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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.

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Cover illustration by Hans Christian Andersen, from The Amazing Paper Cuttings of Hans Christian Andersen ©1994 and used by permission of Ticknor & Fields.
The Amazing Paper Cuttings of Hans Christian Andersen

by Beth Wagner Brust

“When he could give us children pleasure,” wrote Hans Christian Andersen’s goddaughter, “he never neglected the opportunity to do so. He presented his fairy tales to us, took us to the theatre . . . but what interested us most of all were the figures he cut out, and which he often pasted into . . . scrapbooks.” That one of the great storytellers of western culture expressed himself visually as well as verbally will come as a surprise to many readers. Hans Christian Andersen’s skillful paper cuttings, which he made spontaneously without patterns or drawings, project the same bittersweet elements as the fairy tales he wrote. Concentrating on this aspect of his achievements, Brust’s biography explores the development of Andersen’s skill during a childhood deprived of education or entertainment, through an adulthood that saw him replace his dreams of a theater career with home performances of storytelling and paper cutting. In fact, many of his cuttings feature theaters, along with clowns, dancers, masks, and his own leitmotif, the swan; some even reflect the architecture he observed on his travels, the characters he met, and finally, near his death, images representing both sorrow and the central comfort of a cross. Thus Brust manages to work in facts about her subject’s life along with commentary on his peculiar genius as she discusses examples showing the difference between traditional silhouettes and Andersen’s free-style, lyrically innovative art.

Defining the scope of her work so specifically allows the author to develop a direction instead of stockpiling information. Quotes from eyewitneses such as Charles Dickens’ son Henry, Baroness Bodild von Donner, and others whom Andersen entertained as children, show how constantly and consistently the storyteller exercised his scissors, which he always carried with him. Andersen’s autobiography informs Brust’s perceptive synthesis, and numerous paper cuttings provide telling illustration of his unique style. The examples here are intelligently selected to demonstrate points in the text, which is formatted with a clean simplicity that matches the writing. The dramatic contrast of delicate white tracery against black backgrounds is echoed by a crisp typeface printed on a fine grade of paper with spacious margins and leading.

The individualism of both the subject and the presentation makes this an exceptional biography reflecting the importance of selective detail in crafting books for children. Andersen, who reveled in entertaining children, knew the importance of selective detail himself, which made paper cutting as natural a medium for him as
fairy tales, since both required a compressed treatment and spare aesthetic. Above all, he wanted children to have fun, and Brust’s biography will ensure them pleasure not only in the reading of it but also in the activity that will inevitably follow her descriptions of his paper-cutting techniques. A sensible arrangement of bibliography and source notes emphasizes the books that were most helpful for each chapter. Some of these titles will aid a reader inspired to try paper cutting, while others will help students researching Andersen’s life (there’s also an index). It’s not often we can so confidently suggest a resource for school reports, knowing that the work will lead to something even more important—play.

Betsy Hearne, Editor

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE


Intertextuality runs amok when a girl, who is supposed to be looking after her little bookworm brother Jack, follows him into the book he’s just crawled into and meets . . . Jill: “‘Jack fell down—and now he’s run away,’ Jill said.” The girl goes off in search of Jack and finds the house that he built, the candlestick he so nimbly jumped over, and Jack himself up in a castle in the clouds, “eating a Christmas pie. She was just about to tell him to take out his thumb and eat politely, when the whole castle began to shake. A great voice roared: ‘FEE FI FO FUM, I’D REALLY LIKE TO EAT SOMEONE!’” While there is a plot, with Jack and his sister escaping from the giant, the real fun is in the nursery-rhyme havoc, here wreaked at a less complicated level than in the Ahlbergs’ The Jolly Postman or Scieszka and Smith’s The Stinky Cheese Man. While younger listeners might miss the wit, they’ll share the adventure, and the springtime-colored pen-and-watercolor illustrations are breezy and affectionate. Endpapers include the original rhymes. RS

ARAUJO, FRANK P.  Nekane, the Lamiña & the Bear: A Tale of the Basque Pyrenees; illus. by Xiao Jun Li. Rayve Productions, 1993  32p ISBN 1-877810-01-0  $16.95  R  4-6 yrs

Nekane’s mother sends her off with a basket of fish and olive oil for Uncle Kepa—and a warning to beware of the lamiña, “which loves olive oil and will try to get it by taking some shape, living or not.” Just as Flossie foils the Fox in McKissack’s southern tale (BCCB 9/86), this young Basque heroine tricks the lamiña by playing on its own wiles. When it takes the shape of a fog, she lures it into the wind; and when it takes the shape of a fox, dressed as Uncle Kepa, she baits it into the pathway of an angry, hungry bear to whom she has promised that Uncle Kepa will bring honey. Although Araujo has cited neither an oral nor a printed source, he has rendered the folktale into a satisfying picture book text, rounded off with a
glossary of Basque terms. Xiao Jun Li's watercolor paintings have a light, lilting translucence that leaves plenty of room for the imagination. Storytellers looking for strong female leads will like this one; Little Red Riding Hood could learn a thing or two from Nekane. BH

BEAKE, LESLEY  *Song of Be*. Holt, 1993 94p
ISBN 0-8050-2905-2  $14.95  R  Gr. 7-12

Be, a Bushman girl living in contemporary Namibia, is waiting to die from the poison-tipped arrow with which she has intentionally scratched herself, and she thinks back upon the sad events that brought her to such a decision. With her mother, Be had left their village to go help her grandfather, an elderly retainer on a farm owned by the *kleinbaas*, the white farmer. There Be became friends of a sort with the farmer's wife, who lavishly patronized Be—and taught her to read—as a way to stave off her own madness. The relationship, which ultimately drives Be to despair, denies simplistic rendering of black/white, mistress/servant dichotomies, and while the book is sometimes romantic about the traditional ways of Be's tribe, it's always probing and honest about the ways people relate to each other. The other characters—Be's mother and grandfather, the bitter *kleinbaas* who sees what's happening to his beloved, fragile wife—are developed with equal complexity, with only an idealistic and sexy young man who loves Be (and ultimately saves her life) seeming to come from a different kind of story. Still, readers will want something good to happen to Be, and so it does. RS

BELLVILLE, CHERYL WALSH  *Flying in a Hot Air Balloon*; written and illus. with photographs by Cheryl Walsh Bellville. Carolrhoda, 1993 48p
ISBN 0-87614-750-3  $14.96  R  Gr. 3-6

The author, a flight aficionado, tells of her first trip in a hot air balloon, detailing the equipment and proceedings (as well as some history) en route; she follows this up with an account of being the "chase crew" (ground followers) for another balloon. The result is a vivid you-are-there account of a little-known sport, and kids will relish the pageantry of the huge decorative balloons, the thrill of soaring over farmlands, and the simplicity of the science that keeps the balloonist up instead of down. The text is a graceful balance of the aesthetic and the practical (although it never does say just how much a balloon costs or give safety specifications), and the book may inspire science projects as well as armchair trips aloft. Photographs of preparations for flight and of the view down from the gondola are clear and alluring. Bold-faced technical terms appear again in a concluding glossary; there is also an index and a diagram of balloon anatomy. DS

BIAL, RAYMOND  *Shaker Home*; written and illus. with photographs by Raymond Bial. Houghton, 1994  [40p]
ISBN 0-395-64047-4  $15.95  Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 4-6

Particularly suitable for Bial's series blending design with history (*Frontier Home*, BCCB 10/93, *Amish Home*, 5/93), the Shakers have left a legacy of beauty and practicality in their work and words. Bial describes both the theology and everyday life of the Shaker colonies in America, explaining the importance of the melding of the two and the Shaker regret that only the crafts will remain (as one Shaker put it, "I don't want to be remembered as a chair"). Although Bial mentions the
Shakers still living in New England, the crisp photographs of homely elegance were taken at a preserved Kentucky village, which increases the impression of the Shakers belonging to a time past. The spare yet spacious pages, with pictures austere bordered in black, and ample white space keeping things airy, fit the topic well. A list for further reading is included. DS

ISBN 0-02-709735-8  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  3-7 yrs

"We who sing are the stars/ We sing with our light/ We are birds of fire/ We fly through the sky/ Our light is starlight/ We sing on the road of spirits." Ranging from lyrical images to soothing repetition, these Native American chants from a variety of peoples have a depth disproportionate to their brevity. Read often enough, they will come to children's minds in the unsettling moments between wakefulness and sleep, creating a cozy nest of words: "The sleeping place/ which you and I/ hollowed out/ will remain always,/ will remain always,/ will remain always./ will remain always." Try that Wintu song under the covers and then leave your toddler to it. Preschoolers in daycare can listen to these at naptime, and primary graders can take them in as part of their Native American study units. Pedersen's rhythmic, densely textured, full-color illustrations will appeal to the same broad age range, their warmth of hue and composition attracting younger picture book audiences, while the slightly expressionistic style respects children who have outgrown the need for strictly literal depictions. Bierhorst is, as usual, meticulous about crediting and describing his sources, and his brief introduction has a simple eloquence of its own: "Native American traditionalists also know that night is a time for healing, a time when plants grow, and a time for creative awakening—all of which may take place during sleep." Frenetic parents may get hooked on this one along with their overactive children. BH

BROWN, RICK  What Rhymes With Snake?: A Word and Picture Flap Book; written and illus. by Rick Brown.  Tambourine, 1994  16p
ISBN 0-688-12328-7  $11.95  R*  2-6 yrs

As with all the best paper-engineered toy books, this one seems monumentally simple—so why didn't somebody think of it sooner? Based on the old decoding system of substituting one syllable for another that rhymes, this begins with a large red hen. Lift the big flap and under her you'll see a pen. Lift the small flap above her to find the p substituted for an h. Continue to hat (cat), goose (moose), etc., all the way to rake (a double-fold-out snake). It's got the design harmony of Where's Spot with a lively educational twist, proving that reading readiness doesn't have to be boring. The artistic treatment is also simple but inventive. Figures are heavily outlined and hued with depth, unlike many of the flat treatments that pass for simple in toddler books, but are really just simple-minded or lazily conceived. Offering a clue to what's underneath, Brown gives a twist to each picture—the beak of the hen forms the nub of the pen, the edge of the hat forms the tail of the cat—and they're color blended, as in the example of a brilliant gold star covering a jazzy, fin-tailed old gold car. There's humorous imagination in these symmetrical, rounded, old-fashioned shapes. The format is consistent but varied by occasional switches from single to double spreads, one a splendid layout of ducks and trucks,
another a dish covering a fish. The subjects are appealing to young children (the frog and log will be a favorite) and the concept will be a runaway hit among adults working with a diverse spectrum of kids, from toddlers at home to primary graders practicing their reading skills. Along the way, they'll absorb the most important lesson of all: learning is a game. BH


See this month’s Big Picture, p. 213, for review.


