertion, and Winola, a girl hiding from her abusive father. The children’s friendship is based partly on a shared fantasy game and partly on what turns out to be, for Tris, a very real memory. The New Zealand seaside setting is vivid, but what’s most impressive about the writing is Mahy’s ability to build characters into plot (too many children’s book writers reverse the process). She does so here with natural momentum and a literary tunneling that does credit to the central idea: “wherever you look there are tunnels running through everything, . . . crabs in sand and codlin caterpillars in apples.” And sadness in dangerous men, and courage in quiet boys, and shadows of the past in present situations—and, not least of all, sharp fox teeth in Winola’s piggybank smile. In fact, Tris’ nickname of “Ratty” is part of a subtle but telling series of references to The Wind in the Willows. Although it’s never made explicit, Winola has a lot in common with Ratty’s friend Mole, whose instinct was to go to ground for safety. Yet when Winola returns to her abandoned home, in a parallel to Grahame’s famous “Dulce Domum,” she finds the greatest peril of all. Distinctive without becoming didactic, the theme is one that critics can enjoy analyzing while children absorb it through the cracking good story. BH D.V. Friendship values; Imaginative powers


R 5-7 yrs. Spud and Joe are playing car crash (“Scrunch! Clank! Ker-pow!”) when the dreadful Charles Andrew Frothingham comes along and calls them immature. Naturally, Spud and Joe have to defend themselves with a small fib (“It so happens our real car is in the shop!”), which eventually backfires into their illicit acquisition of Principal Lamar J. Spurgle’s new sports car (“Don’t even breathe on it,’ said Spurgle”). Events escalate to a climax that involves the entire Board of Education and a just denouement for all. The Cut-Ups are always good for a little nonstop action, as well as some spontaneous throwaway profiles. When Spud and Joe leave the house with a video camera, Mom asks them why they need it. “It’s for a school project,” says Joe. “Oh,
sure," says Mom. Marshall's uninhibited watercolors exaggerate the drama in high-cartoon tradition. Rate this series capital K for kid appeal. BH


R* 4-6 yrs. "Old Washburn always looked at the bright side of life on Grandfather Mountain. He never worried and he never complained. 'As long as I have a sharp pocket knife, I can whittle my way out of any trouble . . . .' That's just what he does, too, when his cow, pig, and chickens run away, grasshoppers eat his bean crop, raccoons consume his corn, and a storm destroys his house. As a result of each catastrophe, Old Washburn whittles musical instruments that eventually lure the neighbors to rebuild his place ("he could whittle . . . a party out of a blown-down cabin"). Martin's effects are cumulative, her writing itself is whittled to a smooth conclusion, and her breezy tone serves to open up Gaber's style of illustration. The funky colors, free-wheeling lines, down-home setting, and startling closeups of the cast significantly heighten an already tall tale and make it one of the best story hour readalouds for young children to come down the pike lately. BH

C.U. Story hour


R Gr. 3-5. King John has become so vain that he forbids his subjects, and even his wife, to look at him. "Whoever chances to look at me will be beheaded." Somehow, though, the Queen manages to bear six handsome sons and one curious daughter, Sweet Rosilla, who peeks every year when her father conducts his annual inspection of his children and pats her on the head. That pat indicates a warm heart somewhere inside the selfish king, and sure enough, it's found out, with the aid of his daughter, before the end of the story. This benign variant of "Like Meat Loves Salt" is occasionally a touch too coy in its styling, but on the whole it is a pleasantly spun out, just-complicated-enough story that should appeal to those children old enough to prefer their fairy tales funny and a bit fractured. Manageable chapters will encourage practicing readers, and the generally felicitous prose has the balance of action and conversation that makes for a good readaloud as well. William Low's pencil portraits and vignettes offer both vigorous suggestion and visual relief. RS

D.V. Father-daughter relations


R 3-6 yrs. A beach ball takes one big bounce—off the beach, up in the air, past some truly amazed people and animals, and finally back into the arms of its bouncer. No, not much of a story, but the real goal here is to illustrate the difference between left and right, a distinction far more perplexing than the laws of gravity. Each double page spread is centered by a big color photo straddling the gutter; each of the pages is labelled "left" or "right"; the beach ball is always on one side or the other. It's a bit repetitive, but
reinforcing as well. As McMillan notes in a brief afterword, “in addition to determining which side of the photo the beach ball is on, children will learn that their left hand is holding the left page of the book, and their right hand is holding the right page of the book.” That is, if the child is holding the book right-side up... but that’s another story. Over to you, Bruce. RS


