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NAOMI SHIHAB NYE AND PAUL B. JANECZKO

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

The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books (ISSN 0008-9036) is published monthly except August by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak, Champaign, IL 61820.

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Lisa Mahoney, Graduate Research Assistant (LM)
Pat Mathews, Graduate Research Assistant (PM)

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES
1 year, institutions, $40.00; individuals, $35.00. In countries other than the United States, add $7.00 per subscription for postage. Japanese subscription agent: Kinokuniya Company Ltd. Single copy rate: $4.50. Reprinted volumes 1-35 (1947-1981) available from Kraus Reprint Co., Route 100, Millwood, NY 10546. Volumes available in microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 North Zeek Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Complete volumes available in microfiche from Johnson Associates, P.O. Box 1017, Greenwich, CT 06830. Subscription checks should be made payable to the University of Illinois Press. All notices of change of address should provide both the old and new address. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak, Champaign, IL 61820.

Subscription Correspondence. Address all inquiries about subscriptions and advertising to University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak, Champaign, IL 61820.

Editorial Correspondence. Review copies and all correspondence about reviews should be sent to Deborah Stevenson, The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820.

Second-class postage paid at Champaign, Illinois
© 1996 by The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois
Drawings by Debra Boigla. This publication is printed on acid-free paper.

Cover illustration by Debbie Tilley, from Riddle-icious ©1996 and used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf.
Riddle-icious
written by J. Patrick Lewis; illustrated by Debbie Tilley

“Standing under summer skies,/ Her back end’s good for swatting flies.// If there’s nothing else to do,/ Her front end’s good for making moo.// Front to back and in between,/ She’s the original cream machine.” What is it? Well, it’s a cow, of course; it’s also an entry from an inventive collection of riddles in poetry. Joke books abound; although riddle books of the classical kind, involving what-am-I questions couched in crafty wordplay, are less common, the appearance of this on the heels of last season’s With One White Wing (BCCB 2/96), by Elizabeth Spires, suggests a pleasing resurgence of a useful and diverting genre.

Where Spires was delicate, however, Lewis is energetic. His poems vary in style—some are in the traditional first-person voice (“I am a helmet/ on the ground . . .”), some hearken back to classic word games (“What’s in a song, but not in a tune?”), some are galloping rhymes (“As I was driving to Van Nuys/ I met a hangman who had three eyes”), and some are poetic free-verse vignettes (“After the heavy traffic of rain/ The sun gives the green light/ To a truck of colors making/ A U-turn in the sky”). His tone varies too; without seeming fragmented, the collection moves from giggly to incantatory to hushed to deftly cornball, but the spirit of linguistic invention and joie de mots pervades every entry. This spirit of play extends to wordplay within each poem as well as the game of each poem: Lewis dabbles in alliteration, dips into anaphora, sprinkles in the odd bit of onomatopoeia, pours on the puns, and finishes with a concrete poem.

Each riddle’s answer is printed in reverse typeface on the bottom of the page, but most readers won’t need the answers (although they may enjoy the challenge of trying to read them backwards). More clever metaphors than brain-teasers, the riddles and their illustrations are filled with broad and amusing hints, so even younger audiences hearing these as readalouds will be able to guess most of them. The accessibly zany line-and-watercolor illustrations are reminiscent of Nadine Bernard Westcott’s art (in Never Take a Pig to Lunch, BCCB 6/94, and Florence Parry Heide’s Oh, Grow Up, 3/96), only spikier and a bit darker-hued. The pictures are filled with visual riffs on the text as well as their own inventive ideas: the chattering-teeth lawnmowers whittle down the rows of corn on the cob, the pack of cards lines up for a group portrait, and assorted animals—ranging from dogs to mice to armadillos—snooze through the action or peer at it. And, appropriately enough in a riddle book, the art is relentlessly personifying, so that no picture is faceless and many have faces where readers might not expect (carrots, letters of the alphabet, trees).

It’s a fortunate time in children’s literature, poetically speaking; we’re gifted with talents such as Prelutsky and Kennedy, Florian and Silverstein. Yet in some
ways Riddle-icious speaks more directly than do those poets’ works to the poetic impulse, and it offers poems that, in demonstrating the worth of taking the phraseological scenic route to define another word, are subtly about poetry itself. Clever and cheerful, this is a convincing introduction to the pleasures of metaphor. Some books try to make language fun; this one knows it already is and invites readers to share in the revel. (Imprint information appears on p. 343.)

Deborah Stevenson, Acting Editor

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ANDERSON, JOAN  Cowboys: Roundup on an American Ranch; illus. with photographs by George Ancona. Scholastic, 1996  48p ISBN 0-590-48424-9  $16.95  R  Gr. 2-4

Cowboys seem to be “in” these days, and here’s a nice look at them. This photoessay examines the life of a New Mexico ranching family, where three generations, including the older kids (boys ages thirteen and eleven), saddle up come roundup time and go out on the range. Without seeming overstuffed, the book gets in details about horse-breaking, range management, branding, and marketing but combines it all into an evocative glimpse of a life different from that of most young readers. Ancona’s photographs glory in the slanting light of dawn and evening and offer up-close and personal views of Herefords, cow ponies, and prickly pear cactus. This really gives the flavor as well as the facts of an historic way of life, and kids who thought their shot at riding the range died with Trigger will appreciate a chance to stop and smell the sagebrush. A useful glossary of terms is included. DS


When Jesse finds a tiny watermelon, not yet as big as her fist, in the corner patch where the fence posts meet, Pappy tells her to leave it for Watermelon Day. Jesse knows that’s a whole summer away; in the meantime, she checks on it every day, patting it and listening to its sound brighten. Eventually, when Pappy decrees it to be Watermelon Day, he cuts the cord and floats the melon on the surface of the cold lake, under the willow tree. Jesse then has to suffer through a family reunion of ball-playing cousins and banjo-strumming uncles, not to mention an ice-cream-serving Mama, until Pappy finally sets the watermelon down on the front porch and whacks it open with his fist. Anyone who’s ever had to wait an unbearably long time for something wonderful will appreciate the patience it takes just to stand back and let time roll on. The leisurely—almost too leisurely—pace of the text and the periodic fruity repetition (“Watermelon, watermelon,” “A Watermelon Day”) allow time to hang in the air; the illustrations, with their naïve style and angularly drafted figures, change from the fresh green of spring to radiant...
orange in the summer as the watermelon fills up with cool summer rains and the deep hot sun. Appelt neatly presents her simple tale, filled with the lazy rhythms of a summer day, while the dusty intensity of Gottlieb’s palette captures the story’s joys. SSV

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8424-0 $16.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-7
In her preface, Sandy Asher notes that each fictional genre “has its own rules, its own fictional world, and its own special rewards for readers.” In order to demonstrate these unique attributes, she has gathered twelve original stories in genres ranging from adventure (Elaine Marie Alphin’s “A Time to Stand Up”) to animal story (Patricia Calvert’s “Tug, in His Own Time”) to contemporary realism (Marie Lee’s “An Education”); a brief generic description, an author biography and bibliography, and a short author interview are included with each entry. The pieces here vary in quality, with some examples of genre clichés as well as genre characteristics, and Asher never acknowledges the more classical and nonthematic usage of the word “genre.” Stories such as Angela Johnson’s poignant “Flying Away,” Barbara Robinson’s tightly comedic “Alligator Mystique,” and H. M. Hoover’s droll science fictional “Just a Theory” make the collection worth dipping into, however; the author interviews are specific enough to be immediately relevant and contain helpful authorial recommendations for further reading within each genre. Though it has its weaknesses, this offers some useful curricular possibilities as well as a manageable introduction to potential new pleasures. DS

BLAKE, QUENTIN *Clown*; illus. by Quentin Blake. Holt, 1996 32p
ISBN 0-8050-4399-3 $15.95
5-8 yrs R*
“One man’s trash is another man’s treasure,” an adage proved anew by Blake’s toy clown who, although consigned to the garbage, eventually brings beauty and warmth to the family of the girl who takes him in. The book’s first picture shows an all-too-respectable matron dropping Clown and several stuffed animals into a trash can, but Clown tumbles onto the ground, dons a pair of tossed-out sneakers, and speeds about the city searching for a child who will adopt him and his friends. This wordless book works because of the expressiveness of the artist’s drawings. Despite their sketchy quality (half-realized backgrounds, eyes that are no more than rings with dots for irises), the drawings precisely convey mood and personality. The curve of a mouth that consists of a single line, the reddening of a cheek, or the gesture of an arm can express sorrow, anger, or joy so clearly that one never has to guess at Blake’s meaning. Repeated grays, greens, and purples give continuity and harmony to the pictures, and the soft colors keep the tone gentle even when individual episodes within the story are not, as when Clown is hurled through the air by ignorant grown-ups (twice) and chased by a snarling dog. Clown will endear himself to the reader as he does to the children he meets in the story, entertaining them with physical antics made possible by a body more limber than Shannon Miller’s, saving his stuffed friends from the landfill, and bringing warmth to the decaying apartment of the family that adopts him. Even broken-stemmed flowers snatched from the trash can make a charming bouquet and, in the presence
of love, the yellow and lime-green light from a single bare ceiling bulb can suffuse an impoverished room with comfort. In Clown, joy blossoms from the most scorned and unlikely sources, but only through the loving and imaginative cultivation of children or of the childlike Clown himself. LM

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027061-6 $13.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027060-8 $13.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 6-9  

Zimmerman (named for Bob Dylan) is fourteen, and his religious devotion has been a puzzle to his superficial, fun-loving parents for years. Now, however, they’ve come back from vacation with a newborn zeal for Christ and for a charismatic, upmarket religious leader, and they’re determined that their son’s preexisting faith become a testament to the worth of their own. The book intersperses Zim’s narration of the genesis of this situation with chapters describing a local card shop, where the work of an eccentric comic-book genius sits on open display despite its $10,000 price tag, and where, it turns out, Zim intends to perform an action that will rescue him from becoming his parents’ holy relic. As always, Brooks is a brilliant and original writer, delving here into philosophical and theological questions rarely raised in children’s literature, and he’s masterfully depicted the increasing claustrophobia and the irony of Zim’s situation while delicately drawing and redrawing the lines of character interaction. Ultimately, however, his characters are fascinating without quite being convincing (Zim’s parents and their idol are broadly ad shallowly conceived), and the main irony of Zim’s final action springs from a particularly blatant and unbelievable contrivance; the combination of Zim’s certitude and the abstractness of his contemplations sometimes makes his dilemma seem less a heartfelt quandary than a brittle academic problem. This is flawed, but elegant, compact, and intriguing; young readers hungry for philosophical challenge may find that this is what they’ve been looking for. DS

**Byars, Betsy** *The Joy Boys*; illus. by Frank Remkiewicz. Yearling, 1996 48p (Yearling First Choice Chapter Books)  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-32164-3 $13.95  

No matter how challenging a jam the brothers Joy get themselves into, Harry and J.J. are careful to use tightly controlled vocabulary in this beginning reader: in the face of a charging bull it’s “Let’s get out of here. Get me to the fence.” Well, really, what more is there to say? Four related stories of narrow escapes from one dicey situation after another entertain without falling into a sing-songy Dick and Jane cadence, and that’s no small accomplishment. Byars infuses the characters with as much personality as possible, given the constraints of the format. Beginning readers will be motivated to discover if Harry and J.J. are disemboweled by the bull, grounded forever by Mom after a mud battle, or eaten alive by wild animals. Not to worry, all finishes happily and so will the reluctant reader who tackles this. Cleverly cartoony illustrations by Remkiewicz help to round out the characters while adding a touch of sly humor to the mix—the face of the family collie, called by each brother from opposite sides of their room, is suitably and comically confused. Try this one on the very newest readers. SSV
CUNNINGHAM, DAVID  *A Crow's Journey*; written and illus. by David Cunningham. Whitman, 1996  40p
ISBN 0-8075-1356-3  $16.95  R  4-6 yrs