Eve Bunting has a good track record for vitalizing what would be docudrama in the hands of a lesser storyteller. Here the scenario is an inner-city riot that young Daniel and his mother and his yellow cat Jasmine watch from their apartment window. “It can happen when people get angry,” explains Mama. “They want to smash and destroy. They don't care anymore what's right and what's wrong.” Among the stores looted is Mrs. Kim’s market, and when Daniel’s building catches fire in the middle of the night, both he and Mrs. Kim end up in the local church shelter, worrying about whether their cats—archenemies in the past—have escaped the blaze. It’s the authentic child’s perspective that makes the tale so touching. What impresses Daniel in the midst of an adult-size crisis are the kind of details that adults wouldn’t notice (“I’ve never seen a bigger jar of mayo,” he observes in the shelter) or wouldn’t be honest about (“Mrs. Kim takes her big, fat, mean old orange cat and holds him close”). It’s these very observations that lead Daniel to a truth about what caused the riot to begin with. Diaz has not been afraid to take risks in illustrating the story with thickly textured paintings against a background of torn-paper and found-object collage; the heavy outlines are a bit reminiscent of John Steptoe’s early work. Without becoming cluttered or gimmicky, these pictures manage to capture a calamitous atmosphere that finally calms. His choice of a stylized medium to express a frighteningly realistic situation will allow young listeners to get the emotional impact without becoming overpowered by it—just as the first-person narrative succeeds in doing a lot by not trying to do too much. In fact, both author and artist have managed to portray a politically charged event without pretension or preaching. BH


Marigold, a fetching young bunny, is spending time with her grandmother, with whom she has a series of quiet adventures. First they shop for a hat for Marigold (her ears make fitting difficult, but clever Grandma solves that), then they outwit the forceful wind that's keeping them from feeding the ducks; then they go for lunch, where Marigold meets Grandma's friend and tests her grandparent's adoration; and finally a slightly cranky Marigold nonetheless has a delightful time tak-
ing pictures with Grandma. The intergenerational one-on-one makes the entire
day seem a treat, so that the events are individually mild but collectively impor-
tant. While the story occasionally cloys, Marigold has authentic fits of frustration
and worry which make the outing realistic as well as inviting to young readers.
Watercolor illustrations are Easter-bonnet gay, with round-edged, soft-eyed rab-
bbits strolling in lapine luxury through the pages. DS

CALVERT, PATRICIA Bigger. Scribner's, 1994 [144p]
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

It's April 1865 and the Civil War is over. Twelve-year-old Tyler knows that most
men who are coming home are back or have sent word, but no word has come
from his father—Black Jack Bohannon left his Missouri home to join up with
General Jo Shelby of the Iron Cavalry Brigade of Missouri. Tyler is hearing talk
that Shelby's brigade has headed for Mexico to regroup rather than surrender to
the Yankees. Accompanied by Bigger, a strange dog who tags along with Tyler
and serves as the tale's thematic touchstone, Tyler decides to walk to Mexico to
find his father and bring him home. Thus begins a circular journey in which the
boy develops his understanding of the nature of war, slavery, his father's strengths
and weaknesses, and his own courage. He returns home wiser, sadder, and more
tolerant of the foibles of others, even his mama's-boy cousin, Clayton. No trium-
phant and heroic acts are performed here; Calvert's well-crafted story is one of a
boy who comes of age, coping with ironic twists and disappointment when his
idealistic visions of war and of his father are shattered by reality. CF

CARTER, PETER The Hunted. Farrar, 1994 [320p]
ISBN 0-374-33520-6 $17.00
Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 8-12

This is the saga of an Italian soldier's retreat from Vichy France in 1943. It could
have been as easy as joining a truckload of his men over the mountains, but Corpor-
al Salvani chooses to concern himself with the fate of a Jewish child who will
inevitably be killed by the approaching Nazis if he's not evacuated. With all the
elements of cracking good historical fiction, this is unfortunately overwritten, over-
drawn, and overdramatized. You can have a World War II adventure story, and
you can have Holocaust realism, but putting them together makes a reader feel
manipulated by formulaic violence; scenes of torture seem calculated to heighten
the excitement here, and the ending plays an overt game of cat-and-mouse with
our reactions. Subject matter aside, the reader is exposed to paragraph-long sen-
tences that are more pretentious than effective. Description is exaggerated to the
point of stereotype; we soon know the hero is good-hearted and the villain is un-
speakable, and we yearn to see the constant reiteration of their roles exchanged for
more subtly varied depth. It's too bad, because Carter really does have a sense of
storytelling. Underneath its verbiage and affected style, the novel has skillful pac-
ing, a vivid setting, and a core of characters about whom we learn to care a lot—
which is what makes the stylistic overkill so frustrating: "Wincing with pain, he
lurched away from the rock. 'Major!' he shouted. 'Fleur!' scraping scraped hands
and gashing gashed flesh as, spitting blood and cursing, he plunged through scrub
with thorns as fanged as barbed wire, until, raked and slashed, he found the car." BH

Anchored by a chorus that will hold young listeners with its rhythmic title question, this story marks the seasonal passing of nearly two years during which young Eliza’s Papa takes his sailing ship around the world to trade for goods in Java, China, and India. Each time Eliza asks where he is, her mother gives a litany of his activities, which Eliza concludes with a wish that he hurry home safely. Finally, after her sixth birthday, in the heart of winter, he does: “‘Hurry, feet,’ Eliza prayed, running to her Papa’s arms.” What gives this its momentum is partly the swing of the language and partly its detail-filled, cut-paper illustrations that feature more action than the text does. Each double spread is like a toy-chest of patterns collected into graphic scenarios, idyllic and cozily alluring. Although there’s emphatic visual variety, the diverse elements blend well enough to form a pleasing unity of composition. The pictures are saved from being too pretty by their solidity of shape, while the story is saved from being too pretty by its direct naivete in sharing a bedtime bit of history. BH

DAY, ALEXANDRA Frank and Ernest on the Road; written and illus. by Alexandra Day. Scholastic, 1994 40p ISBN 0-590-45048-4 $14.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

Frank (the bear) and Ernest (the elephant) are back, this time to introduce kids to the world of CB lingo as they take a trucking job. Small boxes on each page offer a glossary for the slang as “Furry Face” and “Nose” get their flying orders, drive out on the concrete slab, and follow the banana peel to their destination. There’s not much to the plot outside of the terminology, and the style is a little flat, but the world of arcane argot and the open road is an inviting one. Day’s cheerful, realistic oil and watercolor paintings depict the casually dressed animal pair amid a landscape of pavement and trucks that should appeal to the automotive crowd (although macho would-be truckers might prefer their characters in more realistic human guise). Fans of the dynamic duo’s previous adventures will appreciate this exploration of a new linguistic frontier. Additional definitions appear on the endpapers. DS

DEEM, JAMES M. How to Read Your Mother’s Mind; illus. by True Kelley. Houghton, 1994 [192p] ISBN 0-395-62426-6 $15.95 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-7

This entry in a series with some of the catchiest titles in the business (How to Catch a Flying Saucer, etc.) is an anecdote-packed introduction to ESP: what it is, how it’s studied, and, best of all, how to find out if you have any talent for it. Deem carefully distinguishes between various kinds of extrasensory perception such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition, and he’s equally careful in cautioning readers to be skeptical and scientific when analyzing an ESP account or conducting an experiment. Instructions, accompanied by illustrations that are both funny and useful, are included for several ESP tests, from simple experiments involving a deck of cards to more elaborate schemes that a group of friends could carry out together. Two extended accounts of ESP—one from a man convinced he was on the trail of Jack the Ripper and the other a summary of YA author Lois Duncan’s
attempts to identify her daughter's murderer—conclude the book and will leave readers with lots to think about. True Kelley's drawings have a lively improvisational flair that opens up the format of the book; both subject and style will recommend the title to reluctant readers. There's a reading list, a bibliography, and an index. RS

FACKLAM, MARGERY  *The Big Bug Book*; illus. by Paul Facklam. Little, 1994  32p ISBN 0-316-27389-9  $15.95 R Gr. 3-6

"Nobody swats a wetapunga. It's too big." With its life-sized, realistic illustrations of some seriously scary-looking insects, this book knows just how to seduce kids into some equally serious nature study. Each double spread includes a brief boxed essay on the insect in question, while the fine-lined paintings show the insects against some fanciful backgrounds and props that not only add humor to the proceedings, but also serve to enforce the sense of scale: dragonflies escort an old-fashioned balsa-wood airplane; a walking stick climbs a Tinkertoy grid; Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches crawl over a pile of alphabet blocks. Kids will enjoy the "gross" facts (such as the tarantula hawk wasp laying its egg in the paralyzed body of the tarantula, which will serve as food for the developing larva), but neither the text by Facklam *mère* nor paintings by Facklam *fils* are sensationalized, and the information about feeding, reproduction, and behavior can be extrapolated to more common insects. Give this one to kids who love bugs as well as to those who are frightened by them: everyday bees and mosquitoes won't seem half so threatening. RS


