PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library Large-scale Digitization Project, 2007.
T. A. Barron's dazzling Arthurian fantasy continues...

THE SEVEN SONGS
OF MERLIN

"Spellbinding....In this sequel to The Lost Years of Merlin... readers will relish not only the action but also Merlin's growth from a callow youth to a wiser, more caring wizard-in-training."
—Booklist

“A rich and resonant...tale of the heart.”—Kirkus Reviews

“Delightfully original....A marvelous series.”—SLJ

Young Adult
0-399-23019-X
$19.99

Be sure you have
Volume I:
THE LOST YEARS
OF MERLIN
0-399-23018-1
$19.95
An ALA
Best Book for YAs

PHILOMEL BOOKS
A member of Penguin Putnam Inc.
A LOOK INSIDE

271 THE BIG PICTURE
   Go and Come Back by Joan Abelove

272 NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
   Reviewed titles include:
275 * Smack by Melvin Burgess
285 * Zelda and Ivy written and illus. by Laura McGee Kvasnosky
289 * Fire! by Joy Masoff; illus. with photographs by Jack Reznicki and Barry D. Smith
291 * Strays Like Us by Richard Peck
295 * A Weave of Words ad. by Robert D. San Souci; illus. by Raúl Colón
298 * I Love My Hair! by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley; illus. by E. B. Lewis

303 PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS
304 SUBJECT AND USE INDEX
EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

* 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 61820-6903.

REVIEWING STAFF
Janice M. Del Negro, Editor (JMD)
Deborah Stevenson, Assistant Editor (DS)
Betsy Hearne, Consulting Editor and Faculty Liaison (BH)
Elizabeth Bush, Reviewer (EB)
Pat Mathews, Reviewer (PM)

CENTER STAFF
Shirley Chan
Linda Fenster
Kate McDowell
Jordan Martin

Reviewers' initials are appended to reviews.

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 Zeeb 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 61820-6903.

Subscription Correspondence. Address all inquiries about subscriptions and advertising to University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak, Champaign, IL 61820-6903.

Editorial Correspondence. Review copies and all correspondence about reviews should be sent to Janice Del Negro, The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, 51 E. Armory Ave., Champaign, IL 61820-6601. E-mail: bccb@alexia.lis.uiuc.edu

Visit our homepage at http://edu.lis.uiuc.edu/puboff/bccb

Periodicals postage paid at Champaign, Illinois
© 1998 by The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois
Drawings by Debra Bolgla. This publication is printed on acid-free paper.

Cover illustration by Elly Simmons from Go and Come Back, ©1998. Used by permission of Jackson/DK Ink.
Go and Come Back
by Joan Abelove

“They both wore no beads, no nose rings, no lip plugs, no anklets. They didn’t pierce their noses or their lower lips. They didn’t bind their ankles or flatten their foreheads. They did nothing to make themselves beautiful.” In addition to being undecorated and devoid of the body fat required for true beauty, the two New York anthropologists who are visiting Alicia’s Peruvian jungle village, Poincushmana, for a year’s work on their dissertations have a lot of strange ideas, and many of the Isabo people enjoy watching them make mistakes and ask stupid questions. But there are tensions as well, especially revolving around the stinginess of the “old white ladies.” The villagers “save” by sharing everything they have and depending on others to do the same, whereas the strangers “save” by withholding resources the villagers want or need, from beads to rice. Moreover, Alicia and her people accept primal facts of sex and death with a forbearance (“whatever it would be” is a favorite expression) that unsettles the anthropologists.

Alicia’s mother simply dismisses the foreigners (“Do not think of them as people”). Yet Alicia slowly becomes involved in a kind of friendship with one of them, Joanna, and determines to teach her manners (lying, for instance, to save face with kinsmen), cleanliness (bathing twice a day in the river), generosity (figuring out what people want before they ask), and a better understanding of life generally: “They knew so little and they asked so much.” Slowly, the two women do begin to learn, and they are certainly comparison gainers next to the government officials who come to draft village men, or the missionaries who make fools of themselves in only one night’s stay.