"A wandering crow" follows the course of melting mountain snow from trickle to brook to waterfall to stream to river to ocean. The rhyming text is spare: sometimes smooth ("Beneath the pines and listening thrush/ a shallow brook begins to rush"), sometimes bumpy ("The rapid water/ runs strong and clear,/ wearing rough stones/ smoother each year"), and finally concluding with an elegant triplet ("Here the river/ mouth spreads wide/ and finally meets the ocean tide.// And now the crow is satisfied"). While the text doesn't give you much to go on, the real draw here is Cunningham's gouache art that has the clarity of photographs, the delicacy of ink, and the transparency of watercolor. With the crow sometimes quietly hidden in shadow or a corner, the pictures range from precise close-ups, such as the first small trickle of the snow downhill, to more expansive views of the waterfall and meandering stream, and the picture size alternates between small squares and larger rectangles. The book is nicely but not ostentatiously designed, offering a meditative companion to such extravaganzas as *Paddle-to-the-Sea* and Frank Asch's *Water* (BCCB 4/95). RS

DAHL, LUCY  *James and the Giant Peach: The Book and Movie Scrapbook*; written and illus. with photographs by Lucy Dahl. Disney, 1996  [60p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-3106-5  $15.95  Ad  Gr. 3-5
Paper ed. ISBN 0-7868-4085-4  $7.95
Reviewed from galleys

Roald Dahl's *James* is now a movie, so we'll doubtless be seeing a great deal of literary peachery this summer. This book is Dahl's daughter's account of the movie's making and of her memories of her father. There is a plethora of interesting details here: we see design sketches for James' insect friends (largely created through stop-motion technique) and hear about the rocky relationship between the young human star and a co-starring tarantula, and we get glimpses into Roald Dahl's writing *sanctum sanctorum*. The focus leaps confusingly back and forth between the two subjects, however (with Dahl Senior sometimes referred to as "Dahl" and sometimes "Dad"), and the effect is ultimately too scrapbook-y. The varying typeface seems to change only out of a desire for alteration, and while the multitude of photographs are crisp and clear, they ultimately don't reveal all that much about the more baffling aspects of either writing or film-making. Fans of the movie will enjoy this glossy tribute, but readers looking for something a little more informative may want to turn to a Dahl biography or to Elaine Scott's *Look Alive* (BCCB 9/92). DS

DAY, NANCY  *Violence in Schools: Learning in Fear*. Enslow, 1996  128p  illus. with photographs  (Issues in Focus)
ISBN 0-89490-734-4  $17.95  Ad  Gr. 8-12

By incorporating voices of students and real-life stories of school violence, Day adds reading appeal to this treatment of a hot contemporary subject. She covers many topics—student-on-student and teacher-student violence, gangs, guns, drugs, bullying, sexual harassment, etc.—and, though her discussions usually are thorough, some matters get short shrift. In describing the history of (presumably American) gangs, Day dispenses with the period between 1700 and World War II in
three short, vague sentences. Cloudy assertions such as “Many young people seem to have accepted violence as a way of life” are extensively buttressed with numbers, but the plethora of statistics (especially in the first chapter) and the adequate but pedestrian prose blunt the subject’s inherent power. A glossary, a bibliography, and a list of organizations will aid the student researcher. Endnotes are clear and extensive, but the index could be more detailed: an index term such as “breakdown of the family” refers to only one page number on which that specific term appears, but the subject recurs throughout the book. Although a young researcher will find much useful and timely information here, the presentation puts the book solidly in the “use-it-for-homework” realm. LM


In her picture-book portrayal of the Buddha Siddhartha’s life and teachings, Demi, a practicing Buddhist, uses clear, uncomplicated storytelling to present complex philosophical concepts. She also capably addresses the more abstract and difficult-to-grasp religious tenets such as the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, and her courage in doing so is to be commended, as many children’s authors shy away from these specifics when writing about Buddhism. Her careful choice of narrative detail sheds light on the Buddha and Buddhism without becoming a sentimentalized fairy tale or chatty tell-all biography. The gilded illustrations (based, according to the jacket, on “Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, and Indonesian paintings, sculptures, and sutra illustrations”) are delicate, yet the colors and composition are bold, with central figures and action cascading beyond the careful borders. Transitions are subtle and the book is less immediately accessible than Demi’s Chingis Khan (BCCB 1/91), for example, but patient readers (Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike) will come away with a richer sense of the tradition. AEB


High-energy color photographs are the main draw of this day-care primer, which is short on information but looks like fun. “Busy,” however, is the operative word for text and design as well as for the recreational activities portrayed herein. The rhyming text is cheerful but shallow; it has no clear rhythm, bouncing along for a while (“After lunch,/ it’s time to sleep./ The lights go low;/ there’s not a peep”) and then slamming to a halt (“Now your nap/ is done./ Are you ready/ for more fun?”). Nice as the photos are, they have to compete for attention with a design that includes pastel reproductions of children’s art in the background and a flurry of colored triangles that sometimes “mount” the photos but more often just lie around for no particular reason, sometimes making the book look more like a promotional brochure. Fred Rogers’ Going to Day Care offers a more cohesive presentation of the same topic. RS

De Vries, Anke My Elephant Can Do Almost Anything; illus. by Ilja Walraven. Front Street/Lemniscaat, 1996 30p ISBN 1-886910-06-5 $14.95 Ad 4-7 yrs

The unidentified speaker lists his or her elephant’s capabilities and characteristics: he can stand on top of things (a balloon, a ball, the coffee pot), he can hang upside
down from the ceiling, he can see through things, and he mourns the narrator's absence at school during the day. The absurdity here has its charm (for instance, the elephant can balance on the balloon because he's holding his breath), and the explanations of nonsensical elephantine doings are entertainingly serious in tone. This is an amusing list rather than a story, however, and there's no payoff at the abrupt end. The art consists of a series of pachyderm portraits in various styles: sometimes the fiery orange elephant has hands for ears and a blurry aureole for a boundary; sometimes he's constituted of vigorous black line; sometimes he becomes an abstract, vaguely recognizable design. Although the fantasy elephant is often an appealing fellow, the overall effect is distancing if artistic, more like viewing art in a gallery than entering an illustrated world. Kids will want more information about this pair of friends than the book provides, but some may enjoy the book's matter-of-fact strangeness and find it a stimulus to their own imaginative stories of unusual companions. DS


Yes, not only is there the book *about* the movie (see Dahl, above), there's the book *of* the movie. Disney's novelization whips through the happenings at a brisk clip, following James' modified adventures as he and his insect friends travel to New York in the giant peach while he attempts to shake off his fears of the horrible aunts (who, in this version, pursue him). The stripped-down account allows for little characterization, and it emphasizes the programmatic sappiness of the movie's empower-yourself theme (nor does it include any of Dahl's original poems). The book is really a showcase for Lane Smith's darkly peachy art (Smith has also illustrated the new edition of Dahl's original text, as well as working on the movie), which retains the sharp Dahlian edge that the story here lacks. The illustrations evoke the monstrous opponents and forlorn little James particularly well, although one often longs for a wider view (a stunning exception is an initially perplexing aerial view of the peach soaring over the Arctic ice). If the movie's hot, this book will get a lot of wear; even if it's not, *Stinky Cheese* fans won't want to miss one of their heroes in artistic action. DS


Grant Wood's *American Gothic* is probably the best-known American painting ever, but here's a Wood biography that brings into focus more than just the famous farm couple. Duggleby traces Wood's life from his upbringing on an Iowa farm to his brief travels for education to Minneapolis, Chicago, and Paris, and finally to his return to Iowa and his increasing fame. There are no source notes, and the style here is fictional, but there's a clear picture of the awkward man whose passion for his art, his country, and his people translated into the art movement of Regionalism. Often more articulate than the text are the many reproductions of undeservedly lesser-known Wood paintings, such as the eerily lit *Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* or the rich velvety countryside of *Spring Turning*, which bear fresh
witness to the artist’s talent. It’s slightly frustrating to have to turn to the appendix (which lists the locations of the works included) for dates on the paintings, and the brief section “Drawing and Painting like Grant Wood” is wildly oversimplified and out of place here. Wood is an artist, however, who has much to offer beyond his one unavoidable painting, and this will give young artists a better idea of his contributions. DS


In whatever mythology one examines, hubris seems to be a favorite target of supernatural powers; this Navajo tale is thematically reminiscent of the Greek myth about Arachne, whose pride in her weaving is punished. During the creation of the world, Spider Woman teaches a headstrong young shepherdess how to weave and leaves her with the warning not to become so absorbed in her art that she forgets the Middle Way, for she must respect the balance of life. In a burst of spring colors, Weaving Woman disregards the advice, and her spirit is trapped in a perfect rug until Spider Woman frees her by pulling out a strand of wool to open a pathway. It’s a complex story with a rich cultural subtext, and one years for a more specific reference than “several well-documented versions” in order to decide independently whether veteran novelist Duncan “has maintained the integrity of the legend” (as a brief note asserts). Shonto Begay’s art shows tonal kinship with his illustrations for Mar’ii and Cousin Horned Toad (BCCB 10/92); he has once again struck a balance between literal and symbolic, with many compositions suggesting surreal aspects of space and action. Deep turquoise and earthy red dominate the scenes, in balance with background paper resembling rough-textured sand. It’s refreshing to see the deeply important figure of Spider Woman featured in a picture-book literature that has been dominated by tricksters, especially Coyote, and primary graders could compare this with other women-and-weaving stories for an intriguing multicultural folklore unit. BH


Moira is thrilled. Nearly two years after its release, the film of Moira’s favorite book, Gone with the Wind, is finally coming to town. There’s a problem, though: Moira (who is eleven) and her family are devout Catholics, and the Catholic Legion of Decency has given Gone with the Wind a “B” rating, “Objectionable in Part for All,” which means neither Moira nor her parents are supposed to see it. Nicely spliced into the will I/won’t I and can I/can’t I suspense of Moira’s dilemma are appealing, honest scenes of a 1941 Catholic girlhood at home, church, and school, where Moira is a bussed-in outsider under the strict but ultimately benign eye of Sister Gabriel Murphy. The gathering clouds of war darken but do not take over the story, and Moira’s spiritual crisis is played out at just the right seventh-grade level: when a young priest advises her to consult with her conscience, Moira thinks, “Suppose you had never asked your conscience anything? Your conscience was probably just lying around inside, sleeping. She had to figure out how to wake it up.” And so she does, for an ending that is both satisfying and surprising. RS
FRADIN, DENNIS BRINDELL  "We Have Conquered Pain": The Discovery of Anesthesia. McElderry, 1996  148p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-689-50587-6 $16.00  Ad Gr. 6-9

