OF COURSE

I will not lie.

I will not cheat.

I will not chew gum and pop.

I will not be argumentative.

I will not fight.

I will not trip other kids.

I will not play rough.

I will not talk during.
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—Starred, The Horn Book

"This is a poignant novel about honesty and the complexities of friendship."
—Starred, School Library Journal

"McKay cleverly offsets her plot's more serious dimensions with the often hilarious antics of the saucy Robinsons, whose appetite for pranks youngsters will relish."
—Starred, Publishers Weekly

"The sharply realized characters, fast-paced story, and witty dialogue make this English novel both distinctive and refreshing."
—Booklist

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

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Cover illustration from Bad Girls ©1996 and used by permission of Scholastic Inc.
Bad Girls
by Cynthia Voigt

With this book Cynthia Voigt has probably sewn up the prize for the best come-on title of the year, and her two heroines thoroughly live up to the promise, if not in the way some readers might wish: these are fifth-grade bad girls.

Good girls—think of Lowry’s Anastasia, Mills’ Dinah, Naylor’s Alice—are our friends. We watch them get into embarrassing situations, close scrapes and closer crushes, and we think, this could be me. Bad girls, though, get our attention. We don’t want to be them, but we like to watch what they do. Which Sweet Valley Twin do you remember best? Not Elizabeth, forever mooning over Todd and dutifully turning in her articles for the school paper, but Jessica: mantrap, fashion plate, and saboteur. Voigt’s bad girls, Margalo Epps and Mikey Elsinger, lack Jessica’s chic, but they are still a dangerous, complementary pair. While feisty, hotheaded Mikey, ready to punch or kick at the slightest provocation, is don’t-mess-with-me trouble, Margalo is another kind of bad girl—Machiavellian, you might say, or as Mikey puts it, “sneaky.” Between them they make Mrs. Chemsky’s fifth-grade classroom something akin to a war zone, with Margalo the general and Mikey the troops. They get Louis, the class clown and bully, kicked out of their class, and, with malice aforethought, get him back in (“Doesn’t the expression on his face make you want to just punch him?” asks Mikey of Margalo. “Actually,” Margalo said, “it makes me want you to punch him”). Margalo, unbeknownst to Mikey but in her honor, puts unpleasant surprises (such as a dead squirrel) in classmate Rhonda’s lunch bag, and when Mikey finds out, she insists on sharing the blame. Sucker: this is after Margalo has betrayed Mikey by voting for someone else instead of her for class president. Mikey knows; she peeked.

Voigt is a lot harder on—and truer to—the cliques, bullies, and shifting alliances of fifth-grade society than most writers, who put the tempest in the teapot and then turn off the stove. Her story is loud, angry, and jostling—sometimes to the point of incoherence but always with the undeniable smell of fifth grade. The focus is obsessively on the school, never leaving the classroom or playground (or principal’s office). Small hints, such as what the girls bring for lunch each day, give glimpses of what life is like at home for the two troublemakers, but there’s no indication that Margalo and Mikey are any worse off than their classmates. Bad girls—in children’s books, anyway—are more often misunderstood girls (think of Harriet the Spy), but Voigt doesn’t let her girls that easily off the hook. And she gives her bad girls exactly what they want: attention. Where most books (think of any number of middle-grade stories about girls in cliques) vanquish the bully (or, more often, her bullishness) and send her to the sidelines, these girls stay at the center, unrepentant. Even in detention, where Margalo is writing lines on the blackboard and Mikey scrubbing desks, they’re causing trouble. Mikey strategi-
cally cleans graffiti so it reads “you stink,” and Margalo, her ever-busy brain at work, gets new inspiration from her punishment: “Fifty-one. I will not start rumors,” but she didn’t put a period. Instead, she finished the sentence, ‘about Ann Tarwell going to the movies with Noah Obbink.’ Then she erased back, put in the period and wrote, ‘Fifty-two. I will not start rumors,’ while she thought about what other rumors she wouldn’t start.” We’ll see about that.

Do we like these girls? Well, kids might feel a sort of rough affection for Mikey, but any reader with a brain in her head is going to be afraid of Margalo, even while sensing her loneliness and envying her power. You want to keep an eye on those sneaky ones, and we’re glad Voigt is here to do it for us. (Imprint information appears on p. 280.)

Roger Sutton, Editor

So Long, Farewell

In one way or another, I have been associated with The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books since 1980, when as a student in the University of Chicago Graduate Library School, I had the great fortune to work as Zena Sutherland’s student assistant. In subsequent years I served on the Bulletin’s advisory committee and wrote reviews, and in 1988 I came full-time to work with Betsy Hearne, another top-notch boss and mentor. With this issue, I am leaving the Bulletin to return to my hometown of Boston to take on the editorship of The Horn Book Magazine and Guide. (My reviews will hang around longer.) I leave with thanks to Zena and Betsy, and with the knowledge that the Bulletin lies in the capable hands of Acting Editor Deborah Stevenson, who has been a fine friend and colleague here for seven years. My thanks go also to our series of student assistants, to our reviewers, and to Leigh Estabrook, Dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science here at the University of Illinois, who took in the Bulletin when the University of Chicago made the sad blunder of closing its own library school. And to our subscribers go my thanks for years of support and friendly debate. Boston is a thousand miles away from Illinois, but in Reviewingland, the journals sit side by side. Let’s keep in touch. RS
NEw Books for chiLdeRn and YouNg peoPle

AIKEN, JOAN  Cold Shoulder Road. Delacorte, 1996  [192p]
ISBN 0-385-32182-1  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 5-9

This title continues the adventures of cousins Is and Arun Twite (of Is Underground), who have recently fled from the northern coal mines and are searching for Arun’s widowed mother. But long before they find Mrs. Twite, they become entangled with a band of murderous smugglers who spirit mammoth tusks through a tunnel under the English Channel, and they encounter the sinister leader of Mrs. Twite’s religious community, the Silent Sect. Aiken’s flair for making the ludicrous seem commonplace is very much in evidence here; the cousins’ telepathy, a schooner moored in a treetop by a tidal wave, and a tunnel completed some hundred years before its time are rendered not only credible but perfectly natural, and these bizarre touches only embellish the murky menace that underlies the tale. Although readers familiar with other novels in the extensive Wolves of Willoughby Chase chronicles may take smug pride in catching allusions to past adventures and related characters, newcomers can jump right into this stand-alone entry. EB

ANDRYSZEWSKI, TRICIA  The Amazing Life of Moe Berg: Catcher, Scholar, Spy. Millbrook, 1996  127p  illus. with photographs
ISBN 1-56294-610-2  $16.40  R  Gr. 5-8

This will be an eye opener for kids who think that Bo Jackson is the ultimate renaissance man in sports: Moe Berg was a Princeton intellectual, an accomplished linguist with a law degree from Columbia, who spent two decades playing professional baseball for teams ranging from the Chicago White Sox to the Cleveland Indians. When the U.S. entered World War II, Berg switched from catching balls to catching information: he became an OSS operative, traveling on spy missions throughout Latin America and Europe in addition to making the odd propaganda broadcast in Japanese, and finally retiring from the intelligence service a decade after the war. It’s a one-of-a-kind story, and Andryszewski wisely avoids overdramatizing the already sensational facts, conceding that Berg was an indifferent batter and runner (though a superb catcher and unofficial coach) and noting that Berg’s love of storytelling meant that several different accounts of an incident often circulated. The result is a straightforward, cleanly written, and well-footnoted portrait of a likeable but ultimately enigmatic man, whose dual life sets his story apart from the run-of-the-mill sports bios and may provide fantasy fodder beyond rotisserie baseball for fans of the game. The format is stodgy and uninviting, but a passel of black-and-white photographs helps leaven things. DS

ANZALDÚA, GLORIA  Prietita and the Ghost Woman/Prietita y la Llorona; illus. by Christina Gonzalez. Children’s Book Press, 1996  [32p]
ISBN 0-89239-136-7  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  4-6 yrs

The curandera has no rue with which to help Prietita’s ailing mother, but she does tell the girl what the plant looks like and where to find it—deep in the dangerous
woods of the King Ranch ("I've heard that they shoot trespassers... It is not safe for a little girl"). Although the story seems at first to be developing some kind of anti-colonial theme, the dangers of the King Ranch become moot, as a string of animal helpers, and, most importantly, la Llorona, the ghost woman, lead Prietita to the healing plant. Anzaldúa's stated aim here is to reclaim the scary ghost-woman motif to benevolent ends; unfortunately, that leaves the story with lots of build-up and atmosphere but no conflict—something like "Hansel and Gretel" without the cage or oven. While the story might prove a letdown, the paintings capture the sinuous mystery of the woods and the wide-eyed seeking of the heroine. The text is in English and Spanish. RS

Reviewed from galleys

World War I may loom on the horizon, but Patrick Doyle and his Hell's Kitchen cronies have a more immediate problem—how to drive the interloping Copperheads gang away from the baseball field behind the brewery. Patrick makes a rash bet that if "Doyle will hit one over the fence," his side will retain the field; however, the Doyle he has in mind is his hero on the Giants, Larry Doyle, who will surely come to the aid of his fellow Irishmen. Baseball fantasy is obviously the draw here, but Armstrong gives her characters little time on the field; except for some rooftop warm-ups and the big finish (Patrick himself hits the homer after two strikes, naturally), readers won't see much of the game. A running analogy between St. Patrick driving the snakes out of Ireland and the boys' problems with the Copperheads is stretched rather thin. Still, readers who live for the game may glean a few insights into how the game was played on the streets of old New York, and a glossary of baseball terms and some historical background on the period are included. Reviewed from an unillustrated galley. EB

BANG, MOLLY  Chattanooga Sludge; written and illus. by Molly Bang. Gulliver Green/Harcourt, 1996  46p

When the Chattanooga Creek was named "the most polluted waterway in the southeastern United States," the Chattanooga city council invited Massachusetts scientist John Todd to apply his experimental water reclamation technique, the Living Machine, to their local crisis. Bang examines both the theory behind the experiment and Todd's efforts to adapt it to a large-scale problem. The result of the project—only partial removal of toxins in Todd's sample of creekbottom sludge—provides readers with a sobering view of the pollution problem and the encouraging but limited ability of science to combat it. The picture-book format, with its cheery collages and intrusively cute cartoon frog guides, is busy and suggests a young audience, but students in the upper primary and middle grades will be better able to contend with the fairly intense discussion of the role of microbes in cleansing a biome. The absence of background on the project is a curious and serious omission. Bang never mentions when or precisely where this experiment was conducted, the use made of the results, the current state of clean-up efforts; John Todd's name is, in fact, only mentioned in the frogs' dialogue bubbles, and
we have no idea what happened to the polluted creek. No source notes direct curious readers (or their science teachers) to further information on the project. EB

**Berry, Liz  The China Garden.  Farrar, 1996  [288p]**
ISBN 0-374-31248-6  $18.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7-12

