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ATHENEUM BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS
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Monday’s Troll
written by Jack Prelutsky; illustrated by Peter Sis

There’s just something about monsters that brings out the best in children’s poets. Not that Prelutsky, with an admirable oeuvre ranging from The Random House Book of Poetry for Children (BCCB 11/83) to The New Kid on the Block (10/84), has much of a worst, but this pithy collection of paens to otherworldly grotesques has an elegant blend of verbal sophistication, galloping rhythms, and appealing subjects. The subjects here are actually fairly traditional: there are several wizards, a group of goblins, a witch or two, an assortment of ogres, one tiny troll, and “A Solitary Yeti.” Some of the poems are stories (“I Told the Wizard to His Face”), some are introductions (“I’m Only an Apprentice Witch”), and some, often the best, are quick vignettes of a situation or a quandary (“Invisible Wizard’s Regret”).

What makes these poems stand out is Prelutsky’s technical mastery. He uses short metered lines throughout, keeping the pace up, but varies the rhythm from poem to poem. (It’s also a pleasure to read verse by a poet who understands that scansion isn’t the possibility of reading the meter right but the impossibility of getting it wrong.) He gives his words their full sonorous due, often relying on some deliciously alliterative clusters, as in “Mother Ogre’s Lullaby,” when Mom tells her baby to “slumber, sweet savage impossible pest.” Like the topics, the vocabulary edges into the challenging: Prelutsky isn’t afraid to use polysyllables for their entertainment value as well as their meaning; in fact, part of the joke of “I Told the Wizard to His Face” is that when the bombastic narrator

escalated my harangue,
And blared triumphanty,
‘Your prestidigitation
Simply can’t bamboozle me!’

the wizard transmutes him with a simple “Piffpoff.” Sometimes, however, the touches of poetic phraseology accent the plainer speech and stylishly round out a rhetorical corner (“Monday’s troll is mean and rotten/ Tuesday’s troll is misbegotten”—”Monday’s Troll”). And “Monday’s Troll” isn’t the only work reminiscent of another: “I Thought I Spotted Bigfoot” is a grand story of a monster encounter in the tradition of Silverstein’s “The Slithergadee.”

Sis’ art takes the familiar themes into a new and more shadowy landscape. The illustrations are oil and gouache, but they rely on scratched white lines and darker hatchings which give them an etched quality, and the spidery tracery often weaves its web over paper pressed with its own ridges and patterns. The result is a delicate and layered surrealism that parallels the maturity of the verse and that, paradoxically, makes the creepy images more hauntingly realistic than do the sturdy watercolor cartoons in which monsters usually appear. These are creatures that might appear in unnerving dreams, and their eyes—well, occasionally their single eye—
peer out at the reader with a seeming relish of their power, whether it be the ogre family happily watering the plants grown in the devoured knight’s armor or the ancient witch celebrating her 30,303rd birthday. Details also provide pleasure: note the huge hand creeping into the picture of “Mother Ogre’s Lullaby” (Daddy, perhaps?) and the black cat about to cross the path of a startled Bigfoot. Spreads also have oaken-hued borders with patterned rims and thematically relevant decoration which are sometimes drawn (hatching goblins encircle “We’re Seven Grubby Goblins,” for instance) and sometimes stamped (the armored knight on his charger gallops through the borders around the “Ogrebrag” telling of his fate), giving the book an enticingly kabbalistic appearance.

Overall, the merit of this volume lies in its demonstration of the worth of craftsmanship. Prelutsky and Sis are thankfully not content to coast along on their nice, juicy, monstrous topic, but instead continually invest every idea, every phrase, every image with a serious and creative attention that enhances rather than detracting from the entertainment quotient. Whether as a toothsome readaloud or a beastly good readalone, this converts its creators’ work into audience play.

Deborah Stevenson, Assistant Editor

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8404-6  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

C’mon, you knew it was coming. Along with providing a useful summary of the twists and turns of the Simpson trial, Aaseng gives readers a running commentary of how the trial events exemplify various concepts and procedures of criminal law and jury trials, including search warrants, the Fifth Amendment’s protection against self-incrimination, access of the news media to trial coverage, jury selection, and the stages of a trial itself. There’s no sensationalizing and little editorializing (what you think Aaseng thinks of the jury’s decision probably depends most upon what you already thought yourself), which in other circumstances might seem dull but here is a welcome corrective. A glossary of legal terms and an index are appended; the book will be illustrated with black-and-white photographs. RS

This engaging photoessay follows San Francisco Giants batboy Kenny Garibaldi through a typical fourteen-hour workday at spring training camp, providing readers with a peek into the mysteries of locker room and dugout as well as a look at less glamorous aspects of this coveted job. To earn his twenty-five dollars per diem, thirteen-year-old Kenny takes on pre-game chores from laundry sorting to gum unwrapping, later runs equipment around the field, and finally folds up chairs and clears towels from the dugout. Lest envious readers think that buddying up with the boys of summer is adequate compensation, Anderson points out that batboys lose their positions for soliciting autographs, and Kenny himself observes, "I never talk to the players unless they speak to me." Diverse information ranging from landing the job to catering to players' superstitions and whims is neatly interjected throughout the descriptive narration. Plentiful color shots take viewers into the sweaty inner sanctums where heroes and wannabes work, wait, and worry. With the exception of a dugout spread that fails to depict "eyes blackened to prevent glare . . . a thirty gallon container of Gatorade . . . and the team’s three doctors," uncaptioned photos coordinate closely with the text. A glossary provides the wrap-up. EB


Cat calls her grandmother “The Pag” in affectionate remembrance of a childhood tantrum in which she misspelled a sign meant to read *Granny is a Pig.* The two have lived together since Cat was small, dumped in the Pag’s lap by Cat’s parents, itinerant actors. Now Cat is old enough to be useful and her parents, settled into a popular TV soap opera, want her back; Cat doesn’t want to go. Granny-the-Pag, a psychiatrist who smokes and rides a motorcycle, is in the respectable tradition of tough old birds who foster roughly yet wisely and readers will certainly be drawn to her side, hoping that the family drama is resolved in Cat’s favor. (Cat’s parents, mother particularly, are shallow and shallowly drawn, so it isn’t entirely a fair fight.) There’s a certain amount of formula in the plot and in a subplot about a boy who bullies Cat at school, but Cat’s telling of the story reflects a warm but honest picture of buffeted childhood and loving protection. Fans of Voigt’s Gran Tiller, McKay’s Big Grandma or Montgomery’s venerable Marilla Cuthbert will enjoy making the Pag’s acquaintance. RS


Two weeks before Christmas, the family car goes off the road: Rosemyn, the nine-year-old narrator, is hospitalized with abrasions and a seriously broken arm; her little sister, Phoebe, is unconscious, suffering from brain trauma; Dad has a multitude of internal injuries; and Mum lies in a different hospital, injured beyond recovery and living only on machines. The story of the family’s physical and
emotional adjustment to the situation is told in simple and affecting language (the author did his own translating from the Dutch), as Phoebe regains consciousness, Dad recuperates, Rosemyn struggles with her poorly healing arm, and they all cope with the distant decline and death of Mum. The portrayal of both the pain and the mundane tedium of three weeks of hospitalization and adjustment (the narration is demarcated by days) is low-key, completely unsensationalized, and free of artificial narrative closure; while there are some gentle suggestions of spiritual consolation, it's clear that the family will be dealing with this experience for years after the book ends. A realistic contrast to glitzy soaps about family disasters, this offers readers a touching and authentic human drama. DS


As they did with Dinosaurs Divorce (BCCB 2/87), the Browns here take a difficult subject for youngsters and explain it gently but clearly. The text explains the inevitability of death, various reasons for death (including old age, sickness, accident, and suicide), and the difference between death and sleep; it then goes on to examine feelings about death and ways, both individual and cultural, of dealing with the loss of loved ones. The book is particularly good at linking specifics, both in the panel-cartoon scenes and in the textual suggestions, to generalities, and it also covers the basic ground while leaving openings for further discussion on the subject. The dinosaurs are humanoid enough to keep all the scenes recognizable, but they're green and scaly enough to stave off the dusty flavor of bibliotherapy, and the simple watercolor illustrations help to make some scary situations more approachable. Quiet, respectful, and unthreatening, this will probably become a primary-grades standard on the subject. DS


Marianne's mother left her at St. Christopher's Orphanage in New York with the promise, "I'm going West to make a new life for us.... Then I'll come for you." Now, several years later, the plain-faced child is westbound on an orphan train in 1877, anxious that she find her mother before someone else claims her and yet secretly hurt that no one is interested. At the last station, in Somewhere, Iowa, an elderly couple shyly presents her with a toy locomotive, an indication that they had hoped to adopt a boy; recognizing their kindness and resigning herself to her mother's disappearance, Marianne offers then her most prized possession, the feather she plucked from her mother's hair. Bunting lays on the sentiment with a liberal hand, but it's an affecting story, and details of the journey do much to mitigate the slightly dolorous tone. Stretched blankets provide privacy aboard the train, each town greets the train with its own community rite, and if some of the adoptive parents seem less than amiable, Bunting playfully hints that not all the children will prove to be as charming as they feign to be. Himler's warm, hazy watercolor and gouache paintings focus on the poignancy of initial meetings, with orphans courting or avoiding the attention of prospective parents, and adults regarding the
children as hired hands or lovable sons and daughters. A brief introduction about the orphan trains is included. EB

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-14015-7 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

Zoe is looking forward to celebrating her birthday with a slumber party, and all seems to be going well—Melissa, Stephanie, Sami, and Jessica are all able to come, and restaurant pizza and rock painting meet with general satisfaction. Bedtime, however, gets rockier than the art project, when first everybody wants their sleeping bag next to the birthday girl’s and then everybody finds the dark and the strange noise scary and “mostly Zoe heard the words, ‘I want to go home.’ So Zoe started crying the loudest of all.” Mama points out that the noise is the refrigerator and she dispells the dark with funny stories until finally everybody goes to sleep, and the next day the slumber party is termed a success. We’ve seen problematic-sleepover stories before (Bernard Waber’s Ira Sleeps Over, BCCB 2/73), but Caseley has a nicely confiding tone and a delicate sense of detail that makes this story both ring particularly true and offer particular reassurance. Her illustrations, which depend on clean lines and sturdy hues, keep the book upbeat without underestimating the dark night fears. Kids a little—but not much—more ready for overnights than Rosemary Wells’ Edward (BCCB 11/95) will find this an appealing treatment of a subject close, but not quite close enough, to home. DS