One of the great medical discoveries of the nineteenth century was the safe and effective elimination of pain from the surgical process, but credit for that discovery is still controversial. Fradin examines the work and claims of the four men whose sometimes independent and sometimes shared labor led to the popularization of nitrous oxide and of ether (the latter most successfully) as anesthetic agents. The story of human greed and desire battling with medical advances has a compelling timelessness to it, and Fradin carefully traces the chronology and considers the validity of all of the claimants. Overall, however, this has an old-fashioned Hollywood bio-pic flavor to it, with a certain melodrama permeating the treatment of the subject and the individuals involved sometimes difficult to distinguish. The author appears to have done extensive research but unfortunately includes no notes, so that viewpoint and credibility can be difficult for the reader to judge. It’s still a personalizing examination of the turning and occasional sticking of the gears behind the scientific establishment; readers anesthetized into thinking that all medical advances were sterile and decorous might find this an eye-opener. Black-and-white photographs appear throughout; a bibliography and an index are included. DS


Similar to the Galli-illustrated Michael the Angel (BCCB 8/93), authored by Laura Fischetto, this tells in picture-book format of the life of Leonardo Da Vinci. The book talks about Leonardo’s early iconoclasm, his indomitable spirit of invention, and his artistic labors (despite the title, the Mona Lisa only makes it into the last two pages). Unfortunately, the breeze through such a rich life is blandly written (the real-life Mona Lisa “was very kind and had a magical smile”) and overly summary; there’s not enough shape for the account to work as a story nor enough biographical information (especially when compared to picture-book biographies such as Diane Stanley’s) to convey a sense of what Leonardo really did. The art relies on broad geometric shapes in sunbaked colors arrayed in de Chirico-esque distortions; the frosty mottling of the surfaces appropriately suggests a fresco, but the bright-eyed, sharp-featured crowds are definitely contemporary visions. This is not the best introduction to Leonardo, but it does open the door to his fascinating world, and even a small taste of enduring genius might whet young readers’ appetites for more. DS


Fifth-grader Will Denis has had enough already of aliens ringing his doorbell, crashing his birthday parties, barking at him, landing in his backyard, sliding down his chimney, and hiding out in his tree house. Will and younger brother Rob can spot aliens at fifty paces: these beings may appear sufficiently earthly to others, but the brothers know they are merely masquerading as the new boys on the block, a prissily dressed girl, the neighbor’s golden retriever, or—the greatest sacrilege of all—Santa Claus. Will and Rob feel the pressure you’d expect from schoolboys
entrusted with saving Planet Earth from alien domination, but they never falter in the face of duty. You can see why after meeting Mom, the real hero of the story, who is unflappable in the face of out-of-this-world domestic mayhem. Rookie Gauthier proves herself adept at zany riffs on family life (to the sobbing aliens: “On this planet, you can’t do anything unless a mom says you can”) but has trouble keeping the shtick alive; the story suffers from its one-jokeitis. Of course, the Big Question is why are aliens choosing Will and Rob over and over and the answer is that word has spread throughout the galaxy about Mom’s muffins featuring bran, nuts, raisins, wheat germ, and shredded zucchini. It seems only aliens savor the taste of health food. This is an entertaining—if uneven—debut. SSV


“The Renaissance, the rebirth of Harlem, the recognition of that flame involved laughter, and music, and even a dress,” says Nikki Giovanni; in this account/anthology of the Harlem Renaissance, Giovanni offers commentary, anecdotes, and personal musings that make it clear the movement was more than a tidy selection of poems. Not that the verses here are insignificant: the range of poets is gratifyingly wide (Giovanni, in fact, broadens the traditional parameters of the Harlem Renaissance considerably), including not only famous names such as Langston Hughes, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and Richard Wright, but also powerful poems by less-anthologized writers such as Melvin B. Tolson and Richard Hayden. Throughout, Giovanni’s responses are enticingly confiding yet strong-willed (she applauds Leroi Jones’ groundbreaking public profanity, for instance), giving a picture of a varied group of individuals and a strong sense of enduring connections among them. While the attitude and approach is essentially adult (and familiarity with most of the writers featured seems to be assumed), this picture of a thriving and creative group will give teens a fuller understanding of a cultural movement. A bibliography and compact but spirited biographies of the poets are appended; the finished book will have an index. DS

GREENSTEIN, ELAINE *Mrs. Rose’s Garden;* written and illus. by Elaine Greenstein. Simon, 1996 [26p] ISBN 0-689-80215-3 $15.00 Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

Assiduous attention to fertilizer has finally put this year’s blue ribbon for biggest vegetables within Mrs. Rose’s grasp; her plate-sized radishes and lettuce larger than the cat are early harbingers of a clean sweep at the county fair. But Mrs. Rose suddenly finds she cannot enjoy success at the price of her neighbors’ defeat, so she and Mr. Rose smuggle their plants into other gardens in the dark of the night and assure that all their friends come up winners. Greenstein’s text simply and gracefully lays out Mrs. Rose’s guilty predicament: “She’d thought it would be fun to win a blue ribbon, but now she was sure to win every single one. Somehow it didn’t seem like fun anymore.” It is Greenstein’s paintings, however, with their touch of Cezanne and a wallop of Claes Oldenburg, that carry the day. Rendered in summer-soft hues and springing from a landscape as innocent and mild as the Roses themselves, the tomatoes and melons and cucumbers dwarf the neighbors,
all of whom sport their blue ribbons with a placid satisfaction drolly out of sync with their towering achievements. If the subject of adults competing for first place in a garden contest seems a bit rarified for the picture-book set, there's charm enough in the prodigious produce and in the secret good deed to topple the age barrier. Couple this with Lisa Campbell Ernst's similarly themed Miss Penny and Mr. Grubbs (BCCB 4/91). EB

**GRIMM, JAKOB LUDWIG KARL.** *The Six Servants;* tr. by Anthea Bell; illus. by Sergei Goloshapov. North-South, 1996 32p

Library ed. ISBN 1-55858-476-5  $15.88
Trade ed. ISBN 1-55858-475-7  $15.95  R  Gr. 2-4

A young prince sets out to win the hand of an enchantress' beautiful daughter, and along the way picks up six servants, each of whom has some kind of amazing capability: one man can puff his girth out to a huge size, another hears everything that goes on in the world, the third is taller than the highest mountain on earth, the next possesses a glance so powerful it breaks its object to pieces, the fifth feels cold where others feel heat and heat when others freeze, and the last can see right through the world. The enchantress (and her reluctant daughter) puts the prince through trials, but his servants see him through, and the couple marry and—eventually—live happily ever after. The oddly-gifted-servant motif is an appealing one (especially to youngsters who may recognize it from the film *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*), and the writing is smooth and lively; the tale goes on a bit, however, and the story is rather episodic, with twists and turns preceding and following the servants' tasks before the couple can enjoy their connubial bliss. Goloshapov's illustrations are primarily portraits, which emphasize the dramatis personae at the expense of the action; his Bosch-like, darkly distorted images are similar to those of Gennady Spirin, but his slick gouache visions (here on glossy paper) have a fantasy-art grotesqueness that is less subtle but will probably have more immediate impact on young readers. Kids may not remember what happened to the servants' prince, but they'll relish the superheroesque characteristics of his servants. DS

**HALEY, GAIL, E., ad.** *Two Bad Boys: A Very Old Cherokee Tale;* ad. and illus. by Gail E. Haley. Dutton, 1996 32p


"Listen! In the beginning, before there was a world of work, there was a family." In this ideal setting, Corn Mother and First Hunter have always provided copious food for Boy, who "watched all that his parents did and listened carefully to the stories they told him." Then one day Boy looks into the river and finds Wild Boy, with whom he plays and whom his parents adopt. Wild Boy brings havoc to their lives, enlisting Boy’s help to discover the forbidden secret of First Hunter’s source of game and, later, of Corn Mother’s supply of beans and corn. Because of the boys’ disobedience, their parents fly away to the Western Land of the Darkening Sun, and the boys are punished with the hard work of hunting the animals they released into the world and farming the vegetables they need in order to survive. Haley’s depiction of an idyllic forested Eden includes lush Appalachian flora (flowering dogwood, rhododendron, wisteria, iris, tulip-tree blossoms) and fauna, as well as a perfectly handsome family with flowing fringes of traditional deerskin clothing (traditionally motifed borders compete with some of the busier composi-
If the total artistic affect is glamorized, it is also mythically imagined, providing a lyrical graphic backdrop for an American Indian creation story with intriguing contrasts to the Biblical Adam and Eve. The concept of psychically opposite twins appears in many other mythologies and allows for a revealing analysis of our inner polarities, which are often demonstrated in a child's blaming his invisible friend for making all the mischief in the house. In addition to the aesthetic and narrative effects of the picture book, parents and teachers will appreciate the rich themes for classroom/family discussion. The source note is specific ("a traditional Cherokee legend as recorded by Swimmer, a famous Cherokee shaman and storyteller" born in 1835 and literate by virtue of Sequoyah's alphabet) and in addition addresses the context and meaning of the story. BH


The title event occurred in 1917, when farm-boy Willard was twelve and he and his father pulled the baseball star's car out of a ditch; the boy is rewarded with a gift of Ruth's glove. Willard becomes a confirmed fan for life, writing a prize-winning poem about the Babe, naming his daughter Ruth in the player's honor, and following his career (meeting him twice more) for nearly twenty years until the legendary hitter retires. The book has a leisurely small-town pace and engages in a subtle examination of the passing of American generations as Willard's dad, then Willard, and then Willard's daughter take their turns carrying the baseball torch; the result is attractive but inactive, likelier to appeal more to adults than to kids who want to see real baseball action. Moser's full-page watercolor portraits have an appropriate quiet stillness to them, but some of the figure drawing is tinged with awkwardness. There aren't many good early baseball stories for this age group; Willard's story will at least give young fans a glimpse at how things were back in the days of the legends. A historical note about Babe Ruth is appended, but there's no hint as to Willard's factual or fictional nature. DS


Drawn from post-Civil War African-American stories collected by Martha Young, a wealthy white woman raised on southern plantations, these stories acquire new life with Virginia Hamilton's lyrical idiom and Barry Moser's fun-poking pictures. The cast is largely avian. Sis Wren and Bruh Sparrow lose an argument about the ownership of an impossibly large pumpkin ("Pick on your own size. For it's no use squabbling over what's too big for you to handle"), Miss Bat loses her beautiful feathers and songs because of inordinate pride, Bluejay and Swallow steal from old Firekeeper (who looks a lot like old Barry Moser), Bruh Buzzard loses his top to an aggrieved victim, Hummingbird loses her voice to Old Wind, Cardinal acquires red feathers but almost loses his gray wife when he cleans up Bruh Deer after a hunter's gunshot, and Brown Wren tries to fly too high ("You were born down there... Get used to it"). Some of these stories are folktales, and some are original stories (Young never differentiated). One could surmise that the latter are the more rambling ("Hummingbird and Little Breeze," for instance, or "Little Brown
Wren”), and it’s interesting to compare the former to the tightly structured *pour-quoi* tales of Uncle Remus (“How the Birds Talk,” “Why the Turkey Buzzard Is Baldheaded,” “The Most Beautiful Bird in the World,” etc.). Along with his signature portraits (take a gander at loop-eyed Bruh Buzzard), Moser has injected the collection with spirited action and sprightly colors, as well as a varied page design that will wake up sleepy readers. These pictures are as loud as birdsong on a country morning. The compositions are bold, the humor sly, and the drafting uncannily accurate even as it’s indulgently anthropomorphized. Although independent readers will be able to handle this oversized picture book on their own, don’t miss the fun of reading it aloud. BH

HAUSMAN, GERALD  *Night Flight.* Philomel, 1996  133p
ISBN 0-399-22758-X  $15.95  R Gr. 5-8

