PRODUCTION NOTE

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— Starred, School Library Journal

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SIMON & SCHUSTER BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS
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Zoom
illustrated by Istvan Banyai

Zoom's concept is fairly simple: each illustration draws back a level from the previously depicted scene, so that more of the picture is revealed and the situation turns out to be different than the viewer had expected. In other words, the first picture is of a big spiky red thing, but the next illustration backs off to show a rooster with a spiky red comb; the next picture backs off to show the rooster being observed by two figures; and so on, frame by frame, until the figures are revealed to be toys on a table, the table of toys turns out to be the back cover of a catalogue, the boy holding the catalogue turns out to be on a ship, which turns out to be pictured in an advertisement on a bus, which turns out to be...well, you get the drift.

The book has no text, except for a few signs in the illustrations, and that's just as well because words would interrupt the delicious swoop from perspective to perspective. In fact, the verso pages are all glossy black, serving almost as stage curtains in their dramatic severance of one act from another. Yet the illustrations retain a visual as well as narrative interconnectedness: the simplicity of Banyai's straightforward line work, with its restrained detail, combines with planes of cheerful and uncomplicated (but never babyish) colors and a recurrent visual motif of spatterwork to further link these disparate images together.

There have been various books and visual brain-teasers that have relied on short-term use of this conceit, asking you to guess, from a rough, pitted red surface, that you're really viewing a strawberry in a way you never have before. What makes Zoom unusual is its relentless expansion: sixty-four pages later, we're still broadening our view of the original scene, which has in the meantime evolved into a television show, a stamp, and a view through an airplane window in addition to the initial shifts from barnyard to toy to catalogue to ad.

Such cumulation has an enduring appeal, and kids will enjoy closing the book and trying to recall the various stages through which the pictures have passed. Conceptually, however, this is also reminiscent of that favorite youthful method of writing out location: name, address, city, county, state, country, continent, hemisphere, planet, solar system, galaxy, THE UNIVERSE. The book is playful, of course; postage stamps don't really contain pictures of television shows containing pictures of advertisements containing pictures of catalogues, and there's occasionally a poker-faced humor in the images themselves (as in the Native American cowboy watching television outside his trailer). But there's a strategic moment—see if the kids can find it—when the pictures don't just draw back but actually change: up until this point, each succeeding picture has altered the concept of the previous image but retained an exact, if smaller, version of that picture, so that the ocean liner on the sea is the same drawing but we now know it to be a placard of a
ship rather than a ship itself. But once the letter gets to Solomon Island, Banyai actually allows the scene’s details to alter—we actually see the letter carrier turn and leave the island in his boat—while the concept remains unaltered: we simply draw back in increments from this final “real” scene, so that the trick now is that we are viewing what we think we’re viewing. The zoom-out takes us past the airplane looking down on the island, through the clouds, until we are looking down on our own planet which eventually shrinks down to a dot, so that we finally see a world, as Blake suggested, in a grain of sand.

Of course, *Horton Hears a Who* also involved a world in a grain of sand, or to be specific a dust speck, and the Magic School Bus has zoomed kids in and out of some micro- and macro-cosmic places; youngsters might enjoy using such books as a referent before plunging into *Zoom*. Older kids, however, will appreciate the book’s kinship with Wiesner and Van Allsburg in its suggestion that things are not what they seem, or sometimes even what they are. And none of those books equal *Zoom*’s achievement in making plot and perspective into not just a game, but into the story itself.

*Deborah Stevenson, Assistant Editor*

**NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Ada, Alma Flor** *Where the Flame Trees Bloom*; illus. by Antonio Martorell. Atheneum, 1994 75p
ISBN 0-689-31900-2 $14.95 Ad Gr. 3-5

Ada explains in an introduction to these family memories that her family lived in Cuba, spending their evenings telling the stories Ada retells here (she adds a few paragraphs to provide background explanations as needed). Most of the stories either reveal qualities that Ada admires in her relatives, as in the story about her grandmother encouraging her school pupils to talk to a lonely-looking man, or they tell about turning points in lives, as when her uncle realizes the importance of his teaching job when he mistakenly believes that his pupils have been killed by lightning. Ada skillfully depicts the country of her childhood with its coconuts, flame trees, and heat, and her writing evokes the warmth and character of her family. However, the stories are mostly low-key, quiet explorations of character and values (the one with a family friend dangling beneath a train being a notable exception), and they generally stay true to life in having no grand finale. The descriptive passages may turn readers with a taste for more action away, and the ink wash drawings, while in keeping with the tone of the stories, don’t add much child appeal. Reading the book to young listeners, though, could prompt them to share moments from their own family stories. SDL

**Aitkens, Maggi** *Kerry, a Teenage Mother*; illus. with photographs by Rob Levine. Lerner, 1994 48p
ISBN 0-8225-2556-9 $14.21 R Gr. 5-10

With a text that will be accessible to preteens as well as older readers, this book is a straightforward and sympathetic portrait of a girl who became a mother a long
time before she planned to. There's no preaching, but there's no glamorizing, either, as Aitkens follows Kerry through her routines of caring for baby Vanessa with strong support from her family and boyfriend but without much money, and without any help from Vanessa's father, who is in prison for selling drugs: "It's kind of funny. You meet a guy and think you know him, and then you end up finding out that he's totally different from what you thought." The author provides a good balance between the particulars of Kerry's life and the general situations that most teen mothers face, and Levine's candid black-and-white photos reinforce the picture of Kerry as a determined young woman and loving mother; they also bless the account with a reality that will tell readers that, yes, indeed, it could happen to you and it won't be fun, however cute the baby may be. (One does hope, although the text never says, that Kerry is now using the contraception she failed to employ before.) A reading list includes nonfiction surveys, parenting manuals, and Susan Kuklin's excellent What Do I Do Now (BCCB 11/91), which is a more comprehensive followup that could show readers some other choices that pregnant teens have made. RS

**ARNOSKY, JIM** *I See Animals Hiding;* written and illus. by Jim Arnosky. Scholastic, 1995 [32p]
ISBN 0-590-48143-6 $12.95
Reviewed from galleys

These cleverly camouflaged animals may be easy for young readers or lap-sitters to find, but when viewing the book in a group or from a distance, children can experience for themselves how difficult it can be to spot a well-camouflaged beast. Woodcocks, with feathers of browns, grays, golds and roses, "spend much of their time on the woodland floor [and] have patterns and colors like those of dry leaves." Deer are shown both in summer, and in winter when they have changed into their "grayer winter coats that better match the gray and brown trunks of leafless trees," and Arnosky paints a herd of twenty deer behind trees for children to count. Snowshoe rabbits, owls, snakes, and bitterns are some of the other animals hiding in their variety of ways, all depicted in Arnosky's graceful watercolors. He includes some of the less familiar ways animals hide, such as the bittern turning its head up to imitate a cattail, and his tone is always gently observant, neither anthropomorphizing nor patronizing. This would be an excellent choice for encouraging observation of animal traits and an appreciation for the beauty found in different natural settings. SDL

**BANYAI, ISTVAN** *Zoom;* illus. by Istvan Banyai. Viking, 1995 [64p]
Reviewed from galleys

See this month's Big Picture, p. 189.

ISBN 0-7167-6568-3 $15.95

When the best doctors in the land cannot help the Rajah's ailing elephants, Chandra, the Elephant Bather, discovers and cures the infection. A grateful Rajah offers her a choice of rewards, but Chandra asks only that he give her overtaxed neighbors
the amount of rice amassed by doubling the grains placed on each consecutive square of his chessboard, an amount, the Rajah discovers to his dismay, which eventually would have covered India "knee deep in rice." Barry is clearly more at home in math than in folklore: no sources are offered, his retelling only begins to sparkle as the rice piles up on the board, and the tale's moral—the high price of shortsightedness and greed—is considerably softened in the rosy conclusion. Perrone's jewel-toned illustrations feature some decidedly unappealing elephants and a stiff-jointed, perpetually grinning Chandra. But the purpose of this retelling is to explicate a mathematical concept, and the concluding illustration of a chessboard with symbols representing the results of each doubling (256 bowls = 1 wheelbarrow; 256 wheelbarrows = 1 festival hall) is clear and effective. The youngest readers will easily get the point; truly ambitious older students may even take the book's appended challenge to compute the volume of 256 World Trade Centers or one Mt. Kilimanjaro. EB


Woe to the subjects of the restive King Gordo if the regnant hippo doesn't get his forty winks from one to three each afternoon, and just lately a steady "hic . . . hic . . . hic" from the bowels of the castle is wearing the royal temper dangerously thin. But even after the hiccups are discovered and banished to the Cold and Snowy Land, the king cannot sleep—until the sorrowful, lute-plucking Phoebe (who is also, fortuitously, Gerald's daughter) provides the tuneful remedy for her liege's insomnia and negotiates for her father's return. Stevenson's ever-expressive critters provide the right touch of mock melodrama, and the hiccups, snores, and a bleary-eyed and pajama-clad Gordo are sure to win the approbation of the story hour set. EB


Four Abenaki men paddle to the fog-enshrouded island of the reclusive god-hero Gluskabe to make wishes. Impressed by their determination, Gluskabe hands each a bag with his granted wish inside, but warns them not to open the bags until they reach home. The man who desired possessions peeks inside, and his canoe instantly sinks under the weight of his treasures; likewise the man who wished to be taller is transformed into a pine tree and the man who craved immortality becomes a boulder. Only the man who wanted to become an able hunter for his tribe obeys Gluskabe's command, and he is rewarded with "the voices of the animals themselves, telling him about their ways." The reader may excuse the didacticism for, as the opening note explains, "these stories are strong teaching stories." However, Bruchac observes the three transformations with a coldly clinical eye, ignoring the possibilities for irony, or even horror, that the tale bountifully offers. Shrades's pastels capture the mystic haze that surrounds Gluskabe's island; the adventurers are neatly individuated, but rigidly posed. Bruchac states that he has researched at least four written versions of the tale, but he does not provide citations. EB
BUFFIE, MARGARET  Someone Else’s Ghost. Scholastic, 1995  [256p]
ISBN 0-590-46922-3  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 7-10

Jess’ impetuous father has moved her and her mother from Winnipeg to a dude ranch in the wilds of Alberta after the death of Jess’ brother; Jess’ grieving mother, sunk into depression, thinks she encounters the ghost of her dead son but in fact is seeing the ghost of Ian, a boy who died on the ranch years ago. This is a promising premise for a ghost story, but Buffie impedes the drama of the tale with subplots—Jess’ possible romance with the ranch’s young hand, Ben, and Ben’s abuse at the hands of his grandfather—and with the interspersed sections of Ian’s diary, which slow the pace down considerably. Still, the characters, especially Jess’s determinedly optimistic and often heartless father, are vividly drawn and the ghostly adventures intriguing. Young readers will appreciate Jess’ confusion at supernatural and familial events and will warm to her strength and honesty.  DS

BURNS, KHEPRA  Black Stars in Orbit: NASA’s African American Astronauts; by Khephra Burns and William Miles. Gulliver/Harcourt, 1995  72p  illus. with photographs
Trade ed. ISBN 0-15-200432-7  $18.95
Paper ed. ISBN 0-15-200276-6  $8.95  Ad  Gr. 4-7