"Let Ravensmere die./ Let the land be torn open,/ The end of the world/ Is surely betokened." That's the local rhyme about the West Country estate where Clare's mother has taken a nursing job and Clare is spending her summer. It looks like the truth of the rhyme might soon be tested, as the old earl (Clare's mother's patient) seems not long for this world, and his heir apparent plans to profit from making Ravensmere a toxic waste site. Soon Clare realizes that Ravensmere is part of her own history, that her mother was part of a centuries-old tradition that went horribly wrong, and that it is up to Clare to unravel the mystical secrets of Ravensmere's China Garden and accept her role as Guardian of Ravensmere—if she can. This is a good, solid fantasy that is particularly effective in its use of English history: Berry weaves real past and fictional past together deftly, making gossip about the previous earls (who flourished if they acknowledged their Guardianship but came to grief if they denied it) both convincing and titillating and adding a slight and believable feminist edge to the family history and to the tradition. She's also laid on a steamy romance for Clare in the person of mysterious Mark, and the possibility that they are, quite literally, destined to bond forever merely adds to the intensity. Things get a little convoluted towards the end, so that there's rather more drama in the anticipation than in the final revelation, but mysteries are often like that. This might well please readers with a taste for gothic romances as well as the legion of British fantasy fans. DS

**Bunting, Eve  SOS Titanic.  Harcourt, 1996  [256p]**
Reviewed from galleys  M  Gr. 5-8

Barry, unhappily leaving his grandparents behind in Ireland to go to his parents in New York, is uneasy from his first day aboard the, well, you've read the title. His assigned guardian for the trip is a slimy sort, forever checking the jewels he has placed in the ship's safe, and Barry's enemies, the Flynn children, are traveling below in steerage. And with mutterings about the shortage of lifeboats and the heavy hints of icebergs along the way—not to mention the predictions of the cabin steward who was born with a caul ("'I see disaster,' he said")—Barry is understandably one nervous fellow. While any historical fiction about the Titanic is obviously going to be laden with a certain amount of predictability, Bunting barely lets a page go by without a foreboding observation or remark, something that might have been more effective if we didn't already know what was going to happen. Although the scenes of the wreck itself have an excitement and immediacy that will be enjoyed by disaster fans, the hefty doses of irony ("'They'd be passing icebergs. With any luck he'd get to see one'") and prognostications of doom ("'I told you this ship was doomed,' a doom-filled voice behind Barry said") sink the story long before they get around to the ship. RS
Carr, Jan  *The Nature of the Beast*; illus. by G. Brian Karas. Tambourine, 1996 [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13597-8  $15.93
Reviewed from galleys  R  5-8 yrs

Isabelle uses a found dollar bill to purchase an unusual pet: "They happened to have a special on beasts." Beast, bigger than his owner, very, very hairy, and given to unusual habits such as sleeping in the chandelier and shouting "C'est la vie," isn't quite what Isabelle's mom had in mind, but her scientist father is intrigued and advises Isabelle to document his behavior. This documentation allows Isabelle to notice when Beast's abnormal actions suggest he's sick; they take him to the vet, and everybody, even Isabelle's dubious mom, is happy when he recovers. The story wanders around a bit amidst its not-too-cohesive elements, but the core plot, the strange eccentric thing that comes home to stay, is a durable and appealing one. Karas' illustrations pull the story together, showing Beast as a surprisingly expressive tri-toed furball, an oversized talking puppy-mutant whose company is understandably enjoyable for Isabelle, as well as for young listeners. Youngsters looking for a pet book with a difference will relish the story of this most cuddly of bêtes noirs. DS

Cart, Michael  *My Father's Scar*. Simon, 1996 [208p]
ISBN 0-689-80749-X  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 9-12

Andy is a freshman in college, intermittently pondering his crush on Professor Hawthorne and remembering his miserable childhood, when he was physically abused by his alcoholic father and bullied by other boys for being a fat egghead. There are sweeter memories as well, such as his times with his great-great-uncle Charles who gave him books and taught him about friendship, and his romantic feelings for Evan, an older boy who, as it happens, is big brother to Andy's chief tormentor, Eddie. There's no question that Cart can write an individual scene, but the fade-out, fade-in structure of the novel makes the scenes more emblematic than developed. Evan's revelation to Andy that, as a child, Evan was molested by his father and liked it is dropped in to no apparent point; when one of Andy's childhood bullies later becomes his first lover, we wonder about all the years in between; Evan's vociferous coming-out in the middle of a church service is theatrical rather than believable, as are the subsequent tortures visited upon him. This kind of a loaded plot needs more careful attention than vignettes can supply. The characters, too, are typecast as good and bad agents who, each according to kind, help or hinder Andy in his quest to understand his sexual self. Although the ultimate effect is rather hollow, the book certainly knows the terrors inflicted upon gay boys by their fellows and families and equally, the hope that can be offered by an Evan or an Uncle Charles. RS

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024396-1  $14.95  Ad  5-7 yrs

Adding to her companion volumes of *The Egyptian Cinderella* (BCCB 10/89) and *The Korean Cinderella* (BCCB 6/93), Climo here condenses the traditional Irish
story “Billy Beg and his Bull.” Billy is a lad cast out by his stepmother and befriended by a bull whose magic eventually allows him to kill numerous giants, as well as a dragon, and to win the hand of a princess. The story was popularized by famous shanachie Seumas MacManus in a nineteenth-century collection and adapted by contemporary storyteller Ellin Greene in a 1994 picture-book version with powerful illustrations by Kimberly Bulcken Root (BCCB 4/94). Climo’s version suffers by comparison in both style and abridgement. The nuanced patterns of repetition are lost to a straightforward pitch of language, and much of the life-and-death urgency is temporized; neither the stepmother nor the giants are killed, for instance. Similarly, Krupinski’s doll-like faces and soft pastel hues glaze the action with the tone of a toy world, which makes the story safer for a younger audience but defuses its power considerably. As an educational series, these Cinderellas will reach a wide audience, but they do lose something in the translation. Teachers and librarians interested in alternative presentations might read aloud from Judy Sierra’s collection of Cinderella stories or from more folklorically tuned picture-book versions such as Louie’s Yeh-Shen. BH

COHEN, CARON LEE Where’s the Fly?: illus. by Nancy Barnet. Greenwillow, 1996 [32p]
ISBN 0-688-14044-0 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-7 yrs

The left side of the first spread shows a round vignette of a big ol’ fly sitting on some surface, and the right side asks, “Where’s the fly?” A turn of the page reveals, in both illustration and text, that the fly is “on the dog’s nose.” But then the question is “Where’s the dog?” And so on, through the house, the yard, the school, the neighborhood, the town, the bay, the ocean, and a few more stops in between. This is vaguely reminiscent both of Istvan Banyai’s Zoom (BCCB 2/95) and Jerome Wexler’s Everyday Mysteries (BCCB 9/95), since it includes teasers about perspective and perception as the viewpoint both pulls back and moves around (one nice touch here is that time doesn’t stand still—the dog gets up and wanders across the yard, and the paper carrier moves along). Unfortunately, as the stakes get higher the book begins to cheat itself and its reader with spreads in which the previous images cannot be detected (you can’t match the neighborhood to anything in the “town” spread, for instance, or the town to the big city or the ocean to the planet). The top of the recto has, over the text, an accumulating series of small images selected from the larger illustrations, but sometimes the image seems to be designed as a hidden-picture clue and sometimes it seems to be simply a symbol for that page. Also confusing is the text’s apparent attempt at circularity: when it asks the first question all over again, the answer seems to be merely “on the next page.” The illustrations, with their homely if somewhat bland simplicity, offer a pleasant playing field, but the inconsistent rules here make the game frustrating. DS

COLEMAN, EVELYN White Socks Only; illus. by Tyrone Geter. Whitman, 1996 [32p]
ISBN 0-8075-8955-1 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-8 yrs

A little African-American girl listens with contented nostalgia while her grandma once again tells about her childhood summertime trip into town to see if what they say is true about frying an egg on the sidewalk. It is, but when the thirsty young
Grandma goes to get a drink of water at the town fountain, trouble strikes. Grandma sees the "Whites Only" sign on the fountain and reasons that it means she should take off her black shoes and drink while standing in her white socks. A potbellied redneck does not take kindly to the girl's logic, especially after other African Americans in the town follow her lead, removing their shoes and taking a drink. Only the arrival of the "chicken man," feared and fabled, scares the bigot off—permanently, it seems. As with Coleman's *The Footwarmer and the Crow* (BCCB 12/94), this is a mischievous and slightly spooky tale of vengeance, but it's hard to believe that a black girl old enough to read hasn't heard a thing or two about Mississippi segregation. History and folklore aren't quite in step with each other here, but the girl's spirit survives the story's contrivance, and Geter's impressionistic oil paintings have a hot hazy glow that enhances the half-real, half-legendary, tone of the text. RS

**COLES, WILLIAM E., JR.** *Another Kind of Monday.* Atheneum, 1996 [240p]
ISBN 0-689-80254-4 $17.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 8-12

Mark gets a surprise when he opens a library copy of *Great Expectations*: stuck between two pages are three one-hundred-dollar bills and a note that seems to promise more, with an oblique clue as to the next place to look ("Mihal Dobrejcaj and his Mary/ Also were led by a star./ Quester: read their history,/ And decide what your chances are"). A nasty librarian proves useless; a nice one leads Mark to a novel, Thomas Bell's *Out of This Furnace*, an account of a steelworker's life in a mill not far from Mark's Pittsburgh home. Solving that clue leads to more money and another note; soon Mark is ordered by his anonymous epistolary commander to take a companion on his journey through Pittsburgh's history. The clues Mark and Zeena (his troubled and troubling companion) follow in their quest lead to legends of the eccentric and dark variety, such as the story of Mrs. Soffel, the warden's wife who sprang and ran off with the notorious Biddle Brothers only to be caught and locked up in her husband's own prison. The clues all seem to lead to moments of real-life history, and they cause Mark and Zeena to question and solve problems in their own lives (not to mention giving them a shot at becoming crack reference librarians and/or burglars). While the writing is cluttered by too much detail and the ending is disappointingly abstract, Coles conveys a real sense of adventure and discovery as Mark and Zeena experience some of the stranger reaches of the place they call home. RS

ISBN 0-395-73680-3 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

Soon-to-be-eighth-grader Harris thinks that the couple he babysits for has a perfect life, he finds his own blue-collar parents embarrassing, and he believes that girls don't like him. He's of course wrong on all three counts, but he has to go through plenty before arriving at the end of his journey to self-knowledge. The book focuses its themes neatly through Harris' summertime adventure in babysitting: little Jamey Benya is a handful, but the work and money are steady and Mrs. Benya is a major looker. Harris' daredevil best friend Bert scoffs at Harris' job and tries to get him interested in going out with "babes" (with a subse-
quent turning of tables that gets Harris two girls interested in him and no best friend). The comedy is balanced by Harris' envy for the Benyas' life, which causes a serious rift between him and his father (“‘Mr. Benya doesn’t drive a chip truck,’ Harris shouted. ‘He wears suits, and good shoes, and looks like he’s worth something!’”) that is only breached when Jamey, scared by his parents' hostility toward each other, disappears while Harris is supposed to be watching him. Affable but well-grounded, this boy's-eye view of the trials of everyday life takes itself and its readers just seriously enough. RS


