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Nights of the Pufflings
written and illustrated with photographs by Bruce McMillan

On a small island 200 miles south of the Arctic Circle, Icelandic children play an important role in helping young puffins, or pufflings, survive their entry into the world. In Nights of the Pufflings, Bruce McMillan keeps his focus on the puffins, but gives us the human perspective through a little girl, Halla, and her friend Arnar Ingi as they watch the puffins and “wait and dream of the nights of the pufflings yet to come.” Beginning in April, the puffins land on Heimaey and other nearby uninhabited islands to mate and to hatch their eggs, one per pair. They prepare their underground burrows, the same ones each year, and then tend the chicks through the summer. The children never see the chicks, which remain hidden beyond human reach in the burrows, but they watch the parents bringing back fish as often as ten times a day.

Finally, in August, the pufflings emerge to fly to the sea for the winter, and Halla and the other children of Heimaey begin their nighttime adventure of finding the babies who may have become confused by the village lights, and who have landed in the streets, where they may be hurt by cats, dogs, or cars. For two weeks the children “rescue thousands of pufflings” at night. They sleep late the next day, then head down to the beach with their cardboard boxes of pufflings, launching the babies out over the sea to safety.

Any book about puffins, with their colorful faces and generally comical appearance, is likely to have a certain charm. Not many photographers, however, have the technical and artistic skills of McMillan at his finest. Though he cannot show the newborn puffins, he makes up for it with shots of the adults with beaks clamped tightly on the catch of day, and he perfectly captures a puffin swooping in for a landing. The island scenery gives him crisp hues in the sky, grassy cliffs, snowy mountains, and sparkling seas. The Icelandic gene pool provides platinum blond, pink-cheeked, blue-eyed schoolchildren (no adults are shown), wearing their thick multicolored sweaters on August nights. Even the nighttime pictures are vivid and dramatic, and they give us our first close-up shots of the pufflings.

For a photographer, McMillan can sure write a picture-book text, gaining our interest in the puffins with tidbits about their lives while foreshadowing the mysterious “nights of the pufflings” still to come. He works in a few Icelandic words with their pronunciations (Halla, for instance, is pronounced HATTL - lah), and carefully avoids any pitfalls of anthropomorphizing the birds or making the kids into cutie-pies or superchildren. McMillan doesn’t burden the text with too much information, but he fills in, on the verso of the title page, when, where, and how the pictures were taken, and he concludes with a page of puffin facts and a brief bibliography of (mostly) adult books.
With the keen awareness most schoolchildren have these days of the deteriorating condition of the earth, *Nights of the Pufflings* has a uniquely satisfying twist for its grade school audience: because of the manmade lights, the puffins are put into danger, but the village children take responsibility for undoing the damage. No environmental preaching is done—the story simply speaks for itself. The fact that the island children have a fabulous time doing their job gives the book a special thrill. (See imprint information on page 243.)

Susan Dove Lempke, Reviewer

**NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**ADLER, C. S.** *Youn Hee and Me*. Harcourt, 1995 [192p]  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 5-7

Eleven-year-old Caitlin loves her five-year-old brother, Simon, who came from Korea to join her family three years ago. When it turns out Simon has a birth sister Caitlin's age still in a Korean orphanage, Caitlin insists that Youn Hee is part of the family too; when Youn Hee arrives, however, it's clear that making a family is not as simple as Caitlin envisions. Adler has created some of her most memorable characters here in determined, prickly Youn Hee and devil-may-care, impetuous Caitlin. Without ever calling up cheap clichés of grateful adoptees, the book credibly depicts Youn Hee's gradual adjustment to America, to being different from everybody else, and to her new family; there's also a suggestion that Youn Hee's disapproval of American ways is sometimes justified. Caitlin's narration quietly but effectively addresses questions of racism and the matter of her divorced and distant dad as well as telling the central story in lively and readable style. Adler has a flair for these vivid and slightly unusual family stories; new readers as well as fans of her *Split Sisters* (BCCB 4/86), etc., should appreciate this one.  

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021523-2  $15.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021522-4  $16.00  
R  Gr. 3-7

Renowned poet Adoff here offers fourteen poems about everyday city life. In verse sometimes prosy (“After I've been sleeping, I wake up because/ the covers are on the floor. The apartment is dark and quiet”—“Late at Night”), sometimes cummings-esque (“T h e / swee/ wee/ sweeper truck/ sprays water/ do wn the / g u t t e r s”—“The Streets Are So Hot”), he offers glimpses of waking to garbage trucks, playing in the spray from a fire hydrant, watching crowds of people from a bus window or in the park. He includes chillier aspects of the city scene, such as
frightening fires ("Always Engines") and pigeons pecking at empty crack vials ("On the Way to Breakfast Sunday"), as well as joyous street music ("Music Moves Us Along the Street") and diversely appetizing street fair fare ("On Our Avenue of the World"). Barbour's acrylic paintings use strong colors such as rich yellow, avocado green, or dusky blue as background and base color, upon which she creates naïvely drawn but intricately detailed tableaux of rows of windows, lines of cars, and clusters of people. While the art is sometimes too distant and restrained for the poems, offering a polite busyness and a delicate disorder where the text suggests an explosion of life, the darker hues keep the illustrations from excessive sunniness and the varied compositions keep them visually interesting. Non-city kids will find the life evoked rich and often tantalizing; city kids may find this poetic take makes them look at their world differently. DS

Baker, Jeannie  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-11491-1  $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
R 6-9 yrs

Intricately constructed collage paintings illustrate this gentle ecological lesson about rosy dock, an imported garden plant that has become a tenacious inhabitant of the Australian desert. Although the brief text makes some confusing shifts between past and present tenses, the natural cycle it describes is clear enough: the wind picked up the red seedpods of the rosy dock plant, scattered the seeds across the desert, and, after lying dormant in the sand, the seeds are germinated by the occasional rainstorms and the plant spreads further. Despite an afterword that warns of the danger of introducing non-native plants and animals, the rosy dock is not shown to have had any unfortunate consequences and kids will be likely to take the book as a Miss Rumphius-like story about spreading beauty in the wilderness. That beauty was already there is made abundantly clear in the pictures. With their organic materials and stunning dioramic effects, the collage landscapes never assume the distant, glassy look of photographed realia, and viewers will find something new—a branch that is actually a snake, birds that look like leaves—each time they look. RS

Banks, Lynne Reid  
_Broken Bridge._ Morrow, 1995. [336p]  
ISBN 0-688-13595-1  $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
Ad Gr. 7-10

Lesley, the fourteen-year-old heroine of _One More River_ (BCCB 8/73) is now forty, still living in the Kibbutz Kfar Orde with her husband and two teenaged children. Her daughter Nili has been visiting London with her cousin Glen (son of Lesley's older brother Noah), and when the cousins fly back to Israel and attempt to walk to a relative's house in Jerusalem, Glen is murdered by Palestinian terrorists, an act that not only sends the kibbutz and family reeling but one that also has a tie to Lesley's past. The book is prefaced by a family tree, and you're going to need it; Banks' effort to recap the events of the first book as well as those of the intervening twenty-five years is not entirely successful, and it sometimes seems as if there's a book in the middle that's missing. Too, there is a large cast of characters and the narrative viewpoint ranges wide, so that while the complex repercussions of the murder are fully and often subtly explored, the book lacks a strong emotional
focus. Best is the portrait of Nili, who refuses to confirm the identity of the Palestinian the police have arrested; less convincing is the fact that the man in question is the boy Lesley befriended in the first book. RS

BEGAY, SHONTO  *Navajo: Visions and Voices Across the Mesa;* written and illus. by Shonto Begay. Scholastic, 1995 [48p]
ISBN 0-590-46153-2 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad  Gr. 5-8

A gallery of paintings (scrupulously annotated as to medium and original size) by Navajo artist Begay show a range of the painter’s styles from a richly textured, earthy pointillism to romanticized portraiture. While the paintings capture a variety of moods, the poems they illustrate are repetitive and too long, lacking the concentration of language and metaphor that would make them seem less like prose arranged in lines of uneven length: “Navajo power plant and the powerful healing plant;/ they share the same plateau./ One gives us strength and wisdom here and now—/ one gives power to strangers somewhere over the horizon.” While kids will enjoy looking at the pictures and reading the autobiographical anecdotes sprinkled throughout the book, the soft-centered and long-winded preaching might best be left to adults. RS

BIAL, RAYMOND  *The Underground Railroad;* written and illus. with photographs by Raymond Bial. Houghton, 1995 [48p]
ISBN 0-395-69937-1 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-7

How does one visually document a topic which was by necessity shrouded in secrecy? Bial retraces the slaves’ lifeline to Canada through a series of pristine photographs of artifacts, landscapes, and “station” buildings that the runaways actually encountered along their escape route. A false-bottomed grain wagon, a hand-dug tunnel glowing in amber lantern light, and the signal lamp beckoning from the upper window of the John Rankin house are potent images that invite the reader into an empathetic relationship with the escapees. Although the text covers ground often trodden by other works on this popular subject, Bial’s shots of places and things which now appear tidy and innocent conjure spirits of desperate freedom-seekers as handily as do more detailed narratives. A chronology of American anti-slavery activity and a list for further reading are appended. EB

BOELTS, MARIBETH  *Summer’s End;* illus. by Ellen Kandoian. Houghton, 1995 [32p]
Reviewed from galleys Ad  5-7 yrs

For seven-year-old Jill, a tomboyish redhead in a sad mood, the melancholy feeling of leaving behind the pleasures of summer slowly shifts over to the excitement of starting a new grade of school. The end of summer means “no more fun. I feel like a balloon with a slow leak,” and looking at her scratchy new clothes and shopping for school supplies do not cheer her. However, on the day before school starts, she plays hard but by noon “there is nothing left to do”; that night she remembers some of the fun she had last year in school. Children’s books don’t always portray the vexations of childhood so accurately, and Boelts and Kandoian skillfully show the ambivalence children may feel about school. The soft watercolor pictures,
while not exactly old-fashioned, make few concessions to the '90s, with a bicycle helmet the one thing showing that the book is not set in the '50s or '60s. Pleasantly nostalgic, this makes a good, if mild, choice for children Jill's age and for younger children just thinking about school. SDL

BRIGGS, RAYMOND The Bear; written and illus. by Raymond Briggs. Random House, 1994 40p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-86944-1 $20.00 R 5-8 yrs