Supporting the quotable lines and cinematic scenes in this first novel is a substructure of solid elements. Alicia’s narrative voice, which could have become a gimmick of viewpoint reversal, relies instead on wit and consistency for ultimate effect; her observations naturally suit the adolescent she is, and young adult readers will recognize and empathize with her point of view. The characters are never functionalized to make a statement, but are individualized for true empathetic connection. The situational aspects of humor and tragedy are skillfully counterpointed: on the one hand, we laugh at the dual perception of dental floss as tooth cleaner and fishing line; on the other, we grieve with Alicia and Joanna as they struggle with conflicting expressions of sadness over the death of a baby Alicia has adopted. Alicia’s lifeways make more sense than the Anglos’, of course, since this is her story, but the authorial tone never mistakes cultural adulation for respect. This is not a noble savage story, nor is it a noble anthropologist story. In clearly limited ways, it is a meeting that becomes an exchange, and the titular expression for goodbye in Isabo—go and come back—assumes strong new meaning
in application to precarious new trust. The ending rests gracefully on understated symbolism as Alicia herself, in an unexpected airplane flight over her home, attests to unexpected ways of viewing the world. We are not misled, however, into believing that New York and Poincushmana will ever encompass the same kinship group.

Joan Abelove, who has a doctorate in cultural anthropology, asks many provocative questions in this novel. Who is qualified to portray whom? What is ignorance? When is it acceptable to laugh at others? And the reader must throw in a query, too. Is it presumption to assume the voice of an ethnic other, even to make fun of one's own culture? Too often American fiction for youth has portrayed other cultures from the outside, and clearly this author is not Isabo (which, a note makes clear, is a fictionalized name for a real people; it also mentions that the village may no longer exist). Yet she lived for two years in the setting of her novel; she may not be an insider, but she knows enough to know what she doesn’t know. And, paradoxically, she has shed light on insiders by representing their attention to what she does know—being an outsider to them. The viewing of the norm through an outsider’s eyes is a perennially appealing device that should draw teens right in as well as give them some food for cultural thought. Reading this novel is like feeling wind rush through a stuffy room. We are taken by surprise. We breath deeper for the freshness of observing our own culture from the outside, for seeing two characters so like and unlike ourselves begin to expand, and for experiencing new possibilities of vision: “Maybe they were learning how to be. Whatever reason it would be.” Maybe we can, too. (Imprint information appears below.)

_Betsy Hearne, Consulting Editor_

**NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**ABELOVE, JOAN**  _Go and Come Back_. Jackson/DK Ink, 1998  [192p]
ISBN 0-7894-2476-2  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys  R*  Gr. 8-12
See this month’s Big Picture, p. 271, for review.

**ahlberg, allan**  _Monkey Do!_ illus. by André Amstutz. Candlewick, 1998  [32p]
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  3-6 yrs

“Sunny morning, bright and early./ Things are stirring in the zoo./ Comes the keeper with his key ring./ Monkey see, Monkey do!” And monkey does indeed, as there are plenty of monkey shenanigans in this picture-book offering wherein a monkey mimic (looking like a brother of Curious George) escapes from the zoo
and cavorts through the town, delivering milk and the mail, visiting the Biggins household, sneaking into a school classroom, assisting a fireman in a cat rescue, and finally returning to the zoo. This seems a logical conclusion, but the monkey business is not over yet. More zoo action follows: "Here's a brown bear with a bun./ Here's a crocodile with... nothing./ Monkey see... Monkey run!" Now it really feels like we're done, but are we? Nope: "Just one worn out little Monkey./ Wants his mommy, wouldn't you?" Even though the story goes into overtime, what keeps this litany of monkey madness ticking are light comic touches throughout the illustrations. What five-year-old won't appreciate seeing the monkey peaking out from his position in a school toilet stall? Large and small watercolor vignettes depict the playful action in an array of soft tints while the big print of the rhythmic text is easy on the eyes. Offer this to those little monkeys with a fondness for the friend of the man in the yellow hat. PM


Speech writers and others in search of environmental snippets will appreciate this lushly illustrated anthology of poetry and prose that illuminate the natural world. Pythagoras, Kipling, Tolstoy, Cather, and Attenborough are just a few of the forty-seven authors whose works anthologized here, complemented by the interpretations of thirty-one artists (such as Michael Foreman, Quentin Blake, and Peter Sís). A selection from the Talmud is included, as well as Buddhist and Biblical scriptures. The usefulness of this attractive volume is somewhat marred by selections done in calligraphy (e.g., "Watching the Bird"), which are slightly difficult to read, but Allen has made the logistics of sifting through this tome easy enough with indices of authors and illustrators as well as an appended biographies page, which offers a mini-bio of each author. Young naturalists interested in further research can pursue the full texts of the works as cited in the acknowledgments. As a browser or even a reference tool, this ecologically minded literary cross-section should inspire enthusiasts for the next Earth Day celebration and will make a useful addition to your "green" collection. PM