Pretty nervy these days, to set a science-fantasy novel in a Mad-Max-like Zimbabwe, 2194, particularly when the two main villainesses are a big black slavedriver named the She Elephant and a dotty, white, postmodern colonialist named Mrs. Horsepool-Worthingham, both splendidly drawn. Tendai, Rita, and little Kuda, the three children of the General, are kidnapped by the She Elephant's minions when they venture one day into the dangerous streets of Harare. The children's worried parents consult an unorthodox, semi-bumbling, and anatomically mutated detective trio (the Ear, Eye, and Arm of the title), and the chase is on, with the detectives always just one step behind the kids as they fall into and out of the She Elephant's clutches. The adventure is grand and whole-hearted, its heroics sometimes cut down to size by the ironic tone into which the book occasionally dips. Farmer has wisely considered what the passage of two centuries might bring, with her future Zimbabwe a place of grimy street life, high-rise glamor, and a simultaneous vision of apocalypse (in the toxic-wasted *vlei* that is the She Elephant's stronghold) and fundamentalist paradise (in Resthaven, where the "old ways" are preserved, both food-gathering and witch-baiting). There's a big and busy cast of characters, but Farmer expertly maintains the pace as she cuts from kids to cops, hunter to hunted, and home to away and back again. While the landscape is mostly bleak and the atmosphere often ominous, in its fundamental suspense and appeal the book bears an odd but satisfying resemblance to *The Wizard of Oz*—witches, scarecrows, and all. RS
Who is Julio Montoya, the blond-haired, green-eyed boy living in Mexico in 1845? He believes he is Mexican because the only family he has ever known has lived in the Taos valley for two hundred years, but he wonders if there is some secret about his birth. Julio's search for his identity begins when his absent father returns to Taos and Julio goes with him on the dangerous trail to Bent's Fort. In sudden succession Julio is confronted with his father's death from an Apache attack, a snowstorm, a wolf attack, and finally snowblindness. He is found by Cheyenne who nurse him back to health and accept him as one of their own. Julio questions his earlier life and begins to adopt this new culture, even to earning the name of Soaring Eagle and developing a close friendship with the chief's son Dancing Feather. While the writing is sometimes labored, the author shows deep understanding of the history and geography of this region of the Southwest and intimate knowledge of the Cheyenne culture. Julio is a believable character, and many scenes are filled with tension. For all the acts of courage and the tests passed, Julio and the reader are left at the end still wondering about his parentage and his past—hints of a sequel, perhaps? CF

Zachary is the eponymous young hero of this series, translated from the French and first published in Canada, that offers candid snapshots into the life of a single-parent family: Zachary and his father. Of course, there's also Zachary's father's girlfriend, her daughter, school friends, and the hockey team, all of which add up to a lively cast of characters for Zach to play with, fight with, and otherwise deal with. Each book has a discrete, simple plot and features an engaging synthesis of Zach-narrated text and cartoon-ballooned dialogue, with manic and expressively witty paintings that often seem to pop off the page. Zachary's a good kid and his dad is a great guy; it's a pleasure to watch them work things out. RS

One hot day in 1979 while two friends were hiking on a mesa in New Mexico, they discovered something in the sandstone that looked like bones . . . big bones . . . maybe dinosaur bones. Six years later (well, in dinosaur time, that's a mere minute) they find a paleontologist interested in uncovering the dinosaur. The excavation crews come to the site with picks and shovels, magnetometers, computerized radar equipment, sound-wave-detecting computers, drilling machines, and film crews, and the long saga of discovery and disappointment begins. While the story has tension and intrigue, there are more questions raised than answers given. For example, the scientists use several pieces of expensive equipment to locate the dinosaur underground, but they abandon the chosen area when core drilling un-
covers nothing, even though their instruments indicate dinosaur bones below. By chance they renew digging on the spot and find dinosaur bones. Why didn’t they believe their own instruments in the first place? Also, the scientists compare a dinosaur bone cell to that of a cow and find it “was almost exactly the same as bone from an ordinary cow.” Why a cow? Why not an alligator or an ostrich or some animal more closely related to our fossilized friend? Gillette tries to capture the mystery and excitement of scientific discovery but she sometimes distorts the picture of how research works, with her story leaving the impression that scientists stumble onto success more often than they plan for it. Onsite color photographs, occasionally blurred, and sleek gouache paintings illustrate the text, which is indexed. CF

GOLDENTYER, DEBRA  
Gangs. Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1994 80p illus. with photographs (Teen Hot Line)  

GOLDENTYER, DEBRA  
Dropping Out of School. Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1994 80p illus. with photographs (Teen Hot Line)  

WIJNBERG, ELLEN  
Parental Unemployment. Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1994 80p illus. with photographs (Teen Hot Line)  
ISBN 0-8114-3525-3 $14.94 Ad Gr. 7-12

Each of these series entries uses a “Hot Line” conceit, where first-person interviews and putative questions from teens are answered with a combination of information and self-esteem building. Both Gangs and Dropping Out are addressed to those thinking about indulging, and each book supposedly gives the facts so that “you can make your own decision.” Despite this apparent even-handedness, each book has firmly made up its mind about what the right decisions will be: don’t join a gang; stay in school. Worthy messages, but the books are preachy and repetitive. Parental Unemployment is also repetitive but much less directive in the way it suggests practical and emotional strategies to handle the situation. The text in each book has lots of headings and subheading; photos that are appealing if not really useful, interviews, and occasional charts also give the series an approachable format. Each book has a bibliography, directory of organizations and hotlines, and an index. RS

GRANFIELD, LINDA  
Cowboy: An Album. Ticknor & Fields, 1994 96p illus. and with photographs  
ISBN 0-395-68430-7 $18.95 R Gr. 4-7

Like Sandler’s Cowboys, reviewed below, this is a heavily pictorial history of the cowboy in North America. Sections include “The Historical Cowboy,” “Roundup,” “The Closing of the West,” “Building the Cowboy Myth,” and “Cowboys Today.” The organization is good and the text generally clear, although there is the occasional question: why invent letters from an imaginary cowboy to tell of life on a cattle drive when fascinating real stories abound? Are the women referred to as “prairie nymphs” in reality prostitutes? Unfortunately, many of the impressive archival photographs are left uncaptioned, leaving one to wonder about location, time, and relevance to text. (And the photograph included of Bill Pickett is the one recently discovered by the Post Office to be his brother Ben.) Granfield, a
Canadian, expands the picture by including some more northerly history (including the fact that the Red River Valley of the song is in Canada), and the chapters on media images of the West make an interesting contemporary counterpart to the history. Albert Marrin’s *Cowboys, Indians, and Gunfighters* (BCCB 9/93) is still the best recent book on the West, but *Cowboy* does a nicely visual job of conveying the experience, using the slightly haphazard “album” composition to advantage, particularly in bridging the gap between cowboys then and cowboy dreams now. An index and a bibliography are included. DS

**HANSEN, JOYCE** *The Captive.* Scholastic, 1994 195p
ISBN 0-590-41625-1 $13.95
Ad Gr. 4-7
Kofi, the impetuous and impatient young son of an Ashanti chieftain, finds himself and his family in serious danger due to the treachery of his father’s slave, Oppong. After his father’s murder and his own capture, Kofi’s decisions lead him farther and farther from home as he tries to keep the things his father gave him just before he died. By mid-story Kofi is on an illegal slave ship bound for New England. Fictional, but based upon the actual narrative of Gustavus Vassa, who was captured in Africa as a young boy and sold into slavery, this story chronicles Kofi’s life in Africa, his capture, his trip on the slaver, and his experience as a servant in a Salem household in 1790. Kofi uses his princely role as the son of an Ashanti chieftain to sustain him through the grief and hardship he faces in a new world of whites and blacks when he is suddenly the slave and not the favored son. The reader is moved by the inhumanity and the injustice, but not by the author’s style, which may be trying to convey Kofi’s innocence and incredulity but often seems stiff and explicative: “My head pounded like a thousand drums as I gazed around at the clusters of chained men and women. A new feeling entered my soul. Hatred. I sobbed and again pulled at the clamps on my ankles.” The story lacks subtlety and character development, but clearly contrasts the two worlds of the narrator. Comparing this with James Berry’s *Ajeemah and His Son* (BCCB 11/92) could provide many avenues for discussion. CF

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021462-7 $13.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021463-5 $14.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 1-3
Aptly counterpointing J. Patrick Lewis’ calendrical sequence *July Is a Mad Mosquito,* reviewed last month and also illustrated by Melanie Hall, Hopkins’ beginning-to-read collection of poems about the weather offers short selections for just about any kind of day. Whether the forecast promises a springtime sun (“Your arms feel as new as growing grass/ The first No-Sweater sun”—Beverly McLoughland) or winter weather (“Snow is snowy when it’s snowing,/ I’m sorry it’s slushy when it’s going”—Ogden Nash), new readers can find a poem to match the mood. A mix of the new and familiar, the verses will serve both those just learning to read and those ready to move on to more complicated independent reading; such is the layered nature of the form. Hall’s pastels take things fairly literally, solving the poems for you, but they provide a unified visual tone and are adept at both cozy and frosty effects. RS
HORENSTEIN, HENRY  *My Mom's a Vet*; written and illus. with photographs by Henry Horenstein.  Candlewick, 1994  [60p]  ISBN 1-56402-234-X  $17.95  Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 3-6

Twelve-year-old Darcie narrates her experiences working as her mom's part-time assistant.  Mom is a veterinarian, and she travels miles in a day to treat cows, horses, goats, pigs, and whatever else turns up.  Darcie is sometimes nervous, but she helps hold piglets for their shots, fetches equipment to x-ray a horse, and holds the light as Mom performs surgery on a cow.  With occasional exceptions, the narration incorporates information naturally and sounds authentically pre-teen.  The extensive and varied photographs depict patients, vet, and young assistant with equal appeal; all subjects remain unusually tidy, but nobody's a made glamor queen.  The squeamish are safe, since the calving pictured is fairly unbloody and the surgery is never directly photographed (the curious, however, may feel cheated).  These are parental footsteps in which many offspring would dearly love to follow, and young enthusiasts may find the book a good springboard to James Herriot's adventures.  DS


As readers of her previous adventures will know, Sophie is determined to be a farmer, and in *Sophie in the Saddle* our six-year-old heroine comes closer to achieving her goal.  This year the family takes their vacation at a farm where Sophie finally starts her equestrian career by riding—eventually with great success—the gentle pony Bumblebee.  The story is mostly a collection of small events (Sophie's falling off Bumblebee, encountering old enemy Dawn at the seaside, getting a gift of riding lessons), but Sophie's vigorous personality and relentless drive, as depicted in King-Smith's matter-of-factly and earthily humorous writing, make her as entertaining on vacation as she is at home.  Big print and occasional cheerful and sturdy line drawings keep the book, which could be read aloud to younger listeners, friendly and accessible to independent readers.  DS


