PRODUCTION NOTE

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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH ANNOTATIONS

* Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R Recommended.
Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR Not recommended.
SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.
C.U. Curricular Use.
D.V. Developmental Values.

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"The Devil flew from north to south/ With [Miss Johnson] in his mouth."
Writing about this classic rhyme of school rebellion, Alison Lurie noted in her book *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups* that "most teachers do not find this amusing, but children think it is uproarious." Such opposition is at the core of children's folklore, a miscellany of chants, cheers, spells, and curses through which children can turn the rules upside-down and run the place themselves.

Two new collections of children's folklore, compiled respectively by the recently deceased Alvin Schwartz, and English folklorists Iona and the late Peter Opie, each bring together a clamorous assortment of these defiant rhymes, ranging from the merely silly to those that are bold calls for revolution. Both compilations have to face a paradox: how do we contain recess mayhem within the covers of that icon of adult instruction, the book?

Schwartz's collection is by far the more conservative, at ease within the institutional confines of story hour or classroom round-robin readalouds. The design is large and open, scattered with extroverted pen-and-ink drawings by Sue Truesdell that fully capture the all-American zest of the text. Arranged in such categories as People, Food, Teases and Taunts, Riddles, and "Other Things," the book is sensibly but browsably ordered, with Schwartz thoughtfully providing melody lines for those rhymes designed to be sung, such as "On Top of Spaghetti" and "Be Kind to Your Web-footed Friends." Teachers, librarians, and parents can have lots of fun sharing these classics with children, recalling the variants from their own childhoods, and asking kids to contribute what they've been coming up with on their own.

While a child may volunteer an innocuous take on "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory," it's less likely that he or she is going to pipe up with the latest Jeffrey Dahmer couplet. It will be chanted on the playground, mumbled across desks, passed in notes, and probably stage-whispered in your elaborately oblivious presence, but kids are not about to tell you the real secret. Jeffrey Dahmer may be this week's subject, but the theme is constant: pace Lurie, don't tell the grownups. *What* is being kept secret is less important than the fact of secrecy itself. And don't be fooled when they let you in on something. It's all part of the plot.
The Opies’ collection, first published in a small British edition in 1947 and revised and newly illustrated here, recognizes the essential oath. With its quaint subtitle (“The Schoolchild’s Pocket Book”), small format, and primly designed jacket, the book at first glance looks like a volume in some interminable set of Classics. Even Maurice Sendak’s cover illustration of a tiny quintet of smiling children (and one dog) doesn’t give away the game: it’s not until you’ve looked inside that you realize that those smiles are actually smirks.

Compared to Schwartz’s, the Opies’ collection is both ruder (“Tell her! Smell her! Kick her down the cellar”) and more arcane (“Tid, mid, misere, Carling, palm, paste-egg day”). Of the two books, Opie’s is the one to let kids discover on their own. The fact that some of the rhymes may not give up their secrets easily is a bonus, and any teacher who attempts to parse “Brutus adsum jam forte” should be, as the song says, thrown in the bay. (Any teacher who attempts the tongue-twister “I slit a sheet, A sheet I slit, A new beslitten sheet was it” will be facing early retirement, never mind the bay.) This is the kind of cultural literacy best passed around, not out.

Sendak’s sketches, vignettes, and portraits are as nose-thumbing as the text, and one senses that the artist’s critics are as much the butt of the humor as is the entire stodgy grownup world. There are bare bottoms aplenty, lifted skirts, and gnarling monsters (and if that’s Mickey falling down the bathtub hole, my how you’ve grown). Many of the pictures have the simple mischief of A Hole Is to Dig; others recall the theatrical vivacity of The Nutshell Library (Pierre has a cameo); a mother-and-child sequence illustrating “Rain, rain, go away” has the tenderness of Little Bear. Several full-page, entirely solemn paintings recall the scary romance of Outside Over There. In all, there seems to be some summing-up at work in these pages. The tone, though, is unified and new, with an expressive looseness of line that communes with the improvisational origins of the rhymes.

Will the book be controversial? Oh, probably. Take the vignettes illustrating “I one my mother, I two my mother... I ate my mother.” Here, one of Sendak’s inimitable babies proceeds from hunger to, uh-oh, breastfeeding, to devouring its mother whole, finishing her off with a big, wicked smile. Controversy, after all, is precisely the point; Sendak knows the heart of these rhymes, the subversive passions that feed them, and the important part they play in the rebellion necessary to independence.

Both these books deserve an audience, and it’s the same audience, but at different times. Share the Schwartz with children: the rhymes there have plenty of high spirits that neither you nor the kids will be embarrassed to enjoy together. (The Schwartz book is also impeccably and informatively documented; Iona Opie’s notes are more anecdotal.) With the Opie collection, you have a really interesting puzzle on your hands: how do you let kids know that it’s supposed to be their secret?

Roger Sutton, Executive Editor
New Titles for Children and Young People


R Dark and handsome, strong Hispanic faces are the visual focus of Aliki's bright paintings, in a book with a direct and simple text narrated by a small (but growing) boy. The continuous text is logically arranged, moving from clothes that don't fit any longer to the fact that growth is continuous in youth, and on to such pertinent matters as individual growth patterns, changes visible or internal, and a healthful regimen that contributes both to growing and to good physical condition. There's also a reassuring message about comparative size and its lack of importance. This is a worthy addition to a pioneer series of high quality. ZS

C.U. Health
D.V. Everyday life concepts


R Gr. 7-12. Using quotes from Peary's letters and other writings as well as secondary sources, Anderson has constructed a useful biography of the discoverer of the North Pole. The book traces his life from his childhood through his career in civil engineering, his many explorations of Greenland including his trip to the Pole, and his struggle to maintain his claim of primacy in the face of a rival. Although the author defends Peary from some criticisms (about his treatment of Matthew Henson and the Eskimos, for instance), she paints him as a prickly and difficult man, and she doesn't shy away from matters such as his Eskimo mistress and child. She also broadens the appeal of the book by devoting an appropriately substantial amount of space to the explorer's wife, Josephine, who accompanied him on several expeditions and wrote extensively about them. While the writing slips occasionally into romanticism or confusion, this remains a competent chronicle of a figure who deserves to be more than a footnote in history. Endnotes are included; an index and photos will be in the finished book. DS

C.U. History—U.S.


R Gr. 5-8. Author Ashabranner and photographer Paul Conklin usually make their journeys together, but this time Ashabranner stayed home while Conklin took his two sons, also photographers, on a graduation-present trip to the Chinese "Autonomous Region" of Xinjiang, a remote, ethnically distinct area bordering Mongolia and the former U.S.S.R. The author, however, is no armchair amateur, as he thoughtfully weaves commentary on the Conklins' photographs, materials from his own reading, and recollections by the
photographers: “David and Peter were more adventurous than their father when it came to eating on the street.” Xinjiang is bordered by mountains, contains a scary desert, and is traversed by the Karakoram Highway (as well as the fabled Silk Road), all of which offer text and photographs plenty of scope. At the same time, neither wallow in the picturesque, and Ashabranner is frank about the political and ethnic tensions between the Turkic and largely Muslim natives and the Han Chinese, who are now the largest single ethnic group in the province. Photographs, both black-and-white and color, provide a good balance of faces and places, and, in the text, there is a lot of good information about the cultural niceties and technical considerations involved in taking pictures in an unfamiliar place. In all, the book is a smooth synthesis of personal experience and sociohistorical perspective. A bibliography and index are appended. RS