In a not-so-thinly veiled autobiographical novel, Hausman tries his hand at “banishing ghosts that have remained” from his own childhood. It’s the summer of ’57 in rural New Jersey, and twelve-year-olds Jeff Hausman and Max Maeder expect a blissful vacation—the boys, their dogs, the woods, and the lake. But on an overnight campout both dogs are fatally poisoned; in fact, over a dozen more dogs die in the next few days. Hausman pulls us right into the mystery, but his lyrical prose and skillful revelation of character are what make this book compelling. When Max insists to Jeff that nearby immigrant European Jews are guilty of the crime, Jeff is ashamed to admit that he is, himself, half Jewish. Hausman sensitively portrays Jeff’s adolescent torment—wanting to be liked by a much admired macho friend, yet knowing that he must confront Max about Max’s anti-Semitism and stand up to Max’s bullying. The boys’ contrasting relationships with their parents (the Maeders cold and aloof, the Hausmans warm and caring) provide clues to their emerging characters. Generally avoiding clichés and easy answers, Jeff and his father talk through what it means to be a young man and to face the essential irrationality of life: “Sometimes,” says the dad, “you must use the mystical instead of the logical.” Despite the revelation that Max’s father, an immigrant German glassmaker, is not only an unrepentant Nazi (complete with a photo of Hitler on his desk) but also the probable poisoner, Hausman never allows his characters to become evil or good incarnate; just as in real life, there’s plenty of both to go around. The philosophizing slows the pace a bit, but there’s enough adventure and authentic emotion to snag a reader. SSV

HEISEL, SHARON E.  *Eyes of a Stranger.* Delacorte, 1996  [176p]
ISBN 0-385-32229-1  $15.95  M Gr. 9-12

Charismatic Nick ensnares teenage girls as he progresses through a sequence of psychotic rituals that begins with the Hunt, continues through Courtship (a ride on a carousel), and ends with the murder of each girl in a grisly sunrise ceremony. Marissa, the carousel owner’s niece, nearly becomes Nick’s “perfect sacrifice” in a story that threatens to become as silly as the cliché of Nick’s serial-killer giggle. Give Heisel credit for taking the time to try to make her characters more complex than those in a series YA horror novel: Marissa’s low self-esteem, brought on by her malformed leg and the insults it occasions, makes her vulnerable to Nick’s attentions, and Nick’s cruelty is equally understandable, if hackneyed, given the brutal childhood punishments his mother dealt him. Unfortunately, Marissa some-
times seems more dull-witted than vulnerable, and Nick's tortured rites degenerate into the obligatory stylizations of the fictional psycho killer. Heisel outdoes Nick's sense of drama ("The Dispensation is always at sunrise") with her own melodramatic narration: Marissa fights back "blossoming horror" even as "wordless roars" rise from Nick's throat "like a throng of desperate beasts escaping into the night." Disparities in tone unsettle the story: Marissa—like a good feminist heroine—saves her own life, but only after being shackled to a wall and nearly tied, spread-eagle, to stakes in the ground (a semi-striptease helps her elude the latter torture). Nick's collection of dead girls' toes coexists uneasily with talk of school fundraisers and student council seats. High schoolers ready for something more complex than Fear Street may thrill to this novel's horrors, but readers accustomed to the more sophisticated plotting and characterization of Stephen King or Clive Barker will be disappointed. LM


The boxed statement on the title page says it all: "Here is Snow White's version of this famous story. Turn the book over and read the story from her stepmother's point of view." Postmodern fairy tales, which have made the most of twisting perspectives, often generate questions of audience, and this one is no different. Young children identify with fairy tales exactly because of the vulnerable young heroes/heroines making their way in the world; how many will sympathize with an aging voice that reports how spoiled, selfish, and irresponsible they are ("She was rude, sloppy, disobedient, and threatened to run away when she didn't get her way. I was worried for her safety")? Although there's a hint of tongue-in-cheek humor here, the major impact is more purposeful ("Just remember—there's always another side to the story") than funny (per Scieszka's The True Story of the Three Little Pigs). There's also an odd tonal breakdown in the attempted parallel—Snow White's story is third-person traditional (and told unremarkably) while her stepmother's is first-person contemporary. Stolper's full-page paintings, which alternate with pages of text featuring inset details, have a stately 1940s look blended with a slightly surrealistic Dorothy-in-Oz atmosphere. The compositions are centrally focused, the hues muted, and the scenes otherworldly—often with dramatic cloud formations. As a class readaloud, this could stimulate discussion and creative-writing exercises to explore alternative voices or values in traditional tales. BH


Remarkable for its honesty and immediacy in depicting the lives of its cast of African-American teenagers, this first novel is narrated by Todd, who is something of a brainy outsider in his circle of friends. Todd is worried about his cousin Ezekiel, who seems determined to become something like a hero in keeping another cousin, young Tommy, out of the gang run by Todd's big brother Marcus. Into this already volatile mix comes Leandrea, a privileged biracial girl in love with Zeke and his role as a black crusader. The story has an appeal as old as Durango Street or The Outsiders; in fact, despite its setting in contemporary Denver, the book's treatment of its canvas seems to hearken back to earlier days of young adult fiction, particularly in its depiction of driven teens grappling with a troubling world
that adults can only dimly understand. Todd is an acute observer, interestingly poised among his fellows, and his developing love for Leandrea, combined with his intensely volatile friendship with Zeke, brings a magnetic love triangle into the bleak setting and often violent events of the story. RS


First, there’s a black page with a die-cut peephole, offering a glimpse of dark fur streaked with white. Kids who recognize this genre know the drill—this must be a skunk. Turn the page and . . . nope, it’s a streak across the head and neck of a penguin. Turn once more and find the penguin with his buddies on a barren beach. Eight more exercises in visual trickery follow this puzzler, with nigh-unguessable images ranging from the delicate marbled veining of a rabbit’s ear-lining to the complex symmetry of an illuminated Eiffel Tower. Ebony pages and borders heighten the drama of each fresh discovery and allow the pristine photos to glow within their stark settings. There’s no pressure to identify a right answer, and kids can just kick back and enjoy the game, because the point here clearly isn’t What? but Wow! EB


When her grandmother dies and Concepcion is forced to leave her village to try and survive in an unnamed city, she recalls the wise woman’s adage, “Remember to save enough seed for the next planting. . . . Then you will always have something to eat.” When she reaches a miserable barrio, Concepcion is shocked at the other children’s suggestion that she steal food; instead she plants corn and beans and chilies, only to see her garden destroyed when police come and chase and beat her new friends. With the help of these friends and her cache of seeds, she plants again, and Concepcion’s vision of self-sufficiency spreads through the shantytown. This is a pretty fable, but begs too many questions of reality—most notably, what did Concepcion eat while waiting for her crops to grow?—to be convincing. Like the text, the textured illustrations are a bit too elegantly stylized, with tidy fine lines making even the garbage picturesque. This is pitched in a lower key than such ostentatious lesson-stories as Mem Fox’s Feathers and Fools (BCCB 4/96), but it lacks the hardness that would allow it truly to flower. RS


After First Man emerged from the underworld through a reed in the ocean, he realized that he had neglected to bring any fresh water with him to the arid surface. Otter and Beaver volunteer to return for water but, distracted by lovely marine flora, they return without it and are condemned to live evermore in swamps with their lilies and vines. Other animals fail at the same mission, until Snail struggles under the weight of a leaky flask tied to his back and delivers a single drop of water to waiting First Man, whose chant transforms this precious treasure into a raging river. The storytelling is pleasantly homely, and Hubbard’s gouache paintings set
this Navajo creation myth (Jackson appends a source note) in a fantasy land- and seascape in which a wavy sun blazes in a swirling blue sky, stylized animals and people hover tenuously above their surroundings, and an anxious moon observes the progress of the plucky snail over the searing orange hills. Listeners may enjoy contrasting this account of how water came to earth with Jaffe's retelling of a Taino myth, reviewed below. EB


This Taino myth tells of a child who planted seeds on top of a high mountain that stood upon the arid plain. Amid the lush forest that grew from the seeds, a flower bloomed and produced a glowing golden ball. Lured by its power, greedy men struggled over the ball (in fact, a calabaza or pumpkin) until it broke from its vine and crashed down the mountainside, spilling its contents, the sea, and flooding the earth right up to the mountaintop forest. "And that is how, the Taino say, between the sun and the sparkling blue sea, their island home—Boriquén—came to be." Not many creation myths are as accessible to a young audience as this tale, and listeners will be intrigued to see the familiar old pumpkin cast in so unusual a role. Sandoz constructs highly stylized images with overlaid shapes of softly mottled, translucent color which lends a bright airiness to the densely patterned scenes. Despite their complex composition, human figures are pudgy and naive, bowing to the youth of both the tale's audience and its child hero. In an afterword, Jaffe offers a source note and comments on the Taino legacy in present day Puerto Rico. EB


From chain saw to feller-buncher, grapple skidder to knuckle boom, Jaspersohn acquaints readers with the machines that transform trees into fuel, lumber, and paper. Color photographs (sometimes dark and unclear, due to forest foliage or a mill's cave-like interior) illustrate the cutting, hauling, and processing of a Vermont forest and follow the trees as they power an electricity plant, are shaved into veneer, or get digested into paper pulp. The book provides a simple introduction to the post-lumberjack destiny of trees, but problems arise when it branches off into botany and ecology. Tiny photo insets (bark, leaves, cones) identify hardwood and softwood trees inconsistently. Labels include both genus and species in the common names of some trees ("American Sugar Maple" and "White Pine"), while neglecting the species names of others—Northern Red Oak and Balsam Fir are sweepingly labeled "Oak" and "Balsam." Environmental sound-bites ("Timber Fact," "To Cut or Not to Cut") interrupt throughout, many of them posing as eco-questions unsupported by the main text: "What do you think? Is it enough to scatter the branches of a felled tree . . . so that they rot back into the soil? Or should trees not be cut at all?" Another such sidebar encourages readers to become recycling advocates and save trees, but earth-savvy kids will note that these book pages are not made from recycled paper. Jaspersohn's attempt to graft issues is awkward, but the solid wood of the main topic renders this a useful library addition. AEB
JENSEN, VICKIE  Carving a Totem Pole; written and illus. with photographs by Vickie Jensen. Holt, 1996 32p ISBN 0-8050-3754-3  $14.95 R Gr. 2-4

Jensen’s photo essay treats the same theme as Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith’s Totem Pole (BCCB 4/90) but brings the woodworking process into the spotlight, while streamlining the cultural background information prominent in the earlier work. Nisga’a artist Norman Tait (who also supplies the foreword) designs, directs, and executes the work on an unpainted doorway pole for the Vancouver, BC Native Education Centre, and he trains several relatives who assist on the project. Jensen observes not only the steps in carving, but also the individuated tricks and techniques that leave each artist’s unique stamp upon his work. Sepia-toned photos, which subtly suggest the antiquity of this Native American craft, lend the volume a more sophisticated look than that of Hoyt-Goldsmith’s brightly colored work, yet Jensen’s leaner text is accessible to a slightly younger audience. EB


This familiar Talmudic story (a brief note mentions other tellings as well) rolls right along just the way you expect it to: against the wishes of his father, the youngest brother sails around the world bartering onions for goods and returns home with sacks full of diamonds. And, of course, the older brothers attempt this good fortune for themselves and return with sacks full of—you guessed it—onions. Kimmel’s text keeps things moving along quickly, clearly, and eventfully. The Eastern European flavor of the story is enhanced by Arnold’s jaunty thickly bordered illustrations; they feature suitably ridiculous greedy merchants and silly kings in a lively folk-art palette. The readaloud crowd will enjoy anticipating the success of the ne’er-do-well youngest brother and the failure of the arrogant older brothers, and they might learn a thing or two about supply and demand. SSV