Fractions have always been a nemesis for young students, perhaps because children have difficulty with the abstractions of halves, quarters, and eighths and never quite transfer them into real situations.  As the book begins, chicly dressed Miss Prime (a teaching hippo with clever ideas) and her able students (all young animals) are tackling fractions for the first time.  The teacher uses the ubiquitous overhead projector to draw geometric shapes divided into sections while she encourages the children to envision real objects divided into parts ("Maybe the cow jumped over HALF a moon," muses the kitten.  "I'm imagining a cookie broken into three pieces," smiles the alligator child).  The book itself is broken into five sections, including introductions to parts of a whole and parts of a set, as well as stories of life experiences using fractions.  Each concept that's developed is kept discrete and is amply illustrated.  In a light and easy way, math questions related to
the stories are included, with answers at the end of the book. Thickly pigmented paintings loaded with sporty animal figures add to the humorous presentation, which should make fractions not only more understandable, but more also fun for young children. CF

LEVY, CONSTANCE  *The Tree Place and Other Poems*; illus. by Robert Sabuda. McElderry, 1994  [48p]
ISBN 0-689-50599-X  $12.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 3-6

Forty new poems by the author of *I'm Going To Pet A Worm Today* (BCCB 2/92) showcase her fresh capacity for attending nature and for rhyming naturally. Levy keeps the tone light, with flashes of humor slipping through: "A little green inchworm/ dropped from a tree,/ and rode in my hair/ unknown to me,/ till I looked in the mirror./ 'Aha!' I said, 'What is this green thing on my head?? And the worm must have wondered/ seeing me,/ 'What is this funny looking tree?'" She also injects her description with narrative elements, so that young readers aren't stuck wondering if the sunset is ever going to end: "An Orange-Lined Whelk" is a good example of a story lyric that actually does incorporate the image of a sunset "caught and kept and hidden well inside a twist of ocean shell," which the narrator holds in her hand. The musical language assures successful reading aloud, while the simplicity of images will ease readers through one poem after another. The format is clean, with spare, softly textured black-and-white drawings decorating many of the page spreads. BH


Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-84722-7  $8.99  R  4-7 yrs

Like Rachel Isadora's *At the Crossroads* (BCCB 5/91), this is a story about a black South African boy, Jafta (hero of several previous picture books, see *Jafta—The Town*, BCCB 1/85), whose father will soon be coming home after a long time away working in the mines. "He's been in the city, making money for us, working down a deep hole in the ground, and he's left a big hole in our lives." As is also true of *At the Crossroads*, there isn't much of a plot here, just the ruminations of a boy thinking about all the events his father has missed and how much the boy misses his father, but where Isadora compensated with expansive watercolor spreads, this book achieves a more intimate feeling through simple, well-drawn two-color illustrations that poise the warm chocolate-brown of figures and landscape against the smooth white page. While young listeners/lookers will need some real-world context in order to understand the story, Jafta's longing is clearly realized and amply rewarded: "Things are changing in our country and my father's coming home... coming home... My father's come home." RS

LINDBERGH, ANNE  *Nick of Time*. Little, 1994  [204p]
ISBN 0-316-52629-0  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 6-9

A freethinking New Hampshire boarding school in the Brook Farm tradition is the setting for Lindbergh's latest time-travel fantasy. Jericho's father is the headmaster of Mending Wall School's eight students, but he insists upon being re-
ferred to as the Fugleman, "because headmaster sounds like someone who's out to control your mind, and principal means first in importance." Fugleman or not, he's still oblivious to the time-warp Jericho and fellow student Alison discover that allows them to travel one hundred years into the future, where Mending Wall has been turned into a historical museum dedicated to preserving "typical" late-twentieth century life. It's an engaging premise, and the time-travel mechanics are handled with efficient finesse. What's less successful are Jericho's footnoted asides commenting on the action, cheered readers on, or verisimilitude: "I just got an elbow jab from Bunny, who has been reading over my shoulder." The device seems meant to be casually deconstructive, reminding readers that they're reading, but the effect is that of too many authorial nudges and winks, as if she doesn't trust the story to stand on its own. The book is fun to read, though, and the fantasy aspects are low-keyed enough to make the story appealing to those looking for a slightly offbeat and basically lighthearted school story, as well as to genre fans. RS

MACDONALD, MARYANN  
Rosie and the Poor Rabbits; illus. by Melissa Sweet.  

Sometimes the best intentions can collide, as rabbit-girl Rosie learns while following her mother's suggestion that she donate some toys to less fortunate rabbit-children. At first Rosie fills her charity bag with the toys she doesn't like (a hard puzzle, a scratchy party dress, a sad book, and a doll "with staring eyes"). Then she feels guilty, dumps them out, and instead packs up her beloved old stuffed bear, her most comfortable sweatshirt, and her favorite tea party set. Mama gently objects, saying that the poor rabbits would better appreciate the hardly-used toys instead. Rosie, after examining her conscience, decides she knows better, but discretion being the better part of childhood, she puts the favorites under the flashy and everyone is happy. It's a fresh twist on an old theme, the didacticism easygoing and ameliorated by Rosie's child-knows-best solution. Sweet's watercolor paintings are, well, sweet, in the nicest sense of the word, lightly drawn and washed with cozy light. RS

MARGOLIES, BARBARA A.  
Olbalbal: A Day in Maasailand; written and illus. with photographs by Barbara A. Margolies.  

Reviewed from galleys

Unlike the many children's travelogues that contrive a scenic journey, a schedule of festivals, or some other artificially structured narrative, Margolies is refreshingly content to wander around with her camera, gathering together images, observations, facts, and history to give a coherent picture of an "exotic" group's daily life. She did a fine job with the Papua New Guineans (Warriors, Wigmen, and the Crocodile People, BCCB 5/93); here she visits a Maasai tribe living on the Serengeti Plains of Tanzania. There are glorious jewelry and decorations, but most of the pictures show the ordinary details of house-building (a task done solely by women), cattle-grazing (done by the boys), food preparation, and water-carrying, all informed by a simple, sensible text that gives context for the activities and the history along with future prospects of the nomadic Maasai. The layout is clean and the captions are clear; the cover photo of a Maasai girl elegantly draped with beads and silver will readily provoke browsing. RS
MARRIN, ALBERT  *Unconditional Surrender: U. S. Grant and the Civil War.* Atheneum, 1994 [208p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-689-31837-5 $19.95 Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 7-12

Although this book tells of the early and post-war life of Ulysses Grant, it's not a biography so much as a Civil War chronicle that very successfully uses General Grant as a focus. Especially after Ken Burns' *Civil War* PBS documentary, books on the subject need to meet some mighty high standards, and *Unconditional Surrender* does. You won’t find tales of Gettysburg or Bull Run here, because Grant wasn’t at those battles and was not yet in command of the army. What you will find are lucid accounts of military strategies, both successful and unsuccessful, at Shiloh and Petersburg; frightening visions of the force of Grant’s subordinates such as Sherman and Sheridan as they cut swathes of destruction across the South; blood-soaked scenes of battle; and stirring—there’s no other word for it—stories of effort, inspiration, and camaraderie (such as Sheridan shouting to his loyal men in the heat of battle, “God damn you, don’t cheer me! If you love your country, come up to the front!”). Using extensive eyewitness accounts, Marrin has distilled copious research into a history of living men and women who are complete with faults and contradictions (the racism of many of the Northern commanders, including Grant, is made clear); Grant seems here to be a man splendid in wartime and floundering in peace, except in his happy family life. An evocation as well as a description of war, this also demonstrates how the quiet intimacy of the written word can carry a power greater than faster media such as television or film. Readers may find this book turning them into Civil War buffs or turning them onto history, leading them to Barbara Tuchman and others. Period photographs appear throughout; extensive notes and an index are included. DS

MELTZER, MILTON  *Gold: The True Story of Why People Search for It, Mine It, Trade It, Stealth It, Mint It, Hoard It, Shape It, Wear It, Fight and Kill for It.* HarperCollins, 1993 [168p] illus. with photographs
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-022984-5 $14.89 Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-022983-7 $15.00 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5 up

Gold! The word alone conjures up images of glamor, glory, and grandeur, but it also has a sordid side. According to Meltzer, gold has both worth (durable properties within itself) and value (demand by people), both of which have made it a sought-after metal for over 5,000 years. It is malleable, transportable, resistant to corrosive and destructive forces, easily divided, and hard to counterfeit. It has industrial and artistic uses as well as being the standard for monetary systems. With notable command of specifics, Meltzer weaves the tale of gold from ancient legends (there really was a King Midas) and ancient history (Alexander the Great was the first to mint a gold coin that was used across national boundaries); through the age of discovery (Columbus and Pizzaro were concerned with more than the glory of God); to the gold rushes (Georgia had the first in our country in 1828) and the history of mining techniques and processes across time and throughout the world (cheap black labor, drawn from southern Africa, made possible the growth of the immense mining industry there). The story of gold involves greed, subjugation, piracy, theft, hoarding, and destruction of land and peoples, and Meltzer’s social conscience leads him to concentrate on the seamy aspects of the quest for
gold. His exceptional research and writing skills turn the deplorable facts into engrossing history. Information is supported with source notes, and a bibliography and index add to the usefulness of the book. CF

**Morris, Ann** *700 Kids on Grandpa’s Farm*; illus. with photographs by Ken Heyman. Dutton, 1994 [32p]
Reviewed from galleys Ad 4-7 yrs

This pleasant account of the work on a goat farm in New York State shows the grandchildren of the farm owner enjoying their visits to the farm: picnicking with Grandma and Grandpa, feeding the goats, and visiting the hay fields. Then the chores of caring for and milking the goats are shown, followed by making cheese and taking it to a farmers’ market. It’s clear that goat farming requires a lot of hard work and coordination. The photographs are well designed, crisp, and coordinated with the somewhat perfunctory text. The activities appear to be sequential and logical in their presentation. Written for very young children, the book’s predictability is both its strength and its weakness. This will not set any records for interest and excitement; on the other hand, there are not many books about goat farms for young children. CF

**Nye, Naomi Shihab** *Sitti’s Secrets*; illus. by Nancy Carpenter. Four Winds, 1994 [32p]
ISBN 0-02-768460-1 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R 5-7 yrs