This book is appropriately overly tall, ursine-sized, in fact; it tells the story of a little girl who is surprised one night by the entry into her room of a mammoth but gentle polar bear. Her parents don't believe her new companion is real but they humor her, and Tilly fiercely mothers the bear, feeding him, bathing him, and cleaning up after him ("Oh, you BEAST! You've weed on the floor!"). The dialogue is cheeky and fun, but the real point of the book is the artwork. Briggs plays the oversized page like an instrument, breaking it up into small panels or sections to tighten the action up and then stretching out appropriately when the bear takes over the scene. The bear himself is a softly lumbering creation in colored pencil, whose feathery furry lines seem to speak a quiet narration of their own. While the adult interpretation is likely to be that Tilly imagines her bear, Briggs offers enough suggestion to the contrary to keep kids from generally feeling patronized (although the last panels, where the bear returns to the wild and stands longingly on a cliff before meeting another bear, may baffle some young viewers). A lot of youngsters would go through Tilly's labors in order to experience the cozy safety of the bear hugs Tilly gets in the lap of her seemingly dangerous but actually loving protector; this literary version of that hug will warm youngsters too. DS

BUNTING, EVE Spying on Miss Müller. Clarion, 1995 [180p]
Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 5-8

"She's not a teacher anymore," says a classmate of narrator Jessie, "She's a German." Like the other students, Jessie had admired Miss Müller, the German-language teacher and dorm supervisor at Jessie's Belfast boarding school, but the war has changed their feelings, especially since Miss Miller has been spotted leaving her room at night and going up onto the roof. When the Germans bomb Belfast, Jessie and her friends become more convinced than ever that Miss Müller is a spy, but their attempt to catch her out becomes complicated when taciturn Greta, a Jewish refugee, insists on joining the plot. "Will you kill her?" asks Greta eagerly, and seeks to see her wish come true. Suspenseful and romantic, this is a strong combination of boarding-school story and spy-hunting theme, with the details of 1940s British girls' life worked smoothly into the plot—one of the funnier moments comes during an air-raid when the boy- and girl-boarders at the school chaotically meet in the cellar. "I will not have this!" screams the headmistress. "This is a serious, life-changing experience." Recollects Jessie, "It surely was. Us and the boys," and ponders her first kiss. While Miss Müller does have a secret, it has nothing to do with spying for her fatherland; nevertheless, the girls' conspiracy to find her out has sad repercussions that leave them wiser. The subject is serious and the treatment is cozy but honest, with Miss Müller a figure of Jessie's ambivalent empathy: "Those awful maids spreading the story that Miss Müller's father was a Nazi. As if everyone wasn't against her enough, me included." RS
ISBN 0-590-48991-7 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys M 4-8 yrs

A triangle enjoys its many jobs "holding up roofs, supporting bridges, making music in a symphony orchestra, catching the wind for sailboats," and so on, especially liking to slip into the angles made when people put their hands on their hips, where it overhears news to pass along to its friends, who are also shapes. Eventually becoming bored, it goes to a shapeshifter and turns into a quadrilateral with a range of new jobs, such as being a baseball diamond or a computer screen. Over and over the shape adds a side until it has so many sides it is almost a circle, and it finally decides to go back to being a triangle. Though children may be amused by searching for the new shape in its new chores, the story is remarkable only for its flimsiness. The shape supposedly is individualized by having character traits, being "greedy" for one, but it exists simultaneously in a number of places, and apparently causes no problems by abruptly changing shape, which surely will make children wonder what happened to all of the things that were triangle-shaped after the triangle became a quadrilateral. Notes on using the math concepts with children give some useful suggestions for activities, but in no way make up for the absence of logic. The airbrushed acrylic paintings are pleasantly, if gaudily, cartoonish, but they're crowded and confusing. The concept of adding sides to make new shapes could make a worthwhile picture book, but however many sides this one has, it still falls flat. SDL

CASE, DIANNE *92 Queens Road.* Farrar, 1995 164p
ISBN 0-374-35518-5 $16.00 Ad Gr. 5-7

Six-year-old Kathy is happy with her lively extended family in 1960s South Africa, but she gradually realizes that she's faced with some unfair limitations: she's legally "Coloured" and so not entitled to the rights of whites, and she's also illegitimate. Increasing political turmoil has family repercussions, as Kathy's light-skinned uncle has himself and his family declared "white" and becomes reluctant to acknowledge his relatives; Delores, married to Kathy's other uncle, suffers a miscarriage as a result of a complicated, racially fraught bus incident, and she and her husband decide that emigration to Canada is their only hope of a free life. Case incorporates rather too much in this narrative, so there's little overall focus to the book, and most of the cast is never really characterized, so the end result is a stream of names and small events that doesn't really allow readers to differentiate or empathize. Nonetheless, it's an intimate portrait of a family fighting its personal battles in the shadow of a larger political war, and Case creates an effective sense of place in her Afrikaans-sprinkled account of Kathy's daily life and ethnically diverse neighborhood. While the book lacks the teen heroine that the book jacket and flap copy imply, kids who are willing to overlook the youth of the protagonist may find Kathy's narration an interesting bridge to another kind of life. DS

COLES, ROBERT *The Story of Ruby Bridges;* illus. by George Ford. Scholastic, 1995 [32p]
ISBN 0-590-43967-7 $13.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-8 yrs

In 1960, at the age of six, first-grader Ruby Bridges became the first African-Ameri-
can child to attend William Frantz Elementary School. According to this picture-
book biography, all of the other (white) students were kept home in protest, but
each day Ruby soldiered on into the school, jeered by mobs and protected by gun-
toting federal marshals. One day her teacher observes Ruby talking to the mob on
the way in, but then Ruby explains to her that she wasn’t talking, she was praying:
"Please, God, try to forgive those people . . . Just like You did those folks a long
time ago/ When they said those terrible things about You." While much of the
text consists of quoted material, there’s no hint of where it’s quoted from. The
story ends with Ruby’s prayer, which gives the book the flavor of a parable; while
Ruby herself has a saintly, Shirley-Temple-ish air, many kids will admire her cour-
age and faith. Despite an overreliance on pink tones and beatific poses, Ford’s
full-page paintings emphasize the warmth of Ruby’s family and the heroine’s own
sturdiness; the pictures of the shouting bigots are softened in color and by distance
so as not to be too frightening to younger viewers. RS

COVINGTON, DENNIS  * Lasso the Moon. * Delacorte, 1995  [176p]
ISBN 0-385-32101-5  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 7-10

Until she meets Fernando, teenager April Hunter has little patience with the illegal
Latino immigrants her father doctors at home, but the thin young gardener from
El Salvador commands first her attention and later her love, even as immigrant
authorities close in on him. Besides being a love story and a picture of a rite of
passage to broader social awareness, this is also the story of a daughter adjusting to
her alcoholic father’s recovery; having grown up with turmoil, April must now
accept Dr. Hunter’s newfound stability and allow herself to depend on him rather
than being the child in charge. It’s a packed plot, and it’s occasionally overlaid
with information—masked as dialogue—about Central and North American po-
litical dynamics. There’s also a surprise twist at the end that seems excessive, but
these flaws are balanced by a well-paced plot and consistently intense scenes be-
tween the protagonist and a number of well-realized secondary characters: her
father, her newfound love, her archenemy at the stable where she grooms horses,
the classmate she comes closest to calling a friend, and her father’s potential new
romantic interest. This is more purposive and less brilliantly eccentric than
Covington’s first novel, *Lizard* (BCCB 4/91), but it has a distinctive voice of its
own and will have strong appeal to young adult readers. BH

DAHL, FELICITY  * Roald Dahl’s Revolting Recipes;* comp. by Felicity Dahl and Josie
Fison; illus. by Quentin Blake and with photographs by Jan Baldwin.  * Viking,* 1994  61p
ISBN 0-670-85836-6  $15.99  R  Gr. 4-7

Fans of Roald Dahl will recognize the names of many of these revolting—and not-
so-revolting—recipes, such as Snozzcumbers (from *The BFG*), Mr. Twit’s Beard
Food (from *The Twits*), and Lickable Wallpaper (from *Charlie and the Chocolate
Factory*). Felicity Dahl and Josie Fison have breathed life, presentation, and edibil-
ity into these recipes, and kids will hunger for Strawberry-Flavored Chocolate-
Coated Fudge, Wormy Spaghetti, and Bird Pie (with its forest of bird legs sticking
out of the top crust). While some of the recipes can be rather challenging (some of
the measurements remain in the British system of ounces rather than being trans-
lated into the American cups, deep-frying is required for a few recipes, and some of
the artistic demands—"Draw a frog measuring about 5 x 5 inches"—may be beyond youngsters), there are varying degrees of difficulty, and kids will, with adult help, be able to satisfy themselves with their heroes' favorite potions and munchies. Zingy line-and-watercolor illustrations by Quentin Blake allow the Dahlian personae to interact with photographs of the completed recipes. The kids who ate up Lucy Monroe's Creepy Cuisine (BCCB 10/93) will find that this also pleases their palates, and Dahl fans will want to whip up the famous delicacies tout de suite. DS


Fanaye, an Ethiopian woman, offers her new stepson the tenderest meat, fixes his clothes, and tells him stories, but she is met only with rejection: "Don't try to act like my mother!" Greatly saddened, she visits the medicine man for a magic potion, and though she fears she will be killed, she decides to get the three lion whiskers he tells her she will need. Taming the lion very gradually, she finally gets the whiskers, but when she returns to the medicine man he throws them on the fire and tells her, "Approach your stepson as you did the lion, and you will win his love." Taking this advice, she begins treating her stepson with seeming indifference, and "day by day, as he saw that Fanaye made no move toward him, Abebe inched toward her. When she said nothing to him, he began to speak to her." The story tenderly concludes with Fanaye telling—upon request—a story about the time she "befriended a wild lion." In opening notes, the author says the story has been told for hundreds of years (giving no specific sources), but it has great immediacy and freshness for contemporary children as well. Grifalconi's striking illustrations are constructed from textured papers, photographs, cloth and other materials to great three-dimensional effect. This provides an excellent counterpoint to tales of wicked stepmothers, with its African setting providing additional interest. SDL

DEAN, JULIA A Year on Monhegan Island; written and illus. with photographs by Julia Dean. Ticknor, 1995 [48p] ISBN 0-395-66476-4 $14.95 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-6

Island life has its own peculiar attractions that make it a romantic subject for books; Julia Dean's photoessay on Monhegan Island off the coast of Maine is one of the more warmly evocative of the genre. Seventy-five people lived year-round on Monhegan in 1990, the year Dean photographed the island, but the summer population balloons to 600 (and more come on daytrips); residents of the island speak here of the winter isolation, the labor of lobster fishing, the pains and pleasures of being one of only six children in the school, and the good and bad sides of the summer expansion. Homey mundane details nestle comfortably with history both distant and recent ("When [the underwater phone cable] broke in 1981, the islanders were without telephone service for two years"). The author/photographer's affection for island life comes through not only in the text but in the luminous pictures of clapboard houses amid sea spray and in the memorable images of island people working at battery-powered computers or standing amid towers of lobster traps. Despite the preponderance of adults in text and pictures, the book's blend of romance and reality makes this an enticing prospect for young isle-ophiles, who will enjoy this informative and picturesque armchair voyage. DS
DENENBERG, BARRY  
Voices from Vietnam.  
Scholastic, 1995  
251p  
ISBN 0-590-44267-8  
$16.95  
R Gr. 7-10