ISBN 0-395-73571-8 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 3-5

Here’s a story line with promise: Mom goes away on a cruise, leaving a houseful of five squabbling siblings, aged eight through seventeen, to manage for themselves. Oldest sister Tillie is nominally in charge and Grandpa is nearby as needed, but when Tillie serves up salad for dinner the others rebel at her tyranny and decide to take turns being boss-for-a-day. The skeletal plot is devoid of the juicy details of their various managerial failures; the children merely gather at the table each evening to complain about the dinner choice and to whine about each other. Grandpa mediates with an occasional observation (“Being boss isn’t easy. . . . It’s a responsible job. And one that requires you to be fair and just”). When Mr. Fixit the handyman shows up with some timely words about family appreciation—“I was brought up in an orphanage. . . . Even my name isn’t my real name”—they all resolve to get along just fine in the future. For a sharper, snappier family read, direct the middle-graders to writers such as Colleen O’Shaughnessy McKenna and Johanna Hurwitz. EB

Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-6

There have been several overviews of cowboying in the last few years (Granfield’s Cowboy: An Album and Sandler’s Cowboys, both BCCB 3/94), but this one, fol-
Following the same format as Lincoln’s *The Pirate’s Handbook* (BCCB 10/95), is the niftiest. Sections focus on particular aspects of cowboying (“Cowboy Gear,” “Animals,” “Law and Order”), and offer nuggets of information interspersed with “how-to” panels ranging from making a potato brand to whipping up a bowl of chuck to practicing roping skills at home. The composition is open and enticing, with photographs, old prints, and illustrations appearing as needed. The author (who, to boot, purportedly descends from Buffalo Bill) has a good awareness of his subject, a practical approach to many western myths, and a lively, humorous, and compact writing style. This is vocational guidance that young buckaroos can really sink their spurs into. DS

**COLE, JOANNA** *Riding Silver Star*. Morrow, 1996 [48p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13895-0 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

Young Abby is the narrator of this fictionalized photo-story about that age-old pairing, a girl and her horse. “Abby” (really Aubrey Cohen) shows and explains how she gets “Star” (really Brie) ready for riding, how she rides for her teacher in lessons and out on the trail for fun, and how she uses what she’s learned while competing in a show. The text is clear and simple, describing the basic action without feeling obliged to give an A to Z of pony care. The photographs are the real draw here, though: Abby’s steed is a delectable grey Arab, and the young equestrienne’s pastoral romps will invite envy from many young viewers. Practical readers will appreciate the emphasis on standard safety precautions (nobody rides without a helmet here) and the inclusion of a riding don’t or two, although some may also notice Star’s uncommented-upon change in bridle, a few flipped images, and the name tag of Aubrey Cohen instead of Abby displayed on Star’s tack. This is for much the same audience as Sutton’s *Pony for Keeps* (BCCB 6/91), and desperate horse dreamers who relished that literary wish-fulfillment will gallop through this as well. DS

**COLLIER, MARY JO** *The King’s Giraffe*; written by Mary Jo and Peter Collier; illus. by Stéphane Poulin. Simon, 1996 [40p]
ISBN 0-689-80679-5 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R 6-10 yrs

In 1826 Egyptian pasha Mehemet Ali needs to reciprocate the wondrous gift of a printing press sent to him by his friend King Charles of France. Stable boy Abdul suggests that the pasha’s prized giraffe would be the ideal choice, and the pasha promptly dispatches boy and animal to Paris. Details of the giraffe’s progress from Marseilles, where he is formally welcomed by the mayor, through Aix-en-Provence, where he nibbles his way down the tree-lined avenue, to his final destination, where he is met by the dumbstruck regent, are nothing short of delightful. This story was previously related in Nancy Milton’s breezier *The Giraffe That Walked to Paris* (BCCB 3/92); the Colliers, who are more interested in the human side of the sage, capture the enthusiasm of the citizenry, manifested in giraffelike high-collared court clothing, long and thin poetry, culinary experiments, and renamed streets. Unfortunately there is no note here, as there is in the Milton, to verify what the jacket flap terms a “true story of adventure,” and listeners may wonder why pasha and stable boy converse so informally, how the giraffe fit into the cramped
sailing vessel, and how the Marseilles mayor conversed with Abdul, who spoke no French. Richly detailed oils, in hues reminiscent of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, depict slightly truncated and caricatured figures and a serenely dignified giraffe; their humor and sophistication should engage even listeners beyond picture-book age. EB

Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-7

Christina, the narrator, is ten, still mourning her mother who died in a plane crash seven years ago, and she and her brother Danny are upset when her father moves them across the country, far away from all memories, to North Klondike, California. It seems, however, that either a ghost inhabits their new house or their mother’s ghost has followed them, because supernatural activities are dogging their days; together with a neighbor boy, his psychic mother, and the ghost-hunting professor next door, they decide to get to the root of the problem. Deem, fresh from his experimental narrative The 3 NBs of Julian Drew (BCCB 12/94), plays around through the text, footnotes explain various references, and the book is authenticated in the front by a statement from the book’s own professor (the book, in fact, seems to be a fictional counterpart to Deem’s How to Find a Ghost, BCCB 11/88). While some of the gimmicks work better than others, and the tone is sometimes overly mannered, Deem ultimately offers not only several good ghost stories in addition to the base plot but also a subtle treatment of the human desire for ghosts (“When I investigate a possible haunting,” Professor Barrymore says, “I always devote more time to determining why the so-called haunted person wants to see a ghost than I do to whether a ghost actually exists”). The result is a quirky, often touching, and entertaining read suitable for ghost fans jaded by their usual haunts. DS

Reviewed from galleys M 6-9 yrs

Reviewed from galleys M 6-9 yrs

At first, these slick productions look as if they might be entertaining picture-book knockoffs, or even parodies, of their super-subjects; alas, they’re instead dreary sermonettes about how it’s wrong to be bad. Young Jeffrey thinks the Joker is “cool” but after an evening as the criminal’s assistant, he learns his lesson (“I know what you are like now. My mom and dad were right about you after all”) and gets a ride home in the Batmobile. I Hate Superman! is more of a psychological treatment: James tips his hero Superman to a holdup in a local grocery store, not realizing that one of the thugs is his big brother. When Superman catches Mike and takes him to prison, James, in an orgy of self-hatred, spraypaints “I HATE SUPERMAN” all over Metropolis until the big blue guy sets him straight ("Super-
man gathered him into his arms and held him until James’ sobs quieted”). The art is professional but sedate (although Batman looks suitably noir-ish). These are action heroes in actionless stories; while the comic-book appearance may lure kids in, young fans may be disappointed at this deceptive use of their idols. RS

DOHERTY, BERLIE  *The Snake-Stone.* Orchard, 1996  [176p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09512-6  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 7-10

James is a young English diving whiz, who, under his father’s coaching, seems likely to make it to county and perhaps even national and international championships. He’s beginning to question this sure future, however, and he’s also beginning to question his past: an adopted child, he determines to penetrate the mysteries of his origins, armed only with the bits of an envelope, the spiraled stone, and the baby clothes with which he was found. Punctuated with occasional flashbacks to James’ biological mother’s thoughts at his birth, this is a romantic and unlikely story: James finds his birth mother (his father was a handsome young gypsy) with unrealistic ease, and the saga of his birth is old-fashioned melodrama. There is enough following of clues to keep things interesting, however, and although the book falters in its realism it’s an engagingly spun yarn. DS


A generous helping of standards (“Baa Baa Black Sheep,” “Little Jack Horner”) is seasoned with the occasional surprise (George MacDonald’s “Where Did You Come From, Baby Dear?” or Nancy Willard’s “The Wise Cow Enjoys a Cloud”) in this collection of verses and verbal whatnots. The book is divided into seven brief sections, including stalwarts such as “Animals, Animals,” “Nursery Rhymes,” and “Lullaby and Good Night.” A little more attribution would have been helpful (“African Lullaby” isn’t much of a source note), and some verses, such as the jump-rope rhyme “Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear,” have particular uses that could have been informatively included. More eclectic than either Kay Chorao’s *The Baby’s Good Morning Book* (BCCB 10/86) or Mother Goose collections such as the Opies’ (10/88), this is a nice starter volume of simple and engaging poems that adults and tots will both enjoy sharing. The illustrations, watercolors on oversized pages, are gentle and old-fashioned without becoming sweetly bland: the “Hey Diddle Diddle” page, for instance, offers a determined Scottie as the laughing little dog and a dish and spoon that are quite obviously Going Places in the moonlight. DS

FERRIS, JEAN  *All That Glitters.* Farrar, 1996  [192p]
ISBN 0-374-30204-9  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 7-10

After his mother’s remarriage, Brian is staying for six weeks with his father on a remote Florida key. Brian, sixteen, is as uneasy around his father, with whom he has never spent this much time, as his father is around him, but he finds the islands offer some compensations in the form of a local archaeologist’s dive for sunken treasure and in the form of Tia, an attractive, if temperamental, local girl. Brian’s friendship with prickly and defensive Tia, who is struggling with her own issues
about race (she's African-American) as well as fatherhood (her father is long gone, but her mother's boyfriend fills the role), is sensitively depicted; it's an intriguing friendship that's not quite a romance and the more challenging for pushing but not crossing that line. The father-son plot is pretty predictable, though, with rapprochement induced by a shared night in a hurricane at sea, and the hunt for gold, while exciting, is also formulaic. Ferris is a good solid writer, however, and readers lured by the thought of buried treasure will enjoy the saga of Brian's summer. DS


Like the author's Bull Run (BCCB 4/93), this is a stylized novel dependent on a technical device for its development. Where the Civil War book featured brief glimpses of battle from many different characters' points of view, Fleischman here describes the Trojan War in single-page episodes facing newspaper collages from twentieth-century events that echo the ancient Greek stories and make them seem more relevant than ever to contemporary life. We learn right away that King Priam and Ronald Reagan shared a belief in astrological warnings, for instance, and that Paris was just another abandoned baby ("Newborn Found in Dumpster"), that beauty contests can be taken too seriously by goddesses as well as humans, and that every phase of World Wars I and II, and of conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe has a precursor of misery and treachery as bad as or worse than modern mechanized conflicts. "After ten years of fighting, both lay in their own lifeblood, Greek king and Trojan princess. Who could tell the victor from the vanquished?" Even Odysseus must forego the triumphant ending he found in the Aeneid for the version Fleischman employs, Homer's tragic story of Odysseus' death at the hands of his own son. Fleischman's precision of language reflects the stately perspective of a Homeric story but also, ironically, the distance of modern news reporting styles, which makes the parallels of content even more uncanny. A thought-provoking book, classically austere in design, with a partnership of text and illustration unusual in young adult fiction. BH