Banish, Roslyn. *A Forever Family,* written and illus. with photographs by Roslyn Banish with Jennifer Jordan-Wong. HarperCollins, 1992. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021674-3; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021673-5. 44p. Library ed. $13.89; Trade ed. $14.00. R 5-8 yrs. “My name is Jenny. I am 8 years old. Last year I was adopted,” begins this simple and dignified photoessay about an older child’s adoption. Jenny is first depicted doing daily kid things, like running races and reading Nancy Drew. The ensuing discussion of her adoption covers her entry at age three into foster care, her social workers, and her meetings with and adoption by her “forever family” (including her aunts and grandparents and cousins). While the portrait is positive, the book is quietly realistic, with Jenny stating “Not everybody gets adopted” and “At first it was hard to call my parents ‘Mom’ and ‘Dad,’” and asking about her biological mother “How come she couldn’t take care of me?” Each photograph tells a story in itself as well as illuminating the story, and Jenny is a dark-eyed charmer, lively and thoughtful by turns. It’s clear that there have been many people (of various races—Jenny’s last foster family, pictured in the book, is black, her mother is white, and her father is Chinese-American) who have cared for Jenny and who have a place in her life; the subtle messages—that you don’t need to throw out old loved ones to make way for the new and that people need not be parents to be important to a child—are salutary for all readers, adopted or not. A brief glossary of adoption terms is included, as is a short note from Jenny. DS

Bosco, Peter I. *Roanoke: The Story of the Lost Colony.* Millbrook, 1992. ISBN 1-56294-111-9. 72p. illus. with photographs. (Spotlight on American History). $13.90. R Gr. 4-8. Although the Roanoke mystery has never been definitively solved, the story of the island’s colonization in the late sixteenth century is interesting in itself, and a timely pendant to Columbiomania. Like Columbus, the Roanoke settlers made friends with the locals; also like Columbus, they soon betrayed that friendship, in this case by their overreliance on Indian generosity in order to get through a hard year. There were settlers who had respect for the Indians and their way of life; most notable among these was John White, governor of the colony who had served as the expedition artist on an early exploration of the area. (His granddaughter was the famous Virginia Dare,
first English child born in America.) Bosco's retelling of events is fair and fluent, although readers might want more than the scant two pages he devotes to the eerie, apparently peaceful, disappearance of the settlers. While Bosco should have cited the research of more than one Roanoke scholar (who theorizes that the settlers moved north to Chesapeake Bay), the fact remains that we just don't know what happened, and the mystery remains a tantalizing presence in American myth. Period prints, especially paintings by White, are both informative and atmospheric; there are also a note on sources, chronology, reading list, and index. RS

C.U. History—U.S.—Colonial period


R Gr. 4-6. Large print, topical arrangement within brief chapters, and color photographs (many of which are action shots) make this appealing as well as accessible. The subject is one that should engage all readers and should make all those connected with the Special Olympics programs (coaches, sponsors, volunteers, and particularly participants) proud. From a small beginning at Soldier Field in Chicago the movement has grown into a world-wide event in which thousands compete and in which an increasing variety of sports are represented. The book concludes with a comment on how the program has helped fight discrimination among the mentally retarded who participate, and provides information on how the reader can help; a glossary and an index are provided. ZS

C.U. Recreation
D.V. Courage; Handicaps, overcoming


Ad Gr. 4-6. Twenty-one water birds are described and illustrated, each being given several pages that focus on appearance, mating, breeding, nesting patterns, and the ways in which each species flies and feeds. The illustrations are handsome watercolors, but there are some discrepancies between textual references and visual details. One illustration of a Great Blue Heron, for example, shows the bird with its neck gracefully extended; the text on the same page says "they fly with their heads pulled between their shoulders." The writing is not strong stylistically but it is informative and usually succinct, with a bibliography and index adding to the book's usefulness. ZS

C.U. Nature study


R 5-9 yrs. Hurricane Harry's (BCCB 11/91) sister Dorothy is not happy about moving to a new house and school. A room of her own? "I don't need privacy. I need company." And imagine her first-day-of-school humiliation when second-grader Dorothy accidently escorts kindergartner Harry to a second-grade classroom. That fatal mistake makes manna for the class bully; on the other hand, it also helps Dorothy find a friend. With a good balance of
school stuff and amusing family drama, this story, like Cleary’s books about
Ramona, will appeal to both little brothers and big sisters, and makes a sturdy
bridge between read-aloud and read-alone. The cover portrait is inviting, but
Dorothy looks older than third-grade, and it also seems to imply a scene that is
nowhere in the story. RS
C.U. Reading aloud
D.V. Brothers-sisters; School, adjustment to

Cassedy, Sylvia, tr. and comp. ed. _Red Dragonfly on My Shoulder_; tr. and
comp. ed. by Sylvia Cassedy and Kunihiro Suetake; illus. by Molly Bang.
022624-2. 32p. Library ed. $14.89; Trade ed. $15.00.
R Gr. 1-3. In a book designed to be read vertically, each of
thirteen haiku poems stretches across a double-spread collage of found or crafted
objects. The artifice of assembling words and assembling images gives the
collaboration a common bond, and, although the visual effects are formal, the
technique is rendered appropriate to the content. A pony on the beach, for
instance, is constructed from sea shells; a crow with a scissor beak is cut from
black paper juxtaposed on a white background (snow). The haiku are freely
adapted into one-line poems—an author’s note cites the literal translation of
Hajime’s “sun beam striking place shifting/ napping dog,” which becomes
“High noon! A hot sun bathes the town in quiet and stirs the sleeping dog.”
(The picture here, done in cloth and thread, is dominated by yellow, orange, and
hot pink.) Children will be intrigued with the idea of creating art out of such
inventively manipulated materials, which, from clothespins to chocolate
almonds, are enumerated in the illustrator’s note. Guessing the contents of each
picture will be as much fun as savoring the spare verses; both activities will
serve as an invitation to children’s own aesthetic compositions. BH
C.U. Art; Language arts

Collins, David R. _J. R. R. Tolkien: Master of Fantasy_; illus. by William
$15.95. Reviewed from galleys.
R Gr. 4-7. Tolkien’s early life sounds more fictional than his
fantasy. Born in South Africa, orphaned in England by the age of 12, farmed out
first to relatives and later to boarding houses, he pushed into the upper-crust
British intelligentsia like a mushroom. His fascination with languages, along
with his friendships at King Edward’s School and later at Oxford University, led
to a rich and creative academic life. Yet the don’s literary sensibilities were
tempered with common sense: “Tolkien tried out his hobbit tales on his
children” and “the final decision to publish the book rested with 10-year-old
Rayner Unwin, the son of the publishing company’s chairman.” Despite the
tragedies that World War I wreaked on Tolkien’s society, his life seemed
charmed, and the tone here projects a boyish enthusiasm accurately syncopated
with the “heroic” Colonial period of Tolkien’s formative years. The awkwardly
rendered California-counter-culture-style drawing (especially in the clumsy cover
illustration) is hardly in keeping with Tolkien’s classical tradition, but the
historical photographs, chronology, Middle-earth glossary, bibliography, list of
books for further reading, and index add considerably to Collins’ direct text. BH
C.U. Literature, English; Writing for children