NR Gr. 7-12. Miguel is fifteen, and his godfather says “it is the right age for him to be initiated into the life that is fitting and proper for a son of such a noble soldier and discoverer.” This is a story, from the point of view of a boy with a Spanish Conquistador father (lost on an expedition) and an Indian mother, of part of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Miguel has many adventures with an expedition that searches in vain for a city of gold: he takes part in battle, he is captured by hostile Indians, he and a cabin-boy friend find a treasure, he discovers the cabin boy is a cabin girl, he encounters his father living with Indians in the forest, and he finally returns with the treasure. The book is so episodic that all this adventure is completely unexciting, particularly since the time and historical background are never really explained. There are hints of moral questions, with Spaniards plundering and betraying Indians and one another, but the writing (or translating) style here makes the story dated and interminably tortuous. Digressions into dreams, tedious personal histories, and fragments of romantic but uninteresting poetry resound—in long, rambling sentences—with language that is at times merely stilted (“I stood there looking down at him for a long time, till I perceived in his total motionlessness the image of death,” says the young cabin boy-turned-girl) and at times downright confusing (“The voices of the two men, with the accent of the lands where the sun rises so harsh to the ear. . .”). This book’s pacing, style, and form will prevent young readers from finishing, let alone enjoying, the story. DS


R Gr. 2-4. A closing historical note gives the facts on which this true story is based and to which it adheres quite faithfully. In a light, pleasant narrative style, Milton describes the decision to send a giraffe as a gift to the King of France; it came from an Egyptian Pasha who hoped that his present would alleviate the tension that existed between the two countries. The king fretted at the wait: first the voyage, then detention in the south of France because of weather, then the long walk of La Girafe to Paris (1826) where Charles X and his family were, at last, delighted. Action and humor in the illustrations (cartoon line and subdued colors) add to the appeal of the book. ZS


M Gr. 6-9. “All the subjects, or their designated aides, have approved the material in their own chapter.” Grammatical considerations aside, this statement from the preface to this biographical collection amounts to a warning of the adulatory tone to come. All of the celebrities profiled here are
proud to be Asian, proud to be Americans, believe in the value of hard work, and are famous (including tennis player Michael Chang, who is redundantly referred to as a "well-known celebrity"). While each of the fourteen profiles included here do contain facts about their subjects, none contains any ambiguity or mention of less than perfect happiness (after the overcoming of Great Odds). Maxine Hong Kingston’s novels, for example, powerfully convey the difficulties of a bicultural heritage, but one wonders if her profilers have read any of them: "Utilizing her words [sic], Ms. Kingston will continue to write stories that communicate her values and ideas toward accomplishing world peace." (Similarly, the authors say of the rock group Hiroshima that their name "reflects pride in their Asian-American heritage and serves as a reminder in support of world peace.") The writing here is sometimes glib (Connie Chung and Maury Povich “accumulated many air miles to be with each other”), and repetitive (physicist Samuel Ting’s “first year was especially difficult when he started college”). Non sequiturs are sometimes perplexing: “[Ting] says that scientists . . . cannot hesitate to ask questions, even when their view may be unpopular. Still remembering his college days, Dr. Ting says, ‘At the University of Michigan, I went to all the football games. I still go back.’” Others profiled include Jose Aruego, Daniel Inouye, Haing Ngor and An Wang; black-and-white photos are publicity shots (including a peculiar pose of economist Wendy Gramm and family with a dead deer). A bibliography and index are appended. RS


Ad Gr. 6-8. Tommy’s mother has terminal cancer, and Mom’s tyrannical sister (a nurse) has decided that Tommy, a thirteen-year-old girl, is too young to stay home. Tommy is sent to Maine to stay with Jud, the father she’s never seen since her parents’ divorce when she was three. This is the story of Tommy's learning to know and love Jud, to understand more about her parents via letters from Mom, and to accept the fact that she will be living with Jud after Mom dies. The correspondence, in which Mom gives her life story in installments, is not quite believable as the communication of mother and daughter after years of close contact. Otherwise, the developing relationship between father and daughter and Tommy’s integration into a new lifestyle are credible. The book is weakened by the improbable sentimentality of the final episode, in which Tommy and Jud go back to see Mom and there is a tender three-way bedside reunion. ZS