Written by the son of a Tuskegee Airman and based on a film documentary, Black Stars in Orbit is less a collection of dry biographical facts on African-American astronauts than a social and political history of the treatment of blacks by NASA. Early black pilots are mentioned very briefly, while more time is spent on the fighter pilots of World War II, the Tuskegee Airmen. Moving on to the treatment of African Americans at NASA, a description follows of the frustrating career of Captain Edward J. Dwight, Jr., who claims Colonel Charles Yeager tried many times to force him to resign using threats and racial insults; it should be noted that Yeager’s side of the story is not presented. The next African American enrolled in the training program was Major Robert H. Lawrence, who “faced less overt discrimination . . . than Captain Dwight,” but was tragically killed in a crash while the pilot survived: “Many people feel that the investigation into the crash never gave a satisfactory explanation why one man’s chute opened and the other man’s did not.” The rest of the book covers the seemingly easier careers of later astronauts such as Guion Bluford and Mae Jemison, and includes the story of how Nichelle Nichols, Star Trek’s Lieutenant Uhura, helped recruit blacks and women for astronaut training. The writing is powerful and occasionally even lyrical; however, while the authors’ sense of outrage is communicated well, the book is missing any notes which might help substantiate their hints, for instance, of a conspiracy leading to Major Lawrence’s death. There is an index; a bibliography and a directory for further information would also have been welcome.  SDL

CHAPMAN, CHERYL  Snow on Snow on Snow; illus. by Synthia Saint James. Dial, 1994  32p

A young boy wakes on a winter morning, eats his breakfast of “food next to food next to food,” puts on “clothes over clothes over clothes,” and heads out into the
snowy world with his furry dog, Clancy. The snow is piled so high that after one trip down the hill on the sled, "down down down the slopes, spinning out at the end," Clancy disappears from sight. The boy and his friends look behind trees and bushes, but can't find him: "Tears on tears on tears froze my face." Of course, the story ends happily "ever after ever after ever after." Chapman's spare and poetic text, which she notes was inspired by Christina Rossetti's poem "In the Bleak Midwinter," combines very well with Saint James' strong, dramatic oil paintings, which use bold colors and crisp outlines, leaving faces blank. The thick paint lends texture to the flat perspective of the pictures, which work well with one exception of a group of bushes that, seen from above, look more like grass. Right down to the African-American hero, both the theme and the artwork are reminiscent of Ezra Jack Keats' *The Snowy Day*, but the two books are different enough to be complements rather than duplicates. SDL

**CHOCOLATE, DEBBI**  *Elizabeth's Wish.*  Just Us, 1994  104p  
Paper ed. ISBN 0-940975-45-9  $3.95  Ad  Gr. 4-7

In this second installment in the NEATE™ series (see also BCCB 3/93), talented singer Elizabeth, beset by laryngitis and a sprained ankle, is still determined to win a citywide musical contest sponsored by a popular radio station. At the same time, she and her friends are engaged in an argument about whether rock or rap will be featured at their school dance and are also raising money for the dance by selling African clothing and accessories. It's a busy little story, and a subplot about Elizabeth's friend Tayesha being taunted for her fair skin (her mother is white) never quite gets its due and is wrapped up in a desultory fashion. Still, the book has all the things series fiction fans like, and the conclusion—Elizabeth wins the contest and donates her $2,500 prize to a homeless shelter—is both wish-fulfilling and highminded at the same time. RS

**CHORAO, KAY**  *Number One Number Fun;*  written and illus. by Kay Chorao. Holiday House, 1995  [32p]  ISBN 0-8234-1142-7  $15.95  Reviewed from galleys  NR  4-7 yrs

Chorao's characteristically endearing and sprightly illustrations are not enough to redeem this haphazard approach to math. Ringmaster Rat poses questions in (dubious) rhyme: "Four chickens on one side . . . four on the other,/ how many chickens . . . balance together?" He is holding a sign with the addition problem written out, "4 + 4 = ?" while on the other side a mouse dangles from a balloon with "8" printed on it. Confusion abounds as Chorao shows the chickens on the top half of the page, and again on the bottom half, so that many children will—correctly—count 16 chickens on the page. The subtraction problems have the additional clutter of animals falling out of the pictures, providing funny touches but muddling the counting work. A wagon, carrying a variety of critters for counting, has animals not for counting confusingly built into it, and on one page the question "How many mice and cats wearing hats?" is answered with the number 9 even though only the four cats are wearing hats. None of the problems seems related to the others, and only the toppling pyramid of pigs shows numbers in action. This circus stars some adorable animals, but the number "fun" quickly turns to number frustration. SDL
We may use plumbing every day, but histories of plumbing are few and far between, and here Penny Colman attempts to address that deficit. She examines how various civilizations, ranging from ancient Mesopotamia through Renaissance Europe to contemporary America, have dealt with waste removal, sanitation, and water management, and she describes archeological finds, quotes from letters, and includes photographs of various plumbing arrangements and facilities to enhance her account. The book never quite becomes the lively look at an unsung part of culture that it could be: the writing is sometimes disjointed and choppy, the pictures are occasionally tangential, and the tone is determinedly matter-of-fact and restrained, with little leavening humor allowed to creep in. (It's also too bad that there's no picture of a contemporary men's urinal, since that's an aspect of plumbing that young female readers are likely to find more mysterious and interesting than the habits of the Sumerians.) It's still a useful survey of a little-chronicled aspect of human existence, and the breadth of its scope combines with some piquant detail (astronaut potty habits, for example) that will intrigue young readers. There are no source notes for quotes, but a bibliography is provided; an index is also included. DS


In a dark and magical variant of From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, Katy and Josh run away from the grim institution where they've been living since their mothers became ill and seek a new home at Alton Towers, a vast amusement park centered on a garden of hidden nooks and pathways. They soon discover that there are other homeless children hiding in the park, as well as a silent bag lady who turns out to be more than she seems. She enlists Katy and Josh in a classic struggle between the King, an old man whose music keeps the world safe, and his adversary, a young bully determined to take the King's magic harp and rule the alternate world where the King shelters the lost and abandoned children he has called throughout time. While there's no stinting on the spooky atmosphere, the book's blend of high-fantasy theme and realistic setting is easier to get into than the more intricate and deliberate world-building of Susan Cooper or Ursula Le Guin; the steady focus on Katy and Josh coupled with the equally steady suspense will bring in genre fans of several persuasions: fantasy, mystery, adventure. RS


"Wanted: Children's Librarian. Sunrise Elementary School seeks a thick-skinne professional to help reduce inventory damage and loss." This tiny want ad, adrift in the white space of the opening page, may lure a librarian or two with the promise of a funny book about their home turf, but will it interest their young patrons? Deedy's story of the fiery dragon (Miss Lotta Scales) who takes on the job is likeliest to appeal to the media specialist who will recognize the issues raised: the
the correlation between modeled reading and student grades, book conservation vs. circulation, student "ownership" of their library, and the thorny dilemma of fictionalized biographies. Limp wordplays and tautly stretched metaphors are overdone, and the splashy airbrushed artwork provides the tale with more sight gags than illumination. Little Molly Brickmeyer softens up the old reptile, and while the transformed Miss Lotty, "librarian and storyteller," may now be professionally correct, most listeners will agree she was more interesting when she breathed fire.

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021292-6 $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021291-8 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-6

While not as detailed, comprehensive, or well-documented as Heifetz' *When Blue Meant Yellow*, reviewed below, Dewey's etymology of colors is lots more fun to look at, with each page splashed with lively watercolor depictions of the color sources under discussion and with an index that includes a color swath for each color named. The organization is primarily topical, with sections on "Colors from the Garden," "Spicy Colors," "Jewel-like Colors," etc., and all the basic shades get some play (although the use throughout of *grey* for *gray* may be confusing for American readers). Heifetz's book will be more useful for reference and research; Dewey's is for a younger audience and will more readily attract browsers.

**Donahue, John** *An Island Far from Home*. Carolrhoda, 1995 179p
(Adventures in Time)
ISBN 0-87614-859-3 $14.96 Ad Gr. 4-6

Ever since his father was killed at Fredericksburg, Joshua Loring has hoped that the war will last long enough for him to reach enlistment age and get even with the Rebs. But when his Uncle Robert, a commanding officer at Fort Warren, encourages Joshua to correspond with a Confederate prisoner about Josh's age, the vengeful Yankee boy begins to understand the common threads that draw soldiers into opposing sides of war. This Civil War novel deals in ideas rather than in battles, and Joshua's adamant rejection of the enemy, which gradually gives way to curiosity and finally to understanding, is realistically paced. But the tale is ultimately flawed by an ending involving Joshua's break-in to Fort Warren and last-second rescue by Uncle Robert, an abrupt genre switch to action-adventure which seems as gratuitous as it is improbable.

**Duncan, Alice Faye** *The National Civil Rights Museum Celebrates Everyday People*; illus. with photographs by J. Gerard Smith. BridgeWater, 1995 64p
ISBN 0-8167-3502-6 $16.95 R Gr. 4-6

The Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, site of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., has been transformed into the National Civil Rights Museum. Author Duncan takes us on a tour of the museum's exhibits, which cover the years from 1954 to 1968. Her theme, "a powerful movement . . . conducted by ordinary men and women with everyday lives," is repeated throughout, focusing less on individuals than on group protests. The author explains clearly the historical background; she recreates the sometimes terrifying moments but em-
phasizes the inspiring aspects of the protests. The book combines historical photographs with pictures (sometimes stiffly posed) of school-age visitors of many races visiting the museum and standing among the life-size plaster statues. The crisp contemporary photographs of the children, which allow readers to see themselves in the situation and capture their interest, generally precede the often frightening and intense historical photographs; one example is children seated at a lunch counter with statues of protesters, followed by a picture of the real protesters with white men dumping salt, sugar and mustard over their heads. While subject headings would have been helpful in breaking up the text, the book's clean design with red accents keeps the mood upbeat. A chronology, list of further reading, and bibliography are included.

FRIEDMAN, AILEEN  The King's Commissioners; illus. by Susan Guevara. Scholastic, 1995  [33p]
ISBN 0-590-48989-5  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  6-9 yrs

When the King has appointed so many commissioners to handle special details, such as the Commissioner for Flat Tires and the Commissioner for Mismatched Socks, that he has lost track of them, he decides to organize his adjutants, or "at least to count them." He tells his two advisors to help him count the commissioners as they come through the door, and even though the Princess bursts in and makes him lose his count, he knows that his advisors will still have the answer. However, one advisor has made tally marks broken up into pairs while the other has counted in groups of five, and it takes the Princess to explain to her father (by counting the Commissioners in lines of ten) how these different ways of counting work. While not coming up with a dazzling plot, Friedman has managed to create the bones of a story with some funny details, and she smoothly integrates the math into the story. Guevara's exuberant acrylic paintings add enormously to the feeling that this is supposed to be fun. Her freewheeling use of perspective, her amusing uniforms for the Commissioners (who each wears a beanie with a symbol of his or her job on top), and her lively princess in a great cowgirl outfit will convince any nonbelievers that this math book, anyway, is okay. Friedman concludes with several pages for adults on teaching math to children.

Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 6-9

Lois Duncan meets William Sleator in a tale that pits seven high-school juniors against their futures as designed by a virtual reality program, Argus, that sends each of them to their tenth high-school reunion. The projected futures are drawn from information each student has given in an interview, which in one case leads to a wry moment when class genius Barbara Flores, who told her interviewer she was interested in working with designer genes, discovers she's become a famous creator of sportswear. Graham Hork, a struggling, sober child of alcoholics, finds himself drunk at the reunion, and with a wife who has seen him this way many times before. Each of the subjects is upset to discover that popular Sandy, whose turn is to be last, is remembered at the reunion as the nice girl who died in her junior year. Something about the program is not right, and the students become determined to find out what before Sandy takes her turn. Why the kids believe
Sandy will actually die if she goes into Argus is not clear (in fact, all the computer business is too fuzzy), and the denouement in general is not as skillfully projected as the preceding build-up, but the mix of players is well-differentiated through effective dialogue and the suspense judiciously leavened with an authentic measure of high school camaraderie, competition, and romance. RS


A young boy comes up with a variety of reasons that a Stegosaurus would be a handy pet to have around. He suggests that with a Stegosaurus, he could gallop to the North Pole to fill Santa in on anything he left off his Christmas list, and “who wouldn’t give a special treat to a little Stegosaurus ringing their doorbell on Halloween when a BIG STEGOSAURUS was with him?” A Stegosaurus could eat his “yucky” vegetables, and take his class to the museum if his teacher (in a concern that seems unlikely in a small child) “forgot to reserve the school bus.” Though Grambling supplies a great pair of twists at the end, the bulk of her story is repetitive and has been more entertainingly covered in previous books, most notably in Hoff’s Danny and the Dinosaur and Most’s If the Dinosaurs Came Back. Lewis’ illustrations vary in quality, as for instance on the page with a comically quizzical Santa, an eager dinosaur, and a blank-eyed, inexpressive hero. Despite the book’s blandness, it could, with its rhythmic text, be a useful addition to story hours with lots of young dinosaur lovers. SDL


Most readers will not recognize the name Manabozho, but they already know this legendary Chippewa hero under his more familiar moniker, Hiawatha. In these three tales, each of which can be enjoyed independently, Manabozho assures the survival of his people: he saves them from the cold by stealing fire from a magician; he delivers them from winter starvation by discovering wild rice; he restores the balance of nature by rescuing the world’s last, wilting rose. Retellings are based on a variety of carefully credited sources; Greene also notes her own modifications of season, shape-shifting, and magical words. A deep respect for nature emerges through the Manabozho legend, and the environmental message is clear (“You all knew that the roses were in trouble, but none of you tried to help”). A brief foreword comments on the hero’s ancestry, powers, and legacies; several large, handsome woodcuts embellish each tale. EB


Since the land where he lives is being cleared and settled, Rundi Jaguarundi decides to head north to the Rio Bravo in search of a forest canopy. Coati Coati-mundi agrees that this is a good plan, and they spread the word to the other animals to meet and discuss it in the Great Pineapple Field of the Fallen Timber. Kit Fox, Howler Monkey, and several other rare or endangered animals join them,
but the other animals decide against heading north. Big Brown Bat advises them that adapting to the changing environment is the best way, while Jaguar roars his defiance, saying, “I’ll never flee, nor change my ways.” Once Rundi and Coati have crossed the river, they are disappointed to find more settlers, but, being too tired to continue, decide to follow Big Brown Bat’s advice and adapt. There is little action or conflict in this book, and the language is slow and stately, but children often feel so deeply for the plight of animals that the dignified pace won’t discourage their interest. Cooper’s paintings are darkly mysterious, with animal faces gleaming out from the background of shadowy plants and rocks. His cats are particularly successfully drawn, although the occasionally odd use of perspective makes other animals difficult to see in their entirety. This might be a little too quiet for story hour but could prove a boon for primary-grades discussion of animal endangerment in the face of diminishing resources, and a closing section gives information on the animals shown in the story. SDL

HEIFETZ, JEANNE  
ISBN 0-8050-3178-2 $14.95 R Gr. 5 up

Unlike Dewey’s Naming Colors, reviewed above, this is a reference book, but, like the best of those, it is fun to browse, and Heifetz’s writing and thinking are as lively as Dewey’s artwork. Unfortunately, illustrations here are limited to a glossy one-page supplement of teensy color swatches, but each is coded to the text and will give readers at least a glimpse of what color they’re reading about. Heifetz’s arrangement is alphabetical, save for the fact that each letter-section begins with an out-of-order feature, “turquoise,” for example, which saves us from beginning with the more matter-of-factly defined “tan” but which may be irritating for someone trying to look something up quickly. The stories are great—“Turquoise” begins with an explanation of how the stone came to Europe from the Middle East via Turkey, but then moves into a crosscultural consideration of the conceptual differences between green and blue and concludes with a Dineh origin myth. “Dapple Gray” leads into a discussion of colors named for animals; the shorter entries are often equally intriguing, such as that for “Government Wall Green”: “A color standardized by the federal government’s General Services Administration for use in official buildings.” Each entry includes the date of first known use; an introduction gets you thinking about the whole color and language business; an extensive bibliographic essay and source notes for quotations complete the volume. RS

HIGHWATER, JAMAKE  
Rama: A Legend; illus. by Kelli Glancey. Holt, 1994 226p
ISBN 0-8050-3052-2 $15.95 Ad Gr. 7-12

Jamake Highwater, well known for his Native-American-themed books, turns to Indian mythology in his newest work. It starts with a jolt: “IT WAS A DEAD BODY.” When Prince Rama uncovers the body of a woman, he falls into a trance; he wakes after seeing a vision of a beautiful woman, Sita, whom he eventually marries. When she is kidnapped by the demon Ravana, Rama and his brother launch a quest to retrieve her, helped by monkeys, bears, the great bird Sampathi, and even the ocean itself. The final battle is a grisly one indeed: “From the severed necks of the demons there came a spout of green slime that splattered into the air and rained down upon the princely brothers.” Unfortunately, most young readers
will probably not know that in the Ramayana (Highwater's source material according to his note at the end), Rama is an incarnation of the god Vishnu—he mostly seems like a lovesick prince here. However, the central problem with the book is Highwater's florid writing style; adjective piles upon adjective, similes and metaphors abound. Sometimes it works, as when Rama's mother speaks of her son: "Rama is the river that flows from me. He is the life that I will live when I can live no more. He is the sunshine of ten thousand days I shall never see..." Sometimes it doesn't: "She was a long river of life gently arching its back as it flowed endlessly through sunlit meadows." Overall, Highwater has attempted to combine too many sources (along with the Ramayana he incorporates, as he explains, elements of fairy tales, his travels in Bali, and even a somewhat jarring note from The Wizard of Oz) into a story which loses much of its adventure under the weight of the excess verbiage. SDL


Nick comes home from kindergarten feeling puzzled: a child in his room has the same name as his father, and also, like his father, has black hair and glasses. When he asks his father, "He's not you, is he?" his father blithely replies, "Oh, yes, that's me." Nick doesn't entirely believe him, but can't quite trip his dad up with any of the questions he asks, and his mom plays along. At Parents' Night at school, Nick's dad goes around claiming each of Little David's things as his own, and Nick "was feeling very strange. He didn't want his dad to be Little David." When Little David and his parents arrive, Nick gets his revenge in a very funny conclusion. Hinton's flair for writing with immediacy and with snappy, realistic dialogue carries over to the picture-book form. However, adults are likely to find the book far funnier than children will, appreciating such jokes as when Nick quizzes his dad with "What did Kelsey do in class today?" and his mom replies, "I hope it wasn't kiss Little David." Children are also unlikely to fathom such ruminations as "It's just hard to play pirates on the playground when you're big. It's hard to even want to play pirates on the playground." Daniel's illustrations do match the story's tone perfectly, using intense colors (featuring Nick's bright red hair) and lots of white space to create people jumping with vitality. Hinton and Daniel combine to create an original and entertaining family, but while adults may laugh out loud, children may be left wondering what's so funny. SDL


Subject is occluded by rhetoric in this poetic rhapsody (which unfortunately begins with a misspelled word) about how the restoration of wolf populations can bring back "a harmony" lost when Europeans conquered America. While the book could have been a welcome ecological complement to more straightforward informational titles about wolves, such as Seymour Simon's Wolves (BCCB 11/93), there is an almost complete lack of pertinent facts such as how many wolves are left and where they are; readers not already familiar with the animal may also be led to believe that wolves only exist in North America. Folklore uneasily jostles with natural history when Hirschi tells of Pacific Northwest Indian legends about how wolves were originally orca whales that crawled ashore and that "soon spread coast
to coast," and throughout the text there is more neo-Indian nostalgia for the (un-
documented) old ways than there are concrete suggestions for the future. While a
mention of the wolf as a “key predator” is made in an afterword, the concept is not
made clear in the text, which makes some statements perplexing: “When wolves
return, deer will run free. Moose will give birth to long-legged calves.” Wolf or no
wolf, moose will give birth to long-legged calves, and the book similarly sacrifices
sense for rapturous effusion throughout. Color photos of wolves and prey are
plentiful if tangential; a directory of wolf-preservation groups is appended. RS

HOYT-GOLDSMITH, DIANE  Apache Rodeo; illus. with photographs by Lawrence
Migdale. Holiday House, 1995  [32p]
ISBN 0-8234-1164-8  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 4-6

Hoyt-Goldsmith, author of Cherokee Summer (BCCB 4/93) etc., here turns her
attention to the Apache of the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in Whiteriver,
Arizona. Using ten-year-old Felecita La Rose as its focus and narrator, the book
summarizes Apache history, customs, and daily life, and then goes on to its feature
event: the rodeo. The author mentions the rodeo’s practical applications (“The
riding and roping that the cowboys do to manage the White Mountain tribe’s
large herd of beef cattle are also the skills they use in the rodeo”) but emphasizes
the training and fun of competition, as Felecita and her brothers practice barrel
racing, calf roping, and calf riding, and her father competes in roping events and in
bull riding. Felecita’s narration occasionally tends toward the flatly encyclopedic
(and is never convincing as the voice of a ten-year-old), and the book’s layout, with
competing print of photo captions and of text, occasionally combined with dis-
tracting decorated borders, is uninspired; the title is also a bit misleading, since the
rodeo action disappointingly doesn’t really start until more than halfway through
the book. It’s still a warm and attractive picture of a life many kids will find
desirable, and one that they wouldn’t have thought about without this kind of
introduction. The explanation of the rodeo (a piece of Americana rarely dealt with
in children’s literature) is clear, and the pictures of daily life and rodeo action are
sharp and vivid, if somewhat predictable. A glossary, index, and map showing the
location of the reservation are included. DS

JANNEY, REBECCA PRICE  The Trail of Fear. Word, 1994  119p  (The Heather
Reed Mystery Series)
Paper ed. ISBN 0-8499-3631-4  $4.99  Ad  Gr. 4-8