According to this original pourquoi tale, the titular beast, wrapped into a coil and "all puffed up with his own importance," once went on a heedless roll, creating havoc among the other animals until Elephant's giant foot squeezed the air right out of him and left him with his long, skinny shape. Young listeners are bound to enjoy the repetitive kathumb-kathumb-kathumbs and pockety-pockety-pockets and the typeset that reshapes itself with each alteration in Snake's course. Other animals transform too—some more credibly than others. It's easy to see how Lion got his distinctive mane when startled by the rolling reptile, but why Ostrich learns to run fast because she has a sore foot is more of a mystery. Stylized figures in day-glo bright pastels bound across the pages in wacky disregard of gravity and perspective; they should keep the story-hour crowd focused front and center, ready to chime in on cue with their hup hup hups. EB


Neatly dividing (and metaphorizing) Lindbergh's life into two parts, "Ascent" and "Descent," Denenberg charts his subject's course from childhood and adolescence through his historic transatlantic flight and marriage to Anne Morrow. That's "Ascent"; darkness falls with the kidnapping and murder of the Lindberghs' son, the couple's later campaign to keep America out of World War II, and their at-best naive admiration for the Nazis. Incorporating much and cannily from both Lindberghs' books—chapter five, "Alone," is entirely excerpts from Charles' The Spirit of St. Louis—Denenberg is dutiful in the opening chapters but seems to find himself more at home with his discussion of Lindbergh the celebrity in both triumph and trial. The account of the controversial Hauptmann conviction is fair and openminded, and when it comes to politics, Denenberg wisely uses Lindbergh's own words: "The three most important groups who have been agitating this country toward war are the British, the Jewish and the Roosevelt Administration." In fact, this biography is less notable for any new information or viewpoint on Lindbergh than it is for its sensitive compilation of what the man had to say for himself. Black-and-white photos pace the spaciously designed text, quotes are scrupulously sourced, and a bibliography and index are included. RS
DE VRIES, ANKE  
Bruises; tr. by Stacey Knecht. Front Street/Lemniscaat, 1996  168p
ISBN 1-886910-03-0  $15.95

Judith has a big problem: her mother's constant and violent abuse. No matter how well Judith behaves or how carefully she tends her little half-brother (her mother's golden child), the beatings come, leaving Judith to cover up her bruises with long sleeves, long trousers, and lies, and leading the family to move whenever anyone demonstrates concern about Judith's strange behavior. At her new school, she gradually becomes friends with a boy who has recently begun to overcome his own problems with his distant father; between her friend and Judith's concerned teacher, people eventually begin to understand what's happening to Judith, but will it be too late? A Dutch import, this problem novel is twenty years out of date in America, with stock characters (Judith's mother has all the subtlety of Mommie Dearest), glibly psychological explanations for the problem (Judith looks just like her mother's little brother, whose death, considered Judith's mother's fault, ruptured the family), and sensationalized scenes of abuse. It's also unlikely that real residents of any country today would be as naïve about the situation as the teachers and other professionals are here (young readers will wonder why nobody ever mentions calling the police). Judith's leaving her mother's house at the end is apparently meant to be a victory, but it's a dishonest one, with no discussion of what will happen to her next or of any legal moves necessary to keep her from going back home. What keeps the story moving is its believable depiction of Judith's hurt and bewilderment and her hunger for, yet fear of, affection—from her new friend, from her visiting aunt, and most of all from her mother. Readers prepared to overlook the stretches of unlikeliness may find the intensity of Judith's story absorbing. DS

DEWEY, JENNIFER OWINGS  
Stories on Stone: Rock Art: Images from the Ancient Ones; written and illus. by Jennifer Owings Dewey. Little, 1996  32p
ISBN 0-316-18211-7  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys

So little is known about the Anasazis that discussing their artwork becomes a formidable task, and one that is met here with only limited success. Some generalized comments on the transition of a nomadic hunting culture to a farming society and on the artists' techniques provide the bulk of the background. This information is padded with Dewey's reminiscences of childhood tours through the Southwest to look at the rock art, and her personal speculation regarding who may have created it and what it means. Attempting to convey a sense of awe for the cryptic images and their mysterious creators, Dewey occasionally employs romanticized and adult-oriented prose: "From the time the first human beings banged one rock on another, rock art has created visual connections. The images link the commonplace with the mysterious. Rock art is concerned with spirits, fear, and hope. These ancient marks on stone are maps of the human heart, mind, and imagination." It is unclear whether the pastel pictures are intended to replicate, or merely emulate, the Anasazi images. Although the text distinguishes between petroglyphs ("pecked" into the stone) and pictographs (painted on stone), and it remarks on the range of sizes (from a few inches to ten feet), the homogenous illustrations fail to convey these differences. A map of the Anasazi region is included, but no sources for further reading are offered. EB
As the title suggests, the ten entries here are original stories (some fictional, some autobiographical, and probably all a bit of both) about growing up, by well-known children’s authors ranging from Katherine Paterson to Walter Dean Myers to Susan Cooper. The subject of recalling experiences of youth is probably more inherently interesting to adults than it is to children, and a few of the stories have trouble making it across that barrier; some of the recollections don’t quite have the narrative impact readers might like. The best stories, however, such as Mary Pope Osborne’s “All-Ball,” which tells of the author’s fixation on a beloved but doomed toy in the face of her father’s departure, and Laurence Yep’s “The Great Rat Hunt,” which amusingly depicts young Laurence’s unexpected bonding with his father through the title experience, are accessible to those not yet gifted with the luxury of hindsight. The variety of tone, which ranges from Francesca Lia Block’s wistfulness in “Blue” to the vigorous comedy of Avi’s “Scout’s Honor,” adds to the collection’s appeal. A childhood picture of the author and pertinent notes are included with each story; author biographies are appended. DS

FLORIAN, DOUGLAS

ISBN 0-15-200497-1 $16.00 R 5-8 yrs

What Florian previously did for camels, sloths, and moles (beast feast, BCCB 8/94) he now does for egrets, storks, white-tailed kites, and their avian ilk. Compact poems in a variety of meters and forms offer creative interpretations of, rather than field guides to, the essence of each bird species (“Two things I know about the vulture:/ Its beak/ is strong./ It’s weak/ on culture.”—“The Vulture”). While the ingenuity level flags occasionally, the poems are generally pithy and entertaining, and the book’s clean-lined design attractively presents both poetry and art. The fluid and inventive watercolors set the verse off perfectly, with a wheeled roadrunner, a mynah with a cranium stuffed with a tape recorder, and a medal-bedecked frigate bird all possessing a certain luminous beauty in addition to their poker-faced interpretation of the poetic metaphor. The subject here is a bit more arcane than that of the previous book, but avid junior birdmen and those with a taste for vivid poetry will find this worth sticking their beaks into. DS

FOX, MEM

Feathers and Fools; illus. by Nicholas Wilton. Harcourt, 1996 36p
ISBN 0-15-200473-4 $16.00 M 6-9 yrs

Glamorous, stylized paintings obliquely illustrate this featherweight fable about two species, peacocks and swans, that learn the terrible consequences of fear and intolerance. Afraid that the swans they ridicule might fly ashore and conquer them, the peacocks lay in a secret artillery of sharpened feathers for defense. The swans then do the same and the arms race is on until the peacocks spot a swan flying overhead, reed in beak. The reed was intended for nest-making, but the peacocks fear the worst and the war begins: “Soon cries filled the air and blood darkened the earth. A cloud of feathers rose into the sky and haunted the sun.” Soon, all the birds are slaughtered, but a sign of renewal appears: “Then, in the shadows of the gardens, an egg hatched, and a small bird staggered out into the
bloodstained stillness." Enough, already. Fox's metaphorical hammer may ring soft, but it rings relentlessly. At least Dr. Seuss, in the similarly themed *Butter Battle Book*, had the good grace to be funny. Handsomely designed if somewhat gift-wrappy in effect, this is bound to lure adults attracted by the faux-naïf message. RS

**FRENCH, VIVIAN**  *Once upon a Picnic*; illus. by John Prater. Candlewick, 1996 [26p]
Reviewed from galleys Ad 4-7 yrs

The family from *Once upon a Time* (BCCB 4/93) goes on a picnic, and while Mom and Dad remain oblivious, their little boy spots all sorts of folktales in action: the Three Bears out for a romp, Little Red Riding Hood taking on the wolf, the giant who kicks off his smelly ol’ shoe which becomes a house for an old woman and her progeny. The rhyming text is more labored than in the previous book (“All those children/ in that shoe./ Look how much/ they have to do!”) and not quite as funny, for there’s no tension between what the boy sees and says, as the innocent eye of the first book has turned into an experienced one in the second (“Look! A witch!/ I think her spell/ isn’t working/ very well”). The pictures, though, are a playground of favorite folk tales simply lined to expressive intent. The lower-right recto wordless vignettes of the troll and the billy goats comprise a picture book all unto itself, tweaked by the Gingerbread Man who slips over the bridge while the troll is still recovering from the Biggest Brother of Them All. RS

**GANERI, ANITA, ad.**  *Out of the Ark: Stories from the World’s Religions*; illus. by Jackie Morris. Harcourt, 1996 96p
ISBN 0-15-200943-4 $18.00 R 7-12 yrs

Drawn primarily from scriptural and oral traditions of major world religions, thirty-four brief offerings are grouped by themes such as Flood Stories; War, Pestilence, and Persecution; and Lives of Religious Leaders. Selections are diverse, ranging from the ghostly Shinto love story of creator gods Izanami and Izanagi, to the sardonically humorous Jewish tale of how Evil survived the Flood. Where possible, a motif from one tale is reprised in the next: Shiva’s hand-fashioned son Ganesh is followed by the clay Golem of Prague, and the Christian nativity story echoes the Islamic tale of Maryam and the virgin birth. Ganeri’s retellings, brisk, informal, and decidedly occidental in tone, lack cultural particularity but are comfortably approachable. Abundant watercolor paintings are at once energetic and elegant; Morris meticulously controls the bleeding and blending of her colors to achieve a batik-like effect. Middle grade readers, who can easily peruse these selections on their own, will nonetheless enjoy hearing them read aloud. A glossary and a ready reference section are included, but source notes are not. EB

**GOROG, JUDITH**  *When Nobody's Home: Fifteen Baby-Sitting Tales of Terror*. Scholastic, 1996 [176p]
ISBN 0-590-46862-6 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

Gorog, author of the collection *Please Do Not Touch* (BCCB 9/93), offers fifteen more stories, here focusing on that enduring theme of babysitting. Some stories
are classic "doomed babysitter" tales (several, in fact, are well-known urban legends, although not all contained babysitters in their oral versions), some are tales of doomed, or at least beset, babysittees, and some are just strange things that happened during babysitting; several, including a couple of the urban legends, end with a note insisting that the foregoing is a true story, which is an entertaining nod to the tradition. The stories often aren't as tight as they should be (or as their oral versions generally are), so that the impact is lessened and their unlikeliness more apparent, and the book's framing device (a strange babysitter brings this collection with her on a job) is superfluous. There are still some inventive tales in here ("Toads and Slime," about a babysitter cursed with emitting said grislies from her mouth whenever she speaks, and "Double Pay," about a girl with a very important but very eerie sitting job, are two of the best), the variation in tone from funny to spooky keeps things interesting, and Gorog has a good sense of what kind of mayhem young readers will be drawn to. Poe this isn't, but the book's undemanding spookiness would make it a great slumber-party readaloud. DS