“This book is not about the politics and history of the Vietnam War. It is about what it was like to be in Vietnam.” Contrary to his opening remarks, Denenberg does deliver a cogent historical overview of the conflict from its roots in the mid-1940s through the fall of Saigon. Much of the text is devoted to first-hand observations by infantrymen, nurses, generals, journalists, and North and South Vietnamese military and civilians. Here Denenberg is at his best, cannily weaving his own commentary and explanations through quotations that are long enough to develop a theme, yet short enough to keep the narration clipping along. In those chapters in which the dominant voice is that of the author (most notably, coverage of the 1968 Democratic convention riots) the infusion of other viewpoints is missed. The lack of index and maps, together with a glossary of inadequate scope, limits the volume’s usefulness for report writers, but readers interested in retracing the course of the conflict rather than dissecting its parts will find this work both disturbing and illuminating. EB

DEXTER, CATHERINE  
Alien Game.  
Morrow, 1995  
[208p]  
$15.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
R Gr. 5-8

Zoe knows something is funny about the glamorous new girl, Christina—and not just because she so uncannily resembles the magazine model Zoe had been admiring the night before Christina shows up for school, nor just because Christina’s claim to have attended the school in third grade is not borne out by class photos. Christina also has this alarming habit of turning into a swarm of little lights, and what had been an annual school ritual keepaway game becomes a horror when it becomes apparent that Christina is playing for keeps: she taps you on the shoulder and you’re hers. Yikes. This is a pretty scary story, made all the more so by its ordinary daylit schoolyard setting. Zoe, her friend Norton, and a teacher with a mysterious tragedy in his past are the only ones who are onto Christina’s “game,” and together they force a showdown—at night, in a spooky deserted school—that is somewhat contrived in its set-up but satisfying in its resolution. Attractive cover art of Zoe and Christina makes for an easy booktalk: “This girl thinks that girl is an alien.” RS

DR. SEUSS  
Daisy-Head Mayzie; written and illus. by Dr. Seuss.  
Random House, 1995  
48p  
$15.99  
Trade ISBN 0-679-86712-0  
$15.00  
Ad 5-8 yrs

Flap copy states that the good doctor wrote this story in the 1960s and it was found posthumously among his papers. Certainly the story of Mayzie McGrew, who is startled one day in school when a daisy grows out of the top of her head, has the galloping rhythm and rollicking rhyme that Dr. Seuss was so good at and others so often feebly imitated. Soon various adults realize that Mayzie and her floral topping could be a feather in their own caps, so a politician, a doctor, and a movie agent sow their own plans around her; Mayzie, however, soon tires of fame and embraces love (with a little guidance from the petals of the daisy), whereupon the daisy disappears. The plot weakens considerably at its resolution, finishing the story with more fuzz than fizz and making the classic Seuss didacticism seem rather
forced, but the silliness of the situation is enjoyable enough to carry the story off nonetheless. More problematic are the illustrations, “inspired by Dr. Seuss’s sketches”: the colors are garish and the lines unimaginative and cartoonish (the book is in fact released simultaneously with an animated TV version), so that the cast has none of the raffish charm usually found in a Seuss book, looking more like The Jetsons than, say, the Whos. Kids who see the cartoon will probably clamor for the book and they’ll enjoy it as a lively readaloud; its best use, however, would be in serving as a bridge to classic—dare one say genuine?—works of the master. DS


“Distant rumblings” mark the beginning of a thunderstorm moving in on a summer’s day, as two little girls play in a backyard pool. One face shows excitement, the other apprehension as the “sun is fading/ dark clouds waiting/ trees are sighing/ birds are lying/ low in nests in wait of rain.” Once the mother has hustled them inside, they watch out the windows, and the anxious child cheers up when the more exuberant girl bangs on the bottom of her sand pail, echoing the “big boom bashing!” After the thunder dies down, they pull on their yellow slickers and red galoshes and head out for some puddle fun: “How we love the song of rain!” Evans’ rhythm never falters, and her word choice only occasionally strains, as in “wind is tiring/ beat expiring.” Both story and pictures reflect the simple joys of a change in the weather. Jabar’s watercolor and pencil illustrations, while showing a somewhat idealized setting, with a single house on an enormous lot complete with flowers, birds, worms, frogs, and a dog house, have a nicely light-hearted feel. SDL


When Liam’s mother Katherine tells him that his father Philip contracted AIDS from a blood transfusion, Liam knows she’s lying. He knows from his school sex ed classes that such a risk has become near-impossible, but he also suddenly remembers, “clearer every moment like a photograph negative in a developing tank,” the time three years ago when he saw his father secretly embrace a young man on the beach near the family’s summer cottage. Now Philip has moved back to that cottage, leaving Liam and Katherine in New York with many secrets between them. This is a tough portrait of a family in crisis, each member struggling between love and the betrayals of that love, lying to themselves and each other about what is really going on. But while Fox must be commended for avoiding didacticism or sentimentality, she seems reluctant to tackle either her subject or story head on, substituting metaphor for emotional engagement. Too much is outlined or off-stage, with past events and memories rendered in a pluperfect tense that has a distancing effect (“During the year he’d been away, Liam had had no desire to see him at all”). The best scenes are those where Liam visits Philip at the cottage and confronts him (“You killed our family”) only to be answered in equable manner (“Nobody is killed except me”). Even here, though, the conversations often turn fuzzy and ponderous about time and light-years, and readers are likely to get lost in
the ambiguities. When Liam asks, in a conversation that had, we think, been about Philip's now-dead lover Geoff, "Can you say how it was? What it was?" we're not sure what he's asking; when Philip answers, "It breaks over you like a huge wave. You go under. Some people swim out of the wave. I couldn't," we don't know what to think. What is "it"? Love? Betrayal? Homosexuality? The book gets better and clearer in its last third. Philip's death scene is written with compassion and a restraint that never turns into remove; here Fox reveals her gift for showing, in brief and simple language, the ways people discover each other and themselves. RS

ISBN 1-56402-544-6 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-7

Sixth-grader Trina knows that things are a little rough in her family at the moment, with her mother running a day-care center at home in order to make ends meet since her father's job injury left him unable to work. She realizes, however, that things are more serious than she thought when her father's increasing moroseness and flashes of temper escalate at the news of her mother's long-awaited pregnancy. Trina finds herself increasingly cut off from both her parents as her father's depression increases, leading to hospitalization that only helps for a short time and, finally, to a suicide attempt. Trina's narration of a difficult year is touching and truthful; with the exception of the title metaphor, which gets sentimentally described on the book's final page, there's a rugged honesty to her account which admits that things are rarely easily solved. Counterbalancing the distress of Trina's situation is the warmth of her friends and neighbors, who are clearly the only comfort for Trina and her mother in this very bad year. Tougher than but just as readable as Cannon's Amazing Gracie (BCCB 10/91), on the same subject, this will speak to many kids who feel, for one reason or another, buffeted by adult frailties beyond their control. DS


Each of these series entries purports to be the first-person account of a young refugee, but aside from an opening introduction ("My name is Samira, and I am a Muslim from Bosnia"; "My name is Ahmad, and I am Palestinian") and a posed portrait photograph, these are impersonal accounts that juxtapose information about history, culture, and customs with rigorously "balanced" explanations of the contemporary problems in Bosnia and Israel and the Occupied Territories. It does seem odd that Samira gives such an even-handed survey of the war in her country; she defines "ethnic cleansing" as when "one group of people tries to force all other groups from the land," but neglects to state that it is the Muslims who are being "cleansed" (i.e., killed) by the Serbs. Ahmad's story more convincingly puts forth a particular side of the conflict, while at the same time fairly representing the Israeli position as well. Although shifts between double spreads about customs and spreads about war are sometimes disconcerting, the books are easy to read and filled with stock color photos that, if not always carefully placed or labeled, give an easy first glimpse into some complex problems. Each book has a map, "fact file," and an index. RS

This overview of Latino history from Spanish colonization through the present focuses on women's political and economic oppression and highlights the work of Latina activists such as Lucy Parsons and Luisa Moreno. Arguments frequently lapse into opinion which Garza fails to substantiate: "Some Latinas contract AIDS through drug abuse, but many (perhaps most) are infected by husbands or sexual partners who (as with most men) control the women's sex lives." Garza rides a turbulent stream of consciousness from one issue to the next, making the most tenuous of segues between the 1911 overthrow of Porfirio Diaz and the 1848 Seneca Falls caucus, or between the "zoot suit" riots and a 1943 film about "a typical Russian family that looked and behaved exactly like white American families." When so much YA nonfiction is blandly textbookish, however, Garza's impassioned essay is a change of pace, and while it does not provide broad or balanced coverage, it will be of interest to libraries with extensive holdings in Latino and women's studies. EB

GRIFALCONI, ANN *Not Home.* Little, 1995 [138p] ISBN 0-316-32905-3 $15.95 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

Tommy, the narrator, and his little brother Dicky are upset to hear that their widowed mother has to enter the hospital for an operation; they're even more distressed when they're taken to "the strange, big, clanging place they called 'The Home'" to live until she gets out. Tommy gradually sorts out bullies, loners, and companions among the boys he's barracked with, and he struggles to maintain both the cool he needs to survive and his relationship with Dicky. Few children's books address short-term stays in care, and Grifalconi credibly depicts Tommy's fear, loneliness, and gradual adjustment (as well as his relief at returning to his mother). Tommy's narration is rather forced, however, simultaneously sprinkled with boyish exclamation points but using an outsider's notation of colloquial speech ("Don't b'lieve nothin' you hear 'round here from the Man"), and his perceptions are occasionally purposively adult; although sincere, the plot dips into sentimentality, especially in its portrayal of loner Jimmy, whom Tommy finally befriends but who dies of TB. Tommy is a tough but warm and thoughtful hero, however, and kids who might find Paula Fox's *Monkey Island* (BCCB 10/91) too subtle or too scary will appreciate Grifalconi's story of his and Dicky's survival under difficult circumstances. DS


Okay, so the title gives the ending away: Lily and Beware (from *Beware the Mare, BCCB 7/93*) do win a blue ribbon at the horse show, but that's not entirely the point. Lily, accompanied by her mother and her grandfather, attends the annual Junior Horse Show, where last year Lily took turns with her friend Mandy riding an old pony. This year Mandy has a glossy new horse and Lily has Beware, and friendship may fall victim to rivalry as the two girls compete in a variety of classes, each hoping to prove herself and her horse the best. This is a more attainable
dream for horsey readers than many fictional accounts of Derby wins and Grand Prix triumphs: Lily is flustered by other riders, has some bad riding and some good, and eventually has a realistic day of one blue ribbon, one third-place finish, one fourth, and several also-rans, while enjoying herself and being very proud of her horse. Haas is a knowledgeable equestrienne and keeps the present-tense narration authentic and redolent of the stable and show-ring; Lily's family occasionally seems too good to be true, but they're warm and cheerful literary company. There isn't much out there for early readers with the pony passion; Beware's adventures will be greeted with unbridled enthusiasm. Reviewed from an unillustrated galley. DS