A little girl's preparations for bed are paralleled with the other nighttime scenes the moon witnesses: nomads crouching beside camels in the sand, waves lapping against the beach in a palm-tree'd marina, a lioness licking her drowsy cubs. Banks has a good ear for both nighttime sounds and the slowing rhythms of bedtime ("Someone hums quietly. A clock ticks. A light flicks on"), but some of her word choices are counterpurposive ("Twilight blazes a trail across the wall"); more problematically, it's not clear which scenes happen where (some of the external scenes could be of the little girl's house and town, for instance), which undermines the pattern of distance alternating with closeness. Hallensleben's thickly brushed, post-impressionistic paintings involve blocky shapes of saturated circus colors all shaded softly in the twilight, and he deftly balances the cozy indoor light against the moon-punctuated darkness outside. Kids who like poetic bedtime visions (such as Jonathan
London’s *The Owl Who Became the Moon*, BCCB 2/93) may not mind the roaming in the gloaming, and they’ll appreciate the gentle wind-down. DS

**Bechard, Margaret**  
*My Mom Married the Principal*. Viking, 1998  [144p]  
Reviewed from galleys  
R Gr. 5-7  

Thanks to the well-intentioned machinations of his best friend, Amanda, eighth-grader Jonah Truman is finally “going out” with Katherine Chang, the girl of his dreams. Disenchantment hits hard and fast, though—the once serious but now clinging Katherine actually expects to be taken out on a date, and Jonah’s love life has to play out under the very nose of his new stepfather, the school principal Mr. Decker. Of course the date’s a disaster (a group outing to a laser-tag arena), Katherine ditches Jonah for a faster guy, and Jonah lands the girl that nearly got away. The story is hardly monumental, but the note-writing, boyfriend-swapping, parent-schmoozing, and innuendo-dropping that bring Jonah to his ultimate bliss are junior high to the core, and Bechard’s ear for realistic yet snappy dialogue adds sparkle. Preteens, especially high-low readers in search of a chuckle, will find breezy entertainment in Jonah’s saga. EB

**Blos, Joan**  
ISBN 0-689-81031-8 $12.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
R 2-4 yrs  

It’s bedtime (“The clock said it. The darkness outside said it. And the grandma said it”), but the little boy is opposed to the concept. He does concede that one of his stuffed toys might be tired, so Grandma puts Bear to bed. Not long after that, Tiger and then Clown hit the sack, and after a bedtime story from the grandma segues the boy into his pajamas, he’s in bed and soon asleep. This is a nicely circumscribed bedtime scenario, and the enumerative qualities of the text, which one might consider attritional rather than cumulative as the various critters go down for the count, have a pleasingly lulling effect. Some of the text is a little generically cozy; the chalk-pastel art, in subdued and twilit hues, leans even farther in that direction (and the sunflowers outside the bedroom window occasionally coalesce into a rather intimidating monster), but the little boy’s casual sprawl and sleepy submission to pajama placement have an engaging particularity. Small bedtime-postponers will appreciate the staircase approach, and they’ll insist on appropriating the boy’s methodology for their own. DS

**Bortz, Fred**  
*Martian Fossils on Earth?: The Story of Meteorite ALH 84001*. Millbrook, 1997 72p illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-7613-0270-0 $21.40  
R Gr. 5-9  

It’s fascinating to consider how a dull little chunk of rock with an equally dull moniker could generate such excitement, but the “fossil evidence” for Martian life contained in this now world-famous meteorite has generated controversy of the highest order. Bortz adroitly maintains the tantalizing possibility of extraterrestrial life suggested by the rock’s chemistry and structure, while subjecting the thrilling claims to dispassionate scientific scrutiny. Although the pro and con arguments are undeniably challenging, synthesizing physics, astronomy, biology, and chemistry, Bortz leads his readers through scientific testing and analysis one brief, logical chapter...
at a time and employs an assortment of color photos and charts to aid in explication and comparison. Adults who have been thoroughly confused by media hype concerning life on Mars might want to have a look at this balanced and readable offering, too. EB