An imported series, The Whole Story presents unabridged texts of classic literature, newly illustrated and heavily laden with captioned picture annotation, which, the jacket flap claims, allows readers to “enjoy and understand the story in a way as close as possible to that of audiences when [the author] wrote it.” Given that mission, it is difficult to explain why most Jungle Book addenda focus on animals (information readily available to young readers) while virtually no data are provided within the annotations to shed light on Kipling’s paternalistic attitudes toward India’s native population or on the “white man’s burden” philosophy prevalent among many of his contemporaries; even the reasons for the British presence in India are neglected until the final story, “Her Majesty’s Servants.” Treasure Island fares somewhat better, with plenty of piratical lore enlivening the margins, and
with François Place's line-and-wash sketches outclassing the luridly colored paintings in *The Jungle Book*. But here again, seafaring lingo is defined with even more jargon ("The jibs were attached to the stays running from the bowsprit to the top of the foremast"), which tends to obfuscate more than enlighten. The bright, busy look of these volumes may tempt browsers to get their feet wet on the classics, but only readers undaunted by the original texts are likely to take the plunge. EB

**Klinting, Lars**  
*Bruno the Carpenter*; written and illus. by Lars Klinting. Holt, 1996 34p  
ISBN 0-8050-4501-5 $14.95  
R 5-8 yrs

Ever wondered how to make a toolbox? Or what a T-square is? Klinting's Bruno, aptly characterized as a diligent beaver, demonstrates the essentials of the carpentry craft. If the book's purpose is to get readers excited about what Bruno is doing, it succeeds. The introduction of Bruno and his purpose makes the story personal; Bruno is in his messy workshop looking for misplaced tools, tools that he will later put into his newly built toolbox. Young listeners will be pleasantly entertained with the story's pattern (on one page a new tool is introduced; on the corresponding page an industrious Bruno is shown using it). The language is also carefully structured with sentences that are simple to follow ("Bruno's grandfather built the carpenter's table. It is very old. Bruno built the green stool. It is brand new"). While Bruno's assured expressions and the book's earthy, solidly centered watercolors add warmth, close-ups of the tools provide realism, especially since the plans are included. Klinting has created an enticingly purposeful make-believe world for handy young eager beavers. TLR

**Lamb, Nancy**  
*One April Morning: Children Remember the Oklahoma City Bombing*; by Nancy Lamb and Children of Oklahoma City; illus. by Floyd Cooper. Lothrop, 1996 48p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-14724-0 $15.93  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-14666-X $16.00  
Ad Gr. 2-4

Like Ross and Myers' *Dear Oklahoma City, Get Well Soon* (reviewed below), this is a book aimed at both children and adults, with limited success in shaping the material for either audience. The first three pages, clearly meant to reassure adults, offer a formidably black-framed note from the author and two messages from experts, one "A Letter to Parents and Teachers" and the other about "The Journey of Healing." The next page, "Before," describes the explosion at the Oklahoma City Federal Building, and each of the succeeding pages is divided between adult descriptions and children's reiterations: "Along with the buildings, along with the lives of innocent people and the hopes and dreams of survivors, the explosion also destroyed the sense of security the children had always lived with. 'Anything can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere,' said Emili. 'There could be a bomb right here,' said Abby. 'At my school, at my house, even in my car.' 'You can't really control what happens,' said Cicely." The last double spread, "After," returns to a straightforward description of the rescue efforts, cleanup, and national outpouring of aid. Cooper's rough-textured, soft-edged illustrations on mottled backgrounds show an ethnically varied cast of children, their peers, and their families in various stages of grief or recovery. The figures are capably drafted; the scenes seem suspended in time. Children may find the text both repetitious and amorphous, but the overall tone is not so sentimentalized as *Dear Oklahoma*, and an adult who
connects with the book could render it a cohesive experience by storytelling between the lines. BH


Even if the Donner Party had never been driven to the prandial peculiarities for which they are infamous, their ordeals along the Overland Trail would be well worth recounting. At this 150th anniversary of the tragedy, Lavender retraces the bungled journey to the California promised land and revisits the debate over whether it was the negligence and/or duplicity of guidebook author and California booster Lanford Hastings, or the overconfident naiveté of the travelers themselves that caused the party to become stranded in the Sierra Nevadas. While Lavender places most of the blame on Hastings, he also charges the emigrants with acts of selfishness and with inequitable distribution of scant resources, which endangered the welfare of the group. Although Lavender offers explanations for the emigrants’ harsh and often questionable decisions, his grim portrayal makes it easy for readers to accept any and all tales of cannibalism that have been handed down in Donner lore and are reiterated here. In light of such unpleasantness, his rosy but summary assessment of the ordeal (“In some ways it is a dark picture. But it is also bright with threads of courage and sharing”) is difficult to comprehend. Nonetheless, this clear narrative draws the many strands of the rescuers’ and the victims’ tales into an intriguing whole. Portraits, period artwork, and black-and-white photos of sites through which the party passed are included, as are a bibliographic essay and index. EB


Ninety percent of Alaska is unreachable by road, and it’s the bush pilots who bring residents their mail, supplies, and, until recently, most of their contact with the rest of the world. Levi examines the history of Alaskan aeronautics starting from the daring and dangerous twenties through its strategic importance in World War II to its role in tourism today. The best part of the book is the aviation anecdotes, legends, and tall tales, involving landings on precipices, polar bears as freight, planes held together with piano wire, and any number of brushes with—and sometimes losses to—death. The stories, however, are rather loosely strung together so that the chapters lack focus beyond the chronological, and the technical information tends to bog down the pace of the text but is probably still too sketchy for hardware devotees. The book works best as an engaging introduction to a gallery of characters on the edge of law and legend. A map prefaces the text; black-and-white photographs appear throughout; endnotes, a glossary, bibliography, and index are included. DS


See this month’s Big Picture, p. 325, for review.
LONDON, JACK  *The Call of the Wild*; illus. by Philippe Munch and with photographs. Viking, 1996  126p  (The Whole Story)  
NR  Gr. 6 up

In a series that also includes editions of *The Jungle Book* and *Treasure Island* (see review under Kipling, above), Jack London's brutal masterpiece is tamed by a plethora of Classic-Comics-style illustrations; sidebarred historical photos and information about dogs, wolves, the Gold Rush, and the Yukon; and two-page interruptions on related topics. Not only is the plethora frantic and distracting, most of the marginalia is irrelevant to the nearby text and often actively contradicts the tone of the story. Next to a fierce paragraph about a fight between Buck and Spitz, for example, we find out that "the shape of dog harnesses varies by region. The Indians prefer fan-shaped team formations. In the West and in the Klondike, the dogs are lined up in pairs." Aside from the fact that "the Indians" are not a "region," this information has nothing to do with the action. When Buck has killed Spitz and is demanding the leadership of the team, we see in the margin "A picnic in the snow: in the freezing open air, the men eat their plates of baked beans." And when we *would* like a little assistance, such as a gloss on "Again from its brumal sleep/ Wakens the ferine strain," the sidebar tells us instead about "gold fever." Thankfully, in the last pages where Buck discovers the body of John Thornton, the margins finally have the good grace to shut up. Anyone who inflicts this upon students as a "unique documentary approach" (or so the jacket states) oughta be thrown to the wolves. RS

R  3-6 yrs

By 1980 red wolves had disappeared from their wild habitat in the southeastern United States, where once they had roamed from present day Texas to the eastern seaboard and from Florida to Illinois. Kept alive in captivity, red wolves have recently been reintroduced to five southern sites; an endnote tells us that they now number over one hundred. The story here is simple enough; spare and lyrical, it takes us through a year in the life of a pair of red wolves as they skirt danger (guns and 'gators) and raise their litter. It's the artwork here that really evokes the wild life: although the luminous landscapes are more impressive than the stiffly drawn wolves, fourteen double-page paintings are richly hued and realistic. They don't let us forget that these are wild animals: the alligators are really scary, and even the adorable wolf pups look as if they mean business. This would be an excellent jump-off to a discussion of endangered species for the youngest patrons. A publisher's note informs us that a portion of the book's proceeds will be donated to protecting the red wolf, and there is an afterword by the former red-wolf species coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. SSV

Reviewed from galleys  
R  4-7 yrs

In this semi-sequel to *Rachel Fister's Blister*, another physical calamity befalls a member of the family: Cousin Ruth loses her tooth. Sensible Ruth tries to ex-
plain, but the rest of the family panics and attempts to solve the problem of the missing molar in various ways: buying a replacement at Wal-Mart, refashioning a prosthesis from clay, calling the police to track down the original, and so forth. Finally a fax from the Queen ("Time heals all wounds") gives them a glimmer of hope, at which point Ruthie at last manages to convey the fact that she has no dearth of dentition ("Ahem," said Ruth. / "I FOUND MY TOOTH!" / and opened up for all to see"). This is, in its rhyme, chaotic activity, and concept, an unabashedly silly story with no further pretensions. The short verses clip along, with the family ever more dizzy and distraught as the situation deteriorates, and the specifics of the search ("Check the hatbox./ Check the cat box./ Look inside the VCR") ensure that things remain funny as well as speedy. Priceman's watercolors have an appropriately dashed-off look to them, and the compositions, generally figures flying across the white page, demonstrate a fitting sense of disarray as well as a diverting attention to detail (even without the text's prompting, the Fisters look in the goldfish bowl and under somebody's toupee). The loose-tooth genre often tends toward the fey or the lugubrious; here's a frothy and giggly entry that chatters right along. DS

McGraw, Eloise  
*The Moorchid.*  
McElderry, 1996  
241 p  
ISBN 0-689-80654-X  $16.00  
Ad  Gr. 6-9

"Freaky-odd." "Eldritch." "Pixie." The villagers of medieval Torskaal jeer at Saaski, the smith's daughter, for her strange looks and ways; they accuse her of being a fairy changeling. (Which, as the reader learns early on, she is.) Once, Saaski had been a carefree Folk youngling, making otherworldly mischief on the moor, until the day her half-human (and thus magic-impaired) heritage endangered the Moorfolk community. The powers-that-be then "changed" her with a human baby from Torskaal and now she has forgotten her past life. However, in the human world her half-Folkish tendencies surface and threaten the village community. Day after day, Saaski escapes to the moor, "the only place she had ever felt she belonged," where she begins the process of rediscovering and accepting who she is. Because the reader is denied the suspense that would make quicksilver Saaski's slow self-realization bearable, this who-am-I tale becomes a bit tedious. The themes of identity and isolation-within-the-community are similar to the ones in Monica Furlong's *Wise Child* (BCCB 2/88), but overall, McGraw's book lacks that book's urgency and depth. Though the language is as lilting as the elfin tunes Saaski plays on her bagpipes, the story too often lapses into tell-not-show prose, keeping the characters at an emotional distance. The classic components of the story, however, will be pleasingly familiar to many readers and may engage fantasy lovers nonetheless. AEB

McKissack, Patricia C.  
*Rebels Against Slavery: American Slave Revolts*; by Patricia C. and Fredrick L. McKissack.  
Scholastic, 1996  
[176p]  
illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-590-45735-7  $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 5-8