Fanny feels that the one thing that she's been destined for in her twelve years is to own a dog. She had a puppy, Nellie, but her artist father found it a distraction so Nellie was given away, and her father has gotten tenser and tenser lately as his painting has gone less well. After a brief pre-Christmas defection her father returns with a full-grown dog named Dinner. Dinner is all Fanny has ever dreamed, and she revels in her newfound playmate; she also makes Dinner her confidante for her fears about her father, who seems unable to give something to Fanny without later taking it away (the Marie of the title is Fanny's homemade paper doll, which Fanny's father spent years trying to throw out). Fanny's greatest fear is that Dinner's presence will eventually disturb her father's painting and that this dog, too, will be sent from Fanny's life. While Henkes has a lyrical style, his viewpoint is adult and his stately paced narration is overcontemplative ("It occurred to Fanny that children, as they grow older, probably forget how awful it is to experience that powerlessness; if they didn't, they would never have children of their own"). The dogginess of Dinner is well-evoked, but her linkage with Fanny's uncertainty about her father is less successful. The most enduring aspects of the book are the subtle portraits of the complex and likeable characters, especially Fanny's intense but loving father and Fanny herself; the book's greatest charm lies in the unfortunately undeveloped subplot of Fanny's incipient romance with a neighbor boy who happens to be an expert knitter. DS


Fitzi, heroine of Broadway Chances (BCCB 6/92), etc., is back, and she's got a solo dance in the Broadway musical Crowd Scene, in which her parents and grandfather also appear. She's also got a crush on the young lead, Mark Hiller, and the book's story blends Fitzi's sort-of-romance with Mark together with a familiar backstage story of show-biz life. The theater story is well-trodden but readable territory, with a few unlikely touches (such as the whole family appearing in the same musical) but a nicely soapy atmosphere (Fitzi's aging and sometimes unwell grandfather has his heart set on receiving a Tony award). Fitzi's veering between young stage professional and lovesick teen, however, is more interestingly depicted (Fitzi's strained conversations with her love interest are particularly authentic), and Mark's ambiguity about his social life—does he go out with Fitzi for publicity purposes?
Does he really like her? Can he tell the difference—is a creative and credible touch. Series fans will eat this up, other youngsters can pick up Fitzi’s saga here without feeling left out, and all readers will be pleased that our Broadway baby is clearly destined for more footlights and more sequels. DS

HINOJOSA, MARIA  Crews: Gang Members Talk to Maria Hinojosa; illus. with photographs by German Perez.  Harcourt, 1995  168p  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-15-292873-1 $17.00  
Paper ed. ISBN 0-15-200283-9 $9.00  R  Gr. 5-12

Maria Hinojosa’s interest in gangs (or “crews,” as they call themselves) was sparked by her reporting on National Public Radio about the young tourist from Utah who in 1990 was stabbed to death on a subway platform in New York City. Hinojosa went to Queens to talk about the incident with some of the killer’s acquaintances and came back with the voices compiled here, the stories of crew members who deal drugs, “tag” walls with graffiti signatures, and help and betray each other in a society that seems to offer them little hope. “So why should I feel safe around you guys?” asks Hinojosa of Shank, who has just been telling her about the “release” he gets from beating up a “vic,” or victim. It’s a fair question, and while the reporter seems to come away from her story unscathed, the anecdotes about casual muggings are hair-raising in their blunt honesty: “You need the money for the weekend, that’s all.” There’s a lack of affect in these young voices that’s frightening and, heard cumulatively, a little boring; whether Shank or Coki or Tre or Cindy is speaking, it all begins to run together, a numbing litany of neglect, poverty and violence. While the book, trendily designed with anonymizing portraits of the subjects, doesn’t offer any answers, it does ask many good questions. RS

HOBAN, TANA  Colors Everywhere;  illus. with photographs by Tana Hoban.  Greenwillow, 1995  [32p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12763-0 $15.93  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12762-2 $16.00  Ad 2-6 yrs

Bold black borders set off Hoban’s wordless extravaganza of color photos which range from a picture of bright yellow baby ducks to a rainbow-hued umbrella, with a variety of child-pleasing photos (finger puppets, a dog, candy) coming in between. Each picture, one to a page, is accompanied by a graph that reproduces the colors to be found in the photo, representing their proportions with bands of varying width, so that a photo of a car is partnered with a large oblong of red for the body and a smaller one of yellow-orange for the parking lights and license plate. While Hoban sometimes omits in the graph some of the colors that can be found in the picture (for example, the car photo shows a white car behind the red one), and occasionally the shades or proportions seem off, the graphs are an engaging extension of the book’s basic concept that will hold the attention of older children as well as those still at the point-and-name stage. RS

Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1353-3 $15.89  

Chloe, a young shepherdess found as a baby suckling from a ewe, and Daphnis, a
goatherd fed as a baby by a goat, live on a pastoral island. Their friend Dorcon, who tends cows, also vies with Daphnis for Chloe’s love. Dorcon finds he can’t win Chloe from Daphnis by playing his pipes, and dressing as a wolf and trying to carry her off backfires when her sheepdogs attack the “wolf.” Pirates come to the island, kill Dorcon, take his cows, and carry off Daphnis to be a slave, but Chloe manages to rescue him by taking Dorcon’s dying suggestion of blowing the cattle call on his pipes. In keeping with its pastoral roots, the story takes place completely outdoors and concludes that Daphnis and Chloe “could have had no happier fate than that which had brought them together as children of the pasture.” Hort retells the story (though from where he got it there is no clue) with a nice light touch, but Bloom’s acrylic pictures feel very heavy in comparison. People (awkwardly posed), animals, and landscape alike have great solidity, and there is a flat whitish cast on everything, which is presumably intended to be blazing sunshine. With so few picture book versions of Greek tales, this may be a worthwhile purchase for libraries. SDL

Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

Ozzie (of Roz and Ozzie, BCCB 5/92) is on his own since his friend and niece, Roz, and her parents have gone to London, leaving his summer looking bleak and empty. Things perk up when he begins converting a neighbor’s unused chicken coop into a clubhouse and then finds some new neighborhood kids, with whom he forms The Chicken Coop Club. Summer turns dark again, however, when Ozzie’s father suffers a heart attack and is admitted to the hospital, and Ozzie fears that his father will die. Hurwitz is one of our most reliable writers about daily kid-life: Ozzie is credible and appealing whether his pants are publicly falling down (a numismatist, he overloaded his pockets with pennies) or he’s contemplating the injustice of the hospital’s attitude towards his pet mouse (“How could the nurse scold him and say that his mouse was going to bring germs into the hospital and at the same time the hospital was giving out medicines that made people sick instead of better?”), and the book handles the serious issues and the funny moments with the same calm tenderness. DS

INTRATER, ROBERTA GROBEL  Two Eyes, a Nose, and a Mouth; written and illus. by Roberta Grobel Intrater. Scholastic, 1995 [32p] (Cartwheel Books) ISBN 0-590-48247-5 $12.95
Reviewed from galleys R 2-6 yrs

For once children will not be reprimanded for staring at someone, as Intrater has given them an entire picture book full of fascinating faces to study. The simple text is paired with large, tightly framed close-up photographs of a multicultural gallery of faces: “Two eyes, a nose, and a mouth,/ they’re the first things that we see/ on millions and millions of faces,/ from Tibet to Tennessee.” Highlighting four very different faces, for example, she shows a variety of noses, saying “Noses can be short and wide,/ or turn out long and bumpy,/ Some are small and curve up . . . / and some are kind of lumpy.” She compares eyes, eyebrows (with some particularly extravagant examples), and lips, too. A double-page spread with 128 one-inch portraits follows to illustrate the point that changing these features makes it so “no one looks just like you,” and another spread with 128 pictures of the same
person shows “how dull the world would be” if we all looked alike. She concludes with a spread of thirty-two portraits of people of varying ethnicities and ages and on the last page invites children to paste their own picture in a space surrounded by other pictures, though libraries might have preferred a less permanent suggestion. A true celebration of humanity, this will be a certain purchase for many libraries, families, and schools. SDL


A more likely subtitle might be “Fun for Young Writers,” because there’s a jigsaw puzzle aspect to this book despite its organizational scheme. The alphabetical arrangement makes for pretty haphazard thematic juxtapositions, which is evidently the author’s intent, “to help you see that you can write poems about nearly any subject.” Thus A is introduced by a poem called “Autumn Beat,” followed by instructions for writing an acrostic poem, along with two examples of acrostic poems (“Autumn Beat” is not one). Some of the themes are explicit, others less obvious: D for dreams in “I Picked a Dream Out of My Head,” for instance, as opposed to “The Animals Are Leaving” for E (extinction) and “Harvey” for F (friendship). Janeczko’s sixty-one examples are accessible (from Gwendolyn Brooks to John Ciardi and William Jay Smith), his direct address to the reader is easy and informal (even sometimes glib), and his enthusiasm is catching; modest but lively line drawings dot the text. If the format’s a little jumpy, juvenile TV addicts will probably get all the more out of it. BH

KRASKE, ROBERT The Voyager’s Stone: The Adventures of a Message-Carrying Bottle Adrift on the Ocean Sea; illus. by Brian Floca. Jackson/Orchard, 1995 [96p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06890-0 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

In a Paddle-to-the-Sea kind of natural-history narrative, a message in a bottle travels around the world on the ocean currents, beginning in the Caribbean and very eventually finding a recipient, an Aborigine girl living on Australia’s north coast. While never personified, the bottle encounters much on its journey: tremendous storms, the icebergs of both the Arctic and Antarctic, furious battles between sea predators and prey. There’s plenty of information about the ocean world here, and readers for whom such facts are the adventure probably won’t mind the fictional trappings. Others may become impatient, because despite some vivid writing about killer sharks and waves, the pedagogical intent bogs down the story, which, like its hero, isn’t going anywhere in particular. Nevertheless, excerpts read aloud will provide an unusual complement to various science units; illustrator Floca’s plentiful maps will keep readers firmly afloat and his cross-hatched pen illustrations add drama. RS


As in The Edible Pyramid (BCCB 2/95), Leedy sets out to fill a niche and clarify a subject rarely covered in children’s picture books. This time she focuses on the
family tree, showing an assorted group of animal schoolchildren making their own family trees. The first child, a cat wearing a jumper and her hair in a ponytail, takes over half of the book with her description of the members of her completely conventional family, which goes back to her “mother’s mother’s mother!” She mentions the members by name, telling something about them to personalize the tree (“Nanna and Pop-pop took me to the fair”) and pad the text. One page is spent on adoption, with no family tree in sight, and the subjects of stepparents and stepsiblings and half-siblings each get a few pages. Leedy finishes with a partial explanation of the difference between first cousins, second cousins, and first cousins once removed, and gives a final page of definitions. Her approach, while clear and streamlined, might have been improved by discussing generations and by giving directions for making family trees. Muddy colors and a peculiar mish-mash of woodland motifs detract from the presentation, but this could still be useful in many collections.