A storyteller’s voice informs this lively if lengthy present-tense tale of a frog who, despite the scorn of all the other animals, is determined to sing the boogie-woogie blues: "I'm tired of holding all this inside me. I've got talent. I want to sing." But in his neck of the woods, only birds sing, and it’s fortitude and bravery as much as talent that gain Frog his success at the Big Time Weekly Concert. Frog’s dooba-dooba-doobas dance across the page as the animals forget their misgivings and inhibitions and join in. Learn the simple melody printed on the endpapers, and your story-hour audiences will join in too. Scratchboard illustrations are as wide-awake as the text, as Frog jives and struts and takes center stage (only to, initially, dodge the fruit thrown by the audience). Try this on your shy ones. RS


Motherless Eliza Yates has suffered enough torment at the hands of her nasty, dishonest relations; with a change of clothes and shorn locks, she transforms herself into Elijah Bates and hits the road to Tinville, Colorado, in search of her father. Teenage con artist Calvin Featherstone (who is, coincidentally, heading toward Tinville to avenge his father’s death) takes on Eli as a sidekick, and the pair wins and loses small fortunes fleecing the citizenry along the way. After a series of predictable escapades, Eli is reunited with Papa, and Calvin, easily reconciled to the discovery that his father was a rotter (shot to death by Papa Yates), is headed home to college in Boston. Save for a bath-house scene in which Calvin nearly discovers Eli’s gender, and a chaste peck on the cheek as the pair part, Hahn makes little of Eli’s secret identity; in fact, Eliza could well be Elijah with minimal impact on the plot. This amiable but slight romp offers a crash course in Western conventions to readers new to the genre. EB
HAYES, JOE  A Spoon for Every Bite; illus. by Rebecca Leer. Orchard, 1996  [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09499-5  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  5-8 yrs

Hayes combines two themes from Southwestern Hispanic tradition—rich and poor compadres, and the tortilla as an eating utensil—into a humorous tale in which a poor couple teaches their boastful neighbor a lesson. When the rich guest brags that he can use a different spoon every day of the year, his humble hosts remark, "We have a friend . . . who uses a different spoon for every bite he eats." This drives the greedy guest into a frenzy of acquisition; impoverished from amassing and discarding spoons, he demands to meet this man whose wealth is evidently greater than his own, only to learn that their friend is an Indian who scoops up his meals with a stack of tortillas. Leer complements the lively text with pastel illustrations in rich and lustrous tones reminiscent of oil paintings; expressive countenances reveal the blustering rich man to be foolish rather than mean-spirited, and the poor couple, coyly exchanging sidelong glances, able to carry their superiority with humor and good grace. A concluding "Note for Readers and Storytellers" discusses the oft-told joke and offers background on los dos compadres tales. EB

HO, MINFONG  Hush!: A Thai Lullaby; illus. by Holly Meade. Kroupa/Orchard, 1996  [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09500-2  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  2-5 yrs

Mama has just cradled her son in his hammock bed, but his rest will surely be disturbed by the noises of the forest creatures. The determined mother shushes them all—small mosquito, loose-limbed monkey, glossy white duck, great big elephant—with a lyrical reprimand, "Green frog, green frog, don't come leaping./ Can't you see that/ Baby's sleeping?" By the time "all is quiet, all is still./ The mother dozes/ at the windowsill," the only one left awake is Baby, with "his eyes bright and round." Soothing cadence and steady repetitions strike the right chord for a bedtime selection, but listeners not quite ready to meet the sandman will be diverted by the animals' op-op and jiak-jiak and tuk-ghaa, tuk-ghaa calls and will follow Baby's antics as he sneaks out of his hammock to creep around the porch and swing from the rails while his mother is otherwise engaged. Tropical forest and stilt house of cut paper are rendered in placid shades of olive and tan, with figures outlined in earthy orange ink. A double-page spread in which all the animals are asleep in their proper resting places will introduce the youngest audience to the pleasures of search-and-find pictures. EB

HODGES, MARGARET, ad.  Comus; ad. from A Masque at Ludlow Castle by John Milton; illus. by Trina Schart Hyman. Holiday House, 1996  32p
ISBN 0-8234-1146-X  $16.95  Ad  6-9 yrs

Alice is lost and alone in the deep woods, her brothers having gone off to find her sustenance while she rests for a moment, when Comus the magician appears, disguised as a shepherd, and leads her to his lair instead of to promised safety. Meanwhile, a good spirit appears to Alice's brothers and instructs them on how to save her; they successfully chase off Comus but finally need the aid of the nymph Sabrina to release Alice from her spell. Milton's masque limning the power of chastity is
rather an odd choice for a picture-book adaptation, and indeed the result is problematic. Hodges simply makes Alice "truly good" and gets on to the darker part of the story, but the change of virtues makes the need for dual rescue baffling and undercuts the sinister temptation of Comus' power. The events in this version seem random, and while the formality of the prose adaptation gives it some classic fairy-tale atmosphere, the account is too long and too wordy for most young audiences. The illustrations offer the creepiest old forest this side of Arthur Rackham, with menacing members of Comus' transformed menagerie peering through the trees at palely vulnerable Alice; Hyman's depiction of the beneficent Sabrina doesn't, unfortunately, manage to make the nymph interesting, but her portraits of Comus' cave are darkly and gaudily decadent. A historical note about the performance of the masque is included. DS


This sequel to The Journey Home (BCCB 9/90) reunites readers with Maggie and Annie Lavin, orphan-train children now settled for three years with the Russels. Although Uncle James and Aunt Priscilla now have a year-old son of their own, the sisters' place in the family seems comfortable and secure. Among their prairie neighbors, however, unresolved Civil War hostility, ethnic biases, and contradictory views on religious practices erupt, and the girls are drawn into the vortex of the debate when their uncle arrives from Ireland, anxious to claim his nieces and raise them Catholic. Although thorny issues are often articulated through forced dialogues, the messy tangle of deeply held prejudices and animosities is authentic and presented with respect for divergent opinions. A satisfying conclusion finds the girls safely ensconced with the Russels yet lovingly attached to their uncle, who admits, "May God and the Church forgive me, but you're better off here." Holland hints at an imminent romance for Maggie, leaving the Russels' cabin door ajar for possible further visits with the Lavin sisters. EB


Here's a winning combination: a well-constructed science lesson and a well-drawn murder mystery. In brief chapters, Jackson reconstructs an actual 1988-89 investigation of a puzzling cache of bones discovered in a remote area of a Boy Scout camp. Although the importance of all areas of the investigation is stressed, it is the work of the bone specialists and forensic sculptors that crack the case. Jackson introduces each stage of their examination with a cogent explanation of some fragment of evidence yielded by bones (growth indicators that help determine age, tendon markings that suggest build and weight, etc.), and then turns to the scientist's specific contribution to this case. Along the way she even poses some challenges as a sort of self-quiz of the readers' forensic abilities. But while she snares her audience with the thrill of the scientific chase, Jackson does not allow them to forget the enormity of the crime, as snapshots of the victim, smiling and laughing in a happy past, are superimposed on skull images to clinch a positive identification and bring the perpetrator to justice. Crisp photographs, often presented in series,
guide viewers smoothly through the science explications. Appended materials include discussion of several modern examinations of historic remains, descriptions of other forensic fields, a partial glossary of scientific terms, and a bone chart. EB


Reviewed from galleys

Daisy is determined to paint the winning entry in the art competition ("Paint your favorite things"), so she packs up her dog Duggie and travels after her favorite artists, visiting Van Gogh’s St. Rémy, Monet’s Rouen, Chagall’s Vitebsk, Gauguin’s Tahiti, and Pollock’s Wyoming and New York. Finally she returns home and realizes that’s where her favorite things really were all along, and she paints up her own entry of hearth and home, dog and parents. The story doesn’t have too much impact on its own (and kids may have trouble understanding the “almost” fame of the ending—this reviewer remains puzzled); the pleasures here lie in the visuals. Daisy and Duggie are black-and-white, breezily scrawled cut-outs who have two spreads in each location: in the first they rub shoulders with a famous painter and with figures from his paintings against a background inspired by a specific work of art; on the next spread, Daisy sends a postcard featuring that work of art back to her parents, as small symbols (a monochromatic stars and stripes, for instance, for America) foretell her next destination. The dramatic hues and kinetic collages, as well as the amusing homages, make Daisy’s peregrinations worth looking at, although there are a few questionable aspects (Belarus is neither Russia, as Daisy’s suitcase label suggests, nor the Soviet Union, as the stamp she uses states; the painting representing Chagall is not a particularly characteristic work; and it’s not clear why Jackson Pollock gets two locations when everybody else only gets one). This might best be used as sort of a light-hearted art history game; it’s less knowing and perhaps therefore more accessible than dePaola’s *Bonjour, Mr. Satie* (BCCB 3/91). Brief biographical notes on the artists are included. DS

**Kroll, Steven** *Pony Express*; illus. by Dan Andreasen. Scholastic, 1996 [40p] ISBN 0-590-20239-1 $16.95

Reviewed from galleys

After an introduction to the genesis of the relay mail system, readers accompany the riders on their first ten-day run between Sacramento and St. Joseph, arriving at the route termini to welcomes of bands and bonfires and cheering crowds. Kroll details the inclement weather, challenging terrain, and boggled connections that were conquered at breakneck pace by the determined riders. Then he immediately follows the account of the triumphal run with a discussion of the factors that shut down the Pony Express. If the transition is abrupt, it is also accurate, neatly underscoring the bittersweet termination of service a mere eighteen months after its inception. Facing pages feature a full page of text on parchment-like background opposite a romantic, if stiff, full-page painting, both posted on tawny, richly grained board. This doesn’t have the extensive historical detail of van der Linde’s *The Pony Express* (BCCB 7/93), but it’s a dramatic account. Substantial concluding notes comment on the state of mail delivery service before and after 1860-61. Route map, bibliography, and index are included. EB
Picture-book biography has entered an innovative stage with the likes of Jonah Winter's *Diego* (BCCB 11/91), Diane Stanley's *Peter the Great* (10/86), and Allen Say's *El Chino* (9/90). Now Krull and Diaz join the ranks with an inspiring success story about a baby born with the odds against her: she weighed only four pounds at birth, she was black and poor in a racist southern town during the 1940s, and she was crippled with polio as a child. But she had four points in her favor: a devoted mother, supportive brothers and sisters (twenty-one of them, in fact), a deep religious faith, and an inner strength that pushed her to work through her paralysis, onto the basketball court, and all the way to three Olympic gold medals as a sprinter. If there's any stinting in this simply phrased, sensitively selective account, it's in the stage of her training on the track. In a single sentence Rudolph leaps from discovery by an athletic coach to triumph in Rome, but perhaps it's valid to emphasize the childhood struggles in which her achievements were rooted. Diaz' artwork reinforces the mythic-hero aspects of the narrative with deeply framed compositions featuring stylized, statuesque figures of robotic power. In fact, the one quibble with his depictions might be the Herculean stoutness of Wilma jumping over a wagon, an illustration that faces a sentence stating "she was always so small and sickly." As he did in the Caldecott Medal book *Smoky Night* (BCCB 3/94) by Eve Bunting, Diaz has textured the background paper here according to story motifs—straw packing material for the picture in which Wilma and her mother send the hated leg-brace back to the hospital, netting for a basketball game, dirt for a race, the stars and stripes for an award ceremony, footprints on the endpapers. Because these backgrounds are all brown-hued, and brown skin tones dominate the illustrations, there's no distraction of focus despite the ambitious layout and complex typeface. With the kind of concentration that Rudolph mustered to win her way, Diaz rivets our attention with thick outlines and organic shapes that carry us from enforced stillness to driving motion in the sweep of one brief book. BH