Although stories of slave insurrections can easily be found in other sources, here the McKissacks present the revolts of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Denmark Vesey, John Brown, and others as an intensifying continuum of resistance, which develops from early sporadic attacks aimed at securing individual liberty to organized
insurrections to bring down the very structure of slavery. Political and rhetorical fronts in the war against slavery in the Americas remain largely in the background, and at first glance even the inclusion of Harriet Tubman’s courageous, yet essentially nonviolent, resistance seems out of place amid accounts of bloody revolt. Ultimately, however, each figure in this volume is linked by a belief that “the only course of action... open to them was to end their enslavement by force,” and Tubman’s willingness to shoot any runaway too weak to complete the journey ranks her as a comrade in arms. The prose occasionally turns florid (“[Gabriel Prosser] became the martyr of an oppressed people who heard in his voice the trumpet of freedom”) or confusing (“There are existing ‘confessions’ given by condemned prisoners as they hung on the scaffold”), but the tone is generally moderate; heroic legend and verifiable facts are carefully distinguished throughout the text. A chronology and bibliography are included; the finished book will contain black-and-white photographs. EB


This is your basic treasury of a treasury-prone subject, apparently designed to accompany the new Smithsonian exhibit on the same theme. The book gives a brief account of the life and White House doings of first ladies from Martha Washington to Hillary Rodham Clinton; it also mentions White House hostesses who were not presidential wives (such as James Buchanan’s niece) and gives a quick précis of those women who didn’t live long enough to see their husbands attain the highest office in the land. Interspersed with the biographical vignettes are brief examinations of the changing role of women, the suffrage question, the temperance movement, and so forth. The subject is appealing and the book, which is heavily illustrated with reproduced paintings and photographs, is attractively designed; the writing, however, is disjointed and uneven and a certain shallowness pervades the old-fashioned approach. Youngsters drawn by the theme and the pleasures of a compendium will still appreciate the look at some great ladies and a personalized view of history; this is also a useful reference source and might serve as a companion to White House children books such as Katherine Leiner’s First Children (BCCB 3/96). An index, a divided bibliography (but no notes), and a list of sources for further reading are included. DS


A slender, shady ginkgo tree is in love with the moon, finding “her luminous round face beautiful beyond compare.” While trying to attract Moon’s attention, Ginkgo incurs the ire of Sun, who sends wind to blow Ginkgo’s leaves off; after winter passes, a repentant Moon shines down on Ginkgo’s new leaves “with a beam so bright that his leaves turn a magnificent yellow.” It’s a pretty thought, but the story here is rambling and vague and the point obscure: it’s too convoluted to work as a pourquoi tale and not pithy enough to be a fable. The art is more impressive: relying on a range of browns and yellows, the illustrations (alkyd paints on masonite, according to a note) counterpoint delicately stylized draftsmanship with rough and tactile textures; while the effect is sometimes diminished by interference of the gutter, the pictures generally offer an alluring if static nocturnal
world. Young listeners patient with ambiguities may appreciate this as a tranquil bedtime book; for a more effective written folk-like tale in the same vein, try Amy MacDonald's *The Spider Who Created the World* (BCCB 5/96). DS

**MURPHY, JIM**  
ISBN 0-395-60523-7 $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R Gr. 5-9  

Enlisting at fifteen (underage) to avoid teasing by his friends, Joseph Plumb Martin served in many of the major engagements from New York to Virginia during the war for Independence; his memoirs, which he zestily recorded at age seventy, offer an intimate and sometimes humorous perspective on the battles and their participants, and Murphy weaves them carefully into this biography. Martin learned new military drill under von Steuben (who cursed in several languages), witnessed a cannonball pass between Molly Pitcher's legs ("She observed that it was lucky it did not pass a little higher"), and wryly commented on his commander's equivalent of a modern photo-op ("General Washington struck a few blows with a pickax . . . that it might be said 'General Washington with his own hands first broke ground at the siege of Yorktown'"). Martin and Murphy frequently remind readers that the soldiers were fighting for political liberties toward which their fellow countrymen were often hostile or apathetic; periods of deprivation and even starvation for the army occurred in times of plenty, as supplies were withheld by Tory sympathizers and tightwad allies. Period engravings are accompanied by caption commentaries that point out inaccuracies and romanticization in the images, and viewers can visually trace the development of Revolutionary legend. Report writers will appreciate the detailed index, and a chronology fixes Martin's experiences within the larger framework of wartime events. Bibliographical references are included. EB

**MURPHY, VIRGINIA REED**  
*Across the Plains in the Donner Party;* with letters by James Reed; ed. by Karen Zeinert. Linnet, 1996 [112p] illus. with photographs  
Reviewed from galleys  
R Gr. 5-10

A somewhat different view of the Donner Party debacle emerges from the primary source materials assembled here than from Lavender's account, reviewed above. Virginia Reed was about twelve years old when her stepfather James Reed struck out for California with his family and the Donners; her memoirs of the journey, written for a magazine after her marriage, form the basis for this volume, with her necessarily limited view expanded by entries from her stepfather's and fellow emigrant Patrick Breen's diaries and from a secondary source based on James Reed's notes. Through their accounts the reader meets a band of emigrants largely enjoying each other's company, impressed by the scenery, and amused by hunting parties right up to the point of their time-consuming misdirection at Hastings Cutoff. Then, as each ensuing disaster hits, the emigrants respond in character—from Breen's clipped "Continues to snow. Don't know the depth, maybe seven feet" to Virginia's emotional "I found myself on my knees . . . making a vow that I would become a Catholic if God would send relief." Editor Zeinert divides the volume into two parts (up to and following the point at which the travelers become stranded) and introduces each with a chronology and notes on the extent of her textual
amendments. Readers on the trail of gory detail will perhaps be surprised that the only reference to cannibalism is in the second hand account by journalist J. H. Merryman; social studies classes may find this to be a good starting point for discussion of the scope and slant of sources. EB


Mr. Buzzard knows an easy way to get food during a famine: he cons the forest animals, one by one, into taking a flight on his back, promising each that he will be the first of his kind “to see the whole world.” Then, midflight, Buzzard dangles Messrs. Hare, Antelope, and Crab upside down and extorts their promise of a cushy food supply in exchange for a cushiony landing. Clever Mr. Monkey is on to Buzzard’s trick though, and when his turn comes to see the whole world he covers Buzzard’s eyes with a palm leaf until the disoriented pilot agrees to return his ill-gotten gains. Myers keeps the structure simple, the mood light, and the ending predictably happy, and he even tosses in a line or two for the adult reader’s amusement (“Mr. Antelope got skinny as a bone, and his wife ran away with a goat”). Saint James’ paintings are bold as Buzzard himself, with the animals rendered as sleek shapes (clad in boxer shorts) and settings slyly suggested by a scattering of pill-shaped clouds or a mound of green earth. This is a nifty readaloud for youngsters just beginning to explore the pleasures of folklorically monkeying around. EB


This accessible biography of a great American writer traces Hughes’ life from his peripatetic and uncertain childhood, through his international travels and poetic growth, to his status as one of the pre-eminent poets of the Harlem Renaissance. The book focuses primarily on the poet’s early years (his last three decades are covered in the final six pages), depicting Hughes as loyal to but buffeted by his inconstant and demanding mother, frustrated by his embittered and distant father, and constantly trying, through his writing and through sharing it, to secure his place in a persistently hostile world. The book’s elegance and composition make it resemble an album, an effect enhanced by the inclusion of bordered photographs of Hughes and his family, clippings from his yearbooks, and relevant selections from period newspapers. While the result occasionally substitutes artistry for usefulness (the poetic opening and closing sections confusingly mix Hughes’ verse and Osofsky’s storytelling narration, and the author’s musical setting of Hughes’ “Hold Fast to Dreams” is attractive but extraneous), it’s overall an effective evocation of an individual artistic life. Endnotes, a bibliography, and an index are included. DS


Even readers devoid of enthusiasm for engineering marvels may find their interest sparked by this comprehensive and well-organized account of humans bullishly
beating nature into tenuous submission. Parker heads off with a poem: "Beyond the Chagres" by James Stanley Gilbert, Panama booster and man of (mediocre) letters. The poem's not here for window-dressing—Gilbert's observation that "ten thousand dangers/Hide in the noxious air" accurately describes the view of his American and European contemporaries and prepares readers to appreciate the air of mystery and danger that surrounded the French and American canal builders (even while Parker's slapstick illustrations don't seem to take the poem very seriously). In Part Two, which is a delight for browsers and a boon for middle-grade report writers, Parker begins with an overview of Panama's history and then offers a series of close-ups of persons (and mosquitoes) who influenced and/or impeded the isthmus's development. Although the focus is on the Big Names—Theodore Roosevelt, George Goethals, William Gorgas, etc.—Parker also credits the thousands of Jamaican, Chinese, and West Indian workers whose lives were lost in the jungles. A sunny cartoon portrait accompanies each entry, several maps trace changes in the landscape, and a final section on the completed canal and its current operation has some simple, sensible charts and graphs; an index is also included. EB


Starting with a description of one of the days that Marion Blumenthal Lazan survived in Bergen-Belsen, this chronicle of her experiences during the Holocaust then goes further back for a look at her family's secure prewar life in Germany (her grandparents had run a successful business in Hoya since 1894). Step by step, Hitler's policies cut off their living and endanger their lives as they move to Hanover, flee to Holland, are deported from Westerbork to Bergen-Belsen, and finally are shipped on a death train toward Auschwitz before the Russians liberate them. It is too late for Marion's father, who dies of typhus, but she and her mother and brother eventually make their way to the U.S. and manage to build new lives. Lazan's recollections, along with occasional quotes from her mother, are intertwined with Perl's background narrative to make a smooth factual flow. Especially telling are details such as the silence Marion maintains when a secret pot of boiling soup, which she and her mother rush to hide during a surprise inspection of their barrack, scalds her leg. There's no hint of overdramatization here; the tone is, if anything, understated in a story carried by the momentum of history itself. Two insets of family and historical photos intensify the poignancy of the account. BH


It's just a normal day in Katie Logan's class: "Michelle was hitting Leslie. Roger and Amy were throwing pencil parts at each other. And Michael was trying to bite Kevin's neck." To make matters worse their teacher, Ms. Bauman, is given to long soliloquies about their awful behavior. The class is preparing a Thanksgiving play to perform in front of the whole school, but Katie is not chosen to be a Pilgrim or a Native American: "Katie was a tree. She hated being a tree. What she really wanted was Jessica's part...the star of the show." After a disastrous rehearsal, Katie walks home through the park and finds a three-wish-granting magic lamp.
Katie shares her good fortune with her brother Alex, who points out that all the best wishes are problematic: a thirty-five inch TV set? (“You might get a TV set that doesn’t work.”) World peace? (“Suppose there’s world peace and nobody dies in wars anymore. Then maybe there’d be too many people on Earth and not enough food and we’d all die from hunger.”) Riches? Beauty? Only one wish seems foolproof: “I’ll get to be the star and I’ll still have two wishes left!” Thus Katie replaces Jessica as the “star” of the show, with chaotic results. Pfeffer has taken the age-old, eternally appealing magic-lamp motif and added believable grade-school drama and a distinct cast of third graders any teacher would recognize. Katie’s final wish, which provides the amicable, we-all-like-each-other ending, may engender some skepticism, but readers will be amused by the funny dialogue and situations. Plecas’ cartoon-like but soft pencil illustrations enhance the whimsical quality of this light-hearted story. PM

PORTÉ, BARBARA ANN  Black Elephant with a Brown Ear (in Alabama); illus. by Bill Traylor. Greenwillow, 1996 [48p]
ISBN 0-688-14374-1 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-9