Lyrically reflective of an Arab-American girl’s journey to visit her Palestinian grandmother, Sitti, “on the other side of the earth,” this describes activities both new to the young narrator (“My grandmother ... pats the dough between her hands and presses it out to bake on a flat black rock in the center of the oven”) and common to diverse cultures (“Their marbles were blue and green and spun through the dust like planets. We didn’t need words to play marbles”). There’s more personality than plot here, but the setting is unusual and the details vividly realized. Further animating the situation are Carpenter’s illustrations, fluid in portraying facial expressions and varied with some collage effects that contrast vividly with the surrounding brushstrokes. Like the text, these pictures stretch to show both the distance between cultures—with a desert landscape superimposed upon a line of flapping sheets, for instance—and the closeness of people across cultures, symbolized by the flight of an airplane above the flight of birds tattooed on Sitti’s hands. It’s a bit anticlimactic in the end, when the narrator’s letter to the president spells out a message about peace, but the idea has already been so effectively communicated through the cast of characters that listeners won’t mind. BH

**Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw** *Horses*; illus. with photographs by William Muñoz. Carolrhoda, 1994 48p (Understanding Animals)
ISBN 0-87614-766-X $14.96 R Gr. 4-7

Like the author’s excellent *Dogs: The Wolf Within* (BCCB 7/93), this is an entry in the Understanding Animals series. The book is divided into four sections—“Horses and Wild Horses,” “Horses in the Wild,” “How Horses Communicate,” and “Horses in Today’s World”—in which Patent, in clear and simple language, describes the history, evolution, sociology, and behavior of the horse. The text does
an admirably succinct job in explaining the essential nature of horses and how they differ from other species: "The attitudes of animals are shaped by their roles in the wild. Dogs and cats are predators by nature. . . . Prey animals like horses, on the other hand, need to be wary to survive." Photographs, attractive as well as informative, range from mustangs eking out their living on the plains to Przewalski's horses hanging out in zoos and domestic horses at work or play. An equestrian entry that respects the differentness of the species as well as its appeal, this is a useful counterpart to junior breed manuals and fun-with-horses guides. DS

Reviewed from galleys Ad 4-7 yrs

Much in the same mold as Shirley Hughes' stories about Alfie, these are six neat vignettes that take in the daily adventures of a little boy named Tod, who seems to be around four. Tod has present-drama with his Granny, who sends him a too-small sweater ("I'm not a baby anymore—I'm not!") only to discover the present is for his teddy; Tod is also frustrated—and inspired—when he thinks his mother has found out the present he's making for her. Both the plot and the writing tip back and forth between the startling and the coy. Best are the moments of rage, as when Teddy berates his mother for saying she didn't see the surprise: "You're just pretending not to know. But I know you know, and you know I know you know. And it's all ruined!" The end of the same story, though, is smug: "... he said to his granny, 'She's having an especially nice birthday, isn't she? And now you can start reading to me, please.'" The implied viewpoint seems to shift between what kids will recognize about themselves and what adults find charming about kids. Still, the tone is cozy, the stories are short, and children and parents alike will find enough here to enjoy for a bedtime story or two. RS

PECK, ROBERT NEWTON Soup Ahoy; illus. by Charles Robinson. Knopf, 1994 [144p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-84978-5 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-6

Soup and Rob are back again, and this time their adventure has a nautical twist. Addicted to Sinker O. Sailor's radio serial, they're determined to win the contest that will net them each a sailor's cap and, possibly, a visit from Sinker O. Sailor himself. They do win the visit, but the timid radio personality is unprepared for the mayhem the boys, their homemade boat the Star of Samoa, their two worst enemies, and a pair of excitable goats can wreak. Like Jean Shepherd but without the substance, this is a tale of entertaining slapstick, colorful local characters, and wild action; the absence of plausibility and the presence of predictability won't keep diehard fans or other youngsters in search of a quick read from enjoying the romp. DS

PFEFFER, SUSAN BETH Twice Taken. Delacorte, 1994 [176p]
ISBN 0-385-32033-7 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 7-10

Brooke's life changes when she sees her picture on the television program Still
THE BULLETIN

Missing and calls its 800 number. She's no longer sixteen-year-old Brooke Eastman, but fifteen-year-old Amy Donovan, kidnapped at the age of five by her father, and the court decrees that she must go live with her mother and sever all ties with her father. Amy/Brooke finds herself amid a family (mother, stepfather, half-sister, and half-brother) she doesn't know, wanting to please her daughter-starved mother but unable to become the five-year-old Amy that her mother really wants. Since the discovery of the kidnapping is the beginning of the book, Pfeffer takes the story beyond Mazer's *Taking Terri Mueller* or Ehrlich's *Where It Stops, Nobody Knows*, focusing on the difficulty of the reunion; Amy is achingly polite and realistically uncomfortable with her new/old family, especially when they malign the father who raised her with love and diligence. The story has its contrivances and loose ends, and some of Amy's responses seem a little programmatic, but the melodrama is entertaining and taps into a common core of adolescent anger as Amy deals with her fragmented family, sternly telling her demanding mother, "You want to know why I don't love you? This is why." The emotions are raw and the language gets rough, but the story combines the draw of sensational headlines with an understanding of teenage struggles. DS

PHILLIPS, ANN

*A Haunted Year.* Macmillan, 1994 176p
ISBN 0-02-774605-4 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

Haunting is a matter of opinion: when Florence first calls up George with an old photograph and a magic-circle ritual, she's pleased to have him as a playmate. She lives with her aunts in quiet Edwardian London, and George is a lively companion who teases her out for midnight games in the garden. George, however, seizes control of the situation, and he exhausts Florence in town and at her country cousins', where she's gone to recuperate from her "illness" (really George's keeping her up at night); he also starts to claim Florence's cousin, Nellie, and when the two girls return to town his demands grow until the girls and Florence's new stepbrother find a way to put the frightening ghost to rest. It's a familiar and compelling saga: "When you start something, you don't realize you can't stop it; and what's more, it will grow—it will get powerful." There are some logical lapses, however, and the excitement isn't well-maintained, with the geographic to-ing and fro-ing and the secondary plot strands of Florence's growing friendship with Nellie and her acquisition of a new stepmother and stepbrother distracting from rather than adding to the main plot. With its period setting and quiet power dynamics, it's still a picturesque, atmospheric, and definitely menacing ghost story. DS

QUATTLEBAUM, MARY

*Jackson Jones and the Puddle of Thorns*; illus. by Melodye Rosales. Delacorte, 1994 113p
ISBN 0-385-31165-6 $13.95 R* Gr. 4-7

Jackson Jones wants a basketball so badly he can taste it, but for his tenth birthday he instead receives a plot in the local community garden. Although dismayed, resourceful Jackson figures he'll sell the flowers he grows for basketball money, but he doesn't reckon on a fight with his best friend ("Look at that rosebush. A puddle of thorns"), the taunting envy of the local bully ("Send me a rose, Bouquet Jones"), the interference of some sassy little neighbors ("I'm-sorry-I-cut-your-stinking-flowers-now-can-I-have-some-cake?"), or his own growing fondness for gardening.
Jackson’s first-person, present-tense narration is staccato and street-stylish in an easy-to-read way, and the kids’ quick repartee is witty and funny. The cozy, apparently multi-ethnic apartment building makes for a lively urban milieu, and the characters residing therein, from methodical best friend Reuben to the garden-loving mailman, are distinctive and dignified individuals (although the wildly precocious six-year-old is overdrawn to sit-com proportions). Black-and-white illustrations, competent but without the zing of the text, appear occasionally. A promising first novel, this is fresh, sweet, and vigorous—a real daisy. DS

RATTIGAN, JAMA KIM  *Truman’s Aunt Farm*; illus. by G. Brian Karas. Houghton, 1994 [32p]
ISBN 0-395-65661-3  $13.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  5-8 yrs

Truman’s thrilled when his Aunt Fran informs him he’ll be receiving an ant farm for his birthday, but somehow things get confused: “He didn’t get ants. He got aunts.” And he gets a lot of aunts, who “brought their knitting and homemade banana bread and gave Truman more than one hundred-something gift subscriptions to children’s magazines.” Finally, the overwhelmed Truman gives the aunts away to needy would-be nieces and nephews, and “his very own Aunt Fran” turns up to fill the void with a picnic. Karas’ sharp-nosed, dot-eyed characters liven up the simple line-and-watercolor landscape, and the panoply of aunts are richly comic as they cavort across the lawn blowing bubbles or stand in regimented order under Truman’s eagle eye. This is a one-joke book where the joke works (although perhaps not with readers-aloud who pronounce “ant” and “aunt” differently); there are some logical glitches but the high-spirited fun and gentle satire will satisfy many a young aunt farmer. DS

REISS, KATHRYN  *Pale Phoenix*. Harcourt, 1994 [256p]
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 6-9

This isn’t exactly a sequel to Reiss’ *Time Windows* (BCCB 10/91), but it does feature the same heroine, Miranda, who evidently has forgotten the scary events that befell her family just a year or so before the scary events in this book take place. Abby, a strange new girl at Miranda’s school, is sullen and secretive, and when, to Miranda’s dismay, her parents decide to take the orphaned (she says) Abby into their home, Miranda becomes increasingly convinced that Abby can disappear. It turns out that Abby is a seventeenth-century girl condemned to wander through time, forever thirteen, the age she was when a fire destroyed her home and her spirit was saved by an Indian charm. Farfetched? Sure, but once again Reiss proves herself a canny practitioner of the junior gothic, blending elements of romance and suspense with confident storytelling. Reiss puts real characters into her extravagant plot, and while genre demands are respected, there’s no feeling of formulaic cliche. Miranda is impulsive, likable, and convincing; Abby is an equally credible tortured soul: “I’ve done it all, again and again. Parties, dates, school, teenage stuff... I’ve worked on farms, in mills, in factories. I’ve had friends killed in battle. I’ve traveled and moved a hundred times or more.” Abby’s travails, along with Miranda’s burgeoning romance with friend Dan, make for a satisfyingly romantic read. RS
REUTER, BJARNE  *The Boys from St. Petri*; tr. by Anthea Bell. Dutton, 1994  [192p]
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 6-9