LEGGE, DAVID  
Bamboozled; written and illus. by David Legge. Scholastic, 1995  [32p]  
ISBN 0-590-47989-X  $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  6-9 yrs

A young girl narrates, in a simple and ironically naïve text, her visit to her grandpa’s house, where “something seemed odd.” Actually, lots of things are odd: a giraffe peers around the front door, a necktie hangs out of Grandpa’s mailbox, a floor lamp grows out of a plant pot . . . Granddaughter sits down to tea with Grandpa, they play cards, and they potter about the house and yard as she tries to put her finger on the peculiarity; meanwhile garden gnomes ride ducks across the hall, evergreens are planted in real beds, the television is actually an aquarium, and a jack-in-the-box leaps out of the washer. The shaggy-dog joke is that Grandpa has on mismatched socks, making it seem like everything else is completely normal for this happy pair. The illustrations, of course, are the crucial aspect of this book, and Legge has achieved an interesting range of effect. Stylistically the pictures are cheerful and realistic watercolors, tastefully bland until the viewer starts unpacking the visual jokes; the art is sunnier than that of Van Allsburg, Browne, or Wiesner, but those who enjoy those artists will find range enough in the ideas here to appreciate this book too. Legge’s jokes range from the obvious (Grandpa feeding the cat turns out to be Grandpa feeding spaghetti and meatballs to a tiger named Fluffy) to the wryly referential (Rodin’s Thinker ponders over “2+2=4”) to the subtle (the deadbolt on the front door is on the same side as the hinges), so kids—and adults—can look at this book several times without exhausting the game within. The mysterious British aspects (such as the prevalence of garden gnomes) will merely add to the intrigue for American readers, and the final joke, though slight, will likely be a hit with younger members of the audience. Pair this with Banyai’s Zoom, reviewed last month, to get kids really looking at pictures. DS

LESTER, JULIUS  
Othello: A Novel. Scholastic, 1995  [160p]  
ISBN 0-590-41967-6  $12.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 9-12

The story of Othello, with its themes of love transcending barriers, evil preying on the weaknesses of good, and bitter jealousy resulting in the destruction of love, is an emotionally charged theatrical experience; here Julius Lester has turned it into
a novel, exercising a director's prerogative in making changes and emphasizing particular interpretations in his production. Not only Othello but also Iago and Emilia (here Emily) are black, having been seized from Africa together, and the story is now set in sixteenth-century England, with Othello's patron, the Venetian duke, become the English king. The pacing here is slow, and some innovations of the book—such as the remembered love affair between the king and Desdemona's late mother and the use of a different typeface to indicate paraphrase of Shakespeare's original lines—are distracting rather than enriching. Lester's language, however, is often effectively reminiscent of Shakespeare in its stateliness and extended metaphors. His investigation of Othello's race-based outsider status is the most successful part of the book; Othello here is in some ways reminiscent of Shylock, whose societal usefulness cruelly fails to translate into social acceptability. The love story between Othello and Desdemona is also more fully and sensuously explored than it is in the play, which will increase the book's appeal. Kids may not appreciate Lester's rendition on their own, but the book is an enlightening read which would make for provocative discussion material, particularly in conjunction with a viewing of the play (or, for more intrepid readers, a comparison with Farrukh Dhondy's *Black Swan*, BCCB 9/93); make sure teens read Lester's clear-eyed and intelligent introduction explaining his "reconceptualization" of the play. DS

ISBN 0-688-12570-0  $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R 3-6 yrs

Families know how tough it can be when one child gets a gift that the other children would dearly love, but though that's the set-up in this picture book, patience and understanding help two sisters through the crisis. In a playfully rhythmic text, big sister raves about her new toy: "Me, I love my floppy teddy bear,/ Me, I love my floppy teddy bear,/ Curly brown fur and two black eyes,/ A squishy-squashy belly and a red bow tie,/ Me, I love my floppy teddy bear." Her little sister, who looks about two, also falls for the bear and runs gleefully off with it, subjecting it to lunch, playtime with the dog, and a drenching in the sink, but each time her big sister takes the opportunity to practice her mothering skills, cleaning up her bear and loving it some more. Her tolerance has its limits, though: "She may be my sister, but I don't care,/ She cannot, cannot, cannot, cannot have my floppy teddy bear!" The next day, Mama and big sister go shopping, and by story's end the sisters both have teddy bears. The kind-heartedness suffusing the story makes it a cozy one with a satisfying close; the text, however, is sometimes difficult to read aloud successfully, as its rhythm stumbles occasionally, as in the string of "cannot(s)" above. Baker's watercolors match the mood, with expressive faces and body language for the girls. With their perpetually wide eyes and red noses, they look a little odd, but loving and lovable. SDL

**MACGILL-CALLAHAN, SHEILA**  *When Solomon Was King*; illus. by Stephen T. Johnson. Dial, 1995  [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1590-0  $15.89
Reviewed from galleys  Ad 6-9 yrs

In this original tale from Biblical sources, young Solomon is sent to hunt for food by his father King David. While on the hunt, Solomon prevents one of the hunt-
ers from killing a wounded lioness ("It offends the king's honor to slay a helpless beast"), and he stays with her over the Sabbath, cleaning her wound and helping lower her fever so that she is able to feed her two cubs. After many years, Solomon becomes king and receives the gift of talking with animals, but gradually becomes arrogant about his gift. A meeting with an eagle, the lioness, and her angry now-grown cubs helps restore his perspective. MacGill-Callahan tells the story competently but without excitement; her tone is dignified, but a bit flat. Johnson’s paintings are more successful: his lion cubs are touchingly babyish, and his adult lions splendidly powerful (as is the adult Solomon, although his younger self looks too mature). Johnson achieves a wide variety of textures in his watercolor and pastel paintings, and the contrast between the richly furnished palace and the wide spaces outdoors are particularly striking. SDL


See this month’s Big Picture, p. 225.


Janet and her family, medical missionaries, are leaving India in 1944 via an unnamed, unmarked troopship that they hope will bring them to safe harbor in Los Angeles. Rules, warnings, and alarm bells are constant, and while the ship evades Japanese attack, it still must weather the fierce ocean storms—as well as equally turbulent human emotions. There are plenty of secrets aboard, particularly personified in a young Eurasian boy, Lee, and in the mysterious, beautiful Mrs. Dobson, who, were this an old Bette Davis movie, would most certainly be rumored to be an “adventuress.” Based upon the author’s somewhat more prosaic history (she voyaged under similar circumstances, but rather uneventfully) this is an involving tale of escape and shipboard intrigue, more glamorous than most World War II historical fiction, with the kind of false-identity melodrama we associate with Philip Pullman’s Victorian tales such as *The Ruby in the Smoke* (BCCB 5/87). We won’t give anything away—you will enjoy this as much as will the kids—and while the book doesn’t have the psychological levels of Porter’s *Ship of Fools,* it does have narrative pull and, in ten-year-old Janet, an authentic witness to wartime adventure. RS


Plain and honest verses describe the craft of woodworking and each wood for each use: “Blackwood and box are/ hard and dense/ To make sweet wind/ instruments.” This will be news to kids who think wood is, well, wood, and appended notes further elucidate why particular woods are best for particular purposes. Although this may seem a somewhat specialized topic for a picture book, it’s in fact the pictures that will provoke interest. Each homely scene, most set in the eigh-
teenth and nineteenth centuries, shows woodworkers at their painstaking tasks, enclosed by inventive wood frames that use the wood described on that page. In some cases, picture and frame merge, so that a bas-relief yellow pine rocking horse is both part of the picture and framing the picture. Similarly, a Shaker chair neatly perches on its wall pegs next to a view into a Shaker workshop. The variety of grains and shades relieves the basic brown, and the trompe l'oeil effects will keep kids looking. RS

MILLER, SARA SWAN  *Three Stories You Can Read to Your Dog*; illus. by True Kelley. Houghton, 1995 [48p]
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 1-3

Beginning readers need to read aloud to somebody, and there's no reason why the family Fido can't be up to the task, but best, as this book suggests, to “pet your dog while you read.” Illustrated with goofy, undeniably doggy line-and-watercolor pictures, the three stories here involve bones both real and imagined, burglars (also imagined), a break through the door to freedom, cars, recalcitrant squirrels, and sleep, lots of sleep. In fact, each of the stories ends with a nap, which is certainly true to dogdom but tends to give the tales somewhat soporific conclusions. The text has an direct address from child to dog (“One day you were taking a nap. There was nothing else to do”) that is intimate and slyly observant of dog mores, but the reading-aloud is a little choppy (“You dug a hole. You put the bone in it. Then you covered it up.”) This reviewer's canine audience couldn't sit still for it, but out there are surely dogs—and, more to the point, kids—who will. RS

MIYAMOTO, TADAO  *Papa and Me*; written and illus. by Tadao Miyamoto; tr. from the Japanese by Kathy Raskob. Carolrhoda, 1994 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-87614-843-7 $14.21 R 4-7 yrs

A small bear and his father spend the afternoon fishing and talking. When the little bear poses the question, “Papa, how do you know you're my father?” the father recalls their shared experiences. He remembers washing his new cub, running away from some angry bees, and looking up at the stars when the roof of their house blew off. Finally conceding that “maybe you were too little to remember,” the father suggests that his son work on storing up special memories “of times we share that you can keep forever.” The son immediately decides to store up the story of this fishing afternoon, when he catches a huge fish and his father catches a tiny one. The tender story is nicely balanced by the scratchy, unsentimental pictures done in green, gray, black and brown. Endearing, expressive faces, huge paws and claws, and plain gray clothes give the bears an everyday quality that will help children relate to the story more than fancier fellows might, and the book may encourage them to actively collect memories of their own. SDL

MOLLEL, TOLOWA M.  *Big Boy*; illus. by E. B. Lewis. Clarion, 1995 [32p]
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

The setting may be contemporary Tanzania, but the problem is universal—Oli aches to do everything his older brother Mbuchu does. When a magical bird, Tunukia-zawadi, grants his dearest wish, Oli finds that being a big—big—boy
who towers over his neighbors has as many drawbacks as joys. Although he tromps
around the countryside boasting of his exploits in a lively, cumulative chant (ap-
pealingly punctuated for the read-along crowd by *tuntun* drumbeats), Oli realizes
that stubbing his toe on a boulder and setting off a tidal wave isn't what he bar-
gained for, and he happily awakens to find it was all a dream. Or was it? An eerily
ordinary and realistic Oli hulks through Lewis's watercolor landscape—at first
proudly dominating his surroundings, later crammed uncomfortably within the
edges of the double-page spread—a powerful yet awkward image that reinforces
the tale's rich combination of humor and tension. An author's note on the "pro-
digious child" motif in African folklore and a glossary of Kiswahili terms and pro-
nunciations are included. EB