In this new entry in the enduring Let’s-Read-and-Find-Out Science series, it’s the turn of future astronauts to do some reading and finding out, as whimsical, cartoonish watercolors accompany information about life on a space shuttle. Lots of fun facts (when fixing the Hubble Space Telescope, “the astronauts could have lifted the whole telescope, even though its weight on Earth is more than twelve tons”) and nifty labeled space stuff (e.g., a waste-collection system—yes, a toilet) offer science in a lively, accessible way. This will be a useful source of information for the younger student, so add it to your collection and offer those budding scientists the opportunity to climb aboard. PM


In this fictionalized account of a Quaker assembly’s encounter with a band of Indian scouts in service to King George’s Loyalists, Bruchac alternates the viewpoints of fourteen-year-old Samuel Russell and his Abenaki counterpart, Stands Straight. Both youths question their family’s positions on the war—Samuel, his parents’ unwavering pacifism, and Stands Straight, his uncle’s willingness to attack strangers whose hearts they cannot know. When the Abenaki party enters the meeting house and finds the Quakers unarmed and calm, “listening to hear the voice of Ktsi Nwasku, the Creator,” they abandon their mission for the Redcoats and adopt a policy of neutrality. Although the meeting itself, which Bruchac documents in a lengthy endnote, is undeniably dramatic, getting there takes some time; fully two-thirds of the novel is top-heavy with political issues, complex alliances, and religious tenets, explained in strained dialogue for history-deficient younger readers. Still, there’s an uplifting payoff for the determined, as well as some thought-provoking commentary by Bruchac on how tantalizing historic sources can provide the inspiration for a longer work of historical fiction. EB

BURGESS, MELVIN *Smack.* Holt, 1998 [288p]

ISBN 0-8050-5801-X $16.95 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 9-12

Published as *Junk* in England, this novel of young heroin addicts in Bristol has been described as a junior *Trainspotting* (American readers may also detect resemblances to *Panic in Needle Park*). It begins with the story of fourteen-year-old Tar, a runaway fleeing abusive parents, and his mercurial girlfriend Gemma, who joins him more out of rebellion and restlessness than need. After a stint in a squat run by benevolent anarchists, Tar and Gemma move in with the magnetic Lily and her
boyfriend Rob, whose generous affection and unfettered ways are eyeopening to the younger couple. So is their use of heroin, initially, but soon Tar and Gemma are old hands at the drug, and the desperate search to acquire it (which leads the girls to prostitution), interrupted by occasional attempts to cut down or quit (especially when Lily becomes pregnant), becomes the core of their days. Eventually, Tar’s prison-alternative of rehab and, finally, the teens’ move towards adulthood allow for the possibility—though far from the certainty—of a clean life. This kind of story possesses an inherent sensationalism, which is part of its compulsion, but Burgess steers clear of Go Ask Alice-style contrivances. There are few saints and no pure sinners here; the narration, passed around from character to character with each chapter, makes the appeal of the camaraderie and the adolescent glamour clear and understandable while also implying the terrible deceptiveness of its glitter. There’s a certain inevitability to it all—it’s hard to imagine what else might have happened to these marginalized individuals—that makes the equivocal ending even more shadowed. It’s an open question whether anything this dramatic is really effective as a preventative tract, but it makes for a gripping read about life on—and falling off—the edge. A glossary of British slang is included. DS

ISBN 0-689-81796-7 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-12

Petra is fifteen, trying to keep her family together after her mother’s death and her father’s subsequent job loss, when she encounters strange Mr. Century at Century Hall. Mr. Century, older than his name by a year, takes a fancy to Petra and begins giving her gifts, which makes Petra very uneasy indeed. Her reservations prove prescient when, after his death, Mr. Century refuses to leave her alone, confusing her with his long-dead love and invading first a shadowed image on her bedroom ceiling and then, more chillingly, Petra’s father. To complicate matters, her father has recently started work again with the man who got him fired, the man whom Petra, with good but secret reason, hates and fears. In this first novel, Butler displays a rich wit and a sharp yet unhurried sense of atmosphere; the book’s detail and intelligence (Orpheus and Eurydice, for instance, leave their footprints on the story) enhance the effects without overwhelming the plot. There’s a horror to the climax and a bitterness in the aftermath that carries the book’s resonance through to the end, and fans of Robert Westall and other uncompromising creators of dangerous ghosts will want to make this one of their literary haunts. DS