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


R* Gr. 2-4. First published in Germany in 1988, this book describes in detail the evolution of a garden in a neglected back yard. It concentrates on Ben’s flower garden and Caroline’s vegetable garden, both small tidy plots within the large garden of the urban house into which the family has just moved. This has no limits of place or period; casually conveying values of family solidarity, neighborliness, and persistence, the book focuses on the year’s cycle and its rota of activities: preparing the soil, deciding on what to grow where, planting seeds or seedlings, and the seasonal or continual care needed by

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gardens. The paintings and the black-and-white diagrams are tidy, explicit, and adequately captioned. Although the formats differ, as does the type of garden, the book is reminiscent, in its tidiness and in the completeness of its coverage, of Christina Björk's *Linnea's Windowsill Garden* (BCCB 12/88). A sensible book for the beginning gardener, this has a pleasant fictional framework and illustrations that are both attractive and informative. ZS


R* Gr. 5-9. In this latest installment of their adventures (following *Island of Ogres*, BCCB 2/89), medieval samurais Zenta and Matsuzo find themselves among the Ainu, a racially distinct group of people who lived (and still do) on Japan's northernmost island of Ezo (now Hokkaido). Weary and wounded from their long sea journey, Zenta and Matsuzo are taken prisoner, albeit benignly treated: there is a Japanese settlement near the Ainu village and relationships between the two groups have become uneasy. There's a lot here about Ainu traditions, particularly a bear cult, but the facts always inform the fast-moving plot. While Zenta and Matsuzo together make a strong, sympathetic focus, there is plenty of difference—and outright disagreement—between them, as older and wiser Zenta adapts to and learns from the Ainu ways while Matsuzo is horrified by their un-Japanese hygiene and un-Buddhist animal sacrifice. Both men, in very different ways, try to mend the breach between the Ainu and the settlers; series fans will be glad that there's plenty of intrigue, treachery, and swordsmanship along the way. New and old fans alike will appreciate the ending, in which all signs point to a sequel. RS


R Gr. 7-10. A special murder mystery weekend is taking place at the plush Ridley Hotel, and sixteen-year-old Liz (heroine of *The Dark and Deadly Pool*, BCCB 12/87), summer employee of the hotel's health club, is asked to play one of the scripted roles. She'd be happier if the ostensible murder site wasn't the suite where she'd just encountered a ghost, and things go from tense to tenser when she discovers a real dead body just where the fictional corpse should be. Does his death have anything to do with the Federal witness sequestered on the same floor? Or the uncanny resemblance between the real victim and one of the actors in the mystery weekend? And what about the incriminating conversation that Liz and her boyfriend overhear regarding the hotel manager? Nixon keeps the diverse plot ingredients fizzing while adding a generous helping of farce; she makes the most of the clever murder mystery setting, with amateur sleuths growing increasingly confused ("You are a lovely red herring," says one of a pair of charming Snoop Sisters to Liz) as Roberta Kingston Duffy, the mystery weekend's author, keeps rewriting her mystery to jibe with the actual events. Eventually the murder is solved, but only after the ghost offers some helpful eyewitness testimony. Mrs. Duffy says "That's why people read mystery novels, to get misled and confused"; true, but they also read them to have a good time, which this one delivers faithfully. DS

R* 5-8 yrs. Adapted from a Rumanian folktale published in 1915, this assumes a friendly, informal tone in launching the story of Noah after he's built the ark: "And the minute he finished, guess what happened? The devil himself came striding up the gangplank." It's a face-off that Noah thinks he's won until he notices that there are three mice instead of two, and one of them—the one with the red eyes, fangs, claws, etc.—is chewing a hole in the hull. At this point, Noah's cats take over, but the devil-mouse is too hot to digest. When kitty spits him overboard, he swims off in the form of a viper fish. This is a pourquoi tale that will suspend listeners' disbelief ("Ever after, her fur made sparks when Noah petted her—and her eyes gleamed in the dark") and rivet their attention on Moser's ominous paintings, which alternate or combine gloomy wet greens with scary flickering reds. One look at the teeth on that fish, and you'll hope that Noah lands on a dry mountaintop with all due speed. BH