**PARISH, HERMAN**  *Good Driving, Amelia Bedelia;* illus. by Lynn Sweat.
Greenwillow, 1995 [40p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13358-4  $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  5-8 yrs

Herman Parish has revived his late aunt's endearing heroine, Amelia Bedelia, al-
though her format has now changed from chapter book to long picture book. Here Amelia receives a refresher course in driving from her employer, Mr. Rogers,
who in turn receives a refresher course in Amelia's infuriating literal-mindedness
("Steer straight ahead," said Mr. Rogers. 'No,' said Amelia Bedelia. 'The steer is
behind us'"). Herman Parish is a worthy successor to Peggy Parish: his Amelia
Bedelia possesses the unflappable cheer, helpful spirit, and child-endearing trouble
with homophones of the original, while Mr. Rogers is a thoroughly satisfying butt
of Amelia's unintentional humor. Lynn Sweat's pen-and-watercolor art offers its
usual poker-faced simplicity; the pared-down lines of Amelia, looking like a Pil-
grim gone amok in her dippy flowered bonnet and sober uniform, are the funnier
for their polite restraint. While it's a relief to hear, at the end of the book, that Ms.
Bedelia's automotive ventures are at an end, it's a pleasure to welcome her back
into circulation. DS

**PILKEY, DAV**  *The Moonglow Roll-O-Rama;* written and illus. by Dav Pilkey. Jackson/Orchard, 1995 [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06876-5  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  4-6 yrs

There's some sumptuously expansive painting for this story-in-verse about where
the animals go at night. Furred and feathered alike leave their houses and zoos to
rollerskate in the moonlight until "the magic sweeps all of them/ Over the sky,/ To
moonglow enchanted/ Where animals fly." It's a pretty fancy, and an even prettier
moon, shifting from blue to ivory to yellow to a mysterious pink as it lights the
festivities and dances the animals into the sky. The versifying, however, has little
such beguiling mystery, with verses that sound more than they mean ("There's
magic in moonlight—/ The creatures detect it./ It finds them each night/ For they
merely expect it") and sacrifice grammar for scansion ("They say it gets darkest/
Just before dawn,/ The clouds rolling in/ And the moonlight is gone"). The paint-
ing demonstrates a fetching talent; the words need work. RS
ISBN 1-878093-82-7  $15.95  R  Gr. 3-7

When yellow-tailed cedar waxwings suddenly appear with orange tail feathers, or when pine trees growing under optimum conditions refuse to thrive, scientists begin trying to solve real-life nature mysteries. Quinlan outlines fourteen of these puzzlers, giving them snappy names such as "The Riddle of the Green Tree Islands," and clearly explains the steps scientists take to rule out the different possibilities until they find the right one. In many cases, the solutions involve tiny changes, such as when blue butterflies began disappearing in England because the grass in the meadows grew higher when the rabbit population died, thereby attracting a different kind of ant than the ones which previously had nurtured butterfly eggs. In each situation, Quinlan points out the interconnections in nature which can set off these chain reactions when one link is altered, and she uses several examples where the unexpected is true, such as when a predator is actually responsible for the survival of its prey as a species. She introduces the book by talking about the "land organism," but the definition is completely unclear, and she causes further confusion when she defines "ecology" as the "study of the land organism." Dewey’s pencil drawings add charm and information, but reproduction quality varies, as some pictures are blurry. The sometimes dry subject of ecology is never dull here, and the short chapter format makes it a good choice for readers who like books in smaller bites.  SDL

RANDLE, KRISTEN D.  *The Only Alien on the Planet.* Scholastic, 1995  [272p]
ISBN 0-590-46309-8  $14.95
Reviewed from galley  R  Gr. 6-10

Ginny is fascinated by Smitty Tibbs, a bright senior classmate who lives in a state of profound self-imposed silence and withdrawal. Caulder, Ginny’s outgoing neighbor, easily enlists her help in his bumbling but well-intentioned efforts to reach “the Alien,” whom he has long considered his friend; together they make some progress in guiding Smitty’s first tentative steps into a wider social circle. But when Ginny makes an impetuous move on Smitty, he is so deeply shaken that he finally acknowledges his need for professional help to face his demons—the result of physical and psychological abuse by his older brother. In the hands of a less capable storyteller, Smitty may have miraculously emerged from his reclusive state; instead he recovers by fits and starts, aided by his psychiatrist, his awkward and impatient friends, and his parents, who must overcome their own delusions concerning the older son to save the younger. The credibility of the account goes far toward anchoring the breathless tone of the novel and the heroine’s tendency to over-analyze. This intelligently, if sentimentally, handled tale should appeal to readers who bask in the heat of a good emotional crisis.  EB

RAY, KAREN  *Sleep Song*; illus. by Rhonda Mitchell. Jackson/Orchard, 1995  [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06878-1  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  1-3 yrs

Gentle rhymes and luminous watercolors show a toddler’s playful nighttime ritual, beginning with “Sing song sing song/ listen to the sun yawn.” Playtime comes
first, with the baby bouncing a ball, then running and jumping, before being
swooped up for a bath. The gleeful baby takes off and hides under a table ("Scrunch
low scrunch low/ listen to the search grow") but the truant doesn’t stop beaming
even when captured, washed, rocked, and put in bed. Many of the couplets seem
conceptually forced, as in "Toothbrush toothbrush/ listen to the spout gush" (isn’t
it the water that gushes?), the previous "search" that "grow(s)," or "listen to the
clothes fly," since flying doesn’t make noise, though flapping would. Mitchell’s
paintings exude the sense of love which the parents feel for their baby, and she
catches the mischievous spirit of a toddler very well. Most of the pictures focus
tightly on the baby (who could be either a boy or girl) and the final picture of the
angelically sleeping child seems almost too calculated to draw "Awwws" from par-
ents. SDL

REED, DON C.  *The Kraken.* Boyds Mills, 1995  217p
ISBN 1-56397-216-6  $15.95  Ad Gr. 5-8

Twelve-year-old Tom Piccott belongs to a sturdy Newfoundland fishing family,
and when Tom’s father is blinded and the only merchant who buys the area’s
yearly catch starts cheating the fisherfolk, Tom must work hard to keep his family
from starvation. Reed is good at evoking the ways and atmosphere of an isolated
place in a distant time: the picture of fishing life in 1872 Newfoundland, with the
smallest and weakest often not making it through the winter and the distant mer-
chant controlling everyone’s lives, is vivid (even the Newfoundland dialect, al-
though erratically employed, helps set the scene). The plot here, however, is
formulaic and the evil rich people caricatures; it’s also disappointing that the kraken,
the giant squid featured so tantalizingly on the cover and in the title, makes only
two brief appearances in the book, neither of which offer the Melville-ish sea-
battle that one might expect. It’s still pleasant to follow the adventures of Tom
and his trusty dog Murphy (a Newfoundland, of course) as they try to outwit the
bad guys, save their family, and win Tom his fair maiden. A note on the factual
basis of the book (which admits that many historical events were substantially
rearranged and which also leaves many questions unanswered) and a bibliography
are included. DS

RITTER, LAWRENCE S.  *Leagues Apart: The Men and Times of the Negro Baseball
Leagues*; illus. by Richard Merkin.  Morrow, 1995  [40p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13316-9  $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  6-9 yrs

It seems an unfortunate fact of primary grade life that the age at which kids de-
mand “real” baseball books is somewhat lower than the age level of most available
non-fiction material. Therefore these brief vignettes, which flip along with the
hype of baseball card copy, will be welcome in most collections. More noteworthy
for their flavor than their depth, the portraits feature both the greats who crossed
over to the major leagues after 1947 and others whose careers were spent primarily
in the Negro Leagues ("[Outfielder Oscar Charleston] was often called the black
Ty Cobb, but many thought Ty Cobb should really be called the white Oscar
Charleston."). Ritter carefully tempers tales of feats on the field with the harsher
realities of segregation: "It is tempting to . . . glamorize the Negro League experi-
ence. . . . But these talented men were not in the Negro Leagues by choice."
Bright, grainy oil-pastel caricatures depict the players in an appealing variety of formal poses and "action shots," again reminiscent of collectors' cards. Team this with Golenbock's *Teammates* (BCCB 4/90) for a challenging double-header. EB

**ROUNDS, GLEN**  *Sodd Houses on the Great Plains*; written and illus. by Glen Rounds. Holiday House, 1995  32p  ISBN 0-8234-1162-1  $15.95  Ad  4-7 yrs

In a workmanlike exposition geared to the picture-book set, Rounds describes the construction, advantages, and disadvantages of prairie "soddies." While he does not offer any information or angle that couldn't be found in an encyclopedia article, the plainspoken text works well with the droll, earthy chalk-and-ink pictures ("Uninvited wildlife was another housekeeping problem"—a snake crashes through the roof onto the table), and illustrations capture the vast prairie baked by the sun or scoured by rain and fire. Listeners may ponder where the wood for ridgepoles came from on Rounds' barren plains, and question how these settlers made a living, since no crops appear in the landscape. This work will nonetheless make a useful storytime supplement to other tales of the West. EB


Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 3-6

Wayside School is back in session, and Mrs. Jewls' class is happy to be in their old school again, where everything is logically illogical. After some highly educational adventures with poetry, pet day, and hypnosis, the students are chagrined to discover that Mrs. Jewls is going on maternity leave. Their substitutes include Mr. Gorf, who steals all their voices (Miss Mush, the cafeteria cook, detects him and fells him with a strategically placed pepper pie); sweet Mrs. Drazil, who secretly harbors a dark need to punish unruly students; and finally Miss Nogard, whose gentle demeanor hides a wounded and bitter heart—until Wayside shows her a better way. Each chapter makes for a neatly self-contained story suitable for book-reading aloud, and both discretely and cumulatively they display Sachar's easygoing and unpatronizingly chummy charm. Where many such books (such as Pinkwater's *Mr. Fred*, BCCB 1/95) seem to be improvised, the absurdities of Wayside are crisp and funny, possessing a sense of unity: the staircases where those going up must stay to the right and those going down to the left are replaced by elevators, with the blue one for riding up and the red one down, the pet show is a lyrical expansion of Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First?" routine, and Miss Zarves, who teaches on the cow-infested nineteenth floor, finally gets the respect she deserves. Smart, funny, and widely appealing, this will please old fans and make new Wayside converts. Reviewed from an unillustrated galley. DS


Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024508-5  $20.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024507-7  $19.95  Ad  Gr. 4-7

The latest in a series drawn from material in the collections of the Library of Congress (see also *Cowboys*, BCCB 3/94 and *Pioneers*, 2/94), *Immigrants* focuses upon European immigrants who passed through Ellis Island in the late nineteenth and
early twentieth centuries. This is a smaller scope than the title might suggest—can you really discuss immigrant railroad workers, for instance, without mentioning the Chinese?—but the book is nonetheless a competent survey of a particular epoch and experience. The brief text, while mentioning hardships immigrants faced, has an uplifting tone that becomes a bit relentless, and it’s unfortunate that the photos are unlabeled (and uncredited), flattening the individuals and situations portrayed; still, the variety of period photographs and brief quotes from immigrants make for an open and browsable design that gives faces to common-folk history. There’s no source list or suggested reading, but an index is included. RS