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-88639-7 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-5

Sarah’s move to Maryland is disastrous enough already, and then she finds that she’s unintentionally made an enemy, Eric (“And the only thing worse than starting school as a stranger is starting school with an enemy”). Even her promising new friend, Christina, can’t keep fifth-grader Sarah from locking horns with sixth-grader Eric, whose taste for payback is well-developed. It turns out that Sarah’s is as well, but she begins to realize that the joys of reprisal and escalation have a cost (Christina is understandably annoyed that Sarah’s repeated detentions limit their time together); she therefore begins to steel herself for the more difficult battle
with self-control as she determines to bring matters to an end by depriving Eric of response. Carbone has a spirited voice and a realistic heroine in big-mouthed, impulsive Sarah, and she achieves a balance between her light touch and her acknowledgment of some hard truths that's reminiscent of Louis Sachar. The comedy and aptness of some of the offenses here (live grubs tucked into sandwiches, squirt guns full of pee) will be charmingly repellent to many young readers, who will fully understand the difficulty of Sarah's final resolve. This is eminently satisfying breezy middle-grades fare. DS

COBB, VICKI  Don't Try This at Home!: Science Fun for Kids on the Go; by Vicki Cobb and Kathy Darling; illus. by True Kelley. Morrow, 1998 [128p] ISBN 0-688-14856-5 $15.00 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-8

Here's a grab bag of science tricks, experiments, and observations designed for a variety of settings—schools, airplanes, orchards, restaurants, playgrounds, amusement parks—nearly anywhere but home. Most require very little time or equipment; a rubber band and computer monitor at school, a jar of soap-bubble fluid outside, a ball and a friend on a playlot merry-go-round, and a tuning fork borrowed from the music teacher are typical supplies. Some activities call for special conditions, such as subfreezing weather for soap-bubble experimentation, or apple-ripening season for fruit photography; a few will raise eyebrows (try getting your postage scale through the metal detector at the airport, or standing on a bathroom scale on a high-speed elevator). "Don't try the deed," directions are easy, "Insider Information" explanations are short and clear, and the variety of topics and urban and rural settings should cast a wide appeal. How can grownups possibly object to children's checking out the toilet water at the top of a highrise or playing with drinking straws wrappers at a restaurant? It's all in the name of science. EB


A biography of the fourteenth Dalai Lama presents some difficult challenges for the picture-book format, but Demi has taken on unfamiliar contexts before in the form of Chingis Khan (BCCB 1/92), Buddha (BCCB 6/96), and other monolithic subjects. Perhaps the way is less smooth here because her characteristic doll-like figures fit strangely into realistic portrayals of historical characters and events of modern history. Some of the spreads are very effective, including a war scene with black brushstrokes exploding beside a stylized firestorm that circles a Buddhist temple. However, children may need considerable interpretive background to cope with the accompanying text: "The Communist Cultural Revolution swept across the Chinese continent, which resulted in massive destruction and human suffering." Some of the color contrasts are more intrusive than daring, and the conventionalized rainbow following the introduction seems a clichéd Western way to express Tibetan spiritual radiance. On the other hand, by condensing the account and expanding the graphics, Demi has certainly produced an accessible introduction to the life and times of the Dalai Lama for young children. Pair this with Mordicai Gerstein's picture book on reincarnation, The Mountains of Tibet (BCCB 1/88). BH
ISBN 1-56397-655-2  $15.95  Ad  Gr. 3-6