“Now, tell me all about this mystery, Kelly!” Heather Reed exclaimed, her hazel
eyes aglow.” From the first sentence, we know we’re in Nancy Drew territory, and
Heather proves herself an able and plucky sleuth as she seeks to track down who’s
behind the plot to sabotage and shut down Camp Mohican, a Poconos camp run
by the grandparents of Heather’s friend Kelly. Because there’s little characteriza-
tion here, it can be difficult to keep everybody sorted out, but there’s plenty of
action as Heather and her friends close in on the “scoundrels” who, having heard
of Heather’s detecting abilities, are determined to—at the least—scare her off.
The book, seventh in a series, is published by a Christian press, but that’s evi-
denced only by the occasional mention of prayer and, in one cliffhanging chapter
ending, the strategic placement of a comma: “God, help me!” she cried as the
canoe plunged over the falls.” RS
JENNINGS, PAUL  Undone!: More Mad Endings. Viking, 1995  [112p]  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 4-7  

Jennings, Australian author of offbeat collections such as Unreal and Uncanny (BCCB 9/91), here returns with eight more short stories. The book's subtitle may emphasize endings but Jennings in fact excels at beginnings that will hook young readers: "A person who eats someone else is called a cannibal. But what are you called if you drink someone?"— from "You Be the Judge"; "I, Adam Hill, agree to stand on the Wollaston Bridge at four o'clock and pull down my pants. I will then flash a moonie at Mr. Bellow, the school principal"— from "Moonies." The tales that follow these openings generally fulfill their eccentric promise well, presenting bat-boys, insect transformations, artistically painted buttocks, cod-liver-oil revenge, mind-reading cows—in short, an inventive collection of creatures and concepts that will entertain fans of the bizarre. The generous inclusion of irreverence, broad physical humor, creepy crawlies, and gross details makes these stories appealing to kids who find most short stories oversubtle; these tales tend to be better developed than those in his previous books, too, so that readers will relish each tale's competent progress to a fitting and usually ironic end. DS  

KARAS, G. BRIAN  I Know an Old Lady; illus. by G. Brian Karas. Scholastic, 1995  [32p]  
ISBN 0-590-46575-9  $13.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  4-8 yrs  

From the cover art featuring a cutlery-wielding villainess pursuing terrified animals across a field, one immediately knows that Karas will wrest every ounce of demented absurdity from this familiar cumulative ditty. A spiky-haired boy with binoculars, camera and notepad spies on the carnivorous crone from the apartment across the street as she tosses a series of progressively larger animals down the hatch and waxes a bit rounder, a little greener, and decidedly more maniacal with each course. Karas' acrylic and pencil cartoonish pictures range from droll understatement (a meek-looking neighbor ponders his dog's empty collar with only the mildest surprise) to comic crudity (the bilious, bloated old lady savors the last few inches of cow tail). For the uninitiated, melody and lyrics have graciously been appended. Hilarious and revolting—how could a kid ask for more? EB  

KEHRET, PEG  Danger at the Fair. Cobblehill, 1995  [144p]  
Reviewed from galleys  
Ad  Gr. 4-7  

"I'm going to scream and scream and scream," declares Corey, anticipating the fun he's planning to have on the thrill rides at the fair, but little does he know that laryngitis will not only keep him from screaming, it won't allow him to tell anybody about the pickpocket team he sees working the crowd—a hokey plot device that allows this novel to go on somewhat longer than it really should. Corey and his big sister, Ellen (also featured in Terror at the Zoo, BCCB 2/92, and Horror at the Haunted House), have quite a day at the fair, what with the pickpockets, their murderous accomplice, and The Great Sybil, a fortuneteller who enables Ellen to get in touch with the spirits via automatic writing and thus discover: that Corey is in big trouble. The spirits talk like Spirits ("It is for you to know that the smaller one..."
and the thugs talk like Thugs ("You don't give up easy, do you, girlie?"), and the plotting is equally formulaic, but the code words here are 
undemanding and action-packed—reluctant readers will have a good time. RS

Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-59828-0 $15.00

After Mrs. Gray has lost her second husband to a cat, she resolves that although "trins" (like twins only three) are usually considered unlucky, her newborn mice Thomas, Richard, and Henry will become "guerrilla fighters in the cause of mousedom . . . dedicated to waging unceasing war" on the two housecats. She trains them to be speedy, to avoid mousetraps, and to work together, because "unity is strength." The white cat is quickly driven away, but the black cat and the grouchy farmer are more difficult to deal with. Although their house has a strictly divided class structure, the well-bred Attic trins make friends with a lowly Cellarmouse who becomes their new stepfather, and they begin a soccer league with team members from the whole house, using the farmer's glass eye as a ball. King-Smith writes with his usual light touch and humor, with the farmer's eye adding a rather macabre touch; the references to getting drunk on hard cider, also referred to as "scrumpy," may puzzle younger readers. Due to the brevity of the tale, the trins don't have many chances to demonstrate how "terrible" they can be, but the large print and breezy story make this a good choice for the short-chapter crowd and for reading aloud. SDL

KLASS, SHEILA SOLOMON  *Next Stop: Nowhere* Scholastic, 1995 [176p]
ISBN 0-590-46686-0 $14.95  Ad Gr. 7-10

Fourteen-year-old Beth Converse is resentful when her flighty mother takes off with her third husband to Italy, leaving Beth to stay—for an indeterminate amount of time—with her ceramicist father in small-town Vermont. Beth misses New York and, even more, her gentle Russian immigrant boyfriend, Josef. Beth's difficult father has a jaundiced view of Beth's New York life, his ex-wife, the market in which he attempts to sell his art, and the world generally, and Beth finds herself intermittently battling and making peace with the father she is finally getting to know. Klass has a sympathetic understanding of the burdens of divided loyalty and the strain of relating to a non-custodial parent ("You make complicated arrangements to get together with a distant parent and he takes you out. It's a guilt trip for him. You pretend. He pretends. Ho, ho, ho. We're family having fun"), and she's straightforward about the anger Beth feels as a result of these pressures. The characterizations of both parents is oversimplified almost to the point of caricature, however (as is the depiction of her father's customers): the portrait of Beth's privileged and rootless mother hasn't the complexity that would give it depth or the satire that would give it bite, Beth's father appears pretentious rather than principled, and Beth's sudden nicknaming of him (she dubs him "Pablo") seems arbitrary. Readers will enjoy Beth's tender romance with the nearly ideal Josef, however, and they'll empathize with her feelings of powerlessness and her struggle to understand her flawed but loving parents. DS

Following up her journalistic portraits of kids in New York's Chinatown and in a Latino neighborhood in Southern California (BCCB 5/94), Krull here looks at life in Milwaukee's Indian community and in the African-American towns on the Georgia Sea Islands.  Both books are crisply designed and written, focusing minority experience through the daily life of a few ten- to twelve-year-old children, always acknowledging the fluid borders between cultural specifics and the larger American society.  Thirza and Shawnee are both students at the Milwaukee Indian Community School, which, along with providing instruction in the usual run of subjects, gives Indian kids from many tribes a cultural context for their studies: Shawnee, for example, constructs a science-fair experiment to see whether a hogan or a tepee better retains heat.  Travis and Martha receive daily lessons in black history from their families, their school, and most pervasively the rich historic legacy of the freed slaves on their island of St. Helena who built their own communities after the Civil War.  Sharp color photographs show the kids in a variety of ordinary diversions (going to the mall, riding bikes) as well as participating in ethnic traditions; each book is a blend of the culturally specific and the everyday that will draw in the reader who wants to read about "kids like me."  An up-to-date reading list and an index concludes each title.  RS


In a series of six books set at Parkside Elementary School, Patricia Lakin covers some of the jobs adults do at school: principal, teacher, physical education instructor, bus driver, and, reviewed here, nurse and custodian.  In The Mystery Illness, Asian-American nurse Margaret Yoo's day includes writing a newsletter to parents about chicken pox, bandaging a scraped knee while encouraging the child about her spelling test, stopping a nosebleed, giving a dose of medicine, and informally diagnosing a child's allergy to nuts.  In Trash and Treasure, custodian Earl Mason performs a variety of jobs from finding lost objects to raising the flag to making a presentation to the school children on recycling.  The series presents a self-consciously utopian society, with each member of the school team a different ethnic group, and a similarly mixed student body (the girl in the wheelchair is the one to find a missing locket because "in my chair, I'm eye level with it").  The custodian in particular is painted as saintly in his interaction with the children, and his role seems more administrative than hands-on; the final page lists his duties, which include "supervise daily cleaning," implying that custodians do not do the cleaning themselves.  Children may also be unfamiliar with the term "custodian," which in many schools has been replaced by the building "engineer."  The bland, sing-songy texts are paired with cartoonish pictures where each face looks unaccountably surprised, and while the series may help children to perceive the adults in their schools as sympathetic people, it does not do much to clarify what their jobs are or how they qualified for them.  SDL
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8288-4  $19.95  R Gr. 7-10

Edward S. Curtis’ exhaustive twenty-volume photographic study of Native Americans took nearly thirty years to complete and offers some of the most memorable portraits of American Indian life and famous Indian leaders. Curtis, Lawlor explains, was a midwestern farm boy who headed west with his family at the end of the nineteenth century and tried to make his fortune in photography, eventually falling into the huge project that was to be the focus of his life; Lawlor weaves his biography around his stunning images of a way of life disappearing even then, and now all but gone. Curtis is not, in himself, a particularly magnetic figure, and his work takes precedence in this book much as it seemed to in his life; adults may warm more quickly than kids to his story. Like other interesting books about recorders of history (Sullivan’s Mathew Brady, BCCB 11/94, or Sufrin’s George Catlin, 12/91), however, this not only captures a piece of the American past but raises interesting and discussable questions about its transmission. Lawlor emphasizes the importance of Curtis’ timing—he encountered most tribes before they were unwilling to talk to white outsiders but not long after they had been decimated by European encroachments and military—and kids reading the book will get a real sense of the steady erosion of the once all-encompassing civilizations. Curtis’ photographs, really the raison d’etre of the book, are near-mesmerizing in their mute narrative power and haunting portrayals; they’re quite a contrast to the watercolor Indians who populate so many children’s books, and the cream-colored pages and brown print of the book give the images an appropriately dignified setting. Appendices describing Curtis’ twenty-volume work and listing the source of the photographs are included; there are also a biography and an index. DS


It’s the twenty-first century, and the world is in trouble, with haves and have-nots being sharply divided and natural resources dwindling. In Cardiff, Wales, Hugh and his friends try to stretch their parents’ government allowances by doing odd jobs and picking up tips for carrying bags at the railroad station. Chance keeps bringing Hugh together with Helena, the wealthy, protected daughter of a colliery manager; when Helena tells Hugh that there is employment in her father’s new mine, he and his friends head to Ynysceiber only to find that no jobs exist and that they must now struggle to make ends meet in a strange and hostile place, under an impersonal and soul-crushing system. The main stories here—Hugh’s determination to find a life worth living in a world where that’s nearly impossible, Helena’s gradual awareness of the inequities of the world and the price others must pay for her privilege, and Hugh’s and Helena’s romance—aren’t always subtly written but are consistently intriguing and blend together well. Lawrence’s futuristic world is credibly similar to contemporary life; she’s simply depicted the expansion of current problems, and her treatment of bleak and despairing poverty has a distinctly Dickensian ring to it. The closeness between Hugh and his friends (and his pain when his decisions interfere with that closeness) and the detailed immediacy of their situation makes this book an unusual thing: a highly readable political novel. DS