SCHERTLE, ALICE  Maisie; illus. by Lydia Dabcovich. Lothrop, 1995 [32p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-09311-6  $15.93  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-09310-8  $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys  R  5-8 yrs

Maisie’s life, from her beginnings in a makeshift crib in a dresser drawer to her old age surrounded by family, reveals certain values which remain consistent. Maisie spends her childhood running after chickens, playing by the creek, and sharing “her lunch with blue jays and ants, while bumblebees rumbled in the wildflowers and the hot sun dried her clothes.” Even after she marries and moves to a new house, “she planted flowers in back to bring the bees. She planted a sycamore tree in front to bring the birds,” and she teaches her four children that letting the wild creatures “fly away free” is “the best part.” Maisie’s children reward her by returning home with tokens of the places they have been, and with their own children, and then with Maisie’s great-grandchildren. Dabcovich’s paintings vibrate with soft but intense color, and she does a particularly fine job in recreating period detail from Maisie’s ninety-plus years of life and in showing the aging faces and bodies of Maisie and her husband. Though the book is rather quiet for some tastes, lovers of Cooney’s Miss Rumphius will find in Maisie, who is based on the author’s memories of her mother, another person they wish they knew themselves. SDL

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06881-1  $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys  R  4-8 yrs

A freckled blond boy rhapsodizes about the pleasures of the Demolition Derby at the fair. Although his family goes on some rides and they toss a few darts, the real reason they came is to see those old cars lining up: “The fun about the derby is the WHACK and SCREECH and/ WHUMP and HISS and/ THUMP and POP and BANG/ Until there’s only one car left that runs.” While the cars are smashing and crashing, the boy imagines the cars as dinosaurs and also imagines himself at the wheel of a “Mean Machine.” The family roots for the yellow station wagon and there’s a very good reason they’re overjoyed when its driver wins the derby—it’s Dad. Schindler’s gouache paintings are so vivid they almost have sound effects themselves, and the fair comes to life with its eccentric characters (such as the glaring man in the dart booth with darts puncturing his hat and teddy bear) and clouds of steam and smoke in the derby ring. Awkward phrasing occasionally mars the writing, which sometimes rhymes but sometimes doesn’t, but few picture books match the excitement generated by this action-packed story. SDL
Mai is just learning how to embroider the intricate storytelling *pa ’ndau* cloths that Hmong women sell to visiting traders; Grandma hopes that Mai’s blossoming skill will earn them the money needed to leave their refugee camp in Thailand and join cousins in America. Anxious to produce a *pa ’ndau* of her own design, Mai first thinks she has no story to tell in her pictures until Grandma encourages her to stitch her memories into the cloth—a masterpiece that recounts Mai’s parents’ murder, her flight across the Mekong with Grandma, their life in the camp, and her vision of a future in America. Watercolor and gouache paintings, many bordered in *pa ’ndau* motifs, illustrate Mai’s present life in camp, while three double-page photos of her story cloth accompany italicized text relating her past and her hopes. A glossary with pronunciations and background notes on the Hmong people in the Ban Vinai camp introduce this sensitively crafted tale. Pair it with Eve Bunting’s *How Many Days to America* for a broader look at the plight of refugees.

**Sierra, Judy**, comp. *Quests & Spells: Fairy Tales from the European Oral Tradition*. Bob Kaminski Media Arts, 1994 186p
Paper ed. ISBN 0-9636089-2-4 $12.95 R Gr. 5-8

Leaning toward the more complex and romantic examples of European lore, Sierra has adapted eighteen Slavic, Italian, Scandinavian, and Irish fairy tales in a collection that could prove either a resource for storytellers or pleasure reading for young fantasy buffs. With an emphasis on questing heroes and heroines (including several variants of the Dragon-Slayer and Search for the Lost Husband tale types) and on the magic that helps or hinders them, the stories range from the familiar “Tatterhood” of Norway to Sierra’s own translation of a French tale, “The King of the Crows.” Her retellings are polished and her notes both informative and perceptive. Illustrated only with miniature reproductions of early woodcuts that adorn each initial letter of a story, this spaciously formatted paperback is designed to cross the same age barriers as the fairy tales themselves.

**Smith, Maggie** *Counting Our Way to Maine*; written and illus. by Maggie Smith. Kroupa/Orchard, 1995 [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06884-6 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys R 3-6 yrs

In this cheery counting exercise which forges all the way to twenty rather than wimping out at the usual ten or twelve, Smith demonstrates that she knows a thing or two about family vacations. Exactly what landmarks and activities are most memorable? Well, from a kid’s viewpoint, how about sighting five belching black smokestacks, discovering ten fat slugs on the cottage steps, or counting eighteen mosquito bites on an itchy round belly. Densely detailed line-and-watercolor scenes are busy, but not fussy; items to be counted are cleverly hidden in plain sight, challenging viewers to untangle the twelve piled lobster pots, or pick out the sixteen blueberry pies in various states of preparation and consumption. And the fun’s not over until the audience retraces the journey on the endpaper motifs,
testing their memories to recall what they counted at each stop along the way. This one's sure to elicit a "Read it again." EB


Speaking directly to potential young writers, Stanek offers advice on developing characters and plots while avoiding some common pitfalls. She suggests that they buy a pocket-sized notebook before reading further, then gives clues to the many everyday observations and thoughts they could record: "What you see, taste, touch, hear, smell and feel should go in the notebook. It's material." She demystifies literary techniques such as similes, oxymorons, and irony (though some of her examples are weak, as in calling "My dog is a dope" a metaphor), as well as explaining some grammar rules. After each section, Stanek presents plenty of tempting exercises for practice: "You open your closet door and find in there someone or something that scares you to death. Describe it." The book's second half covers writing fiction, spending the most time on character development, with some repetition of material covered earlier; her plotting techniques all rely on first creating characters, then coming up with conflicts for them. She devotes too little space to fictional genres such as historical or science fiction. Though the author cites examples from modern children's literature, she does not include a suggested reading list of either fiction or additional books on writing, which would have been very useful. Still, by maintaining a chatty, respectful, encouraging tone, Stanek instills confidence in her readers and gives them enough concrete ideas to work with that they can start writing right away. SDL

STEVENS, DIANE. Liza's Blue Moon. Greenwillow, 1995 [192p] ISBN 0-688-13542-0 $15.00 Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 5-8

Twelve-year-old Liza struggles through a year fraught with event and difficult realizations: she catches her charming and unreliable father having sex with a neighbor, she's wrongly accused of cheating by a beloved teacher, she's afraid her best friend is drifting away from her, and she's increasingly jealous of her perfect younger sister. Stevens weaves these diverse events into a poignant but plainspoken narrative, with Liza's voice authentic as she tells of her discoveries ("I looked through the skylight next door and saw Ms. Weller's breasts. Then I saw Dad, and I stopped watching for meteors") and her ruminations ("I wanted to tell someone how I felt. But no one had even read my paper. No one knew how important it was"). The characters are flawed and convincing, especially Liza's tense, driven mother and loving but dishonorable father. The book is particularly gifted in the way it depicts a significant event, such as the cheating episode, without making it the sole point of the book (in fact, Liza tells only her sort-of-boyfriend about her teacher's accusation, and she avoids involving her parents by writing a replacement sell-out paper); this makes the tragic, subtly foreshadowed end of the book all the more shocking, but keeps it from completely unbalancing a narrative that is shaped more by the rhythms of Liza's life than by the drama of a particular problem. There aren't many books that combine this kind of perspicacity with this level of accessibility—kids ripe for a good story about the vagaries of friendship, families, and school will find this a cut above the usual offerings. DS
Reviewed from galleys  Ad Gr. 2-4

Twenty-eight poems, most only a handful of lines long, focus on the homey and the ordinary—ice cream trucks and lemonade stands, ladders and bicycles. Although quite different in tone from the deadpan humor of Stevenson’s picture books these brief, descriptive pieces are accessible to the author’s usual clientele. Several poems feature novelty type fonts: “Photo Album” uses gradually fading print to advantage, while the hollow lettering of “Roadside Stand” and the painted stenciling of “Recollection” seem unrelated to the subject matter. Some pleasing images emerge—a ferryboat in the dark, “Showing the stars/ What light can be”; fishermen leaning over the bridge rails, “Maybe they’re flying their kites/ Upside down.” But the bulk of the collection is too gently prosaic to generate and sustain much interest, and Stevenson’s customary interplay of droll cartooning and text is much missed, as his line-and-watercolor sketches function only as thematic markers. 

Reviewed from galleys  M Gr. 9-12

When rebellious fifteen-year-old Tracey gets kicked out of school, her professor father has had enough and is relieved to see his daughter head off to stay with her mother for awhile. Tracey soon tires of her ditzy hairdresser mother, however, and decides to take off for New York to make it on her own. She ends up staying in a seedy hotel and working as a topless dancer, getting to know the stripper scene and finding herself more and more a part of a hard and dangerous world. While this is more focused than Stoehr’s previous book, *Crosses* (BCCB 11/91), and the world she evokes here has a certain power, this book has some of the same problems: the writing lacks the depth that would make Tracey’s situation believable, and the characters are stock and flat. Tracey herself is more interesting for where she is than who she is; while she grows more accustomed to the manipulation, the men, and the drugs, she seems hard and superficial from the very beginning, so that there’s little pathos in her descent (and there’s little suggestion that there is a more complex Tracey underneath the carapace). On the other hand, it’s quite readable, and kids will relish the danger of Tracey’s razor’s-edge existence and thrill to the earthy dialogue (“Stupid prick of a jealous boyfriend. He’s happy to stick his puny dick in her and buy drugs with her money, but then he fucks her up so she can’t earn it”). But in contrast to a book such as Lynch’s *Gypsy Davey* (BCCB 11/94), where squalor and hopelessness are depicted with multi-dimensional understanding, *Weird on the Outside* makes a fringe existence seem simultaneously forbidden and appealing, the ultimate made-for-cable rebellion fantasy.  