C.U. Storytelling


R 5-8 yrs. Only the fact that it will be easier for her parents to take care of themselves reconciles Miriam to staying with a farm family when the Nazis invade Holland during World War II. And only the company of a black rabbit whom she has named after her father provides comfort when she must run to the secret cupboard to hide from soldiers. In her determination to protect him, Miriam is almost too late. The suspense in the story is inherent, but Oppenheim has wisely chosen to develop the relationship between the protagonist and her "foster brother" for a realistically childlike focus. Miriam's sense of responsibility for the difficulties around her rings true, as well. These dynamics are kept to a simple minimum that is convincingly, if sparingly, detailed. Himler's paintings reflect the same bare detail with spacious landscapes, homely interiors, and portraits that suggest as much as they delineate. This is a heroes' tale; none of the villains ever appear, but their presence is felt through both text and art—the cupboard scene contrasts darkly with the idyllic views before and after. History is telescoped through a specific situation as author and artist together create a picture book simultaneously gentle and sharp in its perspective on the Holocaust. BH

C.U. History—World War II


R Gr. 6-9. In an autobiographical reminiscence that is more literary than personal, Peck writes with wit and clarity, and with an occasional aphorism that punctuates the conversational flow of his memoir. His fans will probably enjoy particularly those disclosures of people and places Peck has used—and where he has used them—in his books. His passionately meticulous use of language, his acuity in character assessment and depiction, and his humor

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are vividly conveyed, and if readers don’t get an intimate picture of the man, they get a close encounter with the writer as a creative artist. ZS
C.U. Writing for children


R 5-8 yrs. Not the Prince William, nor, exactly, *that* Prince William, *this* Prince William is a seal pup rescued by young Denny from the oil spill that swept Prince William Sound in 1989. Denny, a little girl, finds the oil-soaked pup on the beach and takes him to the rescue center where he is cleaned, fed, and, eventually, retrained for his return to the sea. The Rands’ focus on a single heroine and victim of the spill will engage kids’ empathies, but the story is never sentimentalized. Instead, both Denny and readers (unobtrusively) learn a great deal about the oil spill and the various ways that the water and its dependents were afflicted and cared for. Ted Rand’s double-spread illustrations are literal and comprehensive, with some nice fingerpainted effects, but are occasionally too cute in portraying faces both human and otherwise. Neither text nor illustrations, however, soften or deny the scope of the disaster, rendered dramatically against the impressive backgrounds of Alaskan sky and mountains. RS
D.V. Ecological awareness


Ad 4-6 yrs. A static text consists of brief, choppy descriptive sentences that identify and describe (minimally) a number of bird species. Sample: “The robin begins to sing. A yellow warbler, a purple finch and a red-winged blackbird start to sing their songs. Mockingbirds and catbirds can imitate the songs that other birds sing.” The book will have limited use for identification, since the colors of some of the birds are over-accented (a raven described as black, but with every feather outlined in blue; swallows that are bright blue and orange), although the drawing is always graceful and accurate. ZS
C.U. Nature study


Ad Gr. 5-7. When Kiri’s father doesn’t come back from a hunting trip, her mother goes to look for him. Two village hunters find five-year-old Kiri alone in her tent, waiting for her parents’ return. The strangers take her to the village, where Kiri’s empathic gifts are revealed. Because of her ability to “go inside” the consciousness of animals and people, she becomes the apprentice and foster child of the village healer. The world created for this quiet fantasy has a Native American flavor, and Root provides a glossary to define the imaginary animals, herbs, and tools in the culture. As Kiri searches for her identity, the tale becomes so introspective that it loses momentum. When Kiri’s path is finally revealed to her during her solitary Vision Quest, there is little conflict and there are no surprises. Nevertheless, the fantasy culture Root has created is