Eyecatching and lethal, poison dart frogs are intriguing amphibians indeed, and Dewey offers a brief introduction to their life and habits. She describes the poison and its efficacy as a defensive mechanism (mentioning interestingly that frogs in captivity apparently don’t develop the poisons); she also examines their life cycle and their use by hunters to supply poison for darts. The text is capable and compact, and it covers its froggy ground with clarity. The illustrations include common and scientific names for various species of poison dart frogs, and helpful touches include a scale ruler measuring a few species and depictions of some of the harder-to-picture living arrangements. Unfortunately, Dewey’s soft colored-pencil illustrations fail to convey the glowing and varied color of these frogs, so clearly represented in the photographs in Martin’s *Frogs* (BCCB 3/98), and a map would have been helpful. Early frogophiles may not mind, however, as they’ll be absorbed in the details about roasting frogs to collect their poisons and mother frogs feeding unfertilized eggs to the hatching babies. The Martin book is more likely to make amphibian converts, but this is a useful entry-level account. There is no bibliography or index. DS


When the 1906 San Francisco earthquake sends the city into panic, Brendan O’Connor is in the middle of his delivery route for a local bakery, and Dai Yue has just run away from an argument with her guardian, an uncle who is brokering an arranged marriage for her. Predictably, the disparate pair of orphans are thrown together for survival; just as predictably they make it through with flying colors—Brendan is promised a job on a major newspaper, and both the children are taken in by an eccentric but kindly parrot-toting woman in a lavender dressing gown. Before the happy ending, though, they teeter amid aftershocks, dodge falling buildings, rescue a trapped baby, rescue Dai Yue’s uncle, lose Dai Yue’s uncle, and are apprehended as looters. This run-of-the-mill adventure plot is considerably enriched, however, by Duey and Bale’s skill in conveying Dai Yue’s deep-rooted loathing and fear of Fon Kwei (white devils), which proves as great an obstacle to the children’s search for aid and shelter as the physical perils around them. Although the ending is both improbable and hokey, the steady action, palpable tension, and irresistible series title should lure some enthusiastic followers. EB


Thirteen-year-old Brad is a baseball junkie, junior hunk, and regular guy—except for his living with four females (younger sister, mother, youthful aunt, and grandmother) and thereby being able to French braid, apply nail polish, and discriminate between types of pantyhose. He’d like to be a more manly man of the house,
so he’s drawn to the opportunity to make some good money even though it means
he’s “gonna have to do the sissiest thing in the world,” modeling. Soon he discov-
eres he’s got a talent for modeling and that he really, really enjoys the attention he
derives from it, but this leads to trouble in reconciling his old life and his new
stardom. Farrell’s writing is occasionally awkward, but she has an appealingly
breezy tone and a good sense of the ramifications of the situation. Wisely eschew-
ing the overseriousness that marred David Klass’ similarly themed *Screen Test* (BCCB
3/98), the book is lighthearted and humorous while nonetheless making it clear
that Brad could be successful in modeling and also that he’s in way over his head
(this becomes apparent when he arrives home drunk from a party in Manhattan).
It’s also clear that, despite the initial, slightly stereotypical frilliness of Brad’s all-
female home, the women around here are no bad thing to take after. The original
plot and alluring subject will draw readers to this cheerful and entertaining analy-
sis of eighth-grade self-worth and gender issues. DS

**GERSHATOR, PHILLIS**  *Greetings, Sun;* by Phillis and David Gershator; illus. by
ISBN 0-7894-2482-7  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys

A pair of siblings are up with the sun to take on the day, greeting everything that
crosses their palm tree-lined path: “Greetings, sun. Greetings, breeze. Greetings,
Greetings, belly.” From schooltime to suppertime to bedtime the greetings con-
tinue (“Greetings, moon. And now we’re done . . . until it’s time to greet the
sun”). An unsurprising though rhythmic text is well-matched by Saint James’
evocation of the oceanside—crisply defined areas of bold, matte colors, softened
by the friendly round shapes and warm brown skin tones of her figures. The
youngest listeners may be able to follow visual clues to chant along with the text;
older children would probably rather reach for that beloved standby
*Goodnight Moon.*  EB

**GIBBONS, GAIL**  *Marshes & Swamps;* written and illus. by Gail Gibbons. Holiday
House, 1998  32p
ISBN 0-8234-1347-0  $15.95
Ad  Gr. 2-4