In a distinct turn from his Buster novels (BCCB 1/92, etc.), Reuter here traces the dark fate of Lars, determined to follow in his big brother Gunnar’s footsteps as a taunter and baiter of the Germans who have occupied their Denmark town. Gunnar, entering his senior year in high school and eighteen months older than Lars, has formed a secret organization of friends who take small potshots at the enemy, stealing Nazi flags and deflating tires. When Lars and another new, younger rebel, fierce little Otto, become involved, the mischief becomes more damaging and far more dangerous. Otto has a gun, and gets another from the German supply depot, and what had been almost a game becomes a conspiracy, as the boys’ actions threaten to impede the Nazi invasion of Norway. Though the telling is rather clipped and telegraphic (how much translation affects the style is hard to say), the basic material here is exciting. Reuter moves credibly from a boys’ snug clubhouse atmosphere through a taut transition into war-torn adulthood. Each character is clearly delineated, especially the two brothers, whose relationship is complicated by their love for the same girl. It’s an involving book, and one that shows how courage changed—and too often claimed—young lives. BH

RICHARD, FRANÇOISE  *On Cat Mountain*; ad. by Arthur A. Levine; illus. by Anne Buguet. Putnam, 1994  [32p]
ISBN 0-399-22608-7  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R*  5-8 yrs

The poor servant girl Sho has only one friend, a cat named Secret that her cruel mistress first drives away and then orders Sho to find after hearing from a fortune-teller that the creature may be worth something. Unfortunately, no one seeking Cat Mountain has ever returned, but Sho’s friend Secret saves her from the hungry, human-eating cats that live there and even gives her a bag of gold to take home. That, of course, lures Sho’s mistress to Cat Mountain, where the greedy woman comes to an abrupt and appropriate end. There’s no note about this English adaptation of a French text that’s presumably folkloric in origin, but it’s set in Japan and the collage paintings draw heavily on traditional Japanese art. Their highly textured patterning, subtle coloration, and dramatic composition lend aesthetic impact to an eerie story that will pair perfectly with another picture book recently adapted by Arthur A. Levine, *The Boy Who Drew Cats* (BCCB 2/94). BH

ROSS, LILLIAN HAMMER  *Sarah, Also Known As Hannah*; illus. by Helen Cogancherry. Whitman, 1994  [64p]
ISBN 0-8075-7237-3  $11.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 3-6

With a natural and comfortably direct style, Lillian Ross has fictionalized the story of her mother’s immigration, all alone at the age of twelve, from an East European shtetl in 1910. “We sat shiva,” begins the first-person narrative, as Sarah recounts her father’s death and her mother’s decision to send the older girls to live with relatives in America while trying to raise the young boys herself. The relatives can only afford to sponsor one girl, however, and Sarah’s sixteen-year-old sister is eager to go. Then, with the passport and ticket all ready, Mama decides she needs
Hannah to help earn a living and sends frightened Sarah instead. Unlike many
generic docu-novels of the transatlantic voyage and processing on Ellis Island, this
one has the quirky details that render it authentically individual and slightly un-
predictable; we assume it's going to turn out all right, and it does, but along the
way there are small surprises that freshen the cast and action. Ross strikes a good
balance of dialogue and description, showing a flair for the selective scenes that
make a book easy for children who are still consolidating their reading skills but
need a good story to practice on. Black-and-white illustrations convey a sharp
sense of setting, and their unpretentious clarity supports capable writing that's
unusual in historical fiction at this age level. BH

RUSSELL, SHARMAN APT  The Humpbacked Fluteplayer.  Knopf, 1994  [173p]
ISBN 0-679-82408-1  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 5-7

While on a field trip from their Phoenix school, twelve-year-old May and her
classmate, Evan, are transported to a time and place where the Arizona desert is
peopled by warring totemic tribes called the Javelinas, the Owls, the Sheep, the
Coyotes, the Packrats, and the Pumas. After fleeing from the enslaving Javelinas,
May and Evan, along with other escaped slave children, discover themselves at the
center of a war that requires the tribes to band together in order to destroy a new,
more powerful, more magical enemy. The fantasy world of the six tribes is well-
realized (there's no descriptive note, though many of the tribal motifs, including
the Humpbacked Fluteplayer, seem based on those of Native Americans), but the
war is somewhat confusing, especially since it's never really clear what's at stake.
Nor is there any obvious reason why the story had to include contemporary kids
(whose present-day lives and characters remain pretty vague) instead of simply
focusing on the people from the tribes. Nonetheless, for fantasy fans who want a
change of venue from medieval Europe, this offers a refreshing alternative. DS

Book)  [91p]  illus. with photographs
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-023318-4  $19.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 4-7

Cattle-driving cowboys rode the Chisholm and other trails from the 1860s to the
1890s until the range was fenced by farming pioneers and the railroad's expansion
made the cattle drive unnecessary. The life of the cowboy has been glorified and
vilified to such an extent that most of us don't have much concept of cowboys
other than TV images. Using photographs and pictures of the period from the
collections at the Library of Congress, Sandler tells about the life of a cowboy on
the range, at roundup, at cattle branding, on the trail, and on the town. The
photos give a strong sense of the reality of a cowboy's life: they show men tending
cattle on horseback or gathered around campfires or wagons to eat, shave, smoke,
and drink. Mostly young, mostly tough and determined-looking faces peer out
across the years in these pictures. Particularly effective is the juxtaposition of im-
ages of the gun-toting cowboy of stage and screen with the actual photos of cow-
boy life. Sandler, as he did in a less clearly defined volume, The Pioneers (reviewed
last month), tells his story in the present and future tenses. This artifice is occa-
sionally misleading ("The West is filled with cattle thieves who try to rob ranch
owners of their animals”) and distinctions get lost when he actually tells about the cowboy today. The problem with the photos is that none of them is captioned. Therefore, on the pages describing the James Gang and African-American cowboy Bill Pickett we don’t know if we are looking at these particular individuals or just representatives of the occupation, time, and place. Authenticity may not be a problem in this book, but documentation is. Lack of attention to the detail of citing sources and identifying even approximations of time and place weakens an attractive book with an important story to tell. CF

ISBN 0-374-38247-6  $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 8-12

In the aftermath of a 1989 Texas tornado, a boy discovers that the Lakota friend he admires is really his father. In 1860, a pioneer woman is rescued from loneliness—after burying her husband near their sod house—by a cowhand in even greater need than she. In 1853, two slaves escape on a Mississippi steamboat by pretending to be a “lady of the night” and her bodyguard. In 1876, a girl learns of her ostracized aunt’s life as a captive with a Cheyenne husband and their children, who were all killed by soldiers in a raid. In 1904, a boy severely disabled by cerebral palsy has a momentous meeting with Geronimo, who has been reduced to selling buttons off his coat at each train stop and sewing on more for the next crowd that gathers to gape at him. And finally, in 1992, the author describes a collage of photographs picked randomly from her past, some of which refer to incidents, objects, or characters that have appeared previously in the book. These half-dozen short stories seem to revolve around persons who, for one reason or other, haunt the fringes of a social majority. All but the last selection, which is fragmented and even confusing in its relationship to the other tales, are effective and affecting. Sauerwein’s writing is clean and sometimes touched with elegance: “... the trees bent low over the water, their leaves like lips against the cool stream, kissing their own dark shadows”—a telling image, considering that the central figure of the story is thought to be a prostitute but is in fact a loyal lover of the “niggra” serving her. The action is subtly developed as each character finds a spiritual, if not physical, way home; in both theme and impact, this is history brought home as well. BH

Schmidt, Jeremy *In the Village of the Elephants*; illus. with photographs by Ted Wood. Walker, 1994 [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8226-4  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 4-6

“Elephants are ticklish. A mahout must always scrub firmly or his elephant gets annoyed and growls.” These and other items of elephant lore are common knowledge among the hill tribe villagers of Abhayaranayam in southern India. They grow up with elephants, work them all of their lives, and then retire with them. This full-color photo-documentary follows young Bomman through a day’s activities, including bathtime and chores in the nearby forest, all accompanied by informative and sometimes surprising asides. Once, a frightened baby trumpets for its mother and “auntie,” who both come thundering to the rescue just as they would in the wild; on a sadder plane, one of the elephants has recently killed its
mahout during musth, an annual cycle that affects older male elephants with sudden unpredictable bursts of rage. Although there are some details of traditional village life, the focus is on the animals, and it's a clear focus both photographically and textually. The descriptions are straightforward and the pictures candid—altogether a personable, if not personal, travelogue. BH

SEBESTYEN, OUIDA  *Out of Nowhere.* Kroupa/Orchard, 1994  [208p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06839-0  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 6-9

Harley, thirteen, gets dumped by his mother and her latest boyfriend at an Arizona rest stop where he meets May, an old lady recently dumped by her bigamist husband, and a pit bull dumped out of a car by a couple with apparently no more use for him, either. It's a calculated set-up, all right, and if kids don't get the parallels, they're often and sufficiently spelled out. Because the thematic structure is so neat, the story never feels quite real, especially when the three "rejects" (Harley's word) arrive at May's girlhood home only to find a picturesquely cantankerous old man who, with the assistance of an impossibly angelic girl, won't move out. While the softening between the various antagonists is predictable, the relationship between Harley and the dog, whom he names Ishmael, is both loving and spiky as Harley, wrestling with his mother's desertion, refuses to risk having the dog depend on him. But that too works out, and the book ends with the sighting of a rainbow, a conclusion that will appeal to readers in the mood for cozy formula. RS

Reviewed from galleys  R  4-6 yrs

What looks like an energetic outburst of kids' fingerpainting under artistic control illustrates this fantasy adventure of a little girl's journey around, well, the book doesn't say until the last double-spread, but veterans of David Wiesner's *June 29, 1999* (BCCB 11/93) may recognize the broccoli forest. It's a trip around the dinner table: the salt becomes a white pebble hill; the soup, a snake-infested lake; the huge, slippery mountain turns out to be roast chicken. The story is more coherent than many other flight-of-fantasy picture books, and any kid who rearranges his dinner to resemble a map will feel right at home. The drawing has a childlike sketchiness, and the transformations (a corn car, for example) become more evident upon rereading/looking, so the surprise of a first encounter can be augmented on a second by the satisfaction of spot-the-tomato. RS