Reviewed from galleys

The son of the Inca Sun King lies dying, and the high priest determines that only the waters from the lake at the corner of the earth, drunk from a golden flask, can save him. Miro's brothers attempt the search but, failing to find the lake, they try to pass off common water to the prince and are jailed for their ruse. The spirited Miro, friendly since childhood with the Andean animals and birds, receives from the macaws a magical feather fan that send her flying to the lake and helps her defeat its monster guardians. Miro delivers the water to save the prince, and risks the wrath of the Sun King himself when she turns down his royal reward to live forever in the palace: "Thank you, . . . but here I would be like a yellow monkey on a leash." Kurtz expands upon an Incan folktale, "The Search for the Magic Lake," casting it in the dignified, almost reverent prose of a high fantasy quest tale. Frampton's tinted woodcuts, rugged and bold befitting Miro's adventures, incor-
porate intricately patterned motifs from Incan art in strong and rugged earthtones.

In an introductory note, Kurtz credits her source and indicates the additions she has made to the tale. EB

**LYNCH, CHRIS** *Mick: Blue-Eyed Son #1.* HarperCollins, 1996 [128p]

**Blood Relations: Blue-Eyed Son #2.** HarperCollins, 1996 [192p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-025399-1 $13.89

**Dog Eat Dog: Blue-Eyed Son #3.** HarperCollins, 1996 [144p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027210-4 $13.89
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 8-12

It's taken Mick until junior year to realize that life demands more of him than to follow in the footsteps of his drunken, bigoted, morally bankrupt brother Terry. But breaking with the mores of his close-knit Irish neighborhood, which expects a younger son to follow his brother who follows his father, is an uphill, if not impossible, battle. *Mick* establishes the setting and the problem: when Mick refuses to participate in Terry's hate-mongering activities and begins to hang out with new Latino friends, Terry has him viciously beaten. *Blood Relations* follows Mick's quest for physical and psychic refuge; the support of his mysterious friend Toy, the reluctant affection of the cool beauty Evelyn, and a fleeting sexual encounter with Toy's young mother provide him some temporary comfort, but ultimately demonstrate that he can't cast off his identity by shaking off his address. *Dog Eat Dog* pits the brothers against each other in a final showdown, winner take home, with trained fighting dogs as their proxies in battle. Off to a fine start in *Mick*, masterfully creating a closed community in which the gym and pub define the character of their patrons, Lynch loses some steam by book two, relying on more prosaically drawn, repetitive scenes of Mick's failures and Terry's sadism to set the stage for the big finish. But when that finish finally arrives, the unrelenting brutalities of the earlier volumes will leave the audience virtually unshockable. Toy's revelation that he is gay elicits only the mildest surprise, and when, after Mick's dog breaks Terry's neck, Mick rides off into the sunset on the back of Toy's motorcycle, we can only wonder why he didn't leave sooner. EB

Reviewed from galleys R 6-9 yrs

A subtly engaging picture book recounts a family's venture into desert homesteading during the year 1919, when Papa tries to realize his dream of farming land near Yuma, Arizona, while keeping his daytime job in an office. Mama is reluctant but brave, while the four girls vary in their responses. Most enthusiastic is Emily, who revels in the beauty of the landscape despite sandstorms, scorpions, and outhouse facilities. There's something sad as well as realistic in the parents' decision to move back into town, where Papa wants to realize another ambition of "building some colleges." The ending will give even young listeners a taste of the poignance of memory. "If only Papa could have seen this!" says one of the sisters, now a grand-
mother viewing the fields where they had once seen bare slopes. "This is what he always saw," says an elderly Emily, with a smile. Root's watercolor paintings are deep in hue and skillfully drafted, suggesting both action and emotion without exaggerating either. Her informal compositions, varied in shape and placement across the pages, pace a longish text into manageable chunks; there's plenty for listeners to look at on this journey into family history. BH

ISBN 0-15-227562-2 $15.00 R 3-6 yrs

Raising the alarm in the first spread is the titular Mrs. McGuire, gazing intently into the camera for the evening news. "Where? Where?" said Mrs. Bear" as she sees the report in an electronics store. "Downtown!" said Mrs. Brown," who is up a ladder painting the outside of the building. And so it goes, until a hefty chunk of the urban population is assembled in and around an apartment in which a massive birthday cake is ablaze with candles. Martin concocts a few pithy pairings of character and name: rotund Mrs. Kelp clings to a fish bowl, Mrs. Bear is swaddled in an enormous, fleecy brown coat, and Mrs. Kopp is—yup—a policewoman. However, much of the visual humor may zip past a young audience. Mrs. McGuire's colleague at the newsdesk is a vacuous blond Adonis with more smile than smarts, and the male members of the fire squad forget their more pressing duties to fetch water for buxom, leggy Mrs. Votter. A pratfall ending ("'Oh, help us and save us!' said Mrs. McDavis,/ as she slid down the stairs with a sack of potatoes") is as lame as its rhyme. Still, there's an appealing mock-melodrama to Egielski's gouache paintings, undeniable bounce and energy to the slight text, and enough overall screwy confusion to satisfy antsy lap-sitters. EB

MARTIN, JANE READ Now I Will Never Leave the Dinner Table; written by Jane Read Martin and Patricia Marx; illus. by Roz Chast. HarperCollins, 1996 [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024794-0 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-8 yrs

This is a sequel to the creative team's Now Everybody Really Hates Me (BCCB 12/93); here Patty Jane, the stubborn narrator, has been informed by her babysitting older sister that she can't leave the table until she takes a bite of her spinach and swallows it. Patty Jane hates spinach and, at least for awhile, hates her sister Joy, and she revels in imagining ways to get rid of this plague on her family. This doesn't walk the dual-audience tightrope as well as the first book: the child's voice here is less authentic, Patty Jane's resentment isn't as heartily drawn, and her final relenting seems arbitrary. P.J. is still an entertainingly offended heroine, however, and Roz Chast's wiry-lined watercolors, with their amusing diagrams, framing devices, and speech balloons, have a droll energy of their own. DS

MATAS, CAROL After the War. Simon, 1996 [128p]
ISBN 0-689-80350-8 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 6-9

The author of several other novels set during World War II, Matas casts this docudrama into the form of a story related by Ruth Mendenberg, a fifteen-year-old survivor of the Ostroviec ghetto, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and post-war Polish
anti-Semitic pogroms. Italicized flashbacks give us a glimpse of her horrific memo-
ries as she joins a Zionist group that makes its way across dangerous borders, with the
goal of illegal entry into Israel. Although their ship is attacked by the British and Ruth is taken to a refugee camp in Cyprus along with her companions, she does find one of her brothers (nearly eighty members of her family are dead) and escapes with her boyfriend to the promised land. The action is fast paced and the history well researched, but too much information has been loaded onto the dia-
logue and first-person narrative. In addition to having an unbelievably broad per-
spective on the European/Middle Eastern political panorama ("Betar is aligned
with the Irgun in Palestine, a militant group which launches attacks on the British
to try to help them decide to leave Palestine"), Ruth has a self-conscious flippancy ("Of course, I can’t swim, they don’t give lessons in concentration camps") that
seems to belong more to a 1990s suburban middle-schooler than to a 1940s victim
of the Holocaust. What’s realized well is not the traumatic experiences them-
selves—which seem almost generically packed into stories within a story here—but the day-to-day anxiety of loners trying to connect with each other; despite the
expository tone, Matas’ re-creation of life on the run acquires some authentic ur-
gency. BH

MEYER, CAROLYN  In a Different Light: Growing Up in a Yup’ik Eskimo Village in
ISBN 0-689-80146-7 $17.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-9
Returning to the same fictional village and family she explored in Eskimos: Grow-
ing Up in a Changing Culture (BCCB 4/78), Meyer looks at some of the changes
Yup’ik Eskimos have seen in the ensuing generation. Her choice to give informa-
tion on hunting, education, family life, etc. within a fictionalized framework is an
odd one, for we don’t always know what is factual information and what is part of
the “story” (loosely termed; there really isn’t a plot). When she states, for example,
that “a few years ago there was a scandal when Native Alaskan poachers were caught
on videotape, gunning down a herd of walrus,” how are we to know if this event
actually occurred? That said, the synthesis of ecological facts, Yup’ik traditions,
and the how-to’s of everyday life is smooth, and is also honest about problems
such as poverty and alcoholism—there’s no new-agey glossing-over of contempo-
rary dilemmas. Since the “characters” are drawn to be examples rather than indi-
viduals (“this is how many Yup’iks of this remote area live”) they are too generalized
to engender much empathy; still, the author’s respect for her subject is apparent.
Photos (of whom?) will be included in the finished book, which will also have a
glossary, bibliography, and an index. RS

ISBN 0-8050-4217-2 $16.95  R Gr. 7-12
The book opens by telling of an itinerant medieval juggler’s visit to the castle of a
despotic count, who punishes the juggler for his disobedience by chopping his
hand off. The story then goes back to follow that juggler, Beran, from his peasant
childhood, when he left his devastated village and began to make his way alone in
a dangerous world, to his increasing skill in the art of juggling, and to his fate at the
count’s castle; then we see Beran marry and become an innkeeper, make his pil-
grimage to the Holy Land, and finally return home to die at a peaceful old age. Chroni-
cles of an entire fictional life are rare in children’s and YA literature, but
this book sustains its interest level quite well. In addition to Morressy’s excellent realization of the medieval world and mindset (a harder-edged portrait than those drawn in either of Karen Cushman’s books, *Catherine Called Birdy*, BCCB 6/94 and *The Midwife’s Apprentice*, 5/95, or in Frances Temple’s *The Ramsay Scallop*, 4/94), he gives his hero one fascinating and continuing problem: Beran has sold his soul to the devil in exchange for his juggling gifts, and he has repented of the bargain. The book’s refusal to treat its Faust story as fantasy, its unforced period evocation, and its deliberately paced roaming coax the reader into sharing as well as encountering its medieval understanding; there’s also glamor, danger, and action in many of Beran’s adventures. Readers looking for a challenging and unusual trip back in time may find this just the ticket. A note about Morressy’s sources on medieval life is included. DS

**Myers, Anna**  *Fire in the Hills.* Walker, 1996  [176p]
ISBN 0-8027-8421-6 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 7-10