*R*  Gr. 5-8. One of Rylant's most smoothly concentrated works, this is the story of orphaned twelve-year-old Summer's journey through a grief that possesses her and her uncle after her aunt dies. An individualistic classmate rounds out the small cast; while secondary characters are effectively sketched, the novel stays sharply focused on Summer and old Ob, bony, arthritic, and mourning so powerfully that he can hardly see his way to keep a child in their rusting trailer. The West Virginia mountain setting is a low-key presence throughout the book. While selective details such as Ob's hand-carved whirligigs pick up a symbolic dimension in addition to their functional significance, the tone is spare without becoming self-conscious. If the deceased May seems over-idealized, readers can attribute it to the narrator's need and to May's having answered that need with a warm home that is eventually reaffirmed through Ob's emotional courage. Strong nuances of despair and hope create a suspense that forcefully replaces action and that will touch readers to tears. BH

D.V. Death, adjustment to


*R*  5-8 yrs. An organic blend of fantasy and South Carolina island folklore, this exemplifies the best ongoing tradition of storytelling in picture book format. The heroine is young Sukey, who, to escape from her oppressive stepfather, goes daily to the seashore for a visit with a brown-skinned mermaid: "Thee, thee, down below/ Come to me, Mama Jo." After trying to capture the mermaid with Sukey's summons, the angry stepfather works the girl nearly to death. She escapes underwater and returns with a dowry of gold, only to have her true love struck down; twice more the mermaid intervenes, once to revive Sukey's betrothed and once to drown the villain. It's a long story, but one supported with strong writing and some of Brian Pinkney's most expansive illustration. His compositions are broadly conceived, his white hatch over dark colors richly textured, and his characters skillfully drawn in both face and figure. From her black eyes to her deep-green tail, the mermaid is a natural extension of the wild seascapes. However tenuous the narrative connection with West African sources—and San Souci cites some research in a brief author's note—the language and art together take on rich African-American hues in this newly imagined version. BH

C.U. Storytelling


R  Gr. K-2. A small boy remembers his grandfather: they way he'd lift his hat, nod once to neighbors, and say "Mornin'" and the way he'd put the old hat on Jason's head to get it back in shape after Jason had, by chance, squashed it. This isn't a story marred by sadness or sentimentality, but a fond reminiscence of a beloved grandfather who had tolerance, a sense of humor, and a
genial manner. The crayon illustrations seem a bit overcolored, but they are nevertheless effective because of the simplicity of their composition. ZS

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


R Gr. 2-5. In a neatly compact format, Schlein and Pillar bring the same close attention to squirrels as they did to *Pigeons* (BCCB 9/89). As the title indicates, the emphasis here is on the kind of observation—"Look at a squirrel"—that encourages readers to participate in the investigation. And for those leery of looking "at a squirrel face, close up," Pillar's black-and-white photographs, clean and clearly placed, provide a reasonable verisimilitude. While most of the book is devoted to the gray squirrel, Schlein briefly surveys other species, including flying squirrels, chipmunks, and prairie dogs. The tone is conversational, with short sentences that are easy to read and occasionally funny: "The nuts a squirrel finds may not be the ones he himself buried. Most likely they were buried by some other squirrels. It doesn't matter. He finds theirs. They find his." A bibliography and an index are appended. RS

C.U. Nature study


R Gr. K-2. Liz's pet dinosaur Albert, brought to Los Angeles in *How I Captured a Dinosaur* (BCCB 2/89), is getting too expensive to keep: 100 pounds of chicken wings a day; 250 hamburgers, hold the relish. So Liz decides that Albert needs a job, and after "Dino Rides," "Kite Rescue," and lifeguarding fail to pan out, Liz takes Albert to a Hollywood drugstore, presumably Schwab's, where he is discovered by a director looking for the "strong silent type." The story is even sillier than the first book's, but fans and friends of Albert will enjoy his ascent to stardom. And little Lizzes will appreciate the part she plays in the drama; in fact, she costars in Albert's movie, titled, of course, *How I Captured a Dinosaur*. Big blue Albert is a generous focus for Amy Schwartz' dipsy-doodle line-and-watercolor paintings; his bulk provides a smooth relief from the eccentric detailing of the California landscape. RS