R Gr. 2-4. If Columbus suspected he was on the trail of a new world, he certainly never dreamed he would write a picture book about it. But here it is, five hundred years and thirty-two pages later, illustrated with dramatic double-spread linoleum cuts to accompany nineteen selectively edited journal entries. Like Yolen's *Encounter* (below), this is a picture book for older kids who know some of the context and can understand both the wording and the significance of passages like this: "... Joy turned to dismay as the day progressed, for by evening we had found no land and had to face the reality that it was only an illusion." What's exciting about the book is the concept of making primary source material, however abbreviated, accessible to both teachers and students. Of course, selection is all, and the passages describing both the "natives" and the "enchanted land" project a totally triumphant scenario that may leave listeners with a somewhat unrealistic idea both of Columbus' achievement and of its effects. (Peter and Connie Roop's adaptation of the journal, *I, Columbus* (BCCB 3/91), for older readers, gives a fuller picture.) The intensely hued illustrations themselves have a jigsaw-puzzle formality that projects unqualified grandeur. Used alongside books with fuller information, Lowe's selections and Sabuda's art will nevertheless augment children's study during the quincentennial. BH

C.U. History—America; Columbus Day


R Gr. 3-5. In the eponymous protagonist, Posy, Cresswell fans will recognize the indomitable little Daisy of the Bagthorpe stories. Posy is eight, has unusual pets, imaginative projects, inexhaustible persistence, and the sort of compassion that makes her spend money on a totally unappreciative bag lady. The writing is animated and humorous, the characterizations are consistent and sturdy, and the episodic structure makes this a good choice for reading aloud to a group as well as for independent reading. ZS

C.U. Reading aloud


R Gr. 4-6. The combination of original, late 19th-century stories with soft and graceful watercolors makes for a gentle fairy tale collection. With the exception of the title story, all the tales focus on aspects of love: romantic love ("The Wanderings of Arasmon," "The Story of the Opal"), parental love ("The Rain Maiden"), loyalty ("The Pool and the Tree"), and affection for helpless creatures ("The Story of a Cat"). "The Necklace" is one of de Morgan's best—a complex story in which the beautiful and evil Princess Fiorimonde uses sorcery to turn all of her would-be lovers into beads on a necklace. Justice rules in every story, as it does in all good fairy tales; not only is good eventually rewarded the many characters who struggle for love, but also the evil Fiorimonde gets her due punishment. The Victorian language nicely complements the
romance of the stories ("her white soft hands were folded amidst the scented lace
and linen of which the bed was made"). Though expensive, this is the only
collection of de Morgan’s now available, and it will appeal to fairy tale fans who
think they’ve gotten too old for Cinderella. KJ

C.U. Storytelling


R Gr. 3-5. Uncle Tanner, Ma’s brother, has glib excuses for losing all the gold he’d found in the Yukon; now (1898) he wants to go back and wants Pa to stake him and to return to Alaska as his partner. Twelve-year-old Bucky, the narrator, goes along and describes the hardships of placer mining and frontier life. Both Bucky and Pa are relieved when they have panned enough gold to go home. The often-grim details of life in the mountain camp are given immediacy by the first-person narration, and both the hunt for gold and the unpredictable behavior of Uncle Tanner provide suspense. Like a number of other books in the “Once Upon America” series, this is nicely gauged in length, reading difficulty, and subject appeal for a middle-grades audience. ZS

C.U. History—U.S.


R Gr. 2-5. A rich collection of thirty-three poems, organized by season, includes Basho, Buson, Issa, Seisensui, and other well-known Japanese writers. Every selection is accompanied by a full-page illustration executed with delicate linework and restrained hues. Although a few of the animal figures border on cute, Demi varies the visual tone with sly humor, botanical precision, and startling—but never jarring—contrasts of light and dark. Particularly impressive are the pictures that underplay the spare form, as in the ghostly white-on-blue image of a bird reflected upside down under the verses of a Basho poem: “The voice of the cuckoo/ Dropped to the lake,/ Where it lay floating/ On the surface.” Where Cassedy’s Red Dragonfly on My Shoulder (above) makes an unusual picture book introduction to haiku and to collage, this will serve as an attractive resource for a broader age group of readers requesting a more generalized anthology of Japanese poetry. BH

C.U. Language arts


R Gr. 7-12. “My mother was the war, he thought. She was a witch, a terrible demon, an eater of people, but she looked after me.” Paul, probably twelve, has devoted his life to guerilla action in the civil war in Nagala (an imaginary but too-real African nation), and now the war is over. Paul’s idealistic adoptive father, Michael Kagomi, gets an important position in the new government and sends Paul off to school. Before going, Paul buries his AK, his rifle, in a special spot, preparing for the time when he may need it again. That time comes soon, as a different kind of war ensues, and Paul finds [ 234 ]
himself fighting to free his father from prison. Best about this book is how convincingly the author shows a young boy drawn into armed struggle, and how quickly moral decisions are made in times of change and battle. The storytelling can be slow going, especially in the middle third of the book when Paul, along with a young Fulu girl, finds his way back from school to the capital where his father is imprisoned, but the concluding heroics are well-paced. Characterization is a bit anonymous in its idealization, and readers may know too easily whose side to be on. Two concluding, contradictory chapters showing "Twenty Years On Perhaps" each offer, alternately, a vision and a nightmare; the first seems improbable among any circumstances; the second feels more like the truth. RS D.V. Courage; Peace


After the capital letter "A," Drucker's book begins with the sentence "Near the end of the Passover seder, Rachel finds the afikomen hidden under the tablecloth." The paper-collage illustration shows a girl holding up the hidden piece of matzah. Children who are not already part of the tradition will have to look up afikomen in the small-print glossary, whereas those who already know the tradition will not find much entertaining depth in the stiff concepts or stylized illustrations unless an adult livens up the scene by relating it back to the listener's own experience. After "B" ("Raffy brings a bow and arrows and watches the bonfire at the Lag B’omer picnic"—one searches the glossary in vain for the definition of Lag B’omer, only to find it listed in a different section "About the Holidays," where the tradition is described, but "omer" is never defined. Some of the key words are Hebrew (all transliterated), others are common English words (V is for vegetables that fill the sukkah, W is for washing hands during the seder). Although it does become apparent that the children in the pictures are a family, there's no clue to that at the beginning, so at first the characters seem random. Pocock's patterns and textures are the most interesting aspect of the book, which is lavishly reproduced in full color; while the cartooned faces and figures become clichéd, the bold collage designs command attention. All told, this is an educational book which will be useful for teaching Jewish traditions but which lacks the verve of Michelle Edwards' *Alef-Bet* (reviewed below). BH C.U. Holidays


In an Oklahoma town, the worst neighborhood is called Shanty Town. That's where ten-year-old Akers (black) lives with his hard-working mother and where Marleena (also ten, white) lives with her industrially-disabled father and a mother who supports them by taking in washing. Both children do odd jobs for a newcomer, Uncle Shamus, a blind black man whose years in prison are the first clue to a mystery that involves a former prison guard who shows up to threaten the blind man and find a cache of stolen money. The children help Shamus dig up the money, find when he goes to California that he's left them each $8,000. Shamus unexpectedly returns, saying he gave the money back and wants to live in Shanty Town with his two friends Akers and Marleena. In addition to the clogged story line, issues of ethical conduct, of interracial
relationships, and of the fact that the children don’t tell their parents about the
treasure or the danger are never seriously explored, an omission that contributes
to the unconvincing quality of a book that has enough drama and action to lure
readers anyway. ZS

D.V. Handicaps, adjustment to; Interracial understanding

Edwards, Michelle. *Alef-Bet*, written and illus. by Michelle Edwards. Lothrop,
Library ed. $14.93; Trade ed. $15.00.