This compilation of writings and photographs by young people who live in a "smoldering garbage dump in the center of Guatemala City" has more interest than most such collections of children's art, primarily because the kids involved were taught photography and writing by the book's compilers, so that the words and images contained here reflect conscious crafting rather than simply allowing "spontaneity" to carry the day. There is, of course, also the fascination of the horrific setting: while more information about "the dump" should have been included in the brief scene-setting note, the children's photos and words matter-of-factly relate the poverty of slapped-together shacks, alcohol abuse, pet and feral dogs, and mounds of refuse ("One day a neighbor lady found a strangled girl in a box and
when the tractor scooped up the box it made the lady so sad that she put the little
girl where the tractor couldn’t get her again”). As well, there are records of family
moments (such as Junior Ramos’ photo and poem about the time he tried to scare
his stepdad with a plastic tarantula), celebration (“When a girl turns fifteen, it’s a
happy time”), and occult ritual, such as Gladiz Jimenez’s photo and reminiscence
of the jar in which someone had placed a picture of her father with the word
“DIE” written on the back. The black-and-white photos exhibit both sensitivity
and skill; the poems and paragraphs successfully convey people and moments. RS

**Freeman, Suzanne**  *The Cuckoo’s Child.* Greenwillow, 1996 [256p]
ISBN 0-688-14290-7  $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R*  Gr. 6-9

“I wanted, more than anything,” says Mia, the narrator, tired of living in Beirut,
“to walk to school in an American town where I looked like everybody else.” Her
wish comes true partially and bitterly: her parents disappear while on a sailing trip
and she, along with her two older half-sisters (who soon depart for their father’s
home in Boston), are sent to little Ionia, Tennessee, to live with her mother’s
sister. Small-town America in 1962, however, is not tolerant of outsiders, and Mia
finds fitting in difficult despite her longing to conform to every white-bread norm
tossed her way. She dislikes her aunt’s married boyfriend, she’s stuck with the
losers group in bible camp, and most of all she misses her parents terribly, demon-
strating her anger and uncertainty by stealing and meanness. This is the flip side
of Marilynne Robinson’s adult novel *Housekeeping*; the tone and focus are similar,
but this young girl longs to find a home in the face of all life’s changes. Mia’s
narration is natural and subtle, but the story treats all its characters sympathetically
and fully: Mia’s aunt, Kit, beginning to lift some of the limitations she’s put on
her own life, is particularly resonant. Mia’s yearning for her parents (whose disap-
pearance remains open-ended, since there’s a suggestion that they defected to the
Eastern Bloc), mixed as it is with memories of her resentment of their taking her so
far away and leaving her, is believably ambivalent, and her gradual but never smooth
settling-in realistic. Small-town stories set thirty years ago seem to be in vogue at
the moment, but here’s one with heart as well as memory on its side. DS

**Geisert, Arthur**  *Roman Numerals I to MM/ Numerabilia Romana uno ad duo
mila:* Liber de difficillimo computando numerum; written and illus. by Arthur
Geisert. Lorraine/Houghton, 1996 [32p]
ISBN 0-395-74519-5  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R*  Gr. 2-5

The piglets are back, meeting a number concept challenge even trickier than their
alphabet tree house (see *Pigs from A to Z*, BCCB 2/87) with equal success. As
MMMMMDCCCLXIV pigs cavort through barnyard and junkyard, gardens and
mud wallows, readers must count X sandbags, XIV gopher holes, VL pigs, etc.
amid intricately designed scenes. It’s a tough hidden-picture book, with items
often quite cleverly concealed in plain sight, and children may even need to con-
sult an adult or a dictionary to determine what they’re looking for—anchor hooks,
urns, boiler bolts. Geisert explains how the numerals line up left to right, adding
to or subtracting from each other as they go; however, to maximize the challenge,
he never directly defines the number each numeral represents. “If you don’t know
what the numerals listed are, count the objects in the picture to find out.” Thus
readers are drawn into a digital dialogue: Have I really found all the pennants? Check the Roman numeral. What does XVIII mean? Count the bottles. Clever line drawings, tinted in muted tones and featuring mind-boggling permutations of porcine poses, are enhanced by such thoughtful design elements as lower case Roman numeral pagination, Latin parallel- and subtitles, and a numerical recap of the book’s contents. A treat from initium to finis.

**GREENE, STEPHANIE**  
*Owen Foote, Second Grade Strongman*; illus. by Dee deRosa. Clarion, 1996  
[96p]  
Reviewed from galleys

Height-and-weight-chart day is rapidly approaching and Owen, “small for his age,” is terrified. So is his best friend Joseph: “Being fat is a pain in the neck.” Last year the school nurse Mrs. Jackson humiliated Owen by loudly calling him a pipsqueak in front of his entire first-grade class and “this year everyone else would be bigger than ever. He’d look even smaller.” Fans of Janice Lee Smith’s Adam Joshua (BCCB 2/92, etc.) will find a similar hero in Owen, who achieves his magnificence by standing up to Mrs. Jackson for announcing that Joseph needs to get more exercise: “Mrs. Jackson, don’t you think you should keep your voice down a little?” It’s a great moment, if somewhat facilely resolved later, when Mrs. Jackson at long last admits to needing a hearing aid. Although most second-graders won’t be quite up to the reading level of this chapter book (and the title will put off many third-graders), a readaloud will speak to anyone who feels too little, too big, or too whatever. One-per-chapter illustrations chart Owen’s progress while the story charts his growth.

**HAAS, JESSE**  
*Be Well, Beware*; illus. by Jos. A. Smith. Greenwillow, 1996  
[72p]  
ISBN 0-688-14545-0  $14.00  
Reviewed from galleys

Lily’s beloved Beware (from *Beware the Mare*, 7/93, and *A Blue for Beware*, 3/95) is sick, and Lily is sick with worry. The vet helps as much as she can, but Beware may need surgery — surgery Lily’s family probably can’t afford. Haas knows her horse world inside and out, and her informed details — the frustration when two good vets say two different things, the strain of watching a sick animal through the night, the amused and substantial relief at seeing a pile of healthy horse poop — give the book a rich realism. Beware, with her passion for cough drops and her insistence on being scratched in certain places, is a memorable character without being anthropomorphized, and devoted but realistic Lily is a figure worthy of empathy. The little bay mare surely has her fans by now, and they’ll want to see her through her bad times as well as her good.

**HAAS, JESSIE**  
*Clean House*; illus. by Yossi Abolafia. Greenwillow, 1996  
[56p]  
ISBN 0-688-14079-3  $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys

Here’s something that admits the little-acknowledged truth about house work: why bother? Tess and her mother are in a tizzy cleaning house in anticipation of a visit from much-loved Aunt Alice and Cousin Kate. But the more they clean, the messier it gets: after bagging all the clothing donations for the Red Cross, for
example, Tess is convinced they have mistakenly given away one of her sneakers, so they empty all the bags onto the floor only to discover that the dog has contentedly munched the sneaker into a sandal. Sum total for cleaning accomplished? "'I put one of my sneakers away,' said Tess." At great length and after many disasters the house looks perfect—and boring. Thank goodness the relatives come to cheerfully help mess things up once again. Deceptively tidy line drawings illustrate the mayhem and the affectionate camaraderie of mother and daughter. Cognizant of both parent and child demands, this easy chapter book would make a fine intergenerational read-together. RS

ISBN 0-395-76502-1  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 5-7

Granite is an Alaskan-born sled-dog, bred for racing, but the puppy escapes when being taken to a new home and heads for the wilderness. Lacking survival skills, he injures himself and is in danger of becoming prey when a wolf bitch, mourning her stolen puppies, adopts him into her pack. Granite struggles to adjust to wolfish rules and etiquette but remains the lowest member of the pack even as an adult, until he performs an act of heroism to save his foster mother from certain death. Granite is, as most animals are, a sympathetic protagonist, and the details of wolf and dog behavior (and the problems the differences cause) give this account a certain resonance. The plot, however, is hackneyed and sentimental, and while an introductory note describes changing attitudes towards canid behavior and the author's sources for wolf information, it is doubtful that any sources encouraged the rank anthropomorphism of statements such as "Granite thought that his mother was beautiful" and "When Granite wondered if his mother had new babies, he felt cold and lost." Kids who can't get enough of dog tales will appreciate Granite's story, but the discerning will stick with Julie of the Wolves. DS

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09514-2  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 7-10

It's devastating to Pete when his older brother, Will, suddenly suffers from the paralytic illness of Guillain-Barré syndrome. The brothers have always been close, and it seems to Pete as if he's the only one who understands Will now that he can no longer talk, and the only one with hope for Will's recovery. In order to advance that recovery, Pete brings in some of his father's animal masks; placing a mask over Will's face allows Will to become mentally, if not physically, that animal for a brief time, absorbing its strength and wholeness. As Will's condition worsens, Pete grows more desperate, until finally he discovers that the bond between two brothers is strong enough to cheat death. This is an ambitious story but it doesn't quite work; the mask motif never really meshes with the rest of the story, and it interferes with rather than emphasizing the brotherly connection. There's not much characterization, either, and the dialogue seems forced. The disability drama still engages, however, particularly as it's the kid who's the hero while the adults watch helplessly; kids who know they know better too will appreciate Pete's and Will's triumph. DS
ISBN 0-689-80704-X $16.00
Reviewed from galleys Gr. 3-5

[Books written by Bulletin staff are given a descriptive annotation rather than review and code rating.] Two years of begging finally pay off when Eliza gets the dog of her dreams while her family is on vacation in Ireland. But how will she get the dog home to Chicago? And what will having a dog of her own really be like? RS

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09471-5 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-5

The Heides take on a host of childhood annoyances, trials, and miseries from bullies and brats to cafeteria cuisine, allowances and hand-me-downs to the dread principal’s office. While not uniformly hilarious, most poems nonetheless elicit empathetic chuckles or groans. It’s kid-2; parents-0 in “Doubles” (“I need my allowance, Mom,” I say. ‘I really need it bad!’ ‘All right,’ says Mom, ‘then here it is.’ And now I’ll go ask Dad.”) “Dinner at a Fancy Restaurant,” in which a young diner deflates a pompous waiter with his order “I weesh La Peanut Butter,” may strike a chord among readers not to the manor born, and “Grounded” (“I said a bad word and I’m grounded. I just wanted to hear how it sounded”) has universal appeal. Westcott’s manic, crayon-bright watercolor illustrations, which enlivened Never Take a Pig to Lunch (BCCB 6/94), do equal service here, defining a comic venue with dialogue and thought bubbles in “The Interrogation,” or just pumping up the flatter entries. The visual fun will scoop in some primary readers leery of weightier verse. EB

ISBN 0-8234-1225-3 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-6

As in their Cherokee Summer (BCCB 4/93) and Pueblo Boy (4/91), the author and photographer focus upon a young member of a minority community, enlarging the biographical account with contextualizing information about the larger picture. For most of the year, Ricardo (“Ricky”) lives with his mother and older siblings in Rio Grande City, Texas, while his father does roadwork in Chicago, sending money back to support the family. Ricky describes his neighborhood and school, with particular attention to his inspiring school principal. When school is out for the summer, though, the whole family (joined by Dad) travels the migrant farm worker routes, going north to “help with the cotton crop.” While a map shows general migrant patterns, and photos show Ricky picking melons, the book unfortunately favors the general over the specific, making the “I” of the narrative somewhat superfluous. The book is a little livelier when Ricky talks about his life at home, and while there is some generic uplift (“With an education, anything is possible”), Ricky’s voice is friendly and informative. Sidebars include facts about
child labor laws, the United Farmworkers Union, and Cesar Chavez, as well as some mini-portraits of other migrant children; a glossary and index are appended.