Animals visit a pyramid-shaped restaurant hosted by a cat, who explains the United States Department of Agriculture's food pyramid. Aside from the animals lend humor, as when a frog hopes that "their flies are fresh," but for the most part this is a straightforward discussion of the food groups. The bottom of the pyramid is where the most servings in a nutritious diet should come from, and Leedy also gives it the most pages, devoting one spread to the different types of breads, one to cereals and rice, and one to pastas. Next come the vegetables, then fruit, then milk and cheese, where, oddly, a frog is shown bottle-feeding a tadpole who is saying "Mmm, I love milk Mom!" The next spread shows a rather uninteresting selection of meats, fish, and poultry (and virtually identical poached and fried eggs), then nuts and dried beans, and finally fats, oils, and sweets. Leedy then discusses how to count servings, but never clarifies how to count foods which cross categories, such as ice cream, which is in both the milk and the fats/sweets categories. Children will get a good basic overview of the food groups and how to apply the knowledge to their own diets, but Leedy's approach overall could use some spice. SDL


The simplest of text accompanies these hand-tinted photographs of fourteen fruits. The first page says merely "Fruit..." The next spread opens to show a photograph of a single peach on the left. There are two photographs on the right, one showing peach trees, and a smaller one partially inset showing a peach attached to a branch. On the left appears the word "Peach" and on the right, "Peach orchard." Each spread has the same format, with a single fruit isolated, sometimes cut open, and each photograph captures the beauty of that particular fruit in well-composed shots. Lember's hand-tinting sometimes makes the fruit appear almost three-dimensional, while in the shots of trees and bushes she has given the backgrounds mysterious, almost spooky lighting. As a book of lovely photographs, this works very well. However, as a book to satisfy the curiosity of children wanting to know more about how fruits grow, it is not entirely successful. In some pictures, the fruit on the trees or vines is difficult to distinguish, especially with the smaller fruits and berries. It also might have been helpful to state the type of plant each fruit grows on (that grapes grow on vines, for instance, or blueberries on bushes), rather than just where they are grown ("cranberry bog," "raspberry field," etc.). The final page concludes, "Fruit grows in many places," but the places don't in fact look very different, and one gets no sense of which parts of the world different fruits might grow in. This may be the child's equivalent of a coffee table book with alluring photographs but little information. SDL


Rooster faithfully performs his job of waking up the farmer to feed the animals
until the day that a tiny bee flies up his beak as he's beginning to crow, "scaring the cock-a-doodle-doo right out of him." Rooster looks everywhere the other animals suggest around the farm, but in each place, "no cock-a-doodle-doo was there." It isn't until a fox sneaks into the chicken coop that Rooster finds his crow and scares the fox away, and "all was right with the world." While this ending will not come as a surprise to any grownup, it's a sprightly story with a repeated chorus, making it an immediate storyhour favorite. Wickstrom's jaunty illustrations in pen and ink, watercolor, and gouache, show a sunny, cheerful farmyard filled with the usual suspects, in sizes large enough for everyone in a group to see. SDL


As "first light melts/ like butter on pancakes" across the pillow of a sleeping tot, the kitchen drags itself to life ("Papa's kettle whistles/ Mama's bacon sizzles/ slippers whisper/ across the kitchen floor") promising the boy another great day on the farm. First there's the bunny-slippered pajama dance to be done, and a pancake feast to be eaten; there are haystacks to be tumbled in and barnyard animals to be chased. With a jolt of where-has-the-day-gone surprise, a luminous orange sunset and the farmhouse bell herald "Time to wash up!" And after supper it's back to bed, as the moon-washed house dozes off "and the spoons sleep nestled/ in the kitchen drawers." Each mixed-media composition celebrates the play of light that marks the hours—the even purple before dawn, the shocking burst of morning yellow that batters its way through the windows, the puddles of cold white moonlight on the bedroom floor. Squiggly line, scribbly crayon, and smudgy watercolor on a variety of textured papers capture the naïve ebullience of a little guy who clearly knows how to seize the day. EB


Anthologist Loughery has taken the subtitular "international" seriously; this collection is divided into five regional sections, "South America and the Caribbean," "North America," "Europe and Russia," "Africa and the Middle East," and "Asia and the South Pacific," with five or six contemporary stories from various countries representing each region. While well-known authors such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Margaret Drabble, and Yukio Mishima are represented, most names here will be unfamiliar to American readers and many stories appear in translation. The stories generally focus on young protagonists, and the writing is imaginative and stylistic throughout. It's also continually dense, subtle, and allusive to a degree that makes this book a daunting challenge for most teen readers, and the intensity of the pieces—and the often adult themes—is rarely lightened by humor, so ultimately this is an adult collection or a classroom resource rather than a volume youngsters will read through for enjoyment. This is, however, a useful complement to bland, dated, and limited short-story collections; individual entries such as Thomas King's eloquent "Borders" would make for provocative high-school readalouds or assignments. Biographical notes for the authors are appended. DS
LYTTLE, RICHARD B. *Mark Twain: The Man and His Adventures.* Atheneum, 1994 231p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-689-31712-3 $15.95  R Gr. 7-10

Mark Twain is arguably the quintessential American author, and Lyttle, biographer of Ernest Hemingway (BCCB 6/92) and others, here chronicles Twain's quintessentially American life. The book's subtitle is right—it was an adventurous life: Lyttle documents Twain's work as a riverboat "cub" (novice pilot), time as a speculator and newspaperman in Nevada's Gold Country and in California, his trip to the Sandwich Islands, his first voyage to Europe, and then his comparatively settled existence as a husband, father, and popular if not always totally respectable writer. The biographer gives time to the many tragedies of Twain's life and the sorrows he suffered, but also conveys the freshness of his humor through a multitude of quotes and anecdotes (although Lyttle's paraphrases of pranks or jokes sometimes fall a bit flat). Kids awed by literary lions will find this a pleasantly demystifying read—Lyttle paints Twain as rewarding if occasionally irascible company and a smartass to boot—and it may awaken their interest in some of his less ubiquitous works, such as his travel writing. The source notes are disappointingly scanty; two bibliographies appear, one of Twain's work and one of secondary works as well as Twainiana such as letters; an index is included. Black-and-white photographs appear throughout.  DS

 McCULLY, EMILY ARNOLD  *Little Kit or, The Industrious Flea Circus Girl;* written and illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Dial, 1995 [32p]
Reviewed from galleys  R  5-8 yrs

Kit is a young girl who sells flowers to keep herself alive in Victorian London. When "Professor" Malefetta comes offering "a bed, meals, a few pence for hard work—and the company of artists," she leaps at the chance, taking advantage of the fact that Malefetta thinks she is a boy. At first she is disappointed that the "artists" turn out to be costumed fleas, but they amaze her with their act, and she begins to sympathize with the "poor, exhausted little creatures" and eventually runs away, taking the fleas with her. Readers will need to take this for the Victorian melodrama it is and to accept melodramatic conventions in plot and pictures to properly enjoy it. McCully's good people have lovely faces and beautiful hair, and the evil characters have twisted faces and missing teeth. For heroes and villains alike, her watercolors are lushly glowing; pastel highlights burnish Kit's golden hair. Each illustration holds meticulous historical detail without ever being busy. McCully's notes on the verso of the title page give background information on flea circuses, which one might otherwise be tempted to disbelieve. This makes a fine companion to McCully's previous costume dramas such as the Caldecott winner *Mirette on the High Wire.* SDL

MCKENZIE, ELLEN KINDT  *Under the Bridge.* Holt, 1994 140p
ISBN 0-8050-3398-X $14.95  R Gr. 4-7

Life has become difficult for fifth-grader Ritchie Willis. His problems include a mother who has been taken away during the night, a stern father more interested in the war news from Europe than in answering questions, a seriously ill younger sister, and a bully at school. His life begins to brighten, however, when his sister
Rosie gets a letter, supposedly from the troll who lives under the bridge behind their house. As the letter-writer tells of the troll's predicaments, Ritchie and Rosie become involved in his story, which gets them through their mother's absence. Thad Grailowsky provides another bright spot; a musician who lives next door, he encourages Ritchie's piano playing and listens sympathetically. McKenzie weaves her threads together elegantly, giving the troll's story a certain poignancy and giving Ritchie dignity without losing his childlike outlook as he narrates the book. She creates the World War II setting vividly without overexplanation, and though one plot thread is clichéd, as Ritchie and the class bully realize what the life of the other is like, it is nonetheless effective. Ritchie, Rosie, Thad, and the troll provide rich material for class discussion as well as individual contemplation. SDL


Any word fancier who's ever attempted to make an ABC story using each consecutive letter of the alphabet knows it just ain't as easy as it looks. Mahurin has devised a coherent, albeit stretched, tale of a cat who, after guzzling the milk in all the glasses on the table ("A Big Cat Drank Every Full Glass. Hiccup!"), drinks the milk carton dry too. Guiltily fleeing the dining room wreckage, the exhausted Jeremy Kooloo hits the sack for the night, "Tired Under Very Warm XYZzzz." Each double-page painting, dominated by warm, burnished reds and browns, is generously framed by off-white space; oversized-type text marches across the top. This cat is stiffly drafted and rather limited in his expressions considering the breadth of his exploits; nonetheless, each scene is so closely coordinated with the simple text that emergent readers will lap up the context clues. Sneak this one away from the pre-schoolers to encourage older children to try an alphabet story of their own.