R* 5-9 yrs. Like the artist’s *Chicken Man* (BCCB 5/91) and *A Baker’s Portrait* (BCCB 2/92), this has an informal warmth that will endear it to kids who already know or want to learn the Hebrew alphabet. Each picture tells a story that adds to a cumulative, funny family portrait of an *ema* (mother), an *abba* (father), and three distinctly individualized children, one of whom uses a wheelchair. A helpful introductory note gives some background on the Hebrew language, introduces the fictional family, and features the full alphabet with a pronunciation guide. On the first double spread, a transliteration follows the Hebrew character for “alef” in the upper left hand corner, while the Hebrew word, “ahm-Baht-yah,” and its English translation, “bathtub” appear in the bottom corners. In between is the panorama of a chaotic bathroom scene where the older daughter sprays water on a floor full of toys while her mother sits on the toilet dressing a younger child. From *alef* to *tav*, these playfully colored, thickly layered paintings depict the non-stop activity of homely characters who look like Harriet Pincus’ children in *Tell Me a Mitzi* by Lore Segal. Clear, artful, and involving, this is a model of what foreign-language alphabets should be. The ebullience of the book as a whole stands out in sharp contrast to Drucker’s *Jewish Holiday A B C*, reviewed above. BH

C.U. Language arts

ed. $13.89; Trade ed. $14.00.

R 2-4 yrs. Strongly composed and focused oil paintings illustrate a picture book that speaks of love between an African-American mother and child. Like most children, Nikki likes to push/test her parent, and most of the story consists of Nikki making sure her mother will recognize her even in disguise—or what a small child thinks is disguise. All this anxiety has been engendered because Mama is starting a new job; indeed, at the end of her first work day, Mama does make one little slip about what Nikki’s favorite sport is. But Mama is still able to convince her daughter that she would know her anywhere, and Nikki shows that she loves Mama in just the same way. Simple in structure, but wholly believable as a story of separation anxiety that is handled by Mama with understanding and patience. ZS

D.V. Mother-child relations

19217-9. 290p. $17.95.

R Gr. 7-10. Faber’s synthesis of information on the earliest native, Norse, Spanish, French, and English explorers of the Americas represents
a solid resource for students who are researching the subject. Concise background information on European politics is neatly worked into accounts of the voyages themselves, each of which comprises myriad stories of love, hate, greed, and bravery. Vespucci, Balboa, Magellan, and company are characters of almost tall-tale proportion, but the text is careful to balance their exploits with eye-witness accounts of almost continual, often successful Indian resistance. Nor are the native groups glorified: descriptions of their cannibalism and infanticide of female babies match the conquerors’ savage treachery. This is a huge canvas, dotted with dramatic details such as young Balboa’s stowing away with his faithful dog, which is finally poisoned just before Balboa himself is executed by a jealous rival; in another unforgettable scenario, the black slave Estebanico—plumes in his hair, bells on his arms and legs, a feathered gourd rattle in his hand—becomes the first non-Indian to enter the Southwest, only to be killed by the Zuni. Supporting the text are maps, a list of important dates in the “discoveries” of America, notes on the sources, and a bibliography with asterisks marking entries accessible to young readers. BH


R* Gr. 7-12. Megan, the narrator, is the Rapunzel figure; she lives in the Tower Room with Bella (Snow White) and Alice (Sleeping Beauty) at an English girls’ boarding school. At seventeen, Megan falls for Simon, the young lab assistant and only man around, and he begins to visit her by climbing the scaffolding to her window. When Megan’s science-teacher guardian, who is also in love with Simon, finds out, Megan and her prince flee the school for London, from where she writes the account of her adventures interspersed with letters to Simon. Although the message is eventually anti-romantic (Megan repudiates the fairy tale, cuts off her Rapunzel braid and returns to school), Geras’ writing is so much better suited to the romance elements (“The whole universe was now entirely contained in my body, and every beautiful feeling in the world was blossoming and uncurling under my own burning skin, over my flesh, and in my mouth made moist and tender by his kisses”) that the book is likely to have the opposite effect. The fairy-tale parallels sometimes have no point beyond drawing attention to themselves, and the overlaid and moody writing may slow the pace too much for some readers. The girls’-school atmosphere is spot-on and enjoyable, however, and young romantics will savor the story of three quasi-familiar heroines preparing to enter the world. DS

Written with respect for both the subject and the audience, Gherman's biography is meticulously researched and documented, with notes for every one of the numerous quotations and with a generous bibliography that includes primary sources. She has struck an easy balance between discussions of work and of personal life, as well as between descriptions of early and later years. The readership for this will probably be graduates of White's fiction and students with a yen to write—there's lots here about the creative process as well as the practical problems. BH
C.U. Literature, American; Writing for children

R Gr. 4-6. This is one of the few books that deals with AIDS as a physiological problem, referring only briefly to behavioral problems (ignoring safe sex or sterile needles) that spread the causative virus (HIV) through human carelessness. Photos of magnified tissue slides, many in color, show viral bodies and their invasive patterns. Greenberg's writing is clear, authoritative, and logically organized; the print is large and the glossary and relative index make the material more accessible. The text gives, in orderly fashion, an explanation of how viruses seek host cells, how the body's immune system works, and what happens when the system does not function. A brief list of books and agencies that can provide further information is included. ZS
C.U. Health

Ad Gr. 6-8. The story of the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 is narrated by fifteen-year-old Daisy, the fictional servant/companion to Edith Irvine, a real person whose photographs of disaster scenes have been preserved in a Utah library. The plot serves adequately to account for the presence of the two: planning to board ship for Australia, the young women are halted by the catastrophe itself and by being separated from Edith's father, who has their tickets. Gregory does a good job of making the suffering and confusion dramatically vivid, and her writing style has vigor and pace. Unfortunately, the repeated introduction of Jack London and John Barrymore seems egregiously artificial, notwithstanding the fact that both were in San Francisco at the time. A substantial bibliography is provided. ZS
C.U. History—U.S.

R 3-7 yrs. This song book is a semi-facsimile reproduction of a collection put together by Woody and Marjorie Mazia Guthrie for their children. All twenty songs are simple, folk-like, and repetitive ("Hold up your hands, your hands, your hands") in a way that encourages easy memorization; the frequent onomatopoeia ("Bling, blang, hammer with my hammer, zingo, zango, cutting with my saw") will be a crowd-pleaser as well. Although there is nothing
particularly original about the words or music, lots of possibilities for fingerplay and pantomime make the collection a good story hour source. Naïve drawings by Woody accompany each selection; melody lines and guitar chords are provided. RS
C.U. Story hour


Ad Gr. 4-7. Sterling is a champion Bedlington terrier, suddenly blind from glaucoma; Cory is thirteen, adjusting to the death of her little sister, her parents' divorce, and her father's remarriage. Since Sterling is useless for showing, his owners give him to Cory, who feels a bond with him: "He was hers in a profound and complex way; his essence, his need were seeping into the hollows of her heart." She decides to train him for an Agility competition, the one canine event that allows a blind dog to compete, and finds that the training brings her family closer together as they prepare for the day of (successful) competition. The dependency-and-redemption theme is poignant, but the story, especially the tearjerker ending (Sterling dies) is sentimental; nor is the family support of Sterling's progress ever really credible. Hall tells a good dog story, however, and although this one grabs shamelessly for readers' hearts, it will get most of them. DS
D.V. Animals, love for