Asgrim pauses from work on his knörr (boat) to tell his daughter Sigrid the story of Leif, a fellow Greenlander who had dared to sail further than any of his countrymen, discovering the westward lands of Helluland, Markland, and Vinland. Among the treasures Leif brought home was the sturdy lumber which, sold to Asgrim in hard times, became the hull of the new knörr. The story-within-a-slim-story seems an unnecessary contrivance, and Hunt's comprehensive endnote actually offers more information about Norse explorations and settlement than does the fictionalized text. Report writers who can contend with the note's close-set type can learn here about Norwegian seafaring, historical background on Leif, and speculation as to the actual sites of Leif's landings. Bright line-and-watercolor paintings feature a cast of perpetually grinning Norsemen who often bear an uncanny resemblance to Pippi Longstocking. Bordered insets are captioned with runes that can be decoded with the aid of an appended *futhork* (alphabet). A bibliography of books and articles for adult reading is included. EB


Sunny, fourteen, adores her big brother Stephen, who is brilliant, kind, talented, athletic, and popular. Her relative ordinariness is somewhat of a disappointment to her, but she finds that her strength and understanding is what Stephen needs when he encounters real failure for the first time in his life, when his emergency CPR administered to his beloved basketball coach fails to prevent the man's death. Hurwitz is writing about older kids than she usually does, but her easy style and sympathetic characterization are evident here as well. While Stephen's recovery is fairly predictable, the book's continued respect for him is pleasantly novel: he really is a fine young man, and he doesn't need to be revealed as less than that for Sunny to increase her appreciation for her own merits. Illustrations not seen. DS


"Eulaliaaaaaaaaa!" That's the battlecry in the latest Redwall installment as the noble badger Sunflash the Mace seeks to vanquish his sworn enemy Sixclaw the ferret and restore himself to the ancestral stronghold of Salamandastron (see BCCB 7/93). Here again is the pulpy mix that has garnered so many faithful readers: pastoral scenes sprinkled with babytalk ("Rotten uckypaw stinky ole foxes") cheek by savaged jowl with lots of violence ("Fordpetal, the young female hare with the fluttering eyelashes, went down with a scream, the spear sticking out of her back").
The book is predictable and too long, but that doesn’t seem to have stopped series fans before. Although somebody ought to write an article about the currents of fascism that flow uneasily—or too easily—through this series, it will suffice here to say that Sunflash is the most epic of heroes and his journey most perilous; Sixclaw is deliciously, terribly true to his verminous kind and meets a suitable fate. RS

JOHNSON, PAUL BRETT Lost; written by Paul Brett Johnson and Celeste Lewis; illus. by Paul Brett Johnson. Jackson/Orchard, 1996 [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09501-0 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-8 yrs

A little girl has lost her dog, Flag, in the desert. While she and her father look for him—putting up signs, searching a canyon, talking with an old desert prospector—we see what they don’t: Flag looking for shelter and food and protecting himself from perils such as snakes, coyotes, and javelinas. His travails are on the left-hand pages in thickly textured full-color paintings while the girl and her father’s search is depicted on the right in simpler pencil drawings. Flag gets thinner and thinner while his mistress gets sadder and sadder, but while we’re happy for their reunion after almost a month (the old prospector finds and rescues the dog) we don’t quite believe it: too much for too long has gone on, and it’s difficult to see why the dog isn’t dead. To end the story that way, however, would truly be an exercise in story-hour sadism, so the happy ending is probably the better choice even while it remains a case of the end not really following the means. RS

KEHRET, PEG Earthquake Terror. Cobblehill, 1996 [144p]
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-6

When Jonathan and Abby’s mother injures her ankle while the family is on a camping trip, Jonathan is told to take good care of his sister (six years old and disabled) while his parents go to get help. This could be entertaining trouble enough, but then an earthquake strikes and the two kids—and one dog—are on their own. Predictable but exciting, the story puts the siblings in unrelenting but not unrealistic peril (that is, given the contrivance of the set-up), and while Kehret is not always the freshest of writers (“With his heart in his throat, Jonathan crept away . . .”) her focus on the action is tight and involving. RS

KING-SMITH, DICK Mr. Potter’s Pet; illus. by Mark Teague. Hyperion, 1996 [128p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0174-3 $13.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

Mild-mannered Mr. Potter has lived a quiet and orderly life, dutifully looking after his parents, until they are both carried off by food poisoning on his fiftieth birthday. Mr. Potter then breaks out of his pattern and purchases a pet, an outspoken and extremely rude mynah bird he names Everest. Everest and Mr. Potter begin to form a bond, and the bird takes Mr. Potter in hand, finding him a housekeeper and furthering his romance when the new employee proves to be Mr. P’s childhood crush. This is typical King-Smith, with a comfortably familiar story enlivened by cheerful and breezy writing; Everest is an unashamedly anthropo-
morphized bird and all the more diverting for it. Light entertainment with a touch of the fantastical, this will give novice readers a pleasant alternative to everyday-life fare. Mark Teague’s line drawings are comic but restrained, adding to the amusement without overpowering the text. DS

Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-8 yrs

“1927 was a great year to sell newspapers,” and Willie Brinkman is proud to shout “Extra! Extra! Read all about it!” for the Cincinnati *Times-Star* and bring home his pay for his family. Willie is especially excited because the great Dempsey-Tunney fight is coming up, and he wants to be the one proclaiming the victory of his hero: “Jack Dempsey was a workingman’s hero, and the streets Willie walked were workingman’s streets.” Alas—Dempsey loses, but Willie learns a lesson about pride and fortitude. The story is earnest and a little didactic; the recreation of the fight—which Lewin pictures in black-and-white behind the full-color watercolors of Willie’s world—is not very clear, although the authors in a note explain the controversial seconds that cost Dempsey the title. Lewin’s Cincinnati is a well-scrubbed nostalgic vision with characters that are theatrically posed with often clichéd expressions. Still, unlike Pilkey’s *The Paperboy,* reviewed below, there is a story here, and listeners may empathize with the news of victory snatched and more modest victories won. RS


When the paycheck won’t stretch to pay the rent anymore, Joelle, her brother Eli, and their mother have to move into a shelter. Although it’s tough squeezing into one room “a little bigger than our living room at the apartment,” Joelle finds that in other ways the shelter is a communitarian paradise. Neighbors offer cookies and friendship, they visit each others rooms and get together for meals... “At the shelter, it seemed more and more like we were one big family.” Although Kroll sensitively depicts the shame a child might feel at living in a shelter (Joelle tries to hide where she lives from the other kids at school), she is unrealistically sunny in portraying shelter life; indeed, after all the “shelter folks” show up to see Joelle in the school play, we get the feeling that she’s better off than ever. (The pencil illustrations, too, earnest but stiff, show a happy place.) For a less cheerful treatment of the topic see Jacqueline Wilson’s funny but tough *Elsa, Star of the Shelter* (BCCB 2/96). RS


Except for a few nervous dogs, almost everybody likes fireworks, and Susan Kuklin gives eager audiences a chance to know incendiary displays a bit better. Focusing on the Grucci family, the “First Family of Fireworks,” the book gives a basic explanation of the making, storing, exploding, and choreographing of fireworks, in-
cluding some description of the different varieties and how they are achieved. The text is not as strong as it might be: readers who don’t know what actually makes fireworks flammable won’t learn it here, the technical discussions tend to be dauntingly dense, and it can be difficult to discern just what part of the text a photograph is illustrating. The real glory here lies in the photographs: Kuklin shows pyrotechnics at their most splendiferous and varied, with gold-and-blue spiders, silver tourbillions, and the Grucci trademark, split golden comets, streaking through the dark skies and lighting up Shea Stadium below or enhanced by the glittering skyline behind them—in fact, real-life fireworks may be rather disappointing by comparison. Readers may not get all the information they’d like here, but for sheer oohs and ahs per page, this is a firecracker. DS


Like Carol Carrick’s Banana Beer (BCCB 4/95) and Niki Daly’s My Dad (BCCB 6/95), this is unabashed bibliotherapy designed for children living with an alcoholic parent. Where those books tell a story about a child learning to handle his parent’s illness, this one is more of a handbook: sections include What Is an Alcoholic, Confusing Things that Can Happen, How a Family Is Hurt by Alcoholism, and Things You Can Do to Feel Better. Definitions of terms such as “enabler” and “denial” will need adult expansion, but on the whole the text does a good job of keeping to a child-centered perception of the problem. Changes in voice can be confusing, with the text shifting between an omniscient, factual narration (“When someone in a family is sick with alcoholism, things that go on can be hard to understand”) and the voices of various fictional children (“Sometimes my mother pretends that she doesn’t have this illness called alcoholism”); again, adults will have to help with transitions. Illustrator Rubel brightens the pages and the treatment with droll cartoons of alcoholic bears and their families, and, unfortunately, she can’t seem to help being funny, as in the pictures of a mama bear merrily chug-a-lugging the vino or vomiting into the toilet. The children who won’t find these pictures funny are, of course, exactly those to whom the book intends to speak. RS

LAUTURE, DEIZÉ Running the Road to ABC; illus. by Reynold Ruffins. Simon, 1996 [32p] ISBN 0-689-80507-1 $16.00 Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