Hallie is only fifteen when her mother dies in childbirth, leaving her the woman of the house in charge of the four younger siblings while her father and older brother work their Oklahoma farm. Times get even harder when that older brother, who had helped curb bigotry towards local German-Americans, joins the army to fight in World War I; Hallie then risks incurring further patriotic wrath from the community by helping a young draft-dodger who hides out in the local woods. Myers has a much sharper sense of authenticity than most writers depicting this era, and her characters, such as Hallie’s tough but supportive neighbor, Mary Jones, are rich and unglamorized. There’s too much going on in the plot, however, and most of it all gets cobbled together overwhelmingly at the end after an excessively melodramatic scene of danger and rescue. Fans of historical fiction who’ve enjoyed the strength of Hallie’s portrayal probably won’t mind. DS

**Nash, Ogden**  *Custard the Dragon and the Wicked Knight;* illus. by Lynn Munsinger. Little, 1996  [32p]
ISBN 0-316-59882-8 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  5-8 yrs

A sequel to Nash’s poem “The Tale of Custard the Dragon” (and to the Munsinger-illustrated book of the same), this sees cowardly Custard again forced into unwilling heroism, this time against the wicked knight Sir Garagoyle, who has abducted Custard’s beloved mistress, Belinda. Nash’s verse has some entertaining linguistic fillips, although this isn’t his most meticulously scanned work; the story, while enjoyable, is essentially a repeat of Custard’s first adventure. Munsinger’s Muppetish Custard hams up the melodrama with toothy relish, with the big green guy so inherently cuddly that you’re not sure why Belinda even bothers with her other pets. Fans will appreciate this second helping of Custard. DS

**Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds**  *Alice in Lace.* Karl/Atheneum, 1996  [144p]
ISBN 0-689-80358-3 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 5-8

“Patrick and I were getting married, Pamela was pregnant, and Elizabeth was buying a car,” but don’t be alarmed, faithful Alice fans, this is simply the Critical Choices unit in Alice’s eighth-grade health class. The in-class critical choices are
hard enough—Alice and Patrick quarrel to the point of temporary breakup about
their wedding—but real life is producing its own thorny questions. Did Miss
Summers’ romance with Alice’s father cool because she was seeing the vice-prin-
cipal? Will Elizabeth survive her mother’s pregnancy without dying of embarrass-
ment? Did the popular health teacher actually make a sexually harassing remark to
Alice’s classmate? (No.) There’s a bit more contrivance here than is usual for this
series, particularly in the matter surrounding the accusation of the teacher, but
Naylor’s still one of our best writers of everyday junior-high life. It’s entertaining
to see Alice and Patrick’s relationship add a few new dynamics (as does older brother
Lester’s relationship with both his girlfriends), and we remain, as always, com-
pletely invested in and entertained by the process of Alice’s maturation. DS

NEUFELD, JOHN  *Gaps in Stone Walls.*  Atheneum, 1996  [192p]
ISBN 0-689-80102-5  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 5-8

The murder of Ned Nickerson, the most despised man in Chilmark, would hardly
trouble his neighbors were it not for the inevitable investigation. Twelve-year-old
Merry Skiffe has particular reasons for concern—she cannot verify her whereabouts
on the night of the murder, her deafness impedes communication with the inves-
tigator, and her young age hinders her clumsy efforts to flee. The tale is set in a
nineteenth-century community on Martha’s Vineyard, once remarkable for its high
incidence of deafness among the population. Never explicitely introducing charac-
ters as deaf, Neufeld cunningly allows the reader to infer this information through
the characters’ interrelationships. The central murder mystery, however, is more
clumsily handled, and the audience seldom empathizes with Merry’s anxiety to
prove her innocence. The revelation of who did it is strained, and the fact that the
killer goes free will evoke only mild puzzlement rather than relief or outrage. Those
seeking a tense mystery can give it a pass, but historical fiction buffs will find much
to enjoy in observing the methods of communication developed over time by this
tight-knit community. EB

ONYEFULU, IFEOMA  *Ogbo: Sharing Life in an African Village,*
written and illus. with photographs by Ifeoma Onyefulu.  Gulliver/Harcourt, 1996  [26p]
Reviewed from galleys  R  6-9 yrs

Six-year-old Obioma introduces readers to the ogbo, or age group, a social struc-
ture common in Nigerian village life, in which those persons born within a given
span of years perform a particular service to their village community. Although
Obioma is still too young to take an active part in her own ogbo, she relates some
of the responsibilities of her older relatives. Her ten-year-old brother works within
his ogbo to maintain the village square; Mama’s ogbo keeps the stream free of
refuse; Papa’s group makes community decisions; even Uncle Chike, who now
lives in the city, returns to his ogbo to build houses for those who cannot afford to
pay for the construction. Each stop on Obioma’s village tour is illuminated by
several large color photos of the ogbos in action, and if some of the younger sub-
jects seem to deliberately mug for the camera, the images nonetheless convey the
satisfaction these villagers find in their cooperative labor. In her opening remarks,
Onyefulu discusses variations in ogbo composition and she thoughtfully includes
definitions and pronunciations of Nigerian terms within her text. Keep this title
in mind when Kwanzaa next comes around or any time you want a little lesson in cooperation. EB

OTFINOSKI, STEVE  The Kid's Guide to Money: Earning It, Saving It, Spending It, Growing It, Sharing It; illus. by Kelly Kennedy. Scholastic, 1996  [128p]
ISBN 0-590-53850-0 $12.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-6

Breezy and chatty, this offers a quick survey of money management from running a lemonade stand to preparing a budget, from opening a savings account to getting a credit card. As Otfinoski acknowledges, much of his information will have little direct application to the financial lives of young readers, and it's a little jarring to go from paper routes to tax deductions to IRAs in the same book. There isn't much more than a cursory discussion of any one subject, so the book is less helpful than it might be in job-hunting, budgeting, etc., but the sequencing—earning, spending, banking, sharing, borrowing, and investing—is a useful lesson in itself, and definitions are clear if sometimes limited. Appendices, including a directory, reading list, glossary, and index as well as a handy introduction to reading stock charts, are included. RS

PATERSON, KATHERINE, ad.  The Angel & the Donkey; illus. by Alexander Koshkin. Clarion, 1996  [37p]
ISBN 0-395-68969-4 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 7-10 yrs

Paterson retells the story from the Book of Numbers in which the Moab king Balak summons soothsayer Balaam to curse the Israelites, but through the intervention of God, an angel, and a talking donkey, Balaam is inspired to bless this people instead. While Paterson stays close to both the events and the intent of the scriptural tale, she does take a number of literary liberties. That Balaam's greed impels him to visit Balak is stated here explicitly; no mention is made of God's problematic directive to embark on the journey. Paterson stretches the suspense by revealing to the audience the angel on the road only when he is revealed to Balaam himself. Balaam's poetic oracles have been diluted into prose, and dialogue is jarringly modern and informal (“Tell Balaam to get on that donkey of his and come here immediately.” “I'd better sleep on it”). Koshkin's jewel-toned mixed media paintings are fussily composed and stiffly rendered; unvaryingly troubled expressions of all characters contrast oddly with textual attempts to capture the humor of Balaam's dilemma. Notes on the Bible story's authorship are included. EB

PENNEBAKER, RUTH  Don't Think Twice. Holt, 1996  [196p]
ISBN 0-8050-4407-8 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-12

Anne is seventeen, but instead of embarking on senior year she's enconced in a home for unwed mothers in the Texan back of beyond. It's 1967 and there aren't many options for young pregnant single women, so she's got a lot of company. Anne's sometimes disdainful narration tells of her remembering the misplaced love that had got her where she was, but also of the rapes, the flawed contraception, and the unluckiness that resulted in the other girls' pregnancies; she also examines the changes her pregnancy has made in her relationship with her family.
The subject matter isn’t new, but Pennebaker writes about it smoothly and well: Anne’s falling in love and, subsequently, from family grace is believably portrayed. The real strength here is the varied portraits of the residents of the home, ranging from brassy Nancy to sanctimonious Harriet to Anne’s nice roommate, Cheryl (although, since the girls are all of different faiths, classes, and regions of origin, it’s not clear how they all ended up in this particular home). A realistic treatment but with soapishly enticing elements, this will appeal to readers who enjoyed Doherty’s *Dear Nobody* (BCCB 12/92). DS

**Pollock, Penny, ad.** *The Turkey Girl: A Zuni Cinderella Story;* illus. by Ed Young. Little, 1996 32p ISBN 0-316-71314-7 $16.95 R 5-8 yrs

While an East Coast native variant of Cinderella, “The Scar-faced Girl,” has often been retold, “The Turkey Girl” has been less widely disseminated because it does not fit into the European happily-ever-after fairy tale mode. This Zuni story, which is also available in *The Girl Who Married the Moon* (BCCB 1/95) by Joseph Bruchac and Gayle Ross, relates the fate of an orphaned girl ostracized in her village and befriended only by the turkeys whom she tends. When they magically clothe her for a traditional dance, demanding only that she return before sunset to take care of them, she forgets her charge and loses both her magical attire and the turkeys, who scatter wild into the mountains. Young’s art is ideally understated in suggesting both action and setting through hazy, sun-paled daytime vistas or moody twilight scenes. The lure of the dance, which is underscored in Pollock’s narrative by the girl’s remembering her promise but postponing her departure, is illustrated with a blazing sunset in one double spread, followed by another showing deep purple darkness when the girl returns to the empty pen. This is a serious precautionary/pourquoi tale that both adaptor and artist have treated with the dignity it deserves. BH


The romance between beautiful Leah of Chopski and brilliant Chonon of Klopski is literally a match made in heaven: the angels decided it forty days before they were born. Unfortunately, Leah’s parents have determined otherwise. They’ve arranged for Leah to marry “Mean Old Benya, the most powerful man in Chopski.” In the slyest of East European Yiddish storytelling traditions, the angels get their way when Leah is inhabited on her wedding day by a deep-voiced dybbuk with a Klopski accent. “‘Why is her voice so strange?’ . . . ‘A tiny sore throat,’ Leah’s mother said. ‘No reason to be alarmed.’” Even Rabbi Pinchik’s anti-dybbuk equipment is neutralized (“‘Achoo!’ Leah sneezed. . . . And all the candles blew out”) before the Grand Rabbi of Chopski persuades the family to send for the right groom. The conversational tone of the narrative is light and nimble, while the paintings have an airy, Chagallian humor that leaves plenty of room for imaginative listeners to float their own details among Podwal’s lyrically colored, impressionistic Jewish motifs. It’s fun and it’s funny—one of those picture books which, by staying true to an ethnic tradition, reaches beyond it as well. BH
Pullman, Philip  *The Golden Compass.* Knopf, 1996  [416p]  
ISBN 0-679-87924-2  $20.00  
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 6-10  

Pullman here takes an intriguing break from Victorian thrillers (see *The Tiger in the Well*, BCCB 10/90) and contemporary problem novels (see *Broken Bridge*, 4/92) with this fantasy, first in a trilogy, in which a young girl follows a big destiny, the nature of which is unknown—as yet—to her or us. In a world that parallels our own, Lyra is an orphaned ward of an Oxford college, where she overhears concerns about “Dust,” “the Gobblers,” and an “Aurora.” That she isn’t really an orphan becomes apparent fairly early on, as she discovers that her father, Lord Asriel, and her mother, Mrs. Coulter, are locked into some kind of strange cosmic battle that unfortunately includes the sacrifice of children in its progress. More precisely: each human being in this world, much like our own of perhaps a hundred years ago but with sometimes startling, sometimes subtle, differences, has a “daemon,” an animal-familiar that helps and loves its human, and Mrs. Coulter—a scary descendant of Andersen’s Snow Queen—is commissioning experiments in which children are separated from their daemons. Treachery, tricks, Gypsies, polar bears, witches, and photography all play a part in the ambitious story, and Pullman is particularly inventive in the way he blends not-quite science with not-quite magic. Although the book sometimes seems overly cerebral—Lyra seems more a pawn to the plot than a personality, for example—the faithful (and sometimes nasty, depending on their humans) demons give it some heart; the scene in which Lyra finds a boy who has been separated from his daemon is wrenching. There’s enough resolution in this book to give it unity and a satisfying, if rushed and abrupt, closure; at the same time, the prospect of the next book (which Pullman says will be set “in the universe we know”) is enticing.  