Ad Gr. 1-3. "My name is Sami, and I live in the time of the troubles. It is a time of guns and bombs. It is a time that has lasted all my life, and I am ten years old." The narrator goes on to describe his daily life in the family's makeshift basement artillery shelter, which Sami's mother has decorated with exquisite carpets and a brass wedding vase to remind them of their former life (before Sami's father was killed by a car bomb in the market). While the story is moving, it is neither focused enough on a selective incident (which would allow fuller development) nor informative enough in context to be read aloud without considerable adult explanation. Young listeners do not learn where or when the action is set (the jacket copy mentions Beirut), which is important because the implications of the action are more serious than in this team's previous picture book about the Middle East, The Day of Ahmed's Secret (BCCB 10/90). Lewin's watercolors are rich, even glowing, in picking up the rugs' ruddy hues and the ashen scenes of a war-torn street. In spite of insufficient background, the strongly anti-war message will provide opportunities for discussion between children and informed adults. BH
C.U. Social studies
D.V. Peace


Ad Gr. 2-4. Based (as are three of the author's previous books) on stories of her grandmother's childhood, Howard's brief account of a child's desire
for achievement and recognition constitutes a believable but static narrative. The
youngest of four children, Faith wants to prove her ability, but usually
something goes wrong; when it does, her brother Fritz teases her. The rural
setting for this turn-of-the-century period piece is reflected in adequate but not
impressive black-and-white illustrations; the writing style is simple and direct if
a bit choppy. Faith does complete a task, braving the big, scary cellar to get
apples that are stored there; even though Fritz slams the cellar door, Faith
determinedly makes her way toward the light and completes her errand. ZS
D.V. Brothers-sisters; Fear, overcoming


R Gr. 2-4. Nine-year-old Roz doesn’t like it, but she and seven-
year-old Ozzie Sims are permanently linked. Not only do their families live
together in “the same two-family house,” but also Ozzie is Roz’s uncle (Roz’s
mother is Ozzie’s half-sister)—a joke that is used throughout the book. Roz and
her parents have just moved to town and Roz is trying to make new friends, but
she can’t seem to shake off her biggest fan, Ozzie. Roz’s reactions to her little
tag-along uncle range from irritation to occasional gratitude. The image of the
extended family sharing two homes is a gratifying one, as Grandma gives Dad
and Roz cooking lessons when Mom is busy writing her doctoral dissertation
and both fathers take turns taking the kids to the mall or the movies. The
episodic story is usually funny, occasionally repetitive, one grand scene features
everyone including the police (and four dozen extra cupcakes) arriving at school
in time for Roz’s birthday treat. The kids work out their differences on their
own in a realistic and affectionate way. Any child would want to be in this
family, with four loving adults and a next-door playmate who’s likable—most of
the time. KJ
D.V. Uncle-niece relations

Reviewed from galleys.

R* Gr. 4-8. Although a number of children’s books have quoted
Columbus’ description of the native Tainos as being a handsome people, few go
on to his other comments: that he and his 90 crew members “could overrun all
these islands without opposition . . . [for the Indians] bear no arms, and are all
unprotected and so very cowardly that a thousand would not face three; so they
are fit to be ordered about and made to work. . . .” Here is a rare account of the
generous islanders’ enslavement and genocide (from 1492 to 1496, a third of the
estimated million population perished; by 1548, fewer than 500 remained alive)
by colonists bent on wresting gold from a part of the New World that had
sustained a thriving culture on the farming of yucca plants for cassava bread. It’s
a grim record but one that Jacobs has balanced to maximize the force of facts,
which speak for themselves, and minimize the sensational details. Notes,
bibliography, and a list of museum exhibits attest to the background research
synthesized into a historical narrative that should be required reading for the
quincentennial. BH
C.U. Columbus Day; History—America

R 5-8 yrs. This is a third-person narrative from the point of view of a palomino named Custer, who grows up happily amid cows, then has trouble adjusting to his new home among horses until he befriends another shy newcomer, a mare named Minto. Although the story anthropomorphizes a bit it's all in fun, and there's a generous dollop of humor throughout, particularly in the pictures of Custer cheerfully squashed into a row of cows and investigating a farm kitchen. This book has a stronger sense of animal reality than Parnall's *Stuffer*, reviewed below; these horses are more interested in other quadrupeds than humans (and all ends happily, despite the British author's fortunately erroneous statement that "Custer . . . finally lived up to his name"). The sunny-hued illustrations project attractive watercolor landscapes, although the figures are sometimes stiff. The factual base of the plot will add appeal to this playful story, and kids will enjoy the pictures of equine antics. DS


M 5-8 yrs. Here's a pretty picture book in which story seems subverted by style. "Leonora's house is next to Riverview Park," so she isn't exactly homeless. No, Leonora sleeps in the park because she likes to: "The dew is her blanket/ The clouds are her pillow." Leonora's shopping cart is filled with whimsical treasures ("Popcorn from Paraguay/ Snakeskins from Spain/ A buffalo's toothbrush/ A full tube of rain!"), and even though "she doesn't have money/ To buy much to eat," she manages each week to save up for a slice of corn bread, take a taste, and put the rest on her head for the crows. This featherbrained sentimentality might be mistaken for irony were it not for Cornell's voluptuously giddy watercolors, whose raffish charms complement the text's apparent message: it's fun to be a bag lady. Just ask Leonora. RS

D.V. Sharing


R Gr 5-7. Birdie (Bertha) is the narrator of a novel set in a Pennsylvania town in 1917; like her siblings, she is apprehensive about the family's future as well as bereft at her father's death. Jewish immigrants from Russia, Birdie and her brothers hope that Mama—who has little English and less business experience—will want to go ahead with the grocery store Papa had planned to open. This is the story of a courageous and industrious family's project, capably told and accurately reflecting both one kind of immigrant experience and the neighborly trust (Mama extends credit to the black community against the advice of a kinsman) that is the turning point in the family's fortunes. Lehrman's use of phonetic spelling (and the occasional inconsistency in such use) is a minor weakness. ZS

D.V. Family relations; Industry; Kindness

**R**  
Gr. 4-7.  
Less a case of photographs illustrating poetry, this is a symbiosis in which each double spread—one page a poem about light and the other, a photographic study of light—reflect off each other. It is especially remarkable that the photos, though richly reproduced color, have a stark, restrained quality of composition that often characterizes the best black-and-white work. In the poetry itself, light moves beyond metaphor to become almost a character: "Light is a tolltaker, a bridgemaster flashing yellow commands ..."; "Light swims in the ocean tipping broken half-moons over the waves ..."; "Light buys a ticket to the County Fair, spins in circles on a merry-go-round ..."; "Light steps into a pool, stretching its yellow legs deep down ..."; "Light hides its face under a lampshade, throwing strange shadows." Each of these openings and several others, fourteen in all, tells a lyrical story that blends cohesively into an examination and celebration of light. This is a book that could have been glitzy in appearance and faded in lyrical concept; instead, verse and photographs form a bright illumination of an old subject. BH


**Ad**  
Gr. 7-9.  
Vicki, with her mother's backing, has lied about her age (she's only fourteen) so that she'll be eligible to get one of four summer internships on the Scottsville Courier. It's a small-town newspaper that has won a Pulitzer prize, and it's owned by a famous correspondent and edited by his daughter. Vicki, the two older girls (Faith and Elizabeth), and Chris (in Scottsville against the wishes of his domineering father) all stay in a rooming house; Vicki falls in love with Chris, while he falls in love with Elizabeth. All four have emotional upheavals as they interrelate with that intensity that can be born of proximity, zeal, and adolescence. The four make permanent impressions on each other, but even the skill of the authors' writing can't make this much more than a padded situation-exploration. ZS