“The boys are Dyesél, Milsen, Preneyis. The girls are Loud, Kousou, Toutoun. Boys and girls are schoolchildren. They go up and down steep hills six days each week, forty weeks each year, for seven years of their short lives.” The scenario will strike young American listeners as unusual, and librarians will need to preserve the jacket of this picture book because nowhere else, except in the CIP subject headings, is the setting (Haiti) identified. After a breakfast that might include plantain, yucca, herring, Congo beans, or perhaps millet, the children run barefoot from predawn to daybreak: “Up and down/ Every day/ Morning moon/ Evening star/ Morning star/ Evening moon.” Meanwhile, we see the sights they pass by on their
way to "the great and beautiful books on the Road to A B C." It's a poetically repetitive text, rhythmic enough to compensate for a plotless text with an urgent pace. Momentum builds as the children race toward school, although it's too bad that the immediate identification of the characters as schoolchildren eliminates the possibility of suspense. Their eagerness to get to their destination will perhaps inspire some discussion even among kindergarten and primary-grade audiences, who might enjoy acting this out with a teacher chanting the text. Ruffin's acrylic paintings are equally cadenced, starting out a nighttime blue and lightening as the sun comes up. His intense hues, organically stylized compositions, and forward-leaning, angular figures add an energetic motion of their own to the lyrically offbeat words. BH

**Lawson, Julie.** *Danger Game.* Little, 1996 [224p]
ISBN 0-316-51728-3 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 7-10

Unable to control her pyromaniacal urgings, Chelsea, sixteen, is shipped off by her selfish, self-centered mother to her father in Hawaii. She hasn't seen her father in seven years, but just as they're getting to know each other again, a car accident puts him in a coma. Chelsea, whose mother is traipsing through Indonesia with her loathsome boyfriend Simon, then goes to stay with her cousins on Vancouver Island, where she finally comes to terms with the secret that fuels her need to play with fire. This revelation is heavily foreshadowed (and given away in the CIP) but only spelled out after much melodramatic goings-on, including Chelsea's fires, an encounter with the Hawaiian goddess Pele, a dangerous storm, and a distracting subplot about the problems of Chelsea's cousin's boyfriend. Readers might enjoy the soap opera, but the psychologizing is pat, the writing often trite, and an over-reliance on flashbacks and references to offstage events confusing. RS

**Leiner, Katherine** *First Children: Growing Up in the White House;* illus. by Katie Keller and with photographs. Tambourine, 1996 [160p]
ISBN 0-688-13341-X $20.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 6-9

Lots of children have spent formative years in the White House: Leiner includes presidents' children and grandchildren as well as longterm visitors and offspring of staff. She tightens her focus by including only seventeen of the first families and restricting herself to examining a particular aspect of or episode in the life of each child, such as Letitia Tyler's view of her father's remarriage, Frank Johnson's wait to hear the senate verdict on his father's impeachment, and Caroline Kennedy's exclusive school within the White House. It's an approach different from the usual survey (such as Blue and Naden's less spirited *The White House Kids,* BCCB 9/95), but the result is often disjointed and frustrating: we become invested in one person and then get cut off from him or her without feeling any sense of closure (often accounts don't even discuss the rest of that subject's tenure in the White House, let alone what happened to him or her afterwards). Although some of the stories are poignant and memorable and some of the details amusing, sometimes the relevance of an anecdote isn't clear (why do we need to know that Julie Nixon had a black eye at Eisenhower's second inauguration, and why raise the question of where she got it if you're not going to explain?). Scratchboard paintings, sometimes endearingly homely but sometimes simply awkward, open each chapter and paintings and photographs appear throughout. A detailed afterword gives a thumb-
nail sketch of the lives of all the children included in the book; an appendix detailing “The Presidents’ Children” lists the issue of all the U.S. Presidents; a selected bibliography offers sources; there is no index. DS

LEVY, MARILYN  *Run for Your Life.*  Houghton, 1996  [224p]
Reviewed from galleys

Kisha’s life is better than some of the other girls’ in the Walt Whitman projects in Oakland. She’s got her dad—one of the few adult males in the projects—even if he is an unemployed alcoholic. Her best friend Natonia lives with her grandmother and her drug-dealing uncles, who, it turns out, are sexually abusing Natonia. Alisha’s mother is a crackhead. Tureena’s boyfriend sells dope. Despite the fact that none of them show any athletic interest or ability whatsoever, what these girls (all African American) apparently need is a track team. Handsome Darren, the new social worker in the community center, turns them into an enthusiastic running club that fails utterly in its first meet but triumphs in its second: “Our team had taken first, second, and third place. Not only that, we had broken the national record for the 800-meter race.” This is unlikely. Kisha is a spunky, appealing narrator, and you really are glad that everything works out so incredibly well for her, but she’s just about the only believable thing about this novel. Although Natonia has a haunting presence her problems are facilely resolved, and the other girls serve only as didactic stereotypes. The one white girl on the team, Jennifer, pops into the story only when she’s needed to make a preachy point, and Darren is a prince with a vaguely disreputable past that he has valiantly overcome. The running device is transparently contrived, serving as a vehicle for the girls’ self-esteem but lacking any specifics that would inform the story with some realism. Levy does some subtle things with Kisha and her troubled family, but they’re lost in the soapy if entertaining drama. RS

McCully, Emily Arnold  *The Bobbin Girl;* written and illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Dial, 1996  [34p]
Reviewed from galleys

In the textile mills of 1830s Lowell, Massachusetts even quite young girls find employment, and for fifteen minutes each hour from 5:30 am until 7:00 pm, ten-year-old Rebecca removes filled bobbins from the factory’s spinning frames and replaces them with empty ones. Proud to help her mother make ends meet, Rebecca delights in the friendship of the older mill girls and women who work beside her and lodge in her mother’s boarding house. Rebecca admires their dedicated attempts at self-improvement and drinks in their discussions of women’s role in the factory system. It comes as no surprise when, following the injury of a friend in a mill accident, some of the women plan a walk-out and Rebecca’s mother entrusts her with the responsibility to decide for herself whether to join them or to save her own job. This fictionalized account, based on the experiences of a real bobbin girl during the 1836 “turn out,” offers a smooth and accessible introduction to some basic labor economics, as well as a fascinating entree into an early women’s labor action. McCully’s glowing watercolors vividly capture the camaraderie of the women and their varying reactions to the forced choice between unemployment or exploitation. Viewers are frequently drawn into the scenes, rubbing shoulders
with the women around the dinner table, at the heels of an angered mill manager, and right among the cluster of shawled and bonneted women turning out of the factory. Social-studies teachers will welcome the picture book format, suitable for classroom use with a post-picture book crowd. An historical note is appended. EB


It's hard work to make a book seem as dashed-off as this one, but Mahy in madcap mode (overdrive, really) is just as cunning and careful as she is in her serious fiction. Saracen Hobday lives on an island with his "dear old granny," who happens to be a retired ace detective and who, it turns out, can't wait to get on the trail again when an old nemesis, the pirate Grudge-Gallows, escapes from prison. There's more—a lot more—before the final showdown where Granny, Saracen, and a fetching boat captain cum telephone operator, defeat the villain, and Mahy handles the goofy twists of the plot with style and tongue-in-cheek grace. Brief chapters (with zippy titles such as "Ha! Ha! Ha!") lend themselves to reading aloud (although Staermose's jaunty ink cartoons shouldn't be missed—and is that Mahy posing as Granny?), and Saracen learns a truth that may resonate for many: "Did you know you can be shy and brave at the same time?" RS


Describing traditions, stories, and folkways of various West Coast Indian groups, this offers a browsable collage of information. The strength of the book is its inclusion of contemporary Indian communities as well as history, and its blend of voices. The weakness is a tendency toward fragmentation and occasional repetition within fragments: a page about messengers, for instance, introduces a story with "Jeff Jones, a Nomlaki man, recalls how it was," while on the very next page, a section on trading begins, "Here is how Jeff Jones, a Nomlaki man, remembered the traders of his village." The basic organization, however, is sound and includes maturation, cultural variation, relationship with the environment, skills and arts, spiritual beliefs, and adaptations to modern society. A map clarifies tribal territories, and photographs (both historical and current) together with occasional drawings illustrate the book, which concludes with a listing of "California Indian Resources" as well as a careful list of citations for stories, interviews, and pictures. Certainly of regional interest, this will also appeal more generally in the same way that Plains Indians or the East Coast Iroquois confederation might offer a focus for study. BH

MILLER, MARGARET  Now I'm Big; written and illus. with photographs by Margaret Miller.  Greenwillow, 1996  [32p]  Reviewed from galleys  R  4-6 yrs

Photographer Miller takes a longitudinal approach here, contrasting sweet pictures of babies doing baby things ("When I was a baby I had a favorite stuffed
animal and I played with blocks”) with photos of the now-older child engaged in more mature pursuits (“Now I’m big! I take care of a real dog and I’m still playing with blocks, but it’s different”). Although it’s not clear if the babies and the children are actually the same people, they look as if they are (meaning that the book was several years in preparation), and the cast of six (three boys, three girls, varying ethnicities) are appealing subjects. Preschoolers will enjoy this assurance of their inevitable superiority to their younger selves and appreciate the visual evidence that there is indeed a thing called growing up. RS

NERLOVE, MIRIAM Flowers on the Wall; written and illus. by Miriam Nerlove. McElderry, 1996 [32p]
ISBN 0-689-50614-7 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys

“It was winter in Warsaw, Poland, 1938. In a small basement apartment deep inside the Jewish section of the city, Rachel lay beneath layers of blankets.” An adult acquainted with World War II stories knows that this one probably won’t turn out well, and to Nerlove’s credit, it does not. As critic Hazel Rochman says, the Holocaust has no happy ending. What the story does do is involve us in selected daily scenes of hardship that reveal Rachel’s family life and talents—she paints flowers on the wall all winter because she has no shoes to go outside. In 1942 the family is deported to Treblinka. “Rachel’s dreams, along with those of thousands of other Warsaw Jews, faded like the flowers on her apartment walls. And then they were gone forever.” Gentle in tone but realistic in content, this is illustrated with softly textured paintings that are similar, in their graphic effects, to the textual balance. Muted browns and grays are brightened by occasional warm hues, just as Rachel’s dreary days are sometimes brightened by gifts from her family, opportunities to play or study, and her own creative art work. There’s enough distance here to ease the sad outcome for young listeners and enough closeness to make them remember the Rachels of the world. Inspired by Roman Vishniac’s photographs of the Warsaw Ghetto (and by one photograph in particular of a little girl), this is a subtle portrait—more authentic than Wild’s Let the Celebrations Begin (BCCB 9/94) and more typical than Oppenheim’s The Lily Cupboard (3/92)—and one that suggests there is no age limitation to telling a truth. BH

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12988-9 $15.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12987-0 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys

Unlike Paxton’s brisk poetic retellings of Aesop’s fables (BCCB 11/88), this is a sentimental and tired tale of the origin of the tooth fairy. It seems that sometime around the turn of the century a little girl named Emily meets a whimsical fairy named Glynnis. When Glynnis reports the encounter to the Fairy Queen, the good fairy instructs her to obtain a token from Emily that “only a mortal could give.” Thus and so. The lush, fairydust sprinkled watercolor-and-gouache illustration match the story in both mood and cliché—as the characters “exclaim with delight” and “smile with happiness,” so do the pictures. For a tale with more child resonance and appeal, try Kaye’s The Real Tooth Fairy (BCCB 10/90); for one with a little more bite, go for Collington’s eccentric The Tooth Fairy (11/95). RS
Pettit, Jayne  
Houghton, 1996  [176p]
ISBN 0-395-76504-8 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  

As the number of World War II stories, histories, and memoirs increases in literature for young people, so does the quality vary. The eight children described here were all victims of cruel wartime injustice, and their stories have the inherent grip of survival against odds. The focus of the book, however, is only vaguely on activities of resistance, which seems to be loosely interpreted, especially in the cases of Bessie Shea, who kept a wartime diary in Scotland; Alistaire Home, who was evacuated from London to the U.S. during the Blitz; and Jeanne Wakatsuki, who was relocated with her family and other Japanese Americans to Manzanar. Nechama Bawnik's story is one of hiding, Elie Wiesel's of spiritual tenacity, and Karla Poewe's of endurance. The two remaining children do, in fact, take part in the "Resistance" referred to in the introduction, one carrying messages in Belgium and one rescuing a downed British airman in France. Readers with little historical background will find themselves besieged with tritely phrased generalizations: Hitler is introduced as "an embittered little Austrian," Belgium "found itself overrun" by German troops, America "found itself at war with Germany and Japan." There are also some actual points of confusion—when it's hard to follow the vicissitudes of a refugee family traveling between East and West Berlin, for instance, or when it's implied that a German schoolteacher beats children because he saw his own wife and daughter killed. Some passages beg for further explanation: one is left to wonder whether Alistaire realized his dream of joining the RAF after graduating from high school (he turned down a Harvard scholarship because "his country needed him"); or, for that matter, why Charlotte Corday was guillotined for her part in the French Revolution. This is a well-intentioned book that shows signs of diligent research on an important subject, but too much is covered superficially and better writing prevails in books such as Meltzer's *Rescue* (BCCB 6/88). BH

Pevsner, Stella  
* Would My Fortune Cookie Lie?  
Clarion, 1996  [192p]
ISBN 0-395-73082-1 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  

Alexis is getting ready to enter eighth grade, but she's not ready for moving out of Chicago, as her mother wants to do. Alexis's little brother, Tyler, is thrilled with the idea of moving because it means he can get a dog, but Alexis is afraid that a relocation not only means leaving behind her best friend Suzy, but also means that her parents are getting divorced. Things become even more complicated when the mysterious young stranger who's been following Alexis and Suzy proves to be Alexis' father's son from an earlier marriage, a son of whose existence Alexis' whole family has been unaware. This is a somewhat romanticized portrayal of the prodigal child returned (for more realism, see Sarah Ellis' *Out of the Blue*, BCCB 4/95), but Pevsner does a good job of using the solid realism of Alexis' parents' difficulties and Alexis' authentically quotidian friendship with Suzy to underpin the more melodramatic plot twists. The realistic characterization of Alexis' loving but driven mother and the book's tender treatment of Tyler's friendship with Suzy's soap-opera-watching grandmother further enriches the story, which will appeal to young readers who like a low-suds soap themselves. DS
PILKEY, Dav  *The Paperboy*; written and illus. by Dav Pilkey. Jackson/Orchard, 1996 [32p]  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09506-1  $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad  5-7 yrs

A young African-American boy gets ready for his paper route, makes his deliveries (followed closely by his dog), and gets back to bed just as the rest of the world is waking. This is a slender concept rather than a story; while not enough happens to interest those of actual paper-delivery age, the hushed moonlit setting as conveyed in the illustrations has a mystical allure. Pilkey paints a night at once ordinary and enchanted, with the strong, safe beam of the paperboy's bicycle headlight a beacon among mysteries of dark-green hills and shifting shades of sky. The tone is quiet—in fact, while this book closes with the arrival of dawn, it might find a more comfortable place at bedtime. RS


Refreshingly, the authors address the readers of this book directly as teens who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual—a nice change from the assumptions of heterosexuality usually present in teen self-help books. The book begins with two chapters on sexual identity and self-discovery ("Who Am I?" and "The Journey to Self-Acceptance") followed by advice on coming out to family and friends ("I Think I Have Something to Tell You"), followed by advice on dating and relationships ("Could This Be Love?"). followed by chapters on definitions, health issues, stereotypes, religion, and history. The progression from self-acceptance to coming out to romantic involvement portrayed here is not every g/l/b teen's experience (many become sexually involved long before they acknowledge their sexual orientation), and the authors' assumptions about the lives of the book's readers make it less useful than it could be. The tone is supportive but didactic, and readers may tire of the relentlessly chatty advice, well-intentioned and well-thought-out as it may be. The thirty-page list of resources is extensive, including a state-by-state directory of social service agencies and telephone helplines, and a selective annotated bibliography of biographies, nonfiction, and fiction. CHRISTINE JENKINS

PRELUTSKY, Jack  *Monday's Troll*; illus. by Peter Sis. Greenwillow, 1996 [40p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-14373-3  $15.93  
Trade ed. ISBN 00-688-09644-1  $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 3-6

See this month's Big Picture, p. 217, for review.

REEF, Catherine  *John Steinbeck*. Clarion, 1996 [163p] illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-395-71278-5  $17.95  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-10

Having recently biographized one of the most American of poets (*Walt Whitman*, BCCB 7/95), Reef now turns her hand to a chronicle of another very American writer, Nobel prize-winner John Steinbeck. The book traces Steinbeck's life from
his childhood in California, to his burgeoning writing career and his passion for social justice, to his worldwide recognition. Reef does an excellent job of synthesizing Steinbeck’s work, his private life, and his politics and philosophy, and the picture that emerges is a vivid one of a determined and idealistic young man; she also allows the text to pose some thoughtful questions about his last years, where his former idealism seemed at odds with his lack of sympathy towards ’60s social causes. Steinbeck is an important figure both as a writer and as a social documentarian, and this is a smoothly written and accessible biography. Black-and-white pictures (some, such as the one of Betty Furness in front of a refrigerator, of doubtful relevance), are included, as is an index; there are no notes, but a bibliography is provided. DS

ROOT, PHYLLIS Aunt Nancy and Old Man Trouble; illus. by David Parkins. Candlewick, 1996 [26p]
Reviewed from galleys R 5-7 yrs

Aunt Nancy is a cozy old body, but "she knows a thing or two herself”; when Old Man Trouble comes to visit, she doesn’t panic. She’s nice as pie to him, offering whatever hospitality she can and pretending that all his little mischiefs (causing the fire to go out, breaking the water glass) are actually strokes of good fortune, until finally, after she tricks him into restoring her dried spring, he leaves satisfied that he has caused her trouble worthy of his name. The story is apparently Root’s creation and Aunt Nancy, according to flap copy, the author’s invention as well, rather than being the Anansi-descendant Aunt Nancy of folktale fame; nonetheless, the tale has a pleasingly folkloric rhythm and downhome style reminiscent of Wooldridge’s adaptation of Wicked Jack (BCCB 12/95). The interesting slant here is that the troublemaker doesn’t know he got beat, which might disappoint young listeners wishing for a more obvious comeuppance but adds a certain politesse to the proceedings. Parkin’s sharp-beaked, sharktoothed, top-hatted Mr. Trouble (fittingly portrayed in oils) is suavely menacing, where Aunt Nancy is rounder and more restrained; monochrome silhouettes offer an edgy contrast to the thickness and warmth of the color paintings. The victory of the underestimated is a popular plot, and here’s a kid-pleasing version with some bite to it. DS

SCHRENK, HANS-JÖRG Arabian Horses; illus. with photographs by Tomáš Mícek. Gareth Stevens, 1995 48p (Magnificent Horses of the World)
ISBN 0-8368-1367-7 $14.95 M Gr. 3-5

Lipizzaner Horses; illus. with photographs by Tomáš Mícek and Elizabeth Kellner. Gareth Stevens, 1995 48p (Magnificent Horses of the World)
ISBN 0-3868-1371-5 $14.95 M Gr. 3-5

It’s a promising idea—a European-generated series of oversized books on horse breeds (including some breeds, such as Friesians and Icelandics, rarely discussed in the U.S.) featuring eye-catching, Vavra-esque photography. The texts throughout, however, are riddled with errors and confusion. The books have gone through a German and a British edition before this, which perhaps accounts for the textual disorder: the Roman type that appears on a few pages of each book offers generally accurate, if dubiously translated ("Arabian thoroughbred,” for instance, is an oxy-moron) historical information; the italic captions are poorly written, uninformative, and frequently completely mistaken, and they dominate the books. The breed descriptions are unhelpful, romanticized, and virtually interchangeable (all the breeds
are spirited and gentle with silky tails), and the photo captions wildly misinformed (a picture of a mottle-faced, Roman-nosed young Lipizzan is described as showing the Arabian influence on the breed's face); the text "Lipizzaners, as show horses, possess the grace and strength to perform highly intricate movements" attaches to a Lipizzan lying down, and a line in the Arabian book states firmly that "the gallop is the natural pace of these horses"). End matter includes a flawed and poorly written glossary (both bay and chestnut are defined as "reddish brown in color" and manes as "the long hair around the necks of horses"), a short bibliography and index, and a rather eccentric choice of addresses to write to (why the Horse Council of British Columbia and not the American Horse Council?). There's some great poster material here (except for the photos that lose their drama in the gutter), but informed readers will be irritated and novices misled and perplexed by these titles. DS


Churchill's life encompassed three wars and some significant peacetime episodes and accomplishments, and Severance compresses a great deal of information into this biography of the man who is one of the major historical personages of our century. The book examines Churchill's political career and military decisions in detail, including a multitude of quotes from Churchill's daughter, Churchill's wife's letters, and Churchill himself to add immediacy to the account. The writing tends to be flat and choppy, however, explanation is often lacking or unclear (readers unfamiliar with the Dardanelles disaster, for instance, won't learn what it actually involved), and the book is sometimes overoptimistic in its assumption that young readers will understand Churchill's witticisms. A selection of Churchillian epigrams, a bibliography, and an index (from which Churchill's Nobel Prize is inexplicably omitted) are included; black-and-white photos appear throughout. DS