TOMLINSON, THERESA  *The Forestwife.* Orchard, 1995 [176p]  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09450-2  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad Gr. 6-9

When Mary de Holt’s uncle commands Mary to enter into an arranged marriage with “an elderly widower, who had rotten black stumps of teeth and smelled of sour ale and saddle grease,” she rebels and runs away to live in the forest. Soon she
is joined by her beloved old nurse, Agnes, and a few other strays—a pregnant local
girl, a bevy of nuns—who find that the cruel economy and class structure of twelfth-
century England have left them without any other place to go. Agnes becomes the
Forestwife, a position of healer and wise woman handed down over the genera-
tions, and she renames Mary “Marian”; Marian feels herself challenged by but
drawn to Agnes’ son, Robert, who, with his fellow outcasts, fights against the op-
pressive landowners who crush the poor. Readers won’t find the traditional Robin
Hood and Maid Marian romance here, as Tomlinson’s story focuses on the com-

cmunity of women and their relationship with nature; Marian, in fact, acknowled-
ges that her destiny as Forestwife prevents her from marrying Robert. Tomlinson
has romanticized the story in a different way: the idealized portrait of the nature-
connected women, although attractive, is sentimental and more New Age than
Middle Ages, the characters are flat and uncomplicatedly good or evil (and there’s
not a bad woman among them), and the plot owes much to melodrama (especially
the revelation of the identity of Marian’s mother). This is slighter than Furlong’s
Wise Child or Robin McKinley’s female-centered heroics, but it’s still an atmo-
spheric read about a durable heroine. DS

WAUGH, SYLVIA Mennyms in the Wilderness. Greenwillow, 1995 [256p]
ISBN 0-688-13820-9 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

The magically alive family of rag dolls introduced in The Mennyms (BCCB 5/94)
have returned, and now they’re faced with a new quandary: their house is sched-
uled for demolition in order to make way for a new highway. On the side of the
angels—er, rag dolls—here are the ghost of Kate Penshaw, the old lady who first
sewed the Mennyms, and her living great-great-nephew Albert Pond, whom Kate’s
ghost charges with responsibility for the Mennyms, since the family can’t of course
perform the public duties necessary to stave off a town-planning disaster. The
wilderness of the title is actually the north of England, where the Mennyms hole
up in Albert’s drafty ancestral home while the fight to save their street goes on in
town; the family is miserable out in the middle of nowhere and misses their old
home terribly, and each family member undergoes his or her own particular trials
until the battle is won and they finally return to their beloved Brocklehurst Grove
house. The plot is rather more scattered than in the original book, with threads
such as Soobie’s kidnaping, Pilbeam’s and Albert’s incipient but doomed romance,
Kate’s ghost, and even the intrusion of Albert himself all worthy of more time than
they get here. The family, however, remains as unsentimentally endearing as ever,
and Waugh retains her gift for engaging particularity and warm humor, allowing
the characters to grow credibly without stretching the fantasy beyond acceptable
bounds. The first book is definitely the place to start, but kids who enjoyed it will
want to follow the clan on this new adventure. DS

WHITE, ELLEN EMERSON The Road Home. Scholastic, 1995 [464p]
ISBN 0-590-46737-9 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7 up

Rebecca Phillips (introduced in a paperback series by White writing as “Zack
Emerson”) may have shaped up into a crack triage nurse, but she takes no satisfac-
tion in her hard-won expertise; the ceaseless stream of mangled soldiers into OR
and her own gnawing guilt over having killed an enemy boy have convinced her
that enlistment for Vietnam duty was the most ill-considered act of her life. When her tour ends she returns to acquaintances who deplore her involvement in the war, parents who treat her like fragile glassware, and fellow veterans with no advice to offer. She embarks on an odyssey to seek out her almost-lover Michael, who lost a leg and was discharged months before, and who now feels emotionally unable to resume their relationship. Rebecca’s joltingly abrupt transition from hospital chaos to genteel stateside comfort is deftly captured, and the novel’s bitter, wisecracking tone provides the right accompaniment for Rebecca’s disillusionment. While the relative ease with which the lovers rekindle the spark of their in-country fling ultimately betrays the believable portrait of two damaged vets which White has so painstakingly painted, teen readers will forgive this tonal shift and applaud the happy—if unearned—ending. EB

**Willis, Terri** *St. Lawrence River and Seaway.* Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1995 64p (Wonders of the World)
ISBN 0-8114-6370-2 $16.98 Ad Gr. 4-8

This is a competent and comprehensive history of the St. Lawrence Seaway, beginning with the geological changes that created the St. Lawrence River, navigating through early settlement and exploration to the great system of locks and canals begun in the nineteenth century, and continuing through the present. Technical explanations are thorough and clear, and while the text has that all-too-familiar series-book drone and design, the information therein could lend itself to a confluence of curricular settings, bringing science, history and geography together for a focus upon a great North American achievement. Photos are plentiful; there are a reading list and detailed index. RS

**Wolf, Bernard** *Homeless;* written and illus. with photographs by Bernard Wolf. Orchard, 1995 48p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06886-2 $16.95 R Gr. 3-5

Third-grader Mikey chronicles the experiences of his family in the “public shelter system for the homeless”—particularly their current residence in New York’s Henry Street Settlement’s rent-free, temporary apartments. Public assistance checks, food stamps, subsidized lunches, and Medicaid are normal referents in Mikey’s world, and his anxiety over what will become of his family when their time at the settlement is up (a question left unresolved at the conclusion of the text) is quietly harrowing. Crisp color photos of the threadbare but “squeaky clean” apartment, long lines at the check-cashing office, and expectant young faces at the charity Christmas party will speak as eloquently as the narration does to an audience of kids more fortunate than Mikey. Wolf’s focus on a two-parent family of indeterminate racial background effectively defuses any tendency to stereotype welfare recipients. EB


These big guides to books for children and young adults are designed to be useful to young readers themselves as well as to the librarians and teachers who serve them. *Children* includes almost 2000 annotations, arranged alphabetically by author, for fiction for children in grades one through eight; *Young Adults* includes almost 1500 annotations, with the additional limitation of only including books published in 1988-1992. Each annotation includes basic bibliographic information, suggested age range, subject(s) and genre, names and descriptions of major characters, time period, locale(s), plot summary, citations of selected reviews, awards received, "Other books by the author," and "Other books you might like." Phew—that's a lot, and most of the information is also accessible from the ten indexes that complete each guide. Although the information is copious, it is not complete. In *Children*, especially, the citations of awards are scattershot and, in both guides, references to other books by the same author are only partial bibliographies (while the preface to *Children* suggests that the question "What has Maurice Sendak written recently?" can be answered via the Author Index, the only Sendak book found there is *Higglety, Pigglety Pop*). The "other books you might like" suggestions can be tenuous—would a fan of Paula Fox's *One-Eyed Cat* really pick Bill Wallace's *Snot Stew* as further reading? The "other books" suggestions in *Young Adults* will refer readers back to titles published in years other than 1988-1992; still, it seems a little pointless to devote a full annotation to a paperback shocker such as Richie Cusick's *Vampire*, and not give one to, say, Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*. Although both guides feature lots of good books and will enable librarians and others some unusual access points to many of those books (only main annotations are fully indexed) their value as reference tools is less well-defined. RS


Khorana begins this bibliography with a substantial introduction, tracing the history of Africa in children's books and analyzing how stereotypes of the past have in many cases given way to new clichés rather than new understanding. The annotations are broken up into six geographic sections: General Books (covering the continent as a whole), North Africa, West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa; within each geographic section the entries are separated by genre (Fiction, Poetry, Informational Books, etc.) and then listed alphabetically by author. Annotations offer summaries and occasional evaluations, generally positive, of the books, listing author, title, series title, publisher, length, and grade level. A list of distributors, author, title, illustrator, and subject indexes, and an extensive bibliography for further research are included. DS
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.

Adoption-fiction: Adler
African Americans: Bial; Coles; Ritter
AIDS-fiction: Fox
Animals-poetry: Pilkey
Art and artists-fiction: Henkes
Art: Baker; Miller, C.
Asian Americans-fiction: Adler
Babies-stories: Ray
Baseball: Ritter
Bears-stories: Briggs
BEDTIME STORIES: Miyamoto; Ray
Bible-stories: MacGill-Callahan
Birds: McMillan
Boarding schools-fiction: Bunting
Brothers-fiction: Grifalconi
Cars-stories: Seymour
Cities-poetry: Adoff
City life: Hinojosa
Civil Rights Movement: Coles
Clubs-fiction: Hurwitz
Colors: Hoban
CONCEPT BOOKS: Burns; Hoban; Intrater; Leedy; Smith
COUNTING BOOKS: Smith
Creative writing: Janeczko; Stanek
Crime and criminals-fiction:
  Banks; Hinojosa
Current events: Banks; Ganeri
Death-fiction: Fox; Stevens
Dogs-fiction: Henkes; Miller, S.
Dolls-fiction: Waugh
Ecology: Baker; McMillan
Emotional problems-fiction:
  Franklin; Randle; Stoehr
Ethiopia-folklore: Day
EVERYDAY LIFE STORIES:
  Hurwitz
Family life-fiction: Adler; Stevens
Family life-stories: Schertle
FANTASY: Waugh
Fathers and daughters-fiction:
  Franklin; Henkes; Stevens
Fathers and sons-fiction: Fox
Fathers and sons-stories:
  Miyamoto; Seymour
FOLKTALES AND
FAIRYTALES: Day; Hort; Sierra
Food and eating: Dahl
Foster care-fiction: Grifalconi
FUNNY STORIES: Sachar
Gangs: Hinojosa
Genealogy: Leedy
Geography: Kraske; Willis
Giants-stories: Mollel
Grandfathers-stories: Legge
Grandmothers-stories: Schertle; Shea
Greece-folklore: Hort
Guidance: Hinojosa
HISTORICAL FICTION:
  Bunting; Case; Lester; Manley; Reed; Tomlinson; White
History, Canada: Willis
History, U.S.: Bial; Ritter; Rounds; Sandler; Willis
History: Miller, C.
Homelessness: Wolf
Homosexuality-fiction: Fox
Horses-fiction: Haas
Iceland: McMillan
Illness-fiction: Hurwitz
Immigration: Sandler
Island life: Dean
Israel-fiction: Banks
Jews-fiction: Banks
Language arts: Parish
Laos-stories: Shea
Latinos-fiction: Covington
Latinos: Garza
Lions-stories: MacGill-Callahan
Literature, English: Lester
LOVE STORIES: Bunting;
Covington; Hill; Lester; White
Maine: Dean
Mathematics: Burns; Hoban
Middle Ages-fiction: Tomlinson
Native Americans-poetry: Begay
Nature study: Baker; McMillan;
Quinlan
Newfoundland-fiction: Reed
Northern Ireland-fiction: Bunting
Nurses-fiction: White
Oceanography: Kraske
Physical education: Ritter
Pioneer life: Rounds
POETRY: Adoff; Begay; Dr.
Seuss; Evans; Janeczko; Miller,
C.; Pilkey; Ray; Stevenson
Prejudice-fiction: Case; Lester
Reading aloud: Adoff; Kraske;
Sachar
Reading, beginning: Miller, S.;
Parish
Reading, family: Boelts; Intrater;
Leedy; Miyamoto; Schertle;
Smith
Reading, reluctant: Dahl; Dexter;
Hinojosa; Sachar; Stoehr
Refugees-stories: Shea
Runaways-fiction: Stoehr
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Sisters-stories: Lillie
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Theater-fiction: Hill
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Vietnam War: Denenberg
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Weather: Evans
West, the: Rounds
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