D.V.  
Age-mate relations


**R**  
Gr. 1-4.  
Nonfiction at the beginning-to-read level is rare and welcome, particularly when it blends appeal and information as smoothly as this book does. In easy, short sentences Milton dispels myths about wolves, describes their communication, hunting, and pack behavior, and explains how wolf pups are reared. A concluding ecological plea is to the point: "Today people are trying to live in tune with nature, as wolves do. They want to save some of the wild places left on earth. If that happens, there will be wild, wild wolves howling in the forests for years to come." Schwinger's pencil-and-watercolor illustrations are elegant and accurate and don't flinch from the facts, as in a double-spread illustration of a pack circling an old moose: "One wolf charges. It bites the moose's nose and hangs on tight." Cover art sounds an inviting howl; also included is a world map of wolf distribution. RS

C.U.  
Nature study; Reading, easy

**R**  **Gr. 3-5.** Line drawings and full-color paintings have a dramatic vitality that should appeal to baseball buffs as much as will this excellent collection of poems by an experienced anthologist. Morris is (as her appended "Notes on Ballplayers" shows) a knowledgeable fan; herself a poet, she has chosen both classics ("Casey at the Bat" by Ernest Thayer and "The Base Stealer" by Robert Francis) and poems that are less well known. There is variety of style, form, mood, and subject, but a unanimity of theme and high quality. A bonanza for lovers of the country's favorite game. ZS

C.U. Reading aloud; Recreation


**R**  **1-4 yrs.** A Caribbean scene on the cover and tomato-red endpapers dotted with green lizards establish a verdant new setting for this traditional verse. The heavily textured illustrations dramatize a sunny version of the action that surrounds the house that Jack built, including a neatly constructed cottage amidst rampant tropical greenery, lumpy sacks of malt, a fat rat, thin cat, fierce dog, cow with an **extremely** crumpled horn, maiden all forlorn, man all tattered and torn, priest all shaven and shorn, cock that crowed in the morn, and farmer sowing his corn. The black characters and impressionistic, color-struck landscapes will lend new presence to an old cumulative favorite at toddler story hours. BH

C.U. Storytelling


**R**  **Gr. 7-12.** Sara, seventeen, is both excited and apprehensive about her climb up Alaska’s Mount McKinley with her father. Since her parents divorced and her mother remarried and moved with Sara from Oregon to a small Yup’ik village in Alaska, Sara sees this expedition as a chance to: one, prove herself to her Dad; and two, convince him to allow her to move in with him in San Francisco. The relationship between the two is complicated with love and guilt and provides an emotional center for this adventure/survival story. It is a credit to Murphy’s skill that she so successfully conveys the excitement and hardship of the ascent when, according to the jacket flap, she’s never made the attempt herself. Characterization of the other members of the expedition is oversimplified, occasionally anonymous, and the book does get preachy, most annoyingly in the form of inspirational quotes provided to Sara by her mother in a trip diary. But the goal is reached, and the effort to get there has natural suspense. RS

D.V. Father-daughter relations; Perseverance


**R**  **Gr. 6-10.** Jimmy has come home from another aimless day at school to discover his father, long-imprisoned for murder, standing in the
hallway of Jimmy’s rundown New York apartment house. "Crab" is out on parole, he says, has a job offer in Chicago, and wants Jimmy (who lives with his dead mother’s friend Mama Jean) to come with him. When Jimmy goes, he discovers that the only true part of Crab’s story is the part about wanting Jimmy to come with him. Crab spends as much time fooling himself as he does trying to fool Jimmy, and their road trip to Cleveland and Chicago, and eventually to Crab’s boyhood home in Arkansas, is a shifting pattern of old recriminations and tentative reconciliations, all shadowed by the need to stay ahead of the police. Crab and Jimmy are mysteries to each other, and Myers provides no quick epiphanies or embraces. Jimmy finds his father both vulnerable and threatening, misses Mama Jean, but knows that the trip promises something he should know. The novel is occasionally talky but never preachy, and the secrets that Crab reveals about despite himself provide as much drama as the on-the-road prison escape motif that provides the story with its impetus. RS


R Gr. 5-8. “If all the girls in junior high suddenly raced to the roof and plunged madly over the edge, I would be sailing off into space with them,” says Alice (of *The Agony of Alice,* etc.) in the winter of seventh grade, having discovered her desire to be “in step with every female person in Montgomery County” and “part of the great sisterhood of women.” To this end, Alice gets her ears pierced (causing her big brother Lester to faint) and joins an earring club, participates—disastrously—in the school talent show, and starts to move with the popular crowd, almost leaving her good friends Elizabeth and Patrick. This is a smart and funny paean to the pleasures and trials of the herd instinct as well as the rewards and pains of moving beyond it. Alice does demonstrate some unlikely self-knowledge at times, but she’s still touching and frequently hilarious (when she plasters a diagram of the female reproductive organs to her chest, thereby “proudly carrying her sex”); fans will delight in this chapter of her continuing story. DS


R* Gr 3-. See editorial.


R Gr. 4-7. This bug-saga begins when young butterfly Leon espies a beautiful stranger who has dropped her scarf and flown away. He gallantly pursues her; she introduces herself à la Puccini (“They call me Mimi”); they fall in love. Leon’s mother calls Mimi a cheap tramp and tries to break them up (“Leon, Leon, I just want something better for you”) but then true high drama begins when Mimi disappears and her burrow is left in a shambles. “MIMI!” Leon cries. Enter Spider Kane, “brilliant detective,” to the rescue.
Plentifully illustrated with funny, peevishly sinister drawings by Victoria Chess, this is a romp whose allusions may occasionally fly over the heads of young readers, but with a trickle-down effect that will keep them amused and slightly breathless at the fast action and twisting plot. Spiders and slugs, dogticks and ladybugs all have their roles to play, with Spider Kane, battle-scarred veteran of the Mosquito Wars, occupying center stage. The ending is a letdown (it was all a plot to see if Leon . . . oh, never mind), but it does leave the door wide open for a sequel. And, according to the jacket flap, one is due next fall. RS


M  Gr. 1-3.  Poor Stuffer: originally happy, the pet and show pony of a girl (known as “Girl”), he is eventually outgrown and sold to a riding stable where he is ill-treated. Unable to work any longer, he is sold again to a happier place and taken care of by a “wee, little girl” (pictured as a twee little girl). Heaven knows horsey girls love rescue fantasies, but this is sentimental and sometimes anthropomorphic slush, frequently written in irritating verbless sentences (“Away, where foals went down the lane to a disappearing place. Down the lane and around the bend, to Somewhere”); nor does it always make sense, with butterflies mentioned rapturously on pages where they don’t appear, and Stuffer mourning the departure of his (never seen) foal playmates but not that of his mother. The illustrations, spare pencil with an occasional highlight of watercolor, generally have a quiet dignity the text lacks. *Black Beauty* at least had a cause; kids into that storyline should pass up Parnall’s pale imitation and either pick up a good junior version of the classic or wait to immerse themselves in the original. DS