As a little boy prepares to wade along the shore of Lake Superior, a flock of gulls regale him with a litany of some of the ships the hungry lake has claimed, including the famed Edmund Fitzgerald. They warn him off with the eerie admonishment, "Gitche Gumee has a hunger, child, and there's always room for more." The alarmist birds dive away and the boy is seen returning to the shore with his nightgown-clad mother, but whether for supervision or to tell her about the talking gulls is unclear. The audience learns little of the wreck itself and the work seems directed more toward promoting seashore safety than examining a marine disaster. Cut-paper collages, with papers layered or folded to cast shadows and bordered in blue where the gulls relate the disaster, employ grainy black-and-white photos of the ships laid over icy green and steel gray waters and sky. A scene in which the audience shares the viewpoint of the child, who sees "faces [of dead crew members] in the foamy waters," is pleasingly creepy, but the story seems to generate its menace to no particular point. EB
SIERRA, JUDY  *Good Night, Dinosaurs*; illus. by Victoria Chess. Clarion, 1996 [32p]
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  5-8 yrs

The reptilian natives are restless tonight, but Sierra is trying to calm them down with a bit of lullaby poetry: “Good night, dinosaurs./ Sleep tight, dinosaurs./ Good night/ dinosaurs/ good night.” Species by species, the diplodocus, pteranodon, tyrannosaurus, compsognathus, and triceratops are lulled to sleep in their own little way in their own little corner of the mesozoic world. It’s a cute idea, but it doesn’t get much farther than that: the poem’s meter shifts around too often to get the rhythm going, the alliteration starts excitingly but then fades, and some of the near-rhymes are more successful than others; nor does there seem to be much more to the story than a list, albeit a creative one, of slumbering dinosaurs. Victoria Chess’s art is softer here than usual; while the images are less intense, they have a certain lumpy and prehistoric appeal. It’s ultimately less successful than Wilson’s otherworldly *Good Zap, Little Grog* (BCCB 12/95), but small dinosaur aficionados may find this just the thing to send them off to dreams of primeval ooze as they clutch their toy apatosauruses. DS

ISBN 0-525-67477-2  $15.99  R  5-8 yrs

Based on an African-American story collected for the Federal Writers’ Project in Alabama, this tale has a wealth of tellings—including artist Molly Bang’s beginning-to-read version and Virginia Hamilton’s adaptation illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon in *The People Could Fly*—as well as oral interpretations by noted storytellers such as Jackie Torrance and Judy Sierra herself. It’s a spooky story however it’s told, and that’s its prime attraction. Wiley is being stalked by the same wicked creature that carried off his daddy, but with the help of his mama, who’s a powerful conjure woman in her own right (and smart, to boot), Wiley tricks the Hairy Man three times and drives him howling into the swamp. While colors and lines sometimes compete with each other for attention, Brian Pinkney’s oil paintings on scratchboard are definitely the scariest yet. Where Bang’s and the Dillons’ were highly stylized, this Hairy Man is awfully human except, of course, for his cow hoofs. His red eyes, pointy teeth, and wild hair add considerable tension to the brooding swirls that characterize Pinkney’s compositions. The eerie-green swamp scenes and generous amount of text per page suggest an older picture-book audience that will eat this up at Halloween or just any old time there’s a place for ghosts, goblins, and things that go bump in the night. BH

SIMONSON, LOUISE  *I Hate Superman!*
See review under Dixon, p. 223.

SISULU, ELINOR BATEZAT  *The Day Gogo Went to Vote*; illus. by Sharon Wilson. Little, 1996 [32p]
ISBN 0-316-70267-6  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  5-8 yrs

It is 1994 South Africa, and with the country preparing for its first universal elec-
tions, Thembi’s great-grandmother Gogo is determined not to be left out. Thembi and her family are surprised that Gogo (“grandmother”), who hasn’t left her home in years, is planning to go out and vote, but Gogo explains, “You want me to die not having voted?” Neighbors arrange a ride, and with Thembi along for moral support, Gogo casts a ballot in the election that makes Nelson Mandela president of the nation. This is more celebratory anecdote than story, but provides fertile and friendly ground for expansion and discussion. Wilson’s bold, rich well-drafted pastels capture the events and family members with a flexible style and impressionistic textures, accenting the spreads with the bright blue dresses Gogo and Thembi wear for the great day. RS

SLEATOR, WILLIAM  
_The Night the Heads Came._  Dutton, 1996  [172p]
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 6-9

Sleator doesn’t waste any time here, beginning his story with an alien abduction right in the first few pages. Leo and his friend Tim are taken from a midnight road into a grimy spacecraft by repulsive creatures and examined, and then Leo alone is released, all memory of the event wiped from his brain. Of course, no one believes him when he says he doesn’t know where Tim is; when the mysterious hypnotist Dr. Viridian causes him to recover his memories (or so Leo thinks) his credibility is nil. Until Tim—taller and older—and the aliens return . . . There are a lot of attention-grabbing things going on in this novel, but it exhibits little of the originality of such Sleator classics as _Interstellar Pig._ The abduction scenarios come straight from the tabloids, the hypnotist (“You are getting sleepy. Your eyelids are getting heavy; soon you will be—”) is a horror movie cliche, the less than imaginatively named “Acme Chemical Company” is part of the scene, and the book ends with a chilling but narratively unjustified nod to _The Invasion of the Bodysnatchers._ This borrowing makes a certain amount of sense given the book’s interesting premise that the aliens conceal their presence by making people remember (via hypnosis) the visitors as sci-fi clichés, but it’s not clear that Sleator himself is employing the same clichés with equal finesse. RS

STANLEY, DIANE  
_Elena._  Hyperion, 1996  [56p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0256-1  $13.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 4-7

Stanley reimagines events from the family history of her mother’s friend, fictitiously renamed Elena here, who fled from Mexico to California during the Mexican Civil War. Despite the tale’s complicated and personal pedigree, there is much here to intrigue young readers—military occupation, threat of abduction by the rebel army, deathbed prophecies fulfilled. However, readers must wade through a prelude of details about Elena’s early life before they hit the drama. Although these details are intended to establish Elena’s strength of character, her childhood pursuit of education and teenage defiance of her father are never directly linked to the decisions she makes as a widow to remove her children from their war-ravaged country. Subject matter which should appeal to a middle-school audience is delivered in clipped sentences and simplified vocabulary more appropriate to younger readers. Historical notes and an introduction to the “real” Elena’s family are included. EB
Reviewed from galleys R 2-5 yrs

Cat's making the rounds to all her farmyard neighbors, borrowing a bit of straw from Pig, some feathers from Hen, ribbon from Donkey's bonnet, and even Horse's stable. The animals are obliging but curious (as is the reader); Cat replies cryptically to their queries that she needs the items for "this and that." When the animals silently track her to the stable they discover her secret—twin kittens nestled in a ribbon-bedecked bed of straw, feathers, etc. "What are they called? ... I can't decide. What do you think?" and listeners will probably predict the animals' reply. Collages of torn and painted paper with uncolored edges outlining each shape cheerily document Cat's quest, and if the newborns look less young than they ought, they're clearly delighted to join the group. EB

Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-9 yrs

Like its longer (and more complex) companion volume *The Ramsay Scallop* (BCCB 4/94), this is a medieval romance, but the setting is a Middle Eastern desert rather than a European pilgrimage. Loving cousins who have been betrothed since birth, Halima and Atiyah are twice separated: first, by an ambitious uncle who summons Atiyah from a nomadic life to study in Fez; and second, by a rival sheikh who claims Halima for himself when her camel is separated from her tribe's caravan during a sand storm. The tenuous connection to the previous book is Etienne, a friend of Thomas and Elenor who is determined to learn Arabic and who travels with Atiyah from the university in Fez to the camp where Halima is rescued. There is some sentimentality and a few raggedy spots in the portrayal of a complex culture centuries removed (although Western readers might not know what a moussem—a fair for horse trading and camel racing—is, would an Arab prince really need to ask?), and the rival sheikh's sudden change of heart strains credulity; but Temple's storytelling diminishes these problems to minor status. It's a lively plot, with playful poetic passages attributed to Bedouin customs of versifying and at least one tale-within-a-tale that will ring familiar with those who have "Clever Grethel" in their repertoire. BH

Reviewed from galleys Ad 6-9 yrs

Unlike the home-away-from-home ambience of the shelter depicted in Virginia Kroll's *Shelter Folks*, reviewed above, the shelter where Davey and his family stay each night is not far from the mean streets, has bars on the windows, and you have to wait in line to check in each evening at eight, when the shelter opens. (This is after waiting in line for dinner at the soup kitchen.) Although this picture book is more generic situation than story, it is free from illusions but not without hope—Davey does make it through the day and finds out that his older brother does indeed get the job he had applied for. Ritz's watercolor pictures are appropriately somber, and unlike the shelter residents of the Kroll book, those here actually look in need of a place to stay. RS
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Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

Orphaned at age fourteen, Bonnie Shaster moves to Seattle to join the household of her maternal relatives. Cousin Audra, her daughter Sally, and sister-in-law Winnie are models of early-twentieth-century progressive women—well-educated, liberal, and warm-hearted to boot—but their generosity and lack of domestic management skills have brought on hard times and forced them to take in boarders. At Bonnie's arrival they have just begun to realize that espousing women's social and political self-reliance doesn't make them handy in the kitchen. Somewhat predictable household dramas and comedies play out against larger historic events such as World War I demobilization and the general strike of 1919. Lovers of orphan-finds-a-home tales will excuse the occasional cliche ("The train rattled west into the flaming sunset. . . . Never go back, never go back, the train wheels said") and warm to Bonnie's new family and to her budding romance with a blind young veteran. EB


This big, splashy picture book is about a big, friendly dinosaur who decides to go on a cruise on his floating island and ends up in New York harbor: "He saw a gigantic woman holding up a very large flashlight." While Tom ensconces himself on the Chrysler Building and tries in various ways to make himself useful, no one pays him any attention until a little boy befriends him and introduces him to his father, "a very important art critic." After seeing the daubs that Tom's feet have left around the city, the critic decides that Tom "could be the next Pigasso or Andy Warthog," and a celebrity is born. The retro ink and watercolor paintings are sweepingly conceived and glamorous if all too much of the same tenor; the small, formulaic story is overwhelmed. Kids will like big Tom, but the book has too much of an eye on an adult audience. RS

Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-6

Through her letters to the Imperial Magic Sea Monkey Company, the circulation director of the local newspaper, her best friend Sally away at camp, and even Dear Abby, Venola Mae Cutright records the ups and downs of her eleventh summer. Nothing too terrible happens (even though those darned sea monkeys never do turn into anything much more than little specks), although an armed robbery of the Sunday church service adds some excitement; what's fun here is Venola Mae's breathless take on small events, such as acquiring warts (and losing them) and being named—twice—Paper Carrier of the Month: "P.S. Thank you for the second certificate. Now I have one for each end of my bed, which is good because sometimes I sleep with my head at the foot, so now I'll see a certificate either way." Although the tone and approach rely a little too much on Venola Mae's naiveté, the style is lively and the epistolary format an easy reach for readers scared by more substantial paragraphs. Give it to those kids having trouble getting through the spring. RS
WASSERSTEIN, WENDY *Pamela’s First Musical*; illus. by Andrew Jackness. Hyperion, 1996 40p
M 6-9 yrs

A birthday treat, a loving aunt, the bright lights of Broadway—sounds like quite an outing, but the curtain opens on the cutenessness too often employed by noted writers who should have stuck with what they were good at: "I-wish-I-wish-I-wish I get to see my aunt Louise. My aunt Louise is a perfectly perfect person. We always have a most splendiferous time." Wasserstein is a justifiably celebrated playwright, but that skill doesn’t necessarily carry over into a children’s book. What isn’t precious here is either big (the musical they attend is an extravaganza the likes of which is more suited to the Hippodrome than the Great White Way) or pointed at adults (a marquee reads “Kathleen Battle-Weary: Woman in Denial,” and the acidulous critic John Simon is quoted on another marquee saying “I Loved it!”). The watercolor paintings (including caricatures of some Broadway habitués) are more effervescent than the lengthy, hard-worked text, and while kids might wish for an aunt like glamorous Louise, they would probably prefer one who did not preface almost every remark with “Oooooooh, dahling.”