“When I look at many of Bill Traylor’s pictures,” says Barbara Porté, “I think of them as stories that he told himself. Seeing them, I tell myself different stories.” Ten such stories are included here, addressing such topics as porcine heroism (“Prize Pig,” responding to Traylor’s “Purple Pigs”), disgruntled canines (“Red and Black Dogfight,” responding to “Fighting Dogs”), or wayward transportation (“Run-away Goat Cart” develops from “Hell-Bent for Leather”). The stories couldn’t stand independently, but they’re not meant to; a blend of musing, humor, and just plain serendipity, they bounce off and diverge from the art as much as finding inspiration in it, so the gap between picture and text is as telling as the connection. The tone and effects vary considerably: “Scary Creature,” for instance, is a matter-of-fact but creepy vignette, whereas the title story is gravely, randomly hilarious in a manner reminiscent of James Thurber. Traylor’s surreal but literal art is fascinating, although there isn’t much of it here (only one painting per story). Porté includes a biographical note and an endnote that will point readers to more sources (she also includes source notes for borrowed bits of her tales). Most important here, though, is the demonstration of one kind of art as inspiration to another; it may also inspire teachers—and kids—with ideas for similar projects. DS

PRESILLA, MARICEL E.  Life Around the Lake; written by Maricel E. Presilla and Gloria Soto; embroideries by the women of Lake Patzcuaro. Holt, 1996 32p
ISBN 0-8050-3800-0 $16.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

This photoessay offers readers a substantial amount of material about the area around Lake Patzcuaro, located in Michoacán, a state in west-central Mexico. In an attempt to celebrate life around the lake, the book treats ecological concerns, local fishermen’s woes, food preparation, a wedding ceremony, special feast days, and the history of the local embroiderers’ guild. Photographs of the exquisitely detailed embroideries provide brilliant jewel-like color, but they do not offset perplexing inconsistencies in the text. For instance, in the explanation of “The Dance of the Old Men,” “dance master Nicolas Constantino thinks he knows why the dancers wear white masks,” but in the illustration the dancers wear red masks. Quotations, presumably from local people, are placed capriciously throughout the
book, neither clarifying nor defining its various sections. There's just too much going on here; the information given is sketchy and confusing, and it's delivered in an adulatory tone that becomes wearisome. Why are fruits and gifts thrown down from the tower of the four-hundred-year-old Franciscan church on the Feast of Corpus Christi? Because "this feast is a time of giving." Okay, but who's throwing all those goodies and who's getting them? The embroiderers of the Lake Patzcuaro area are obviously talented artists, and this book is a colorful tribute to their exceptional work. The book's cumbersome scope and choppy text may hamper young readers' appreciation of the artists' creative skills, but the scarcity of other works on this vivid craft makes this title a worthwhile resource. PM


Believing that the key to the extraordinary witchhunt of 1692 is to be found in the ordinary circumstances of colonial life, Roach conducts readers on a thematic tour of the milieu from which the trials arose. Opening chapters on law, punishment, and the invisible world convincingly present a system of beliefs encompassing supernatural "evidence" upon which defendants could be charged and convicted. However, as Roach extends her discussion to the land, farming calendar, recreation, etc., her grasp on the original argument weakens and, indeed, connections to the trial are frequently neglected for long stretches of text. Her conclusion that "the Salem witchcraft panic began with personal fear, grew with neighborhood suspicion, and then spread through the region fueled by the time's tensions" is credible but dangles largely unsupported in the final chapter. If this work doesn't contribute much to the debate on the trials' genesis, it does provide a smoothly readable overview of the far-from-homogeneous culture of seventeenth-century Massachusetts. Scribbly line vignettes are jarringly light-hearted, given Roach's premise that this was a population "at risk from so many earthly threats." An index is appended. EB


Children need and yearn to express themselves, and their expressions can be unselfconsciously moving for an adult audience, especially when offering a child's-eye record of events; a good example is the art and writing by young Holocaust victims in I Never Saw Another Butterfly, which also has juvenile appeal because of its consistent focus on youthful viewpoints. The difficulty with Ross and Myers' book, featuring responses to the bombing of Oklahoma City's Federal Building, is its inclusion of quotations from both adults and children. The editors' introduction is clearly written to adults: "This book has its roots in the belief that throughout this tragedy the voices of America's children were all but lost in the torrent of dramatic stories and images saturating the news. Yet their reactions, expressed in both writing and art, cut straight to the heart of the disaster's impact on all of us." Similarly, Oklahoma first lady Cathy Keating's note is clearly an I-they rather than an I-you address. Throughout, the text varies in adult/child balance, leaving a
question as to who the audience really is for this picture book. The adult passages are frequently above or beyond primary-grade reading levels, while the children’s passages will appeal to young readers only when emotionally forceful; children don’t see or care what’s “cute” about misspellings or quaint phrasing (“Sorry! I feel sad what hapin to the pepol”). The art varies from a pale crayon illustration of a big rainbow over a small building (“This is our school”) to a picture full of red hearts, a Teddy Bear waving a flag, lots of fire engines, and other naively drawn images. This is a patriotic book with strong sentimental appeal—most of the children are reacting to what they’ve heard from family or television reporters rather than to the experience itself. The biggest audience will be adults appreciating children for their fresh vision of the world and of one of its tragedies. BH

SCARBORO, ELIZABETH  
Phoenix, Upside Down. Viking, 1996  [128p]
Reviewed from galleys  R Gr. 4-6

Jamie is not happy about her family’s move from Boulder to Phoenix: she misses her old friends, she’s unhappy in her new fourth-grade class, and she mourns her pet rat, who died upon arrival in Arizona. The one bright spot in Jamie’s new neighborhood is Celia, an old lady with a passion for her garden and an interest in Jamie and her little sister, Rachel; through her friendship with Celia, who is herself dealing with the changes of advancing age, Jamie gradually adjusts to the change in her own life. This relocation story doesn’t chart any new territory, but Scarboro has a quiet style rich in particularity and nuance, which makes Jamie’s ordeal of transitioning to a new school culture honest and vivid (“At her old school, she never cared if people saw her standing alone. Then again, she wasn’t alone that often”). The book wisely underplays the connection with Celia, keeping her relationship with the girls realistically shy and uncertain on both sides, and the story is also authentic in its depiction of the ups and downs of incipient friendships. Kids will appreciate this insightful, well-modulated story about an all-too-common childhood hurdle. DS

SHERMAN, JOSEPHA  
Trickster Tales: Forty Folk Stories from Around the World; illus. by David Boston. August House, 1996  [172p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-87483-449-X  $28.95
Paper ed. ISBN 0-87483-450-3  $18.95
Reviewed from galleys  R Gr. 4-6

Serving a dual purpose as storyteller’s source and elementary students’ browse, these tales circle the globe in sections: Africa, Europe, the Near East, Asia and Polynesia, Meso- and South America, and North America. Tricksters take many forms, and many of the forms they take here are not commonly anthologized or picturebooked—with exceptions such as the familiar “Raven Steals the Light.” Even Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby acquire unfamiliar faces in a French Creole variant called “Lapin and the Little Tar Man.” While Sherman’s adaptations are neither lyrical nor colloquial, the tales thrive on a straightforward style that lets their structure shine through, and her notes are impeccable, giving cultural context, motif numbers, and sources (even the puzzling phrase “This story is known to the author” gets an accompanying suggestion of sources for “very similar versions”). Full-page pen-and-ink hatch drawings, which introduce each section, are precisely drafted, satirically exaggerated, and tonally attuned to the characters they portray. BH
Yes, this is a fully fledged, brand-new volume of Silverstein in the vein of *Where the Sidewalk Ends* and *A Light in the Attic*. And Uncle Shelby's still got it—the poems here range from vivid to raucous to sly to tender, telling tales of monsters ("It's the deadly eye/ Of Poogley-Pie"—from "The Deadly Eye") and mistakes ("We gave you a chance/ To water the plants./ We didn't mean that way/ Now zip up your pants"—"Gardener") and a multiplicity of characters ("Larry's such a liar—/ He tells outrageous lies./ He says he's ninety-nine years old/ Instead of only five"—from "Lyn' Larry"). Silverstein's scratchily eccentric line drawings illustrate poetic conceits, provide punch lines, and add jokes of their own. Not every entry is a home run, but the enticing blend of wickedness, creativity, and rhythm makes the verse entertaining, readable, and often chantable. Many of the poems would make dynamic readalouds for younger listeners, and they might particularly suit an older-child/younger-child sharing session. A title index of poems is included.

SNEDDEN, ROBERT  
*Yuck!: A Big Book of Little Horrors.* Simon, 1996 [32p] illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-689-80676-0  $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 2-4

No matter how cozy, your home will seem terrifying after you see these startling magnifications of ordinary critters, foods, and products found under your roof. As they did with Cobb's similar *For Your Own Protection* (BCCB 2/90), kids will find irresistible the mundane made extraordinary, here in disgusting shots of peanut butter, toothbrushes, ants, silverfish, and, yes, human skin, all shown enlarged anywhere from hundreds to many thousands of times their actual sizes. The double-page spreads pose a question on the left side and provide the answer on the right side underneath a lift-up flap. Most of the spreads are horizontal, but a couple are vertical in a nifty example of creative bookmaking. The star quality of the photos is outstanding throughout; the text sensibly accepts second billing. One shot kids will love shows the actual pits in a compact disc, which are read by a laser and translated into music. And, of course, the predictable curtain-closer is a revolting montage of human body parts—hair, tongue, sweat—up close and all too personal. Even the most jaded of the Nintendo set will be drawn into the guessing game—what is that thing with its antennae waving, an alien? Nope, just a backyard mushroom. All this and the joy of knowing that even Martha Stewart's home holds the same nightmares. SSV

STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS  
*Treasure Island.*  
See review under Kipling, p. 341.