D.V. Animals, kindness to


Ad  Gr. 1-3.  This is a reminiscence, with the narrator recalling her girlhood in a “run-down and crowded” house, where she lived with her parents, brother, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and assorted pets. When her Uncle Carmen gets a new job in an office (he has previously been a waiter) he needs a suit, but he doesn’t have enough money to buy one. The family, who have all accompanied him to the store, secretly get together to pay for the suit while convincing Uncle Carmen that he is the winner of a contest and the suit is free. The houseful of relatives is nostalgic rather than lively; and the humor throughout is more likely to be understood from an adult perspective (the time is described as “back when there was only black-and-white television with just three channels” and a dog is “a mix of many, many very rare pedigrees”); child readers many also not understand the generous deception. The house looks disappointingly roomy in the illustrations, but Passen’s bug-eyed and misshapen cast troops merrily across the pages, making the illustrations more appealing than the text (the typeface of which is offputtingly dark and narrow). Overall, this is adult retro; although more substantial than most such books, it’s more for those who were kids then, not those who are now. DS

D.V. Family relations

*Gr. 6-10.* Fourteen-year-old John’s rite of passage is a summer alone in the mountains with six thousand sheep and four border collies to help out. The action is nonstop, as a rattlesnake, dog injury, stampede, flash flood, coyote pack, marauding bear, and various accidents follow in quick succession. John rises to each occasion, earning the respect he has long coveted from his taciturn father, who shows up a month into the summer and stays up all night talking—for the first time—about John’s birth, his beautiful mother killed by a horse, and his grandfather, a cruel man whom John has idolized as heroic. This is in many respects formula fiction, but it’s a successful formula that will have readers plunging over each cliffhanger into the next crisis until they finish the book. The protagonist is clearly imagined; the style is both consciously simple and dramatic; the dogs are appealing. There’s even a touch of humor: “I don’t know why it is, but if you have fifteen horses, twenty cows, and some sheep standing on a hill and a thunderstorm comes, lightning will hit the sheep. Every time. Things just happen to sheep.” Not to mention their herders. BH D.V. Father-son relations; Self-reliance


*Ad Gr. 5-8.* Meg Hamilton bitterly resents her family’s move to Ohio the summer before her entry into eighth grade. At first she resists the charm of the old wooden farmhouse and the friendly neighbors, but she becomes interested in the house’s past when she finds a forgotten wooden chest in the attic. With the help of a neighbor boy, Talley, and his great-grandmother, Meg begins to uncover the history of the house and the chest’s owners, including the information that proves Talley’s family to be the rightful owners of the house from which a developer threatens to evict them. Precek’s particularly good with atmosphere, and the hot midwestern summer, the old houses, and the musty old attic are well-evoked. The story itself is quite predictable, as Meg adjusts to moving, finds a friend in a wonderful old lady whom she originally feared, and beats the evil real estate developer (with the aid of a dream that may have been an assist from the long-deceased inhabitants of the house). It’s a pleasantly-told tale, however, and many readers will enjoy Meg’s pursuit of the past and coming to terms with the present. DS D.V. Moving, adjustment to


*M 1-3 yrs.* Each of these little board books includes attractive if sentimental color photographs of toddlers engaged in sunny, everyday activities. *Let’s Get Together* pairs facing pages of opposites and almost-opposites: “I have blond hair . . . you have black” . . . “I have dark skin . . . you have light skin” . . . “You wear glasses, I do not.” These are concepts most toddlers can follow, but the conclusion is on another level entirely: “Each of us is different and very special, too, so . . . let’s get together and be friends!” *Sharing & Caring* is more disjointed, but its emphasis, too, involves a degree of moral and
conceptual awareness beyond the board-book audience. After six spreads of toddlers playing together ("We jump in the hay. Ready, set...wheeeeee!") the book concludes, "Sharing and caring is [sic] what it's all about." Most two-year-olds will skip the sermons, and view both books as pleasant, if plotless, compendia of other kids having a good time, an appeal readily covered by pretty much everything already published for this age group. RS
D.V. Cooperation


R  Gr. 2-4. When Angie Wu receives a gift of six Guatemalan Trouble Dolls from her aunt, she immediately attempts to use them, as instructed, to take away her troubles. Her small but immediate success (a loathed admirer doesn't sit next to her in class) causes her to sing the dolls' praises during Sharing Time, so everybody in class begs to borrow one. When Angie lends them out, all she gets in return are recriminations from her unlucky classmates ("I didn't need to study. I had a Trouble Doll," snarls the boy who flunked his spelling test) and no Trouble Dolls, since the kids have all lost or destroyed them. Angie herself is in serious danger of failing an in-class report (she was too busy trying to find out about Trouble Dolls to research planets, as she intended) until she uses her research on Guatemala to write a report on the Mayan Indians. The setup with both the dolls and the research payoff is a little contrived, but it's well-executed. Angie and her friends are realistic, her library research is incorporated smoothly and humorously into the peer-group plot, and it's nice to have an easy middle-grades school story with a twist. DS
D.V. Age-mate relations


M  Gr. 5-9. John F. Kennedy won because he looked good on television, Benjamin Harrison campaigned solely from his front porch, and Jimmy Carter based his campaign on a strategy he read in a book. This is filled with interesting presidential campaign trivia scattered throughout a confusing description of the U.S. election process. Definitions and explanations are lost within the anecdotal history, so that terms like "primaries," "delegates," and "exit polls" are left unclear. Reische's deductive writing style sometimes results in premises left hanging too long—confusing the reader for several pages until the point is made. For example, the statement that "George Bush, it was said, would never get elected President" provides a perfect cliffhanger chapter ending, but the reader's interest crashes before the reasons appear, nine pages later, that explain why Bush won. Reische gets careless when, in a chapter on presidential image, she describes Dukakis as looking like "a small-town engineer," and again when she suggests that a Democratic rule for electing delegates is complicated because it "insists that half of all delegates be women." Read this to get an impression of the history of U.S. presidential campaigning, but look elsewhere to learn how the system works. KJ
C.U. Government

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R Gr. 9-. The daughter of a fanatical Christian evangelist, 17-year-old Lucy has been surrounded by inhibitions and prohibitions that leave her totally unprepared for a date-rape and ensuing pregnancy. When she runs away from home, she almost immediately encounters Jake, a sensitive boy who protects and cares for her. This is their love story, and it is a tribute to the writing that a plot with so little conflict—after the initial dramatic episodes are over—can sustain such concentrated attention from the reader, whose involvement with the two main characters deepens with each revelation of their inherent good nature. The coming baby engenders enthusiasm rather than resentment on Jake’s part, and their differences of socio-economic class and education dissolve in the face of a profoundly innocent but convincingly honest affection. Rodowsky has experimented with a narration that shifts between first and third person; it doesn’t add to the impact, but it doesn’t detract, either, because in each case, the effect of intimacy is achieved by attentive observation of detail. Would that all runaway teens could tell stories that ended so happily.