Trade ed. ISBN 0-15-200768-7  $11.00  
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 4-7  

For fifth grader Ann Frase, the privations resulting from rationing are nothing new; World War II has merely provided her tightwad father with an excuse to be close with his money, and her stepmother is loathe to spend anything on her even in the best of times. The war does immerse Ann in propaganda and patriotic rhetoric, and when she is forced to do some of the family shopping with a German neighbor, she is instinctively mistrustful of the woman’s warm and gracious manners. However, Ann discovers that her own grandfather may harbor German loyalties, and that you can’t tell the good guys from the bad guys strictly on the basis of national origin. The believability of the tale is strained by the presence of the stock wicked stepmother and the overly-righteous reporter who defends German-Americans, sounding more like a 1990s ACLU lawyer than a creation of his time, but Rinaldi paints a credible portrait of a gullible young girl forced to reexamine her war-bred prejudices.  

Robinson, Lee  *Gateway.* Houghton, 1996  [176p]  
ISBN 0-395-72772-3  $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys  M  Gr. 5-8  

As Mac relates her thoughts, fears, and wishes into a psychiatrist’s tape recorder,
her parents are getting a seriously ugly divorce. They’ve put Mac, thirteen, right in
the middle of it, thus the psychiatrist, and thus also the interventions of a madcap
but wise court-appointed guardian ad litem, as well as the help of a colorful, courtly,
ex-drunk lawyer, who decides to represent Mac in the custody battle. The good
guys—the guardian, the lawyer, the judge named Judge—are genial stereotypes,
while the bad—Mac’s parents, their lovers, their lawyers—oppositely venal or at
best hopeless (Mac keeps telling us that there are good things about her ambi-
tuous, superficial mother, but we never see them). The plot turns on several un-
likely legal maneuvers, and the solution (Mac’s parents have to take turns staying
with her, rather than Mac dividing her time between two houses) pointlessly con-
trived, because the house is apparently going to be sold. Mač, though, is fun to
listen to, and the general zaniness of the proceedings is a nice alternative to the
frequent dolefulness of the genre. RS

ROCKWELL, ANNE, ad. The One-Eyed Giant and Other Monsters from the Greek
Myths; ad. and illus. by Anne Rockwell. Greenwillow, 1996 [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13810-1 $15.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13809-8 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4
This companion piece to The Robber Baby is probably just what newcomers to
Greek mythology want—quickie descriptions of six-headed, snake-haired, one-
eyed, no-eyed, flesh-eating horrors and big, literal pictures to go with them.
Rockwell has ably chosen some of the more terrifying creatures, from stinking
Empusae to brutal Centaurs, and includes just enough juicy detail to either satisfy
the browser or send more thoughtful readers off in search of “the whole story.”
Each monster merits at least one, and sometimes two, full-page ink-and-water-
color illustrations, which are engaging hybrids of classical line (à la Greek urns)
and contemporary cartoon. A pronunciation guide and source note are included.
Skip all that Hellenic love, lust, and intrigue; bring on the gruesome stuff. EB

SCHETTER, ELLEN The Big Idea; illus. by Bob Dorsey. Hyperion, 1996 [80p] (West Side Kids)
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2085-3 $13.89
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-5
Luz’s “big idea” is to create a garden out of the trash-filled empty lot she passes
every day in her inner-city neighborhood, and while she finds a sponsor in a citywide
“Green Giants” organization, she has trouble getting her friends and neighbors to
help. Although the book at times belabor its multiculturalism (“¡Mira! Look at
Shrimp Pazzalini sitting on his favorite stoop, watching Mike and DeVonn, hop-
ing for a turn to pitch”), Luz is an enterprising eight-year-old who makes her
dream come true, corralling her entire community—even, eventually, her very
reluctant best friend Rosie—into the project. Luz’s present-tense narration is con-
versational and immediate if message-burdened, and newish readers who enjoyed
DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan’s picture book City Green (BCCB 9/94) will enjoy this
chance to grow (although you should also pass along Mary Quattlebaum’s more
individualized story of urban gardening, Jackson Jones and the Puddle of Thorns,
BCCB 3/94). The finished book will include illustrations, and information about
starting a community garden is appended. RS
SCHNUR, STEVEN  *Beyond Providence.* Harcourt, 1996  [256p]
Paper ed. ISBN 0-15-200981-7  $6.00  M  Gr. 7-10

Twelve-year-old Nathan is struggling to come to terms with life changes: first, his mother dies, after leaving the family perhaps for good; next his older brother departs the family farm after continuous argument with their stern father; then his adored cousin Kitty, who came to keep house after Nathan’s mother’s death, may be leaving to marry a neighbor. Schnur is good at depicting the insularity and isolation of a small family farm early in the century (the book seems to be set in the teens or twenties), and Nathan’s bewilderment at the changes that beset his previously secure life is subtly depicted. The book gets awfully heavy-handed, however, with its characters (Pa and Eric the artist never rise above stereotype), with symbolism (the white dove that flutters about the pages, the prowling mountain lion killed in the nick of time), and with the occasional speech (Pa has a three-pager); the scenes where Kitty and Nathan visit Eric in Manhattan and, more importantly, Nathan’s eventual desire to make the farm his own fail to ring true. There’s some good atmosphere here and some classic family dynamics, but it gets bogged down; readers in search of a dramatic farm story would be better served by Avi’s *The Barn* (BCCB 12/94). DS

SHANNON, GEORGE  *Tomorrow’s Alphabet;* illus. by Donald Crews. Greenwillow, 1996  [56p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13505-6  $15.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13504-8  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  3-5 yrs

K is for tomato? Well, sure, when it’s “tomorrow’s KETCHUP.” Too many alphabet books have become complicated or needlessly ornate beyond the needs of the preschool audience; here’s one that enlarges the basic concept of first-letter identification with another—change—that is almost within the needs and aims of preschoolers. Each letter of the alphabet gets a double-spread that illustrates a transformation: “A is for seed—tomorrow’s APPLE,” B is for eggs—tomorrow’s BIRDS,” and so on. The changes depicted aren’t always parallel (acorn is to OAK TREE is different from seed is to APPLE), and some of the pairings (“U is for stranger—tomorrow’s US,” “Z is for countdown—tomorrow’s ZERO”) are cock-eyed. It’s intriguing but too complicated for preschoolers; while older kids might enjoy the game element, it is vitiated by placing the answer opposite the puzzle. All head-on pictures of the object being named, the watercolor illustrations are less than imaginative, but they do have the perhaps even greater advantage of being easily identified. RS

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024723-1  $13.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024722-3  $13.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 3-4

Eli does not want to go to New Orleans for Mardi Gras, where his stepfather, Ari, is going to “mask Indian,” a celebration by African Americans of the Indians who hid and protected slave runaways. Instead, Eli intends to ride his bike from his Seattle home to his father’s house in Alaska. Eli is eight, and it’s the kind of book
where you know he isn’t going to get very far, geographically speaking. Although the “mask Indian” theme is layered onto rather than worked into the story, Sherman otherwise gives the story a strong folkloric framework: while Eli’s three best friends refuse to join him on his adventure, they each give him a talisman (a marble, security blanket, and a pet salamander) to help him on his way. It’s not long before Eli runs into the feared “Swamp Man,” a homeless man who lives around a local bog, and to his initial dismay, the man insists upon helping Eli find the salamander that he had promptly lost. He helps Eli with more than that, of course, and the prodigal stepson is soon on his way back to his family. Although the story is predictable and not as substantial as it means to be, Eli is a likable kid, and readers stepping up from Ann Cameron’s Julian stories might want to go along for the ride. RS

SIMON, FRANCESCA


As their name suggests, the Topsy-Turvy family tends to do things backwards: they get up at midnight, watch TV standing on their heads, and take their baths in the bathroom—while scrupulously avoiding the bathtub. One day they help out a neighbor by babysitting her daughter: after they helpfully set her house to rights (turning everything upside down) and encourage the little girl to behave properly (drawing on the walls instead of on the paper), they scare away a perplexed burglar and return home in triumph. The Topsy-Turveys don’t have the zen absurdity of Allard’s The Stupids, and their adventures are, paradoxically, less smart (the cartoon burglar is particularly out of place here), but the game of inversion is played out well and is likely to tickle youngsters. The gouache art has a ’50s era palette of dark pink, dusty red, grass green, and baby blue, which suggests that the characters’ doll-like blandness is intentional and ironic. Youngsters amused by the concept of relative norms will appreciate the Topsy-Turveys’ inverted point of view. DS

VOIGT, CYNTHIA


See this month’s Big Picture, p. 253, for review.