EB


Mazer, capable anthologist of America Street (BCCB 11/93), returns with another collection of varied authors, who here offer autobiographical accounts of their youth. "A multicultural anthology" this certainly is: authors included are Hisaye Yamamoto ("The Enormous Piano"), who grew up in America speaking Japanese; Ved Mehta ("Sound-Shadows of the New World"), who arrived from India at fifteen, struggling with the English language and with a new country's reaction to his blindness; Luis J. Rodriguez ("Always Running"), who tells how his family's California addresses fluctuated with its fortunes. While many of the perceptions included in this anthology are adult despite the youthful ages of the protagonists (and some pieces may therefore simply seem to young readers like adult reminiscence), the stories here are more keyed to teen reading levels than are those in Loughery's collection, reviewed above. The best stories bridge the gap between adult recall and youthful immediacy and would make intriguing readalouds as well as class assignments: Naomi Shihab Nye's "Thank You in Arabic" tells the story of her family's intense and vivid year in Palestine getting to know their roots;
Willie Ruff, in “A Call to Assembly,” relates in musical prose (“I was a slave to my ear and in love with my shackles”) his experience at a job that taught him bitter truths of bigotry and showed him beauty in the form of sign language. A helpful paragraph of explanation and authorial biography precedes each story. DS

MYERS, EDWARD  Forri the Baker; illus. by Alexi Natchev. Dial, 1995  [32p]
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

The people of Ettai at first enjoy the amazing variety of breads Forri the baker comes up with, but eventually they get bored: “Pen bread. . . . Who wants to write with bread?” Forri’s bakery goes out of business, but when neighboring barbarians invade with their dazzling array of weapons, Forri’s bread and his ingenuity save the town. Myers writes with a storyteller’s flair, and this folk-like story is an appealing original tale. Forri is the quintessential creative genius who is unappreciated by those around him, and the story overall has an optimistic feeling even in Forri’s darkest hours. Natchev’s watercolor and colored-pencil illustrations show a fictitious medieval European town made of stone, with lots of turrets and brightly colored roofing. Forri and the townsfolk have comically long, pink noses and wide eyes, while the barbarians are thickly whiskered and heavily armed but look so impassive that they aren’t frightening. The party at the end of the book is particularly satisfying both in words and pictures as the townspeople feast on Forri’s newest creations. SDL


Induk Pahk’s widowed mother is determined that, against the advice of powerful male relatives, her daughter will become an educated woman. Through her mother’s sacrifices, Induk, passing as a young boy, enters an all-male school, later attends a mission school where the eight-year-old lives independently as the school’s sole boarder, and finally completes her studies to become a teacher. Readers will be intrigued by cultural details of life in turn-of-the-century Korea—boys wear pink, girls spend an entire class day pickling cabbage, and Woolworth’s lead pencils are exotic imports. However, characters remain one-dimensional, narration is often simplistic (“I was glad. It was always nice when a baby was born, especially a boy. This baby had been a boy. I was glad they were so happy”), and the tale’s main draw—the girl-disguised-as-boy storyline—is only a fleeting chapter long. Younger or less skillful readers may enjoy this fact-based tale, but most upper middle graders are likely to prefer Watkins’ faster-paced Korean adventures (So Far from the Bamboo Grove, BCCB 6/86, etc.). A historical epilogue, an appendix on Korean birth signs, and a bibliography are included. EB

NIMMO, JENNY  Rainbow and Mr. Zed. Dutton, 1994 192p
ISBN 0-525-45150-1 $14.99 R Gr. 6-9

The continuation of Ultramarine (see BCCB 7/92) finds Nell (Rainbow) in early adolescence, painfully aware of her own social backwardness and envious of older brother Ned’s chance to sail off on an animal rescue mission with their mysterious, adored father. Nell stoically accepts an invitation to visit with distant relatives in
hope that "the timorous bits of her would be snipped away," but she is lured to an island by the reclusive Mr. Zed—Nell’s Uncle Zebedee, an evil enchanter who, in his lust for power, has plundered from the Furthest Ocean crystals which hold the secret to life’s origins. Zebedee is certain that Nell’s kelpie heritage will enable her to interpret the tiny voices of the crystals, and he holds his niece virtually hostage while awaiting both her acquiescence and a final confrontation with his childhood enemy—Nell’s father. If the delicately ambiguous relationship between fantasy and reality that graces Ultramarine is missing from the sequel, Nimmo more than compensates with a coming-of-age tale of equal delicacy. Nell’s self-doubt and self-discoveries are subtle, complex, and thoroughly believable as she tests the strength of her absent father’s love, even while tearfully admitting her bond to Zebedee, who “saw me as someone special, someone he wanted with him—always.” EB


Micah loves flannel Bunny Rabbit so much he shares his applesauce, chocolate milk, and adventures with her until she can hardly be seen beneath the mess. Mother helps Micah give her a bath, scrubbing at her stains, but decrees afterward that “Bunny Rabbit is a mess... It is time, Micah, to buy a new rabbit.” Such callousness seems unlikely, but Micah accompanies his mother to the toy store, tucking Bunny Rabbit inside his coat and whispering “I love you, Bunny Rabbit.” Finally sensitive to her son’s feelings, Mother ends up buying him a milkshake instead. Oppenheimm tells this universal preschool tale with simplicity and understanding, albeit somewhat flatly, and makes the point that children associate rejecting a dirty stuffed animal with a parent rejecting the child for being messy. While Moore depicts both Mother and Micah with greeting-card sweetness and little personality, her predominant tone is playful, with colored pencil and watercolor streaking color and swirling patterns into backgrounds and borders. SDL


Todd Tobin’s family has recently abandoned a suburb with escalating school violence for a safe haven in picture-perfect Walden Woods. Todd and his adopted sister, Diana, ease right into tenth-grade social respectability in their new high school, and romance even looms on Todd’s horizon in the shape of little sister Marnie’s babysitter, the fetching Laurel Kellerman. When the Tobins’ outdoor Halloween display is vandalized and Marnie’s behavior becomes increasingly bizarre, it is clear that all is not well in this “last safe place” and that Laurel and her Satan-fearing church congregation are at the root of the trouble. Todd’s chatty narration is at once tense and witty, and Peck dashes off some great lines with his customary aplomb (“My technique with girls needs work.” “Work? It needs government funding”). But the tautly drawn tale which makes such a promising start eventually devolves into a pile of fragmented subplots which include parental alcoholism, book-banning, child neglect, homophobia, and physical abuse; antagonists are facilely dismissed as troubled or unbalanced. Each issue raised deserves fuller treatment than it receives, and readers may well feel short-changed. EB
PENNER, LUCILLE RECHT  
*A Native American Feast.* Macmillan, 1994 99p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-02-770902-7 $14.95  R  Gr. 4-7

In the tradition of her *Eating the Plates: A Pilgrim Book of Food and Manners* (BCCB 9/91), Penner offers this history/cookbook of Native American foods. She organizes her chapters by how the food is obtained (agriculture, for “A Great Mystery” and “Treasure”; hunting for “The Hunt”) or how or when it is prepared (“Feast and Famine” for, obviously, feast and famine). It’s not always immediately clear why a particular recipe turns up in a particular chapter, but it’s a tasty, occasionally exotic collection: as Penner says, “some Native American dishes . . . may seem strange to many of us today. Yet others, like baked beans, succotash, and roast turkey, are familiar.” She includes information about and recipes from tribes from the east and west, north and south, and many concoctions promise to be highly kid-appealing adventures (the purple “Wild Grape Dumplings,” for example, or “Popped Wild Rice”). The book suggests more easily available alternatives for many unusual ingredients (although sometimes this would Europeanize a recipe beyond interest, as when it suggests replacing buffalo steaks with, simply, steak). Big print and a variety of illustrations—photographs, old engravings, sketches—increase the volume’s accessibility; a bibliography and index are included. Food is a great medium for an entree into cultural understanding, and this will sharpen many young readers’ appetite for both snacks and lore. DS

PETERS, LISA WESTBERG  
Reviewed from galleys

In these three easy-to-read summer stories, Caroline Rose and her younger sister Ivy share small adventures revolving around the hayloft in their barn. In the first, they attempt to make the family cat, Hebby, go for a walk on a leash, and in the second, they look for ways to escape the heat. The last story has the two girls spending the night in the hayloft with the bats and Hebby. Parents and farm activity are nowhere in sight, and though urban children may relish these outdoor stories, neither Caroline Rose nor Ivy exhibit much personality. Plum’s illustrations, somewhat reminiscent of Trina Schart Hyman’s, combine watercolor, dye, gouache, and pencil for intense colors and some pleasing lighting effects; the two children look energetic and playful, and even the inanimate objects seem lively almost to the point of busyness. Overwhelmed by the illustrations, the stories seem pale, but libraries needing more easy readers or female main characters will find this a useful addition. SDL

PLEASANT COMPANY  

The American Girls phenomenon rolls triumphantly on—now all the Girls have their own cookbooks so that young aficionados (aficionadas?) can cook along with their heroines. Each cookbook has clearly demarcated sections: a quick overview
of cooking in the era described ("Cooking in the Civil War"; "Cooking on the Frontier"), a description of kitchens from that time and place, a note on table settings—i.e., whether dishes matched or were even used, and a double spread of "Tips for Young Cooks"; these are followed by the recipes (divided into "Breakfast," "Dinner," and "Favorite Foods") and by suggestions for a theme party. These are clearly and admittedly cookbooks for cooking with adults, but they're ones that parents might not mind getting into. Recipes are fairly straightforward, with clear step-by-step instructions and marginal diagrams; the books are peppered throughout with chatty bits of information about food supply ("Plantation owners sometimes allowed enslaved people to have small vegetable gardens"), utensils, and pastimes that connect each book more firmly to its era. While the recipes occasionally fudge realism in favor of palatability (Addy's dishes, for instance, include an unlikely amount of expensive cream), the books generally demonstrate a good awareness of their heroines' financial standing and of their access to food supplies. The combination of attractively glossy format, solid cultural examination, and just plain culinary fun makes these appealing to a wide variety of readers and young chefs. DS


In this book, "written" by eleven-year-old Lewis Q. Dodge, the young narrator tells of his vacation trip to Yellowstone Park with his new neighbors, the Rupes. Delighted at first with the very loose rein the Rupes keep on their children and the steady diet of snacks and sweets, Lewis and his sister Alison become disenchanted and then horrified as the trip progresses. Mr. Rupe, who has refused to exchange their large, luxurious rental motorhome when a clerk tries to convince him he has taken the wrong one by mistake, turns out to be both a terrible driver and an inconsiderate boor, blocking cars in their parking spaces and yelling at the irate drivers when they return. Lewis notices that everywhere they stop they see the same blue car with two men in it, and when four-year-old Billy Rupe begins flashing hundred-dollar bills, Lewis deduces that the men are after the money—and just whose money is it? Roberts, who in the author bio notes her extensive motorhome travel experience, has clearly had a good time writing away her frustrations with her more obnoxious fellow travelers, making the Rupes delightfully horrible, while keeping Lewis and Alison both reasonable and likable. Though there are no real surprises in the mystery plot, the story whizzes along, and readers, unlike Lewis, will be sorry when the trip is over. SDL

ROSS, GAYLE, ad. How Turtle's Back Was Cracked: A Traditional Cherokee Tale; illus. by Murv Jacob. Dial, 1995 [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1729-6 $14.89 R 5-8 yrs
Reviewed from galleys

Possum enjoys perching in a persimmon tree and throwing fruit down to his good friend Turtle, so when Wolf stands behind Turtle and steals all of the persimmons, Possum becomes annoyed. He throws the next persimmon down so hard it sticks in Wolf's throat, choking him to death, but Turtle manages to convince himself that "he alone, Turtle the Mighty Hunter, had slain the greedy wolf." Taking the wolf's ears as tribute, Turtle makes them into spoons, showing them off every-
where he goes, which proves a mistake when the wolves hear about the spoons and decide Turtle must die. His quick-wittedness, proving him narrative kin to Brer Rabbit in the briar patch, saves him, but he ends up with a cracked shell. An experienced storyteller, Ross knows how to move a story along and fill her characters with sparkle and personality. While the story has some sharp edges, the outcome seems just and there are moments to make kids laugh aloud. Jacob’s acrylic paintings tend to be very dark, with lots of woodland and nighttime scenes, but the many decorative touches, such as the sky with its swirls of color and the Cherokee motifs in the borders and animals’ clothing, help lighten the feeling. Ross gives source notes at the beginning, and includes a one-page summary of Cherokee history at the end. A good companion for Mollel’s *The Flying Tortoise* (BCCB 10/94). SDL