WATERS, KATE *Tapenum’s Day: A Wampanoag Indian Boy in Pilgrim Times*; illus. with photographs by Russ Kendall. Scholastic, 1996 [40p]
ISBN 0-590-20237-5 $16.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

As Samuel Eaton prepares for adulthood from behind and beyond the Pilgrims’ stockade (*Samuel Eaton’s Day*, BCCB 11/93), a Wampanoag adolescent hunts, fishes, and learns tribal lore from his elders in this third attractive photoessay on children’s life in 1620s Massachusetts (see also *Sarah Morton’s Day*, BCCB 1/90). Pristine photos, many close-ups of skills and crafts, document daily life in a summer encampment. A substantive storyline enhances the examination of customs—Tapenum has been passed over for initiation into the *pniesog* (warrior counselors), and he doesn’t understand why. Through his lapses in commitment to training throughout the day, though, readers will understand that he is still acquiring the strength, skill, and wisdom he needs. Just as Samuel in the earlier volume makes only casual contact with his Wampanoag neighbors, Tapenum expresses only passing interest in the activities of the European “coat-men.” Cogent endnotes explain annual Wampanoag migrations, the Indian homesite at Plimoth Plantation, and *pniesog* initiation; a map of known tribal settlement is included. EB

WAUGH, SYLVIA *The Mennym’s Under Siege*. Greenwillow, 1996 [224p]
ISBN 0-688-14372-5 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

The Mennym’s, rag-dolls come to life in an old English house, are well on their way to becoming classic series protagonists with this third book (see also BCCB 3/95 and 5/94). The family dynamics have changed somewhat after their last adventure, where the normally reclusive dolls were forced to depend on human help and relocate temporarily to the country, and they’re changing some more. The younger Mennym’s increasingly long for activity in the outside world, but the family patriarch, Sir Magnus, is opposed to this; he is so alarmed when these outside activities seem to spark interest from outsiders that he attempts to wall the family off en-
tirely, which leads to frustration and, ultimately, disaster. Waugh walks an interesting tightrope in this book, examining through the supposedly ageless and immortal rag dolls issues of the importance of change and growth, and the forced isolation brings out some intriguing pricklinesses in the family. Her employment of a shocking and apparently irrevocable change emphasizes the darkness that’s touched these books and separates the series from the tameness of the usual toy fantasy; that plot move, however, is not particularly effectively handled and leaves some obvious questions without necessary answers. At this point, however, Mennymites are along for the whole ride, and this book will take them in some provocative new directions. DS

WILD, MARGARET  *Old Pig*; illus. by Ron Brooks. Dial, 1996 [32p]  
Reviewed from galleys  

Old Pig and Granddaughter have lived together happily for a long time. The first double spread details their everyday activities; the second introduces an ominous note when Old Pig does not get up for breakfast as usual. During the rest of the book, Old Pig prepares to die, returning her books to the library (and not borrowing any more), closing her bank account, paying her bills, giving the unspent money to Granddaughter, and taking a last slow walk to look and listen and smell and taste everything. Finally, Granddaughter climbs into bed—“and for the very last time Old Pig and Granddaughter held each other tight until morning.” This seems more creepy than comforting. The pastel hues cast a golden glow over this gentle farewell to life and love, but the process does seem to be somewhat drawn out and sentimentalized compared to, say, Tomie dePaola’s equally heartfelt but more crisply balanced *Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs* (BCCB 10/73) or Aliki’s *The Two of Them* (9/80). BH

WILLIAMS, MARCIA, ad.  *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*; ad. and illus. by Marcia Williams. Candlewick, 1996 26p  
ISBN 1-56402-802-X $17.99  
Reviewed from galleys  

Readers familiar with Williams’ comic-strip treatment of other classic subjects (Greek myths, BCCB 11/92, and Robin Hood, 5/95) will recognize the format here: oversized pages with panel cartoons in various sizes, straightforward narrative appearing in captions underneath and humorous dialogue spoken by the characters within. This version distills and selects from the variety of Arthurian tales extant: there’s no Mordred and no actual indiscretion between Lancelot and Guinevere, but there’s the sword in the stone, the round table, and a whole lot of grail quest. The last is somewhat problematic, as its mystical point doesn’t translate well to this format and the recounting seems a bit hasty (we never know, for instance, what happened to Lancelot in the end); the compositions also tip too often from the lively into the confusing. It’s still an amiable and breezily told introduction to a durable legend, with adventure, broad comedy, and atmosphere aplenty (there are some particularly rousing dragons); kids just beginning to quest for Arthur will enjoy sharpening their swords on it. DS

This is a bright, breezily written, and highly capable examination of that amorphous and challenging genre, young adult literature. Cart devotes the first half of the book, “That Was Then,” to a discussion of the genre’s history, and the second half, “This Is Now,” focuses on contemporary literature and current issues. Throughout, he deals competently with both broad generic tendencies and specific texts, including some interesting explorations of the merits and the flaws of major young-adult authors. His distinctly personal, often colloquial voice makes a refreshing contrast to bland literary surveys: Cart has opinions, and he’s neither afraid to share them nor unclear about explaining their rationales. His thorough research is demonstrated by his reliance on, acknowledgment of, or open disagreement with most of the important writing in the field (although several of the quotations and examples have a redundant second appearance). Footnotes are supplied for each chapter, and an extensive selected bibliography is appended; the bound book will have an index. DS


This useful guide divides its material into six categories: informational books; autobiographies, biographies, and poetry; historical fiction; plays; contemporary and creative interpretations of the Holocaust and its lessons; and other resources, including organizations and other guides as well as films and journal articles. Titles (intended to be a selection of the most useful rather than a comprehensive listing) receive an age-of-audience classification, a page or so of summary, and suggestion for teaching uses; additional titles are briefly summarized; and each chapter ends with suggestions for student responses and activities. The arrangement is sometimes a bit confusing (there’s no indication on the cross-referenced titles of the full description’s location, for instance), but the combination of breadth and focus here will be helpful to those seeking possibilities in this area. DS
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 read aloud audience; “fiction,” to those books intended for independent reading.

Accidents—fiction: Bohlmeijer
Adoption—fiction: Doherty
African Americans—fiction: Ferris; Levy;
African Americans—stories: Sierra Wiley
Alaska—fiction: Hall
Alcoholism: Langsen
**Arithmetic:** Geisert
Aunts—stories: Wasserstein
Baseball: Anderson
BEDTIME STORIES: Sierra Dinosaur; Pilkey
**BIOGRAPHIES:** Reef; Severance
Birthdays—stories: Caseley
Brothers and sisters—fiction:
Hurwitz; Kehret
Brothers—fiction: Hatrick
Bullies—fiction: Bawden
**Careers:** Anderson
Cats—stories: Sykes
Child abuse—fiction: Lawson
**CONCEPT BOOKS:** Miller
COUNTING BOOKS: Geisert
Cowboys: Cody
Crime and criminals: Aaseng
**Current events:** Aaseng; Sisulu
Death: Brown
Death—stories: Wild
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Disabilities—fiction: Kehret
Dogs—fiction: Hall; Hearne
Dogs—stories: Johnson
Dolls—fiction: Waugh
Earthquakes—fiction: Kehret

**Emotional problems—fiction:**
Lawson
**England—folklore:** Williams
Epistolary fiction: Ware
**Ethics and values:** Fleischman
Family life—fiction: Clifford
Family problems—fiction: Pevsner
**FANTASY:** Jacques; Waugh
Fathers and sons—fiction: Ferris
Fireworks: Kuklin
**Florida—fiction:** Ferris
**FOLKTALES AND FAIRYTALES:** Root; Sierra Wiley
France—stories: Collier
Friends—stories: Caseley
**FUNNY STORIES:** Clifford; Mahy
Ghosts—fiction: Deem
Giraffes—stories: Collier
Government: Aaseng; Leiner
Grandmothers—fiction: Bawden; Mahy
Grandmothers—stories: Sisulu
Guatemala: Franklin
Guidance: Langsen
**HISTORICAL FICTION:**
McCully; Stanley; Temple; Thesman
History: Severance
**History, ancient:** Fleischman
History, U.S.: Bunting; Leiner; McCully; Margolin; Waters
Holocaust: Nerlove
Homelessness—fiction: Kroll
Homelessness—stories: Testa
Horses: Cole; Schrenk
Horses—fiction: Haas *Beware*
Hospitals—fiction: Bohlmeijer
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Indians, American: Margolin
Indians, American—fiction: Waters
Jews—fiction: Nerlove
Labor movement—fiction: McCully
Latinos: Hoyt-Goldsmith
Literature, American: Reef
LOVE STORIES: Temple; Thesman
Mexico—fiction: Stanley
Migrant workers: Hoyt-Goldsmith
Monsters—poetry: Prelutsky
Mothers and daughters—fiction:
   Haas *House;* Lawson
New York City—stories: Torres; Wasserstein
Orphans—stories: Bunting
Paperboys—stories: Kroeger; Pilkey
Papergirls—fiction: Ware
Pets—fiction: King-Smith
Photography: Franklin
Pigs—stories: Geisert; Wild
Pirates—fiction: Mahy
POETRY: Dyer; Heide; Lauture;
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Reading, family: Brown; Dyer; Haas *House;* Miller
Reading, reluctant: Prelutsky; Sleator; Williams
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