Wetlands are a big issue these days, but a lot of kids probably aren’t sure of what
exactly they are and if their favorite puddle qualifies. Gibbons helps clear the
muddy waters, describing the difference between marshes and swamps and subcate-
cgories therein, such as freshwater vs. saltwater marshes and freshwater vs.
man-grove swamps; the book also depicts various denizens of each ecosystem and describes
the necessity of and the problems facing wetlands today. Unfortunately, it’s not
clear if all these inhabitants live in every such wetland, some of the figures aren’t
well distinguished (all the species of trees look alike, and the people are awkward
even by cartoon standards), and the text slips into the vapid (“Marshes and swamps
are wonderful places to explore . . . They are home to many interesting creatures”)
It’s still a patient and low-key introduction to an important environmental topic,
however, and it’ll give young eco-buffs a helpful start. A map showing the location
of some major North American wetlands and a page of wetlands miscellany are
included. DS

Over the centuries, across the continents, from center ring to back lot, through competition and controversy, Granfield guides her readers on a tour of the big top that takes in both the glamour and the grit. The first three chapters focus on the development of the modern circus, highlighting the contributions of European founders and the American showmanship of Barnum and the Ringlings; the last four chapters examine contemporary circuses and the performers’ lives in and out of the spotlight. Granfield addresses controversies over animal welfare and side-show “freaks” and even discusses how dated or even offensive literary circus classics such as *Toby Tyler* may seem to modern readers. Even the layout and design have a circusy ebullience, the text generously interspersed with black-and-white and color photographs, drawings, and examples of circus posters and other art. The real fun here, though, is in the wealth of *did-you-know*s: the leotard was named after a nineteenth-century trapeze artist, Tufts University athletes rub the jar of Jumbo’s ashes for good luck, it’s bad luck to whistle or eat peanuts in the dressing room. Try reading a few excerpts to get a group charged up for a field trip to the circus. As if they’d need it! An index is included. EB


Unlike the previous two picture-book versions of this Talmudic tale, adapted recently by Neil Waldman (*The Two Brothers: A Legend of Jerusalem*, BCCB 10/97) and earlier by Florence Freedman (*Brothers: A Hebrew Legend*, 12/85), this one has a rollicking tone and is set in the pre-World War I shtetl culture of East Europe. Two brothers—charged by their expiring father to divide his land in half, to work together, and to take care of each other—try to sneak food into each other’s houses at night during an extended drought. Each in turn is puzzled the next day to find the same amount of food back in his own house and suspects an imp or ghost of interference. It’s not till they meet in the dark that the truth comes out, “the angels in heaven weep tears of joy” at their loyalty, and the rains fall. The text plays on Yiddish inflections and reflections: “But the dancing type Josef was not. He grew more like the beet; the best part was buried deep inside the ground.” Wickstrom’s pictures are richly textured and deeply hued, with rounded lines of motion and dynamically drafted figures. Sunlight, candlelight, and lightning bounce off coppery-browns and blue-grays, creating visual transitions as smooth as the verbal ones that revolve on turns of season. What goes around comes around, as the saying goes, and this retelling deserves to make the rounds of many library storytimes. BH


Readers probably won’t consider forty-two as young, yet most will concede that Theodore Roosevelt’s sudden ascent to the Presidency at that age constitutes the
most significant milestone in his life and, thus, an appropriate culmination for this biography. Harness marks the highlights along the route to the White House: Roosevelt's sickly childhood, his growing interest in natural science and "the strenuous life," the loss of his first wife, his entry into politics, his remarriage and a rowdy new family, his command of the Rough Riders, and his governorship. Each stage receives only cursory treatment, however, with important episodes underexplained and often choppily cobbled together. Garish cover art and cluttered layouts frequently cross the line between visual excitement and visual assault. Still, Harness does convey T.R.'s undeniable eccentricity and his passionate embrace of his many enthusiasms; that may be enough to prod readers to find out more. EB


Ravel and Indigo are identical twins, now young men in their early twenties; since the recent departure of their parents to parts unknown, they're alone in the huge decaying house, living by candlelight, using only each other as reference points for reality, and taking turns reading aloud to each other from books telling of old oddities of violence, justice, and torment. The half-hearted efforts of Ravel, the apparently subordinate twin, to open up this circumscribed existence are met with resistance by Indigo—resistance that eventually proves to be much greater and more dangerous than Ravel had realized. Those familiar with Hartnett's splendidly Faulknerian last book, *Sleeping Dogs* (BCCB 1/96), will find the visceral grotesqueries here familiar, as rats overrun the house, the question of the twins' parents' fate gets more immediate, and Ravel's physical condition declines at the hands of his brother. The psychological menace is even more chilling, however, and the book poses some interesting questions about the polarity of sanity and insanity, and what it means if you've only got your mirror image and other self to judge by. Teens intrigued by the films of David Lynch or David Cronenberg (particularly the latter's twin-themed *Dead Ringers*) will find the book's tightly controlled bizarreness and sense of inexorable entropy most enjoyable. DS