**RUBY, LOIS**  *Steal Away Home.*  Macmillan, 1994  192p ISBN 0-02-777883-5  $15.95  R  Gr. 5-8

As enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act and rival territorial claims threaten to turn Lawrence, Kansas into a battleground, the Weaver family, which is solidly committed to the antislavery cause, finds itself divided concerning resistance strategies. Young James favors his neighbors’ call to arms; father Caleb fights his battle within the court system; mother Millicent (against her husband’s wishes) harbors runaway slaves in their home. But when an Underground Railroad conductor, Miss Lizbet Charles, becomes critically ill while in hiding, Caleb and James must take drastic measures to prevent her discovery. Interwoven throughout this tale of a Quaker family in Bleeding Kansas is a contemporary detection story in which the current owners of the Weavers’ house discover the bones of a young woman sealed into a cubicle behind an upstairs wall. The Shannons research the history of their house and town and peruse Millicent Weaver’s diary, drawing tantalizingly close to the truth behind Lizbet’s death. Ruby offers a fully realized portrait of the zealous and outspoken Lizbet and treats the Weavers’ often contradictory religious convictions with respect. The Shannons’ almost giddy fascination with the skeleton in their closet provides an effective counterpoint to the serious drama played out over a century before. EB


In this tale of those foolish people in Chelm, where they have posted a sign saying “Search Here” under a light so people will know to look for their lost things where it is bright enough to see, we hear the explanation for another of the town’s signs. This one reads: “A teacher may not live on top of a hill. A teacher may not own a trunk with wheels. A teacher may not eat apple strudel.” It seems that the craving of schoolteacher Zaynul and his wife, Zeitel, for apple strudel led to disaster when each of them agreed to deposit money in a trunk to save up for strudel, but then neither of them followed through. In their argument, they ended up falling into the wheeled trunk, which then rolled out their door and down the hill, and then crashed into the market square. Children will find this scene hilarious if they get that far; ten pages pass before the action of the story begins, and many listeners will be long gone, especially since children are unlikely to feel much interest in the
craving of the teacher and his wife for strudel. Lisker's rollicking oil paintings, styled after Chagall, may keep their attention through the dry spots, though. Cheerful reds, blues and oranges and amusing touches like the goat peeking in Zaynul and Zeitel's window help keep the book looking lively, and once Sanfield hits the action his skill with words becomes apparent. SDL


In this followup to Volume I (BCCB 12/89), Smith offers biographies of seven canonical women writers and interviews with twenty-two contemporary ones, plus some analysis of the history of women writing and some helpful advice to young writers. Smith candidly admits to asking forty writers, eighteen of whom turned her down, but the collection here is still fairly diverse: veteran authors such as Fay Weldon and Margaret Atwood rub shoulders with first-time novelists such as Katherine Vaz; different genres are represented, such as mysteries (Sue Grafton), screenplays (Melissa Mathison), poetry (Rita Dove), and young adult literature (Cynthia Voigt); the inclusion of authors such as Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Denise Chavez, Hisaye Yamamoto, and Louise Erdrich emphasizes the cultural diversity of contemporary writing. The interviews themselves vary intriguingly in tone and in their advice to young writers, but provide some insight into both the process of writing and the skill of these particular authors. Smith's own lengthy section on writing is superfluous in the face of the words of her interviewees, however, and her choices for biography perplexing (why bring in Murasaki Shibu, for instance, when the rest of the book limits itself to writers in English?); since no publication information is given in the interviews and many of the authors' works go unmentioned there, the lack of a real bibliography for the writers addressed is lamentable. Still, the direct voices of these writers, many of whom will be new to young readers, will enlarge their picture of writing and of authors. Included are a useful list of suggestions for further reading about writing, endnotes and an index; a black-and-white photograph precedes each author's section. DS

SOBOL, DONALD J. “My Name Is Amelia.” Karl/Atheneum, 1994 105p ISBN 0-689-31970-3 $12.95 Ad Gr. 5-7

Sobol wanders far afield from Encyclopedia Brown territory in this science fantasy, and if his reach sometimes seems a little overly ambitious, he still grasps an action-packed adventure featuring two strong female heroines—one of them the young Amelia Earhart. The other is sixteen-year-old super-capable sailor Lisa Maddock, who stumbles upon a mysterious island in the Bahamas after falling off her boat during a midnight accident. She drifts to the island on a sturdy wooden raft that happens to be floating by, courtesy of... George Washington, who built the raft in a vain attempt to escape the island and the power of Dr. Freemont, a super-scientist who has discovered how to “snip” historical figures out of their time and whose leadership talents he hopes to employ in building a more perfect Earth out in space. The “snip” means he actually gets a double of the personalities, who otherwise go on with their lives in their own eras. Clear? While the details don’t overcome their contrivance to the point of being convincing, there’s still some exciting suspense as Lisa and her new friend, the ten-year-old Amelia, plot to escape the island despite Dr. Freemont’s pleas and threats and misguided idealism. It’s a short, quick read, unlikely but inviting, and ends with the girls successfully escaping with a promise to keep the island secret forever, and with a new life for
the duplicate Amelia (who, oddly, does not seem overalarmed when Lisa divulges her original's famous fate). RS

STEVENSON, JAMES  *A Village Full of Valentines*; written and illus. by James Stevenson. Greenwillow, 1995 [40p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13602-8 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys

Seven quick, funny stories depict Valentine's Day in a village populated by a variety of animals. Clifford, a turtle, only sends a valentine to someone if they send one first—he hasn't gotten a valentine in fifty-six years. Mice Mona, Tina, and Mary Lou squabble over who will do which chore in the valentine-making project, but come to a satisfactory agreement. Murray bemoans his inability to cut a straight heart, but his friend David gives him another way to look at it. Stevenson has done a masterful job of creating stories easy enough for new readers to read alone, each with a twist or joke based on a character's personality. The characters come together for a grand finale in a village Valentine Show, and we find out what Gus the tailor was doing with his enormous ball of string in the sixth story. This joyful book will make young (and old) fingers itch to begin making (not buying) valentines no matter what time of year it is. SDL

TATE, ELEANORA E.  *A Blessing in Disguise*. Delacorte, 1995 [176p]
ISBN 0-385-32103-1 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys

Zambia, now twelve, has lived with her Aunt Limo and Uncle Lamar ever since she was four, when her mother was hospitalized for alcoholism and drug addiction. While she loves her relatives (even bossy cousin Aretha) she fantasizes about living with her father, high-flying Snake, who owns a fancy nightclub over in Gumbo Grove and seems to give Zambia's half-sisters Seritta and Meritta all the money and credit cards and clothes a girl could wish for. But Snake's business dealings go far beyond the nightclub, something the neighbors have whispered and that Zambia slowly sees for herself when Snake opens up another nightclub across the street from her house in Deacon's Neck. The poor but quiet village becomes plagued by noise and drugs and violence, and Zambia has to choose sides between her glamorous father and the "dull" but caring family that raised her. With a far bleaker theme and atmosphere than Tate's previous two books about Gumbo Grove, South Carolina (*The Secret of Gumbo Grove*, BCCB 6/87, *Thank You, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 6/90), the story is honest about the way an African-American community can be threatened from within and "how these things can flash through a family and burn everybody." While there is a lesson here, and readers may find that Zambia takes too long to learn it, the novel is saved from preachiness by Zambia's impulsive, colloquial narration and her true-to-twelve fascination with the night life and its supposed glamor. RS

TAYLOR, MILDRED D.  *The Well: David's Story*. Dial, 1995 [96p]
Reviewed from galleys

Like *The Friendship* and *Mississippi Bridge* (BCCB 12/87 and 10/90), *The Well* is
a short, dramatic pendant to Taylor's longer novels (Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, etc.) about Cassie Logan's family. David Logan (Cassie's father) tells this story from his childhood, when the conflict between his family, comparably well-off black landowners, and the neighboring white Simmses, struggling tenant farmers, was just as volatile as it would be during the lives of his children. There's a drought, and the Logans possess the only well in the area that has not gone dry. Black and white alike come for water freely given by the family, but the Simms boys can't seem to stand the necessary charity, and their resentment explodes when David's big brother Hammer beats Charlie Simms after Charlie hits David. The Logan brothers actually think that Hammer has killed Charlie, and while it's not that bad, it's certainly bad enough. Taylor knows how to write forcefully yet briefly, and if the angels are entirely on the side of the Logan family, the conflict is compelling and painful, as in a scene where the sheriff and Mr. Simms force David's mother to whip both her sons. Kids intimidated by the lengthier entries in this family saga will find this a fairly easy place to start; you might want to couple a readaloud of this title with a booktalk for Roll of Thunder, thereby assuring kids of Taylor's skill with a story of any length. RS

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-84016-8  $15.00  Ad  4-6 yrs

As the title suggests, the text of this Haitian-set bedtime book rocks and sings a rhythm chant as it counts the children that make their way to the young narrator's house. At first the family is just her and her parents, but then a baby cousin comes to stay while her parents work, a hungry neighbor boy shows up, a homeless boy follows Papa home from the town, more cousins arrive, and Mama brings a baby home from the market. Each arrival is punctuated with a lullaby for whoever is youngest in the house at the time: "Mama rocks. ZI-ZAH ZI-ZAH/ Baby weeps. WAH WAH WAH/ Papa sings. SHU-LA SHU-LA/ Baby sleeps. ZEH ZEH ZEH." Listeners are going to need some context for all these fosterings, and the frequent employment of Creole ("ti gason trails him [Papa] home—sé yon gris siprisel!") will require flipping to the glossary at the beginning of the text. While the words at least imply the hard conditions facing Haitians today ("Friend Clive says, 'Mwin gran' gou!' He goes begging in the street") the pictures present a clean and sunny tropical setting, with the family's small shack looking like a cozy rustic hideaway. The pinks and greens and blues are pleasingly intense, and children will enjoy counting all the newcomers. The ending, in which all the children go away, is quite puzzling. We can infer that the cousins went back to their parents, but are the strays simply put out into the night? RS

Weidt, Maryann N.  Oh, the Places He Went: A Story about Dr. Seuss—Theodor Seuss Geisel; illus. by Kerry Maguire. Carolrhoda, 1994  64p  (Creative Minds)
Paper ed. ISBN 0-87614-627-2  $5.95  R  Gr. 2-4