R 5-8 yrs. Although Savitri is a radiantly beautiful princess, it is through her virtue, strength, and wit that she wins back the husband, Satyavan, whom she has chosen and who is claimed, after only a year of marriage, by Yama, the god of death. Following Yama to the very threshold of his kingdom, Savitri is offered three boons ("anything but the life of your husband"), whereupon she requests that her father-in-law's kingdom be restored, that her father be blessed with more children, and that she herself bear many of Satyavan's babies—thus forcing Yama to give Satyavan back to her. A popular Hindu myth from the Mahabharata, this is delicately rendered in both adaptation and illustration. The full-page paintings that face each page of text reflect visual
elements of Indian art without imitating or demeaning the classical tradition. Modulated colors are enhanced by formal frames that border each composition, and the figures effect graceful, ritualistic postures. This is a book that will open children's eyes and ears to an unfamiliar lore and that will provide rich contrast to Western parallels such as Orpheus and Eurydice. BH

D.V. Loyalty


Ad Gr. 6-9. Norrie has a crush on Mark, but it soon becomes evident that he's interested in girls his own age (several years older than Norrie); it's frustrating to be working for him (as a tourist photographer) and have him be no more than polite and helpful. When she realizes that Mark thinks she's in love with a married man but doesn't know he's married, Norrie lets Mark comfort her, lets comforting blossom into dating. What Mark doesn't know is that the married man is a cousin-by-marriage and that their only dates are tennis games. As time goes by, Norrie finds it increasingly difficult to tell Mark the truth, and she is heartbroken when he does find out and breaks off their relationship. This is a somewhat overextended tangled-web tale, believable but uneven in pace; fortunately it rises above the illogical happy ending of so many teenage problem novels. ZS

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Truthfulness


R Gr. 2-4. The year is 1885, the place Manhattan, and the protagonist (Lily) anxious to find a way to contribute to the class fund that will be sent to help pay for the pedestal for the soon-to-arrive statue of Miss Liberty. Papa and Grandma approve, but Mama thinks money is better used to help poor people. However, Mama is helpful when Lily does think of a product she can make and sell: crowns of stiff yellow paper. The details of Lily's industry and her sales, the kindness of her sharing her proceeds with another child so that Lena won't be the only person in class who hasn't done her share, and the satisfaction of seeing the French ship come into harbor strike just the right level of historic detail and child participation, all of it in clear, casually written prose, creating a good primary grades story about the past. ZS

C.U. History—U.S.


R Gr. 4-7. Luke had secretly imagined that his father, fighting in Vietnam, was a hero; now he's come home wounded, and his Purple Heart seems to Luke proof of valor. Moody and quiet, Dad won't talk about the war, and he's angry when he discovers that Luke has taken his medal and dropped it while playing a prank on an elderly neighbor. Made by his parents to do chores for the neighbor, Mrs. Pederson, Luke learns that her deceased husband had also received a Purple Heart, and that war was not the glory that Luke had perceived it to be: "he did his duty and he defended his country by risking his life. I only know that
he didn’t enjoy it... it brought him no joy, the killing.” The novel’s patterning is predictable and the theme told as much as shown, but the tone is plain and pared, allowing readers to appreciate but not sentimentalize the developing understanding between father and son. Luke learns that the occasion of his father’s injury was scary and pathetic, not heroic, perhaps making him all the more deserving of a medal. And in the end, for his bravery during a tornado, Luke earns the medal for himself. RS

D.V. Father-son relations


R Gr. K-3. In a diverting look at amateur dramatics, Tryon presents an all-animal cast as they audition for, rehearse, and mount a school play, Edward Lear’s The Owl and the Pussy-cat. No type-casting here, as the star roles are awarded to a pig and a rabbit. The text is (more or less) in the same metric form as Lear’s poem, and both the text and pictured scenes of busy preparation lead nicely to the performance, bridged by a surprisingly effective double-page spread of the closed front curtain. The costumes and masks are ingenious, the perspective changes, and the use of stippling and fine parallel lines gives texture to the boldly-composed paintings. ZS


R Gr. 5-7. Photographs of the author and her family are included in the moving autobiography of a child who was born in this country, treated like an enemy during World War II, and only slowly—as maturity has lent perspective—able to accept the values of the Japanese culture that was her heritage, the culture to which she is tied by so many invisible threads. Many readers will be familiar with the horrors of relocation camps through reading Journey to Topaz (BCCB 12/71) and its sequels. Here is a sharper focus on those horrors and on the emotional anguish that accompanied physical stress and deprivation. Uchida is open about her feelings in a way that will make admirers feel they are friends; as always, she writes with mastery of style and an implicit respect for her readers. A list of Uchida’s published works is provided. ZS

C.U. History—U.S.