THOMAS, ROY EDWIN  *Come Go With Me: Old-Timer Stories from the Southern Mountains,* illus. by Laszlo Kubinyi. Farrar, 1994  [224p]
ISBN 0-374-37089-3  $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7 up

It's exciting to see children's literature functioning as a real repository for newfound folklore, and this collection will serve a broad range of uses, from providing anecdotal information for student research on the South, to offering funny samples of family narrative to fill the cracks in a storytelling program. My favorite example is the storekeeper whose customer is dissatisfied with the chicken he pulls from his
ice barrel. Realizing it's the last one, he returns it, pretends to feel around for another, and offers her the same chicken held in such a way as to exaggerate its plumpness. "I believe I will take 'um both," she says, trapping the trickster in his own trick. Preserving dialects without artificial drawl, Thomas has skillfully edited the taped interviews that served as a basis for these previously unpublished narratives. Almost a hundred brief selections, of one to several pages each, include bits of philosophizing, descriptions of living conditions "back then," jokes, and succinct tales of family drama, friendship, or enmity. Browsing is probably the best way to absorb the book, although the author has hit upon an organization that's helpful without being forced: using quotes to head each section, he's concentrated on subjects such as maturation, motherhood, farming, hunting, food, work, neighbors, courtship, religion, war, and traveling. A final section of notes meticulously introduces each informant. The color cover is young-looking, but Kubinyi's incisive pen-and-ink crosshatch drawings have an all-ages dignity. BH

Vuong, Lynette Dyer Sky Legends of Vietnam; illus. by Vo-Dinh Mai. HarperCollins, 1993 103p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-023001-0 $13.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-023000-2 $14.00 R Gr. 4-6

More culture-specific than Vuong's The Golden Carp and Other Tales from Vietnam (BCCB 11/93), which emphasized romantic folktales akin to European variants, this collection includes six stories of mythical proportion, including "Why the Rooster Crows at Sunrise" and "How the Moon Became Ivory." The interchange between humans and supernatural beings inevitably lends suspense and sometimes leads to tragedy, with Jade Emperor, ruler of the fairies, wielding ultimate control. Other figures such as the Thunder Spirit, the Earth Spirit, and the seven weavers who form the Pleiades comprise a vivid cast; one of the stories features a character popularized by a Vietnamese song, "The Man in the Moon," for which music and lyrics are appended. An introduction cites specific sources for all the stories, and a pronunciation guide helps with the Vietnamese names. Occasionally, the style slips into a jarring colloquialism ("Forget it," says one mortal to his star wife), but on the whole Vuong's experience of living in Saigon and learning the language makes her an invaluable translator of Vietnamese tradition for young western readers and for immigrants' children who want to stay in touch with their heritage. The large typeface and understated black-and-white prints give the book an approachable look for independent reading. BH

ISBN 0-525-67435-7 $15.99 R Gr. 4-7

Roy Lichtenstein's art, with its clear images and popular roots, is highly kid-accessible, and here is an appealing and user-friendly account of his work. Like Gardner's Henry Moore (BCCB 4/93), this focuses on the artistic process more than the artistic impact (although Walker does discuss Lichtenstein's critical stature) as the text describes Lichtenstein placing masking tape on canvases, piecing together collages, and organizing his studio; Walker's book tells kids what an artist—or at least this artist—does all day. The photos of Lichtenstein in action are lively and immediate as he peers at huge canvases and carefully spreads pigments (particularly informative are some closeups of the artist's hands), and there are a few great double-take images of the live artist working on—and seemingly standing in—his
oversized Interiors. The artistic explanations are straightforward and the format big-print and open in an easy, uncondescending way, while reproductions of Lichtenstein’s art fill the pages with color. There’s a double-spread gallery of the artist’s important paintings and an extraneous artistic exercise at the end. DS


The author’s final note concedes that many of the stories about Betsy Ross’ life remain unsubstantiated, and that this picture-book biography has chosen to follow a particular route. It’s none the worse for that, as the simple but lively text tells of Betsy’s early Quaker life, her three marriages, her business, and her return to the Quaker faith, in addition to the famous sewing of the flag. The net result is a story not just of a picturesque historical footnote but of a businesswoman and citizen who lived a part of the birth of the United States every day. Agreeable (if sometimes overliteral) flat-perspectived illustrations possess a seamstress-like tidiness as they show Betsy walking with her colonial compatriots in the narrow Philadelphia streets, working with rolls of fabric amid frisky cats, and encountering groups of soldiers. More inviting than most young biographies, this is a good book for taking Ms. Ross from a cameo role to a starring part and using her to explain early American urban life. In addition to the final author’s note, there is a diagram and explanation of a nifty way to cut out a five-pointed star. DS


“There’s a hole, there’s a hole, there’s a hole . . .” Well, there’s apparently more than one hole in the bottom of the sea, and Waters’ book is a fluid account of how the sea vents were hypothesized, looked for, and found—both what was found and what was found out. Giant tube worms and eyeless shrimp are among the inhabitants surrounding “chimneys” that bring geothermal energy to the deep ocean floor (and heat the water in excess of 650°), but what has been really challenging to accepted scientific thought is the discovery that these creatures do not rely on photosynthesis for food. The book is an admirable outline of the scientific method, progressing from questions, through research, to further questions; and color photos of the research ships and submersibles, as well as those of the denizens of the deep, add drama to discovery. RS

Wijnberg, Ellen Parental Unemployment.

See Goldentyer, p. 222, for review.


Some of the delicate lushness of Japanese landscape painting informs this dreamy tale of a baby’s nighttime adventure in the Minnesota northwoods. Per Mary
**Poppins**, the story proceeds from the premise that babies can talk to animals, while "grown-ups lose our language and forget they knew us," says Big King Moose, who, along with the raccoons and the foxes and Black Bear, has invited baby Hajime to come and live in the woods. It's a tempting proposition for Hajime, but he soon—and loudly—misses his mother, and the dismayed animals send the screaming baby back home on the back of Gray Wolf. The art effectively contrasts the almost airbrushed scenery of the woods with fine-lined precision in the animal drawing; Hajime himself sometimes looks a bit too cartoonish, although it's a welcomey matter-of-fact touch that he's a biracial baby, with an Asian mother and Caucasian father. The woods are lovely, dark and deep; still, there's no place like home. Snuggle up. RS

**WILLIAMS, CAROL LYNCH**  *Kelly and Me.* Delacorte, 1993  123p  ISBN 0-385-30897-3  $13.95  R  Gr. 5-7

Summer is filled with adventures for eleven-year-old Leah and her ten-year-old sister Kelly: they steal away to the beach with their truant grandfather, Papa, participate in exotic wart-removal ceremonies, drive downtown naked (except for heavy winter coats), and watch horror movies with relatives. It's also a summer of random accident and tragedy, as Papa loses his driver's license after a crash, his dog is killed by a passing motorist, Leah almost shoots Papa when his scary game gets out of hand, and, most shockingly, Kelly dies suddenly of an aneurysm at the close of summer. Williams knits these episodes together with a strong and original voice as Leah tells her story in conversational, southern-accented language; the dialogue and family dynamics are authentic, humorous, and restrained. Readers may not pick up the foreshadowings of darkness in the book and may find the tragedies, particularly Kelly's death, quite startling, but the smooth and unsentimental writing makes this a memorable account of one last special summer. DS


Local color goes a long way in filling out a story, but it can't be the story, something Williams and Stock showed they understood in *Galimoto* (BCCB 4/90); here the narrative is slighter, although not without engaging detail. "Now that Sasifi was eight, Mama said she was big enough to help on market day," and while Sasifi wishes they could ride to the marketplace in a tap-tap, one of the private jitneys that roam the Haitian countryside, there isn't enough money, so Sasifi puts a smaller version of Mama's basket of oranges upon her head and the two set out on the long walk. Most of the book is devoted to the events of the day. Sasifi reveals unexpected prowess at orange-selling, and when she decides to spend her earnings on a tap-tap ride home for the two of them, readers will learn how the buses got their name: "Tap-tap! The woman with the chickens hit the side of the truck. The tap-tap stopped and the woman climbed down." Sasifi gets her own chance to tap-tap when the wind blows her new hat off the bus, and readers will probably be as pleased as she at her chance to bang out her request for the bus to stop. Is it a story? Barely, but the simple structure has both conflict and wish-fulfillment, and Stock's watercolors have a crisply defined tropical bounce, with the gaudy colors of the tap-tap making it look like anychild's dream machine. RS
WOODSON, JACQUELINE  I Hadn’t Meant to Tell You This.  Delacorte, 1994  [112p]
ISBN 0-385-32031-0  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys R  Gr. 6-9

Two girls: one black, one white; one comfortably middle-class, the other poor; both motherless. Even as they acknowledge how unlikely it is, Marie and Lena do become friends, although their bond is threatened when Lena tells Marie, who doesn’t want to hear it, that she is being sexually abused by her father. Explicitly feminist in both theme and poetics, the book turns a lot of stereotypes around, with Lena, the white girl, being the underprivileged outsider in a mostly black town. Marie is popular, voted best-dressed, and her father is a university professor, but both father and daughter are still dislocated since Marie’s mother walked out, now in touch only via postcards sent with beautiful drawings and oblique poems from foreign places. Marie wonders why her father never touches her. Lena wants her (widowed) father never to touch her again: “just if he didn’t look at me. If he made believe I wasn’t even in the world, that would be better.” The bleakness of Lena’s life is unrelieved; when Marie loyally suggests that she’d like to kill Lena’s father, Lena replies, “Then what?,” and the novel ends with Lena running away with her little sister Dion when their father starts to molest her as well. While the structure is a little neat, this is probably the best book Woodson has yet written. The girls’ friendship is awkward, sometimes angry as Woodson acknowledges that no one can be meaner than your best friend. All the emotions played out here are rough-edged and ambivalent, as are the frank discussions about race. The story, told through a series of recollected vignettes from Marie’s point of view, has an elegiac quality that gets to the heart of both girls’ dilemmas in a way that a more prescriptive problem novel could not, and the spare writing generally allows events to speak for themselves. It’s a book that has the courage to let things hang in the air.  RS

WRIGHT, BETTY REN  The Ghost Comes Calling.  Scholastic, 1994  [128p]
ISBN 0-590-47353-0  $13.95
Reviewed from galleys R  Gr. 4-6