SWANSON, DIANE  
*Buffalo Sunrise: The Story of a North American Giant.* Sierra Club, 1996  58p  illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-87156-861-6  $16.95  
R  Gr. 4-6

Everyone's familiar with the depressing numbers—where once sixty million bison, commonly known as buffaloes, roamed the length and breadth of North America,
only one thousand were left by the end of the nineteenth century. In the name of
sport, Europeans and North Americans alike went on buffalo safaris, one Irish
noble named (appropriately) Gore killing over 2,000 buffaloes on a hunting trip
in the 1850s. But the title of this book reflects the current optimistic state of the
buffalo; now numbering over 200,000, the herds are, in fact, thriving in both the
U.S. and Canada. While there has hardly been a stampede of books on the sub-
ject, enough ground has been covered that Swanson has to work hard to tell us
something new. She delivers admirably and kids will be able to stump each other
with buffalo facts. Among the tidbits: American Indians had over one hundred
uses, including employing buffalo ribs as runners on sleds, for the animal; early
pioneers crossed the plains following “Bison Streets,” trails made by herds; a cross
between a buffalo and a cow results in a “cattalo”; a bellowing bull can be heard
over three miles away. The handsome illustrations include reproductions of paint-
ings, archival materials, and current wildlife photographs. Occasional inserts,
dropped in as sidebars, offer related information, and an index will assist young
researchers. SSV

Thompson, Colin  How to Live Forever; written and illus. by Colin
Thompson. Knopf, 1996  32p
ISBN 0-679-87898-X $17.00  Ad Gr. 4-6

Peter Robinson lives in a book in a library that houses every book in the world.
One book, however—How to Live Forever—is missing, and Peter determines to
find it and secure eternal youth. He hunts through the crumbling stacks until he
encounters a quartet of elders who offer him the book; Peter then meets the An-
cient Child, the one person who has read the book and remains frighteningly,
miserably, frozen in youth while the rest of the world goes by, and Peter sensibly
decides not to read the book after all. As fables go, this is fairly thin and obvious
(and, as Jonathan Swift pointed out, immortality need not mean eternal youth
anyway). The real draw here is the art: Thompson’s line-and-watercolor pictures
depict a bibliomane’s heaven, as rows of punnily titled books (The Lizard of Oz,
Finnegans Snake) topple onto each other in Dickensian disarray and near-Escherian
structure; readers will relish the hunt for illustrative details such as gardens beyond
volumes or tiny stack-dwelling folk. Thompson’s ability to create a unique visual
world will pull youngsters in; perhaps in the future he might concentrate on that
strength and, à la Mitsumasa Anno or Peter Collington, simply let those visions
tell the story on their own. DS

Trahant, LeNora Begay  The Success of the Navajo Arts and Crafts Enterprise: A
Retail Success Story; illus. with photographs by Monty Roessel. Walker, 1996  78p
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8337-6 $16.85  Ad Gr. 5-8
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8336-8 $15.95

As the title indicates, this is less a book about cultural traditions than it is one
about business (the publisher’s Success series has also spotlighted entrepreneurial
successes by other minority-owned businesses). The Navajo Arts and Crafts En-
terprise (NACE) succeeded the Navajo Arts and Crafts Guild in 1972, changing
what had been a consortium of independent artists into an assembly-line for mass-
producing silver jewelry. This was not a success (“One thing led to another and
the quality of the jewelry went down”), and Raymond Smith, a former member of
the Navajo Tribal Council, was then hired to redirect the organization. The book
examines the changes Smith wrought, describes the system that links jewelry makers and weavers to NACE, which sells them raw material and buys their creations, and provides brief interviews with Smith, various managers, and artists. There’s quite a bit of repetition in the thinly spread information, and the business talk is not always clear. “The difference between retail and wholesale is the amount of jewelry sold to individuals or companies.” Still, Trahant goes easy on the self-esteem talk that usually nibbles at this kind of book, and even business-impaired readers can appreciate the clear descriptions of how the crafts are made. Black-and-white photos generally prefer portraits to merchandise; a glossary, index, and appendices of crafts organizations and American Indian associations are included.

WALSH, ELLEN STOLL Samantha; written and illus. by Ellen Stoll Walsh. Harcourt, 1996 32p ISBN 0-15-252264-6 $14.00 R 4-6 yrs

Samantha is a young mouse who becomes overwhelmed with the roughness of her older siblings’ play, and who wishes for a fairy godmother to protect her—and “a fairy godmother must have been listening, because one appeared out of nowhere to take up her new responsibilities.” Samantha’s F.G. keeps her safe and away from all the playing until Samantha finally gets fed up with the restriction and chases her away; soon, however, Samantha misses the security, brings her guardian back, and negotiates a more moderate deal. Fairy godmother notwithstanding, this story will ring completely true to adults familiar with children’s contradictory demands for safety and independence, and kids will understand Samantha’s impulses completely. Walsh’s cut-paper collage mice (strongly reminiscent of Leo Lionni’s in Frederick, BCCB 10/67) are their usual cuddly but serious selves; their bright-eyed gamboling makes a nice counterpoint to the softer comradeship of the delicate-winged lavender mouse-godmother and her charge. It’s a bit on the sweet side, but the text is low-key and restrained and Samantha’s too strong-willed to be cloying. This will make a cozy but not suffocating readaloud for youngsters pushing a bit farther than The Runaway Bunny.


This book introduces listeners to the narrator’s (and the author’s) autistic sister Christa, describing her activities and preferences (“Christa likes to do what I do . . . Christa loves the way water looks. She also likes the way kittens feel on her cheek”) and summing up by stating that “my sister Christa is autistic. And she is my best friend, too.” This is a simply worded and affectionate tribute, but it’s not much more than that. The text is bound to confuse young listeners: though at one point it reads “She doesn’t speak to me out loud,” at another juncture Christa is speaking to the narrator face to face, and it’s not clear whether Christa considers herself to be “softly talking to angels,” or if that is somebody else’s interpretation of her activity. Nor does the readaloud audience, who may also cover their ears when they hear bad noises and enjoy the feel of kittens, get any hints as to what those things have to do with Christa’s autism, what autism is, or if they have it too. The mixed-media art is intriguing and deliberately childlike, focusing on tremulously lined faces and multifingered hands; the images are telling to those in the know.
without, unfortunately, assisting much in explaining Christa to the audience. The narrator's love shines through, but it's never quite clear what that love is illuminating. For a book that will really help kids understand the concept of autism, see Charles Amenta's *Russell Is Extra Special* (BCCB 12/92). DS

**WILHOITE, MICHAEL**  
*Daddy's Wedding*; written and illus by Michael Willhoite. Alyson Wonderland, 1996 32p  
ISBN 1-55583-350-0  $15.95  
M 5-7 yrs

Daddy is at again! The story opens at a backyard picnic where Daddy and Frank (*Daddy's Roommate*, BCCB 3/91) announce to son Nick that they are getting married ("We call it a commitment ceremony, Nick," said Frank") and everyone's happy (as Mommy says, "It sounds like a lot of fun. Nothing's better than a wedding in June"). Nick signs on as best man and the wedding is off and running, replete with balloons and matching tuxedos. Daddy and Frank recite their vows, exchange rings, and kiss. Clancy—Daddy and Frank's rambunctious dog—beats the guests to the wedding cake, but this is the only flaw in an otherwise lovely party...uh, I mean, wedding reception. The guests chat and eat, Daddy and Frank depart for a San Francisco honeymoon, and Nick goes to baseball camp. The end. This book is not so much a story as a series of snapshots (in broad and pedestrianly drafted cartoons) of the happiest family in America. However, the same light touch that Willhoite employed to normalize the relationship between Daddy and Frank in *Daddy's Roommate* here works to trivialize their pledge of life-long love as roughly equivalent to, say, sharing a popsicle—or, in this case, co-hosting a backyard party. To compound the problem, the writing is flat and uninspired, and the events (witness Clancy's mishap) have a sitcom predictability. In a well-intentioned effort to portray Daddy and Frank's wedding as Perfectly Ordinary, Willhoite has made it No Big Deal. Though this is one of a handful of picture books on weddings of any kind, adults will probably be far more interested in *Daddy's Wedding*—for better or worse—than the book's intended audience. CJ

**WILSON, JANET**  
*The Ingenious Mr. Peale: Painter, Patriot and Man of Science*. Atheneum, 1996 [128p] illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-689-31884-7  $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
R Gr. 4-7

Eighteenth-century dilettante Charles Willson Peale has made several appearances in children's literature, but most accounts either fictionalize his life (e.g., the Epsteins' *Mr. Peale's Mammoth*) or highlight a single incident (Michael Tunnell's *The Joke's on George*, BCCB 10/93). Wilson offers middle graders a balanced biography that integrates Peale's disparate careers and portrays him as the free-wheeling son of the Enlightenment he was. Readers familiar only with Peale's enterprises in painting and natural history will learn of his debt-driven stumble into art, his passion for Revolutionary politics, his reluctant service as a military officer, and his dabbles in inventing, farming, and even motion pictures. Peale's family life remains largely in the background, although his succession of wives and his strained relations with artist son Raphaelle do receive some attention. Wilson covers a lot of ground in her energetic, no-nonsense charge through Peale's vita, and samples of Peale's paintings illuminate his stylistic development and benchmark events in his life. A bibliography and index are appended. EB

Readers familiar with Yolen and Lewin’s first poetry cum painting collaboration, *Bird Watch* (BCCB 12/90), will (with respect to the title) be expecting a sequel. Caveat aviator. In the earlier collection, text and illustration extended each other throughout; the book became a wooded path, a park bench, a window from which we could fully observe and respond to the birds around us. In *Sea Watch,* text and illustration often ride cross-currents, and our experience of marine life is less holistic. Visually, we become the snorkelers or sailors peering through the murky, watercolor depths, yet textually we remain readers, learning about fourteen different predatory or preyed-upon creatures of the sea. As a result, the mood conveyed by a painting is not necessarily the mood conveyed by the accompanying verse. In “Octopus,” a golden, glowing mollusk curls its tentacles around and about the inky deep, almost reverent in its embrace. However, this sophisticated offering is joined by a rhyme-the-verb counting poem—featuring arm number one through, yes, eight. Alone, Lewin’s watercolors can be effective: aquamarines and violets bleed into the paper, brush strokes vary tones and suggest sleek underwater movement (“Warning: Shark,” “Sea Canary—Beluga”). Unfortunately, Yolen’s verse seems to tread water alongside; with a few buoyant exceptions (“A thousand thousand wriggling fish/ Upon the dark wet sand”), the rhythm is often uneven and the imagery weighed down by rhyme. Some of her strongest poems are also her most puzzling ones, as she twists little-known characteristics of the creature into a poem-as-riddle (“Anemone,” “The Grunion”). Fortunately, factual endnotes about each animal demystify the poetic images and eventually extend our understanding of both animal and poem. Despite the book’s inconsistencies, teachers eager to incorporate a bit of right-brain thinking into their units on marine life will welcome this collection, and young readers may very well be inspired to create oceanic odes of their own. AEB
Keyed to *The Bulletin*'s alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in **ALL-CAPS** refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject headings, the subhead "stories" refers to books for the readaloud audience; "fiction," to those books intended for independent reading.

African Americans: McKissack
African Americans—biographies: Osofsky
African Americans—fiction: Hewett
African Americans—folktale: Hamilton
Alaska: Levi
American Indians: Jensen; Trahant
American Indians—folktale: Duncan; Haley; Jackson
Art and artists: Duggleby; Galli; Jensen
Art: Dahl; Porte; Presilla
Autism: Watson
Aviation: Levi
Baseball—fiction: Hall
Beavers—stories: Klinting
BIOGRAFIES: Demi; Duggleby; Galli; Murphy, J.; Osofsky; Wilson
Birds—fiction: Hamilton
Birds—stories: Cunningham; Myers
Bison: Swanson
Brothers—fiction: Byars; Gauthier
Brothers—stories: Kimmel
Brothers and sisters—stories: Walsh
Catholics—fiction: Ford
Colonial life: Roach
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Contests—stories: Greenstein
Cousins—stories: Hewett
Cowboys: Anderson
Crime and criminals—fiction: Heisel

**Current events:** Day; Lamb; Ross
Disabilities—fiction: Heisel
Dogs—fiction: London, Jack
Ecology: Jaspersohn; London, Jonathan; Swanson
Elephants—stories: de Vries
**Ethics and values:** Brooks; Ford
Family problems—fiction: Brooks; Hewett
FANTASIES: Disney; McGraw; Pfeffer; Thompson
Fathers and daughters—fiction: Hall
Fathers and sons—fiction: Hausman
Fathers and sons—stories: Willhoite

**FOLKTALES AND FAIRYTALES:** Duncan; Grimm; Haley; Hamilton; Heller; Jackson; Jaffe; Kimmel; Mertins; Myers; Sherman
Food and eating—stories: Kimmel
Friends—fiction: Hausman; Scarborough

**FUNNY STORIES:** Gauthier
Gangs—fiction: Hewett
Gardening—stories: Appelt; Greenstein; Hughes
Government: Mayo
**HISTORICAL FICTION:** Ford; Hall; Hausman
History, American: Parker
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