WALLACE, BARBARA BROOKS


Poor little Amelia! Papa has died in a far away land, and now sinister Cousin Charlotte is taking her across the ocean to live with Cousin Basil in America. Charlotte disappears on the New York dock, and Amelia is kidnapped by kind-faced old Mrs. Dobbins and locked in a dank basement, only to escape from her drunken guard and flee to sanctuary with a shipboard girlfriend named Primrose, who turns out to be an orphan boy nicknamed Rosie. After more treachery and escapes, Amelia discovers that Charlotte isn’t evil, Papa isn’t dead, Rosie isn’t an orphan, and life is “like a fairy tale.” Amelia is the quintessential gothic heroine, as helpless as she is hapless, but at age eleven she is too young to be rewarded with the truly romantic rescue that is the customary climax for this genre. Suspense is
artificially generated, as the reader is prodded along with an overabundance of pointed questions: "But who was Mrs. Shrike? How was she connected to Mrs. Dobbins? Was she a thief as well or just somebody hired by Mrs. Dobbins to guard Amelia . . .? And if so, why? Why not just let Amelia go?" Middle graders who crave authentic nail-biters will likely prefer Garfield or Aiken, but there's peril and drama enough. EB

WHITE, RUTH Belle Prater's Boy. Farrar, 1996 [208p]
ISBN 0-374-30668-0 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

Gypsy Arbutus Leemaster—nicknamed Beauty—has fairy tale looks complete with long golden curls, while her cousin Woodrow is cross-eyed, gawky, and awkwardly clad in "hillbilly clothes" that were hand-me-downs to begin with. Beyond outer appearances, though, they have a lot in common. Woodrow's mother has disappeared without a trace, and Gypsy's father is dead. Beyond these facts, we discover the cousins' underlying pain just as they discover their deep friendship for each other during the year Woodrow comes to live with his grandparents, right next door to Gypsy. Woodrow knows that his mother deserted the family (she took some of his clothes and money), and Gypsy knows that her father shot himself (she found his body). Despite these dark themes, much of the novel is light in tone, its natural dialogue spiked with the jokes Gypsy loves to tell and the stories Woodrow spins. Both central and secondary characters are vividly realized in a plot that draws on family dynamics for its tension and energy. The 1950s Appalachian community itself acquires plenty of personality here; White knows her setting well enough to poke fun without sacrificing her affection for the small-town atmosphere. She's also supported her characteristically fine style with a sharpened sense of control developed through two previous books, Sweet Creek Holler (BCCB 10/88) and Weeping Willow (6/92). BH

WILLEY, MARGARET Facing the Music. Delacorte, 1996 [256p]
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-10

Ever since their mother was killed in an accident, Lisa has felt protected by her older brother, Mark, but after three years he's trying to break away. Naturally he's upset when Danny, the leader of his garage band, decides that Lisa, with her beautiful, passionate voice, would be just the thing to make their group a success. Lisa is thrilled, both for the chance to make music and for the chance to be Danny's girlfriend ("Me, who had never been anyone's girlfriend. Me, who wasn't anybody's anything"), even when he tells her that because of his friendship with Mark, their relationship has to be a secret. Lisa is a vulnerable, honest heroine; her brother (whose account of things is interspersed in Lisa's narration) is sullen but easy to empathize with. Danny is a snake, but he certainly provides plenty of romantic and narrative tension. As ever, Willey knows her girls—both character and audience—and makes credible and close the dilemma of falling for The Wrong Guy (Chapter Nine: "What I Should Have Known"). The relationships Lisa and Danny have with each other and with their closed-off father have a prickly resonance, with some healing promised if not entirely gained in the end. RS
ISBN 0-06-026464-0  $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys  NR  4-6 yrs  

Illustrated by sweeeet and stiff pictures that seem modeled on the authors themselves, this book introduces young children to the thought of Marianne Williamson, “internationally acclaimed author and philosopher.” First Emma asks Mommy where she, Emma, came from, and while Mommy replies “From God, sweetheart,” the facing illustration shows a bouncing baby Emma shooting down through a sentimentalized (c.f. the twinkling star in the shadow of a crescent moon) cosmos. So much for the cabbage patch. Then Mommy explains what God is: “God is all the love in the world.” Replete with Mommy’s platitudes, Emma can hardly be blamed for dreaming about an angel (blonde, winged) who advises Emma about God and prayer (“He will always be there to take care of you and tell you what to do whenever you have a question”). This tip comes in handy later when Emma, tormented at school by a bully who throws sand at her, prays for the boy who, “the very next day,” nicely picks up the sweater that Emma has dropped: “Emma knew in her heart that God had helped Peter.” Even, perhaps especially, the most devout know that it just ain’t this easy. However you feel about Marianne Williamson’s current popularity as a guru, you can’t believe she tries to put this kind of fatuous nonsense over on adults. Then again, maybe she does, in which case pray for us all, Emma. RS

WONG, JANET S.  *A Suitcase of Seaweed and Other Poems*; written and illus. by Janet S. Wong. McElderry, 1996  [48p]  
ISBN 0-689-80788-0  $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 3-6  

Wong writes of her heritage in this collection, dividing the poems into three sections—Korean poems, Chinese poems, and American poems—and introducing each section with a small memoir and explanation. Her poems, generally written from the child’s point of view and mostly free verse, are simple and accessible, and their images are sometimes vivid (as in “Campfire,” when the narrator thinks for a moment that her mother is going to produce grasshoppers, rather than marshmallows, to toast over the fire). More often, however, the prosaic quality of most of the poems flattens their impact, and vignettes become merely mild anecdotes without point or further significance. Kids, particularly younger readers, who like their poetry easy without wanting it frivolous will appreciate the thoughtful but uncomplicated verses here. DS

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8407-0  $17.85  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8406-2  $16.95  
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 4-7  

The clear blue eyes of a kenneled husky stare out from the dedication page, inviting readers into this you-are-there photo-essay about a 1995 competitor in Alaska’s Jr. Iditarod sled-dog race, a 158-mile version for teenagers of the more famous 1,180 mile race for adults. The book takes fifteen-year-old Dusty from preparation and practice through the race itself, and photos of Dusty at home (a log cabin
with seventeen dogs in the front yard) and at high school (six students in all, four shown here in a Spanish class conducted via telecommunication) establish him as an ordinary kid with an extraordinary avocation in a magnificent landscape. Full and half-page photos of Dusty, the dogs, and the setting include some striking shots of the dogs at work, including one picture of a dog leaping straight at the camera; local color includes caribou, moose, and a vertiginous view of Mt. McKinley towering over the family car. The text is clear about the mechanics and hazards of the race, which Wood keeps in the present tense ("Dusty can't believe it. Two tangles in less than five minutes") to give the book momentum and ultimately triumph—Dusty wins. RS

WRIGHT, BETTY REN  
*Haunted Summer.* Scholastic, 1996  
[128p]  
ISBN 0-590-47355-7  $13.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R Gr. 3-5

One of the obliging conventions of ghost stories for kids is that spooks tend to come out during school vacations, when kids have time to deal with them. Here's a good example: nine-year-old Abby finds that her summer vacation has taken a sinister turn when a music box restored to the family house seems to evoke a ghost. Abby's older brother scoffs, but the summer au pair, Hannah Gray, sees the spectre constantly, and she and Abby try to track down and mollify the troublesome spirit. Abby's a credible heroine, with her consideration for timid Hannah and her resentment of her brother's insistent superiority, and her rising to the difficult occasion is a satisfying bonus. Slight but sufficient, this is a tidy little ghost story for younger readers, with enough menace to give the story an edge lacking in *Goosebumps.*  

DS

WYLIE, STEPHEN  
[26p]  
Reviewed from galleys  
R 5-8 yrs

Ah, yes, here again are those traditional adversaries the fox and the hound, with some nice juicy chickens and a horde of biting fleas just to keep things, well, hopping. First the fox sweet-talks the dog away from his chicken-guarding by telling him how to drown all his fleas; then the dog tricks the fox away from his poultry-filled den and rescues his charges. The writing sags a bit in places (such as the limp ending), but most of the time it has a zingy, understated folksiness, especially in the dialogue between the clearly well-acquainted enemies. The watercolor art walks the line between caricature and nature drawing; the old spotted dog, with his droopy ears and sagging flews, mostly belongs in the first category, the gravely shrewd fox has a toe in both, and the lucent landscapes of sundappled forest and grassy-edged ponds are simply alluring in their own right; varied and lively compositions keep the visual side of the story moving along smartly. Tricking the tricky fox is a time-honored plot (see McKissack's *Flossie and the Fox,* BCCB 9/86, for a classic contemporary version), and this is a nice Disneyesque variant that young listeners should find aw-flea entertaining.  

DS
CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARDS 1996

The Newbery Medal will be awarded to Karen Cushman for *The Midwife's Apprentice* (Clarion). The Newbery Honor Books are *What Jamie Saw* by Carolyn Coman (Front Street), *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis (Delacorte), *Yolonda's Genius* by Carol Fenner (McElderry), and *The Great Fire* by Jim Murphy (Scholastic).

The Caldecott Medal will be awarded to Peggy Rathmann for *Officer Buckle and Gloria* (Putnam), written and illustrated by Peggy Rathmann. The Caldecott Honor Books are *Alphabet City*, illustrated by Stephen T. Johnson (Viking), *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin*, written by Lloyd Moss and illustrated by Marjorie Priceman (Simon), *The Faithful Friend*, written by Robert D. San Souci and illustrated by Brian Pinkney (Simon), and *Tops and Bottoms*, adapted and illustrated by Janet Stevens (Harcourt).

The Coretta Scott King Award will be presented to Virginia Hamilton, author of *Her Stories* (Scholastic) for writing and to Tom Feelings for *The Middle Passage: White Ships Black Cargo* (Dial) for illustration. King Honor Books for writing are Christopher Paul Curtis' *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* (Delacorte), Rita Williams-Garcia's *Like Sisters on the Homefront* (Lodestar), and Jacqueline Woodson's *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* (Blue Sky/Scholastic). King Honor Books for illustration are *Her Stories*, written by Virginia Hamilton and illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon (Scholastic) and *The Faithful Friend*, written by Robert D. San Souci and illustrated by Brian Pinkney (Simon).

The American publisher receiving the Mildred L. Batchelder Award for the most outstanding translation of a book originally published in a foreign language is Houghton Mifflin Company for Uri Orlev's *The Lady with the Hat*, translated by Hillel Halkin. The honor books are *Star of Fear, Star of Hope* by Jo Hoestlandt (Walker) and *Damned Strong Love: The True Story of Willi G. and Stephan K.* by Lutz van Dijk (Holt).

The Scott O'Dell Award for historical fiction will be given to Theodore Taylor for *The Bomb* (Harcourt).

The Canadian Library Association's Best Book of the Year for Children is *Summer of the Mad Monk* by Cora Taylor (Greystone). The Best Book of the Year for Young Adults is *Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me* by Julie Johnston (Little). The Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award for illustration goes to Barbara Reid for *Gifts*, written by Jo Ellen Bogart (North Winds).

The Carnegie Medal was awarded to Theresa Breslin for *Whispers in the Graveyard* (Methuen).

The Kate Greenaway Medal was awarded to Gregory Rogers for *Way Home*, written by Libby Hathorn (Crown).
The 1996 May Hill Arbuthnot Lecture will be delivered by Katherine Paterson.

The Margaret A. Edwards Award will be given to Judy Blume.

NCTE's Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children goes to *The Great Fire* by Jim Murphy (Scholastic); Honor Books are *Dolphin Man: Exploring the World of Dolphins* by Laurence Pringle (Atheneum) and *Rosie the Riveter: Women Working on the Home Front in World War II* by Penny Colman (Crown).

**SUBJECT AND USE INDEX**

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

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Weddings—stories: Prose
West, the—fiction: Hahn
West, the—history: Kroll
World War I—fiction: Myers
World War II—fiction: Matas; Rinaldi
World War II: Andryszewski
“[After] Arthur Dog—mild-mannered guard [of works by Vincent Van Dog and Henri Muttisse] at the Dogopolis Museum of Art by day, mural-painting superhero by night—is mistakenly apprehended when the Mona Woofa is stolen from the museum; he paints his way out of prison and succeeds in catching the crooks. The grateful museum director offers Art Dog a one-man show, during which the artist unveils his masterpiece… Hurd employs a disarming, deliberately slapdash style, blazing a trail of scrawled charm across the streets and skies of Gotham; Art Dog is a superhero for all times.” —Kirkus Reviews

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