Chad’s initially excited when his father buys a weekend cabin on a nearby lake, but his superior neighbor Jeannie tells him that the place is haunted, and “when you stay there, you’re going to shake and shudder all night long.” And by golly, she’s right: the ghost of old Tim Tapper, shunned by the town after a truck accident involving local children, stalks the place. Chad sees his face at the window, hears his boat on the lake, and suffers ghostly ire upon examining old Tapper’s truck in the woods. Finally Chad comes up with an idea to restore Tapper’s tarnished reputation, and the mollified ghost departs happily. The book is a smooth and easy read, and there’s a nice prickly relationship between Chad and Jeannie, the would-be know-it-all who’s been demoted to sidekick (she says enviously, “You’re the only person I know who’s actually seen a ghost. I’ve been to Disneyland and I’ve had my ears pierced and I have a cousin who was in a movie, but I’ve never seen a ghost, for pete’s sake”). This is an unthreatening and very tidy ghost story, a step up for those who enjoyed Wright’s The Ghost of Popcorn Hill (BCCB 6/93) but who aren’t quite ready for the fuller-blooded fear of The Dollhouse Murders.  DS
YEP, LAURENCE  *The Ghost Fox*; illus. by Jean and Mou-sien Tseng.  Scholastic, 1994  [70p]
ISBN 0-590-47204-6  $13.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 3-5

Clean writing and a suspenseful plot make this small novel, adapted from a traditional Chinese story, especially well suited for kids who are ready to exercise their skills and interests on chapter books but who are not yet ready for longer fiction. With practice born of his excellent folklore collection (see *The Rainbow People*, BCCB 4/89), Yep keeps his style simple and respects the narrative elements enough to keep them scary. While his father is away on a merchant ship, Little Lee must fend off a ghost fox that threatens to steal his mother’s soul: “Later that night, a scrabbling sound woke Little Lee. It sounded as if an animal was outside their house. It sounded as if claws were scraping the hard dirt outside.” After the creature breaks in, Little Lee’s mother changes from sweet-tempered to terrible and the townspeople blame Little Lee. It is only through his own wit and bravery that he saves the situation, to the accolades of everyone. What more could young heroes ask? The Tsengs’ pen-and-ink drawings, too, are action-packed and have been researched to reflect accurately the seventeenth-century period during which the story was first collected. BH

ISBN 0-88776-320-0  $19.95  R  Gr. 5-12

Literal, muralistic paintings illustrate this artist’s simply told autobiography, spanning from early World War II through the Chinese communist revolution, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, Tiananmen Square to the resettlement of Song Nan’s family in Canada. The details of hunger, forced labor, and “political reeducation” are strongly but sparely told; while the examples are personal (the artist painting propaganda posters, for example), the book is also a concise history of Mao’s impact and legacy. Despite the anti-communist viewpoint of the book, the art is proletarian—capably rendered, naturalistic, and resistant to ambiguity—with a comic-book-like simplicity that, along with the sober, full-paged text, will appeal to older kids who consider themselves way beyond the picture-book stage. RS

Ideally, every teacher makes her or his own anthology of favorite poems for year-long classroom use, but in lieu of—or in addition to—that personalized preparation, here’s a lively educational aid. It’s almost like a scrapbook: after the generous introduction offers suggestions about introducing and exercising poetry on an active daily basis, the book launches into a diary of poems, songs, folklore, and informational tidbits related to the multicultural-calendar. The three compilers are experienced educators who make a convincing case and lend strong support for incorporating poetry into the curriculum. Users will need to follow up the brief snippets for more in-depth development, but the bouncily illustrated, spiral-bound book offers an informal springboard to other activities. BH


More than a useful reference for kids gathering background on favorite poets, this comprises intriguing interviews that reveal the differences in work, lifestyle, and personality among sixteen popular poets: Arnold Adoff, Lilian Moore, Mel Glenn, Aileen Fisher, Karla Kuskin, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Mary Ann Hoberman, Myra Cohn Livingston, Valerie Worth, Lee Bennett Hopkins, X. J. Kennedy, Gary Soto, Eloise Greenfield, Barbara Juster Esbensen, William Cole, and Eve Merriam. Most have published anthologies as well as collections, and all have strong ideas about what they read as well as what they write. A selective bibliography follows each author’s interview. BH


Despite the apostrophic glitch on the title page, this is a useful handbook for young writers looking to publish their work. Part one offers practical advice on manuscript preparation and submission and warns of deceptive contests and vanity presses; part two features interviews with editors and adolescent writers (along with a brief story by the then thirteen-year-old Stephen King); part three lists more than 150 magazines and writing contests that welcome submissions from young people. Useful information and sensible suggestions, browsably arranged. RS


Without trying to impose—or superimpose—a thematic organization on this collection, Pellowski has simply put together 34 cracking good tales from East Asia,
the Middle East, Africa, Europe, North and South America, and Oceania. There's a wide variety of genres, including pourquoi, cumulative, riddle stories, and several selections with rhymes, fingerplay or drawing games. Decorative line drawings are unintrusive, and the notes give helpful background and specific sources. A bargain resource for librarians, teachers, or parents—and it's easy to read for kids on their own. BH


This extensively researched biography of Dahl paints him as magnetic and infuriating, a man who could charm and offend with equal insouciance. Treglown chronicles the writer's life from his youth in Cardiff through his wartime experiences, family life, professional success, and personal tragedies; a substantial amount of attention is paid not only to Dahl's writing but to his dealings with publishers and editors in a way that makes the personalities and mechanics of publication particularly vivid. This isn't for those who prefer their literary heroes unblemished, but it's a readable and enlightening portrait of an important figure. An index and photographs will be included in the bound book. DS


Unlike similarly annotated children's titles in which hypertextual facts and anecdotes about the book and author border the main text, Neumeyer takes a homier approach, with his annotations serving more as moments in a ruminative chat between critic and reader. Neumeyer is occasionally pedantic ("Charlotte as mother"), but more often appreciative ("We love Wilbur at this moment") and helpful ("Yes, spiders do have muscles"). The original text and illustrations are fully included; interesting appended material includes information on Garth Williams, correspondence between White and editor Ursula Nordstrom, and critical response to the book. RS

*From ALSC/ALA come two new "Program Support Publications," Programming for Children with Special Needs (19p., ISBN 0-8389-5763-3) and Programming for Introducing Adults to Children's Literature (16p., ISBN 0-8389-5763-3). Each pamphlet is $7.00 and includes basic programming advice; Special Needs also has a directory of organizations concerned with disabilities. *Children's literature specialists involved in issues of translation will be glad to know about Riitta Oittinen's unusual study, I Am Me—I Am Other: On the Dialogics of Translating for Children, a dissertation published by the Department of Translation Studies, University of Tampere, Finland. Oittinen explores the idea that translation goes far beyond concepts of fidelity and equivalence to include "whole situations." Translators "bring to the translation their cultural heritage, reading experience, and in the case of children's books, their image of childhood and their own child image." *Also of interest is a translation, along with the original Chinese text and background notes, of the earliest version of the Chinese "Little Red Riding Hood," presented by Dr. Günter Lontzen in the December, 1993, issue of Merveilles & Contes, a journal available from the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado."
SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

Keyed to The Bulletin's alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in bold type refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject headings, the subhead “stories” refers to books for the readaloud audience; “fiction,” to those books intended for independent reading.

Africa: Margolies
African Americans—fiction:
  Hansen; Woodson
Africa—fiction: Beake; Farmer
Archaeology: Gillette
Arithmetic: Leedy
Arizona—fiction: Russell
Art: Walker; Zhang
Aunts—stories: Rattigan
BEDTIME STORIES: Bierhorst;
  Conway; Wilds
BIOGRAPHIES: Brust; Wallner;
  Zhang
Brothers—fiction: Reuter
Careers: Horenstein
Cats—stories: Richard
Child abuse—fiction: Woodson
China: Zhang
China—folklore: Yep
City life—fiction: Quattlebaum
City life—stories: Bunting
Civil War: Marrin
Civil War—fiction: Calvert
CONCEPT BOOKS: Brown;
  Leedy
Cowboys: Granfield; Sandler
Death—fiction: Williams, C.
Denmark—fiction: Reuter
Dinosaurs: Gillette
Dogs—fiction: Sebestyen
England—fiction: Phillips
Ethics and values: Bunting;
  Goldentyer; Macdonald
EVERYDAY LIFE STORIES:
  Pearce; Quattlebaum
Extrasensory perception: Deem
FANTASY: Lindbergh; Reiss;
  Russell; Yep
Farm life: Morris
Fathers and daughters—fiction:
  Woodson
Fathers and daughters—stories:
  Conway
Fathers and sons—fiction: Calvert
Fathers and sons—stories: Gauthier;
  Lewin
Flight: Bellville
FOLKTALES AND
  FAIRYTALES: Anholt; Araujo;
  Richard; Thomas; Vuong
Food and eating—stories: Sun
Friends—fiction: Sebestyen;
  Woodson
FUNNY STORIES: Peck
Gangs—fiction: Reuter
Gardens—fiction: Quattlebaum
GHOST STORIES: Phillips;
  Wright
Grandfathers—fiction: Williams, C.
Grandmothers—stories:
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Guidance: Goldentyer
Haiti—stories: Williams, K.
Handicrafts: Brust
HISTORICAL FICTION:
  Calvert; Carter; Finley; Hansen;
Phillips; Reuter; Ross;
Sauerwein
History, U.S.: Bial; Calvert;
Finley; Hansen; Marrin;
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History: Meltzer
Horses: Patent
Horses-fiction: King-Smith
Immigrants-fiction: Ross
Insects: Facklam
Japan-folklore: Richard
Jews-fiction: Ross
Kidnapping-fiction: Pfeffer
Language arts: Brown; Day
Literature, children's: Brust
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Mexico-fiction: Finley
Mothers and daughters:
Horenstein
Mothers and daughters-stories:
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Namibia-fiction: Beake
Native Americans-fiction: Finley;
Russell
Native Americans-poetry:
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Nature study: Facklam; Patent;
Waters
Oceanography: Waters
POETRY: Hopkins; Levy
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Reading, reluctant: Deem;
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Religious education: Bial
School-fiction: Lindbergh
Science fair: Bellville; Deem
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