This is a handy if very sketchy overview of the great African kingdoms between 3800 B.C. and A.D. 1800. Sections on the kingdoms of Nubia, Egypt, Jenne-Jeno, Ghana, Mao, Songhay, etc., briefly discuss trade, education, art, agriculture, and other practices, including contributions of African cultures to the Western cultures that were beginning to trade with, and, ultimately, to exploit them. The illustrations are romanticized and nonspecific, the peoples and architecture seen through a golden glow that adds little to the glancing glimpses of these great civilizations. Sections on the spread of Islam, music and dance, slavery and colonization, are notably brief. The chronology is a little hard to follow, since entries discuss kingdoms as if they existed concurrently, but a timeline on Milestones in African History may clarify matters; a bibliography and index are included. This is not going to be the last word on this topic by any means, but it may work as an introductory response to an oft-asked reference question or for readers not ready for the McKissacks' *The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay* (BCCB 2/94). JMD
ISBN 0-8234-1313-6  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  4-7 yrs

It’s Lowell’s birthday, and all the clan from Crumm County to Slocum’s Bluff are expected for the big bash. However, things aren’t looking good weatherwise: “Don’t you know, Lovey! Red skies mean rain.” Naturally, Lowell’s siblings chime in with their own dire predictions as well: “Yep,” piped Earl. ‘Mama, hold those cupcakes. Crumm Creek will flood. Not one Crumm will come.” The pile-up of weather clues (“Low geese mean rain”) doesn’t dampen Lowell’s confidence in his relations’ party-going perseverance: “I know Papa’s side can keg-slide here.” The storm does set in and the relatives do come: log-riding, keg-sliding, and vine-flying on a hilarious kind of “birthday ark” full of twin and triplet cousins, lots of aunts and uncles, and gramps and grannies. With the combination of a youngun’s birthday party, plenty of fantastical family how-to, and a heapin’ dose of folk wisdom, you get a pretty fine tale worth celebrating. Rogers’ watercolor spreads, humorously detailed, capture the downhome atmosphere of the Ozark setting and the aplomb of its inhabitants. Children will recognize Lowell’s birthday concerns, appreciate the family dynamics, feel the tension as the storm approaches, be tickled to learn some weather proverbs (appended), and eagerly join the final chorus: “Happy Birthday, Lowell!” PM

HIGH, LINDA OATMAN  Beekeepers; illus. by Doug Chayka. Boyds Mills, 1998  32p
ISBN 1-56397-486-X  $14.95
Ad  5-7 yrs

Honey-toned oil paintings feature a grandpa and his young granddaughter tending bees one spring morning; golden highlights and airy white space around the text keep this gentle intergenerational adventure bright and sunny. The tenderness of the shared activity between grandfather and granddaughter is showcased against the buzzing activity at the hives, and children will probably enjoy getting a glimpse at the business of beekeeping, especially when the granddaughter must bring down the swarm to a new hive for the very first time: “My heart flies into my throat. Bringing down the bees has always been Grandpa’s job.” Though this is obviously not meant to be a definitive offering on bees, the questions that arise from the illustrations (what is that saw-like tool on page eight?) and the narrative (what is the significance of “all the bricks standing on end”?) will go frustratingly unanswered. An author’s note or glossary would have been helpful. This may be useful as a lightly sweetened buzz-in to Gail Gibbons The Honey Makers (BCCB 4/97) or Joanna Cole’s The Magic School Bus Inside a Beehive. PM

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-11389-3  $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  2-5 yrs

The concept that some animals are awake while people are asleep is a good one for the bedtime bunch, and in this fairly same-and-tame entry, sleepyheads can go to South Africa where “it is twilight in Johannesburg. Lights go on in the city. Stores close for the night.” The aforementioned animals are “more than two hundred
miles away, in Kruger National Park.” Visits to a black mamba, prowling lionesses, a leopard, a hippopotamus, and an elephant and her baby comprise the nocturnal tour till we