As quirky as his books, Dr. Seuss, or Theodor Seuss Geisel, provided lots of entertaining anecdotes and quotations for biographers. He grew up a few blocks from a zoo and was encouraged by his mother to draw pictures of animals on scraps of wallpaper, although his animals never resembled those at the zoo. Later, his art
teacher was not impressed, but he maintained his own point of view: "That teacher wanted me to draw the world as it is,' Ted said, 'and I wanted to draw things as I saw them." Though he made a good living in advertising, he wanted to write a children's book, and he didn't let the failure of his first book, or the twenty-seven publishers who rejected his second book, stop him. A college friend became his editor at a twenty-eighth publisher, and And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street came out in 1937. Geisel died in 1991, forty-seven books and many awards later. Although her style sometimes fails to reflect the liveliness of her subject, Weidt skillfully connects events and people with Geisel's work; she draws on her interviews with Geisel friends and experts as well as the articles cited in her bibliography. Maguire's black-and-white illustrations are competent but stiff; the book would have been greatly improved by samples of Dr. Seuss' own artwork. SDL

WILD, MARGARET Beast. Scholastic, 1995 [112p]
ISBN 0-590-47158-9 $13.95 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

Jamie is convinced that a beast, as real as the bully who torments him at school, is stalking him at night. Constructing increasingly elaborate rituals ("tapping the doorknob four times, aligning his slippers exactly, and rubbing the bedpost twice") to keep the beast at bay, even imagining that the family's garden has turned into a wasteland, Jamie finds that fear has taken over his life. Meanwhile, another boy dreams of being the Gamesmaster, a sinister Peter Pan who turns ordinary children's games into nightmares. The Gamesmaster is eventually revealed to be the bully, Brendan, who takes out the abuse he suffers from his father on the dream-children and on Jamie. Underneath the scary dreams and illusions is a predictable story of the bullied become bullier and of his victim's retreat into fantasy. Wild's depiction of the concrete nature of childhood fears is impeccably convincing, recreating the certainty—not dream nor fancy—that something is under the bed or outside the window (although the fact that Brendan actually was outside Jamie's window, gazing in at normal family life, makes the psychology somewhat distractingly conflicted). The therapeutic diagramming of the story isn't quite up to the power of its images, but the menacing atmosphere evokes a reality of the imagination that many kids will have visited. RS

WORTH, VALERIE All the Small Poems and Fourteen More; illus. by Natalie Babbitt. Farrar, 1994 194p
ISBN 0-374-302111  $18.00 R Gr. 4 up

The late Valerie Worth leaves this seemingly final legacy: the complete collection of her "small poems" for children. Those familiar with Worth's previous volumes know her precision, her quiet inventiveness, her keen eye, and will recognize Babbitt's unassuming but adroitly complementary drawings in the corner of each airy page. As the title suggests, this volume has fourteen new poems in addition to those previously published: entries such as "Autumn Geese" ("One long/ Ragged/ Thread// Unravels/ The whole// World") and "Skeletons" ("Is it the/ Curve of their/ Breezy ribs, the/ Crook of their/ Elegant fingers . . .") are vintage Worth, if not quite demonstrating the continual surprise of her best work. Should you buy this book for those fourteen poems? Well, there are few enough poems in the world of such Worth; to possess them all, in a volume of pristine completeness, would seem both useful and singularly appropriate. DS
ISBN 0-590-43598-1  $13.95  
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 4-7  
Jessie is terrified to discover that the ghost in her nightmares also appears to be materializing while she is awake. Wright's many fans will enjoy this scary story, especially since the ghost is neither a "friend" nor an illusion, but a spirit from the past malevolently intent upon hurting, maybe killing, Jessie. While the frights of the haunting are expertly paced and displayed, Wright also surrounds the special effects with the very ordinary pressures of Jessie's life: tensions between her financially hard-pressed parents, and a bitter, disabled neighbor girl who can't seem to decide whether she wants to be friends with Jessie or not and who scoffs at her reports of the ghost. And in her search through her grandmother's girlhood diary to find clues about the haunting, Jessie thinks she discovers something about her beloved Grandma that she would rather not know. Send kids sated with or scared by the lurid paperback horror series here: the spooky cover will invite them in and the storytelling won't let them down. RS

WYETH, SHARON DENNIS  * Always My Dad; illus. by Raúl Colón. * Apple Soup/Knopf, 1995  32p  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-83447-8  $15.00  Ad  6-9 yrs  
Stylish yet tender watercolor-and colored-pencil drawings etched with sinuous patterns and crosshatching illustrate a mood piece about a young African-American girl's longing for her father, almost always away looking for work. Once, while staying at her grandparents' farm for the summer, the girl and her two younger brothers do get to see their father for awhile, and she learns that although he has to leave yet again, he always thinks of her and will come back "soon." The writing is quiet and easy, but while it's an effectively bittersweet portrait of a father and daughter's bond, the book hasn't enough of a story to make it seem more than a nostalgic fragment, an impression exacerbated by the retro mood of the pictures and idyllic rural setting. Too many questions are raised and left unanswered: we don't know when or where the book takes place, and it is not clear whether the girl's parents are separated by law or simply by economic hardship, but children in whatever circumstances longing for a mostly absent father may enjoy the reassurance of love presented here. RS
PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS


For those of you with a taste for lists of lists, this one's for you. Lenz and Meacham have compiled an imaginative, thoughtful, and broad-ranging guide to sources bibliographic and otherwise. Seven sections, each with several-to-many subsections, include Professional Resources, Periodicals, Resources for Research, Specific Genre and Catalog Selection Tools, Subject-Specialized Biographies (broken down by subject), Using Books with Young Adults, and Tools for Selection of Audiovisual Materials. Each individual numbered entry includes publication information, price, print status (including whether a new edition is anticipated), and availability in alternate forms such as CD-ROM or online; a sizable annotation outlining the arrangement, scope, and specific strengths and weaknesses of the source follows. Lenz and Meacham have included not just traditional sources such as best books compendiums and teaching guides, but also less obvious sources such as adult scholarly works on genre, review guides to music CDs, and browsers’ guides to literature. Just the book to grab if you need to know where to find a bibliography of horse books in the morning, CD-ROM reviews at lunch, and grant-seeking ideas in the afternoon. An index to titles, an index to subjects, and a directory of publishers are included. DS


Hunt, renowned critic of children’s literature, here offers a book-length examination of this classic English work. His compact and methodical study offers a section on literary and historical context, then discusses the narrative patterns, the symbolism and use of the characters, the book’s underlying themes, and Grahame’s style, incorporating previous Grahame scholarship throughout and continually probing the issue of the book’s real audience. An “Approaches to Teaching” section offers a guide useful for study as well as pedagogy; a chronology of Grahame’s life, a bibliography, and an index are included. DS


Drawing heavily on the Keats collection at the University of Southern Mississippi, this attractive and glossy-paged book offers an overview of Keats’ life and work as well as a glimpse into the collection’s holdings. Alderson’s British viewpoint and strong opinions keep the text fresh but always admiring; a reminiscence by Keats’ longtime friend Martin Pope adds a personal touch; pictures by Keats, pictures of Keats, and Keats collectibles such as fan mail and other ephemera brighten the pages throughout. Several appendices, a list of Keats’ books, endnotes (cross-referenced to the catalogue numbers in the collection), and an index are included. DS
African Americans: Burns; Krull
African Americans-fiction:
  Chocolate; Tate; Taylor
African Americans-stories:
  Chapman; Wyeth
ALPHABET BOOKS: Mahurin
Amusement parks-fiction:
  Cresswell; Kehret
Arithmetic: Barry; Chorao;
  Friedman
Art and artists-fiction: Klass
Art: Banyai; Dewey; Duncan;
  Heifetz
Astronauts: Burns
Aviation: Burns
BEDTIME STORIES: London;
  Van Laan
BIOGRAPHIES: Ada; Lawlor;
  Lyttle; Weidt
Books and reading-stories: Deedy
Brothers and sisters-fiction:
  Kehret; McKenzie
Brothers-fiction: Taylor
Bullies-fiction: Wild
Canada-fiction: Buffie
Cats-stories: Mahurin
Censorship-fiction: Peck
Civil Rights Movement: Duncan
Civil War-fiction: Donahue
Color: Dewey; Heifetz
CONCEPT BOOKS: Banyai;
  Barry; Chorao; Friedman;
  Lember
Crime and criminals-fiction:
  Roberts
Cuba: Ada
Death-fiction: Buffie
Dinosaurs-stories: Grambling
Divorce-fiction: Klass
Ecology: Greene; Hamilton;
  Hirschi
Ethics and values: Lawrence; Peck
FANTASY: Cresswell; Highwater;
  Nimmo
Farm life-stories: Lewison;
  London
Farm life-fiction: Peters
Fathers and daughters-fiction:
  Klass; Nimmo; Tate
Fathers and daughters-stories:
  Wyeth
Fathers and sons-stories: Hinton
Fear-fiction: Wild
FOLKTALES AND
  FAIRYTALES: Barry; Bruchac;
  Greene; Ross; Sanfield
Food and eating: Leedy; Lember;
  Penner; Pleasant Company
Food and eating-stories: Karas;
  Myers; Sanfield
FUNNY STORIES: Jennings;
  King-Smith
Ghosts-fiction: Buffie; Wright
Growing up-fiction: Loughery;
  Mazer; Nimmo
Guidance: Aitkens
Haiti-stories: Van Laan
Hippopotamuses-stories: Black
HISTORICAL FICTION:
  Donahue; McKenzie;
  Neuberger; Ruby; Taylor
History, U.S.: Donahue; Duncan;
  Krull; Lawlor; Penner; Pleasant
  Company; Ruby
History, world: Colman
India-folklore: Barry; Highwater
Kansas-fiction: Ruby
Korea-fiction: Neuberger
Language arts: Dewey; Heifetz; Mahurin
Literature, American: Lyttle
Literature, children's: Weidt
Literature: Smith
LOVE STORIES: Klass; Lawrence
Mice-fiction: King-Smith
Mothers and sons-stories: Oppenheim
MYSTERY STORIES: Janney; Kehret; Roberts
Native Americans: Hoyt-Goldsmith; Krull; Lawlor; Penner
Native Americans-folklore: Bruchac; Greene; Ross
Nature study: Arnosky; Hirschi
Nutrition: Leedy
Occupations: Lakin
Orphans-stories: McCully
Photography: Lawlor
POETRY: Worth
Pregnancy, teenage: Aitkens
Prejudice: Duncan
Prejudice-fiction: Chocolate; Taylor
Reading aloud: Greene; King-Smith; Loughery; Mazer
Reading, easy: Neuberger; Peters; Stevenson
Reading, reluctant: Chocolate; Sobol; Wright
Rodeos: Hoyt-Goldsmith
Runaways-fiction: Cresswell
Sanitation: Colman
SCARY STORIES: Buffie; Wright
School: Lakin
School-fiction: Chocolate; Goldman; Peck
SCIENCE FICTION: Goldman; Lawrence; Sobol
Sex education: Aitkens
SHORT STORIES: Jennings; Loughery; Mazer
Sisters-stories: Peters
Social studies: Krull
South Carolina: Krull
Story hour: Black; Bruchac; Deedy; Grambling; Hamilton; Karas; Lewison; Mahurin; McCully; Myers; Ross; Sanfield; Stevenson; Van Laan
Toys-stories: Oppenheim
Underground Railroad-fiction: Ruby
Vacations-fiction: Roberts
Valentine's Day-fiction: Stevenson
Wales-fiction: Lawrence
Winter-stories: Chapman
Wisconsin: Krull
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