D.V. Courage; Patriotism


R* Gr. 7-12. “Who said Dead? Sepp’s been gone this seven year. But I didn’t say Dead,” says Mr. Gotobed, the local handyman, about the previous inhabitant of Rose’s rented seaside cottage. Rose and her two children, Timothy and Jane, are mystified by the local people’s unwillingness to set foot inside the house. The little Norfolk village grows increasingly suspicious of Rose and the children as the family grows increasingly more concerned with questions surrounding Sepp Yaxley’s disappearance. Why did he leave a small fortune in gold sovereigns and cash in the house, and what does his odd handwritten book say? What is Mr. Gotobed fortifying the garden against, and why is he laying snares? And from whence comes the huge and silent cat?
Westall has concocted a superb story, blending evil atmosphere, the supernatural, and human brutality, where the horror lies less in the otherworldly than in people’s fear of it. The kids have significant roles, but the viewpoint, including Rose’s seeing just how frightening her children can be, is interestingly adult without sacrificing appeal for young readers. Subtle and richly menacing, this will reel in fans of both Barbara Michaels’ atmospheric spookiness and Shirley Jackson’s implacability. DS


R* 2-6 yrs. Endpapers textured to look like rice paper set the stage for a fastidiously designed book that uses contrasts of white or bright hues on a black background for stunning effects. The cumulative story shares some elements with Eric Carle’s *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, as seven blind mice, whose variously colored tails are the only objects visible on the first spread, discover a strange Something and scamper away wondering what it is. “On Monday, Red Mouse went first to find out. ‘It’s a pillar,’ he said. No one believed him. On Tuesday, Green Mouse set out. He was the second to go. ‘It’s a snake,’ he said.” Each one conjectures, by feeling a different body part, what every viewer has already guessed: it’s an elephant, of course, but the play between words and images is imaginatively suspenseful (the trunk depicted as a snake is downright startling). For counting, identifying colors, naming days of the week, or just catching up on a favorite old Indian fable, this will reach a broad age-range of read-aloud audiences, who will find the graphics clearly visible even from a distance. BH

D.V. Perceptual acuteness

The publisher has announced that Gary Soto’s *A Fire in My Hands*, reviewed in the February issue, is not available in a paperback edition.

In our review of Molnar and Fenton’s *Who Will Pick Me Up When I Fall?* in the February issue, the illustrations were erroneously attributed to the co-author Stephan Fenton. As stated in the heading, they are the work of Irene Trivas.
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AWARDS

The Newbery Medal will be awarded to Phyllis Reynolds Naylor for *Shiloh* (Atheneum). The Newbery Honor Books are *Nothing but the Truth* by Avi (Jackson/Orchard) and *The Wright Brothers* by Russell Freedman (Holiday House).

The Caldecott Medal will be awarded to David Wiesner for *Tuesday* (Clarion). The Caldecott Honor Book is *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold (Crown).

The American publisher receiving the Batchelder Award for the most outstanding translation of a book originally published in a foreign language is Houghton Mifflin for Uri Orlev’s *The Man from the Other Side*.

The Coretta Scott King Award will be presented to Walter Dean Myers, author of *Now Is Your Time!* (HarperCollins) for writing and to Faith Ringgold, author and illustrator of *Tar Beach* (Crown) for illustration. *Night on Neighborhood Street* (Dial) is an Honor Book for the text by Eloise Greenfield and the illustrations by Jan Spivey Gilchrist; Ashley Bryan’s *All Night, All Day* (Atheneum) is an Honor Book for illustration.

The Laura Ingalls Wilder Award goes to Marcia Brown.

The Scott O’Dell Award for historical fiction will be given to Mary Downing Hahn for *Stepping on the Cracks* (Clarion).

The Canadian Library Association’s Best Book of the Year for Children is *Redwork* by Michael Bedard (Atheneum). The Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award for illustration goes to Paul Morin for *The Orphan Boy*, written by Tololwa Mollel (Clarion).

The Carnegie Medal was awarded to Gillian Cross for *Wolf* (Holiday House).

The Kate Greenaway Medal was awarded to Gary Blythe for *The Whale’s Song* (Dial) by Dyan Sheldon.

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