BH
D.V. Boy-girl relations


R Gr. 7-12. “You’re a bastard...we don’t want you here,” says fifteen-year-old Hannah to her father. Joe is black, a pop star, returning to Hannah and her twin Rosie’s white mother after an absence that began before the twins’ birth. He brings with him Nicola, his cool, sophisticated daughter who is only a year younger than her half-sisters Hannah and Rosie, and who is now in Hannah’s class at their very suburban English school. Pullman’s The Broken Bridge, reviewed last month, had a similar subject, but Roy involves herself more with family dynamics than plot strands, demonstrating a gift for phrasing and sharp insight that makes this unusual situation broadly meaningful. The point of view shifts gradually between the three girls, as Hannah and Rosie both cling to and fight their mutual dependency, Rosie (neurologically impaired after a childhood illness) begins to befriend Nicola and to blossom, and Nicola attempts to place herself in a new household and a virtually all-white town. The style of the novel, the author’s first, is highly descriptive and the pace deliberate, but the characterization of the three girls and treatment of their interrelationship (as well as their connections with an increasingly extended family) are superb and complex. This is an intelligent exploration, executed with sensitivity, of some difficult familial and racial issues. DS
D.V. Family relations; Interracial relations


R 4-6 yrs. Framed paintings that are cheerful and simply composed, if anatomically naïve, illustrate a story told by Ben, who looks back over the several years of their best-friendship. Ben notices, as they grow older, that Alex (now six, while Ben is five) doesn’t seem to be growing. Mama
explains: “Alex is always going to be small. It is how he was born” (unfortunate phrasing, since everyone is born small). Alex has back surgery and is recovering as the story ends; his physical limitations shape their joint activities. Ben concludes, “Alex is little and I’m big, but it really doesn’t matter . . . because Alex is my friend.” Young listeners may want to know what, specifically, is wrong with Alex; however, they can still appreciate the fact that the simple narrative stresses both the acceptance of disability and the fact that a disabled child has the same needs and the same potential for friendship as do other children. ZS

D.V. Friendship values; Handicaps, overcoming


R* 4-10 yrs. See editorial.


R 4-8 yrs. A picture book that’s politically correct in a natural, friendly way, this follows Elisa, the driver of a recycling truck, on her cleanup route. With an informal narrative and color photographs that are appealing if sometimes dark, Seltzer directly summarizes the disposal problem in his first few pages: “Our supplies of some materials we use are growing smaller and smaller. The piles of garbage are growing higher and higher—we’re running out of room!” Enter the recycling truck, nicknamed Uncle Bud. PC aside, boys will love looking at all the equipment; girls will love looking at a strong role model who lifts and dumps, gets a truck named after her when she moves on to another position, and is visibly pregnant as she sits by the computer in her new job as recycling manager for another county. Both the regular garbage truck crew and some of the neighbors are African-American in this socially sensitive introduction, which concludes with recycling tips for young listeners. BH

D.V. Ecological awareness


R Gr. 2-5. Like earlier books in this excellent astronomy series, these two volumes are distinguished for the beauty of the color photographs (from space probes) and the clarity of informative diagrams and continuous texts. Simon is adept at arranging scientific material in a logical way that makes it accessible; his writing is clear, succinct without being terse, and always illustrative of good scientific principles: objective, distinguishing between fact
and conjecture, and making it clear that scientific knowledge is built on the
continuing input from many sources and is perennially subject to change as new
data accrue. ZS
C.U. Astronomy

0-8075-7849-5. 192p. illus. with photographs. $11.95.
R Gr. 6-9. Liberally illustrated with reproductions of
contemporary prints and photographs, this is a lively biography of Roosevelt
although the style is serious. The coverage is broad, and the author is candid
about Roosevelt’s faults or idiosyncrasies but firmly complimentary about his
many achievements and reforms of social, industrial, and legislative ills (she also
wields the “Big Stick” metaphor a little too often). There’s a good balance
between Whitelaw’s coverage of the biographee’s personal life and his dramatic
career. This is more detailed than Fritz’ *Bully for You, Teddy Roosevelt* (BCCB
5/91) and deals more specifically with the pros and cons of Roosevelt’s politics.
A bibliography of sources, a list of Theodore Roosevelt’s books, a chronology,
and an index are appended. ZS
C.U. History—U.S.

Whittier, John Greenleaf. *Barbara Frietchie;* illus. by Nancy Winslow Parker.
09829-0. 32p. Library ed. $13.93; Trade ed. $14.00.
Ad 6-9 yrs. Line-and-wash illustrations, tidy and static, echo the
events if not the sentimentality of Whittier’s Civil War poem. Notes by the
artist make it clear that the poet believed the shoot-if-you-must incident to be
true, although no verification exists. Parker also offers notes on Whittier and on
Stonewall Jackson, the Confederate General who spared one Union flag
(according to the poem) because of his respect for the courage and patriotism of
elderly Barbara Frietchie. The notes are useful; one pair of facing maps seems to
have contradictory details because of a difference in scale; one erroneous caption
for endpaper flags (one set for each of the contenders) is being corrected so that
Fort Sumter will not be said to be in Virginia. ZS
D.V. Patriotism

Wilson, A. N. *Hazel the Guinea Pig;* illus. by Jonathan Heale. Candlewick,
Ad 5-9 yrs. “Well,” said Hazel to herself, “if that isn’t a tunnel!”
Since Hazel had already decided that she wanted to try exploring, she crawled into
the rain boot (“tunnel”) and got stuck. That is the beginning of a slightly
sugary story that is replete with anthropomorphism and in which the two-strand
plot concerns the interaction between people and guinea pigs and the tension
created by the addition of a guinea pig mate, a guinea pig intruder, and guinea
pig progeny. Black-and-white illustrations have a sketchy quality, and the
writing style, even for lovers of animal stories, may prove just a bit contrivedly
ingenuous. ZS
D.V. Animals, kindness to

R 3-5 yrs. In this cheerfully cyclical story told in casual rhyme, truck-mad young Peter interrogates every truck driver he meets, guessing at the truck's contents. He starts with the milk truck ("Mister, Mister, are there cows in your truck?" "No cows, sonny, just milk") and questions drivers of a gasoline carrier, garbage truck, armored car, and so on, each time asking if this truck has the same cargo as the last, until finally he finds a truck that *does* have cows. The ink-and-watercolor illustrations balance dusky shades with energetic, frazzly lines and truckloads of character in each double-page encounter: the scenes are full of unpicky background detail, such as the antics the various cats get up to (eyeing fish-market merchandise, chasing each other across the street), the stout police horse shepherding pedestrians, and the jogger and biker who whip by on their respective pages. The trucks will charm the Tonka crowd, and the "what's inside" theme and the bouncing rhymes ("I see lots of flies. Is there garbage inside?" "I should say not. The flies come for the ride") make this a lively readaloud. DS

C.U. Reading aloud; Transportation


Ad Gr. 2-4. A young Taino boy has a prophetic dream the night before Columbus' landfall on San Salvador: "three great-winged birds with voices like thunder rode wild waves in our bay," and "sharp, white teeth filled their mouths." Despite the boy's warnings, his people welcome the Europeans, who smile like serpents when they see gold. Escaping from the ship to which he's been taken, the boy wanders far and wide with his portent unheeded: "So it was we lost our lands to the strangers from the sky.... May it be a warning to all the children and all the people in every land." The story is a 1992 hindsight lament that depends more on symbol than development; young listeners—unless they are to conclude with a general moral to beware of strangers—will need to know specifically what the strangers did. Even the statistics in the author's note do not make clear, except in a remote and generalized way, what happened as a result of the encounter. On the other hand, there are few books at this age level that give more than lip service to a non-white point of view. In conjunction with books that do include more contextual details (Jacobs' excellent *The Tainos*, reviewed above, is for older children but could be read aloud to younger), this will present children with a springboard to discussion of Columbus' hotly debated "discovery." Shannon's brooding, tensely emotional paintings attribute mask-like visages and deathly white hands to the Spanish sailors, augmenting the surrealistic sense of imminent, unnamed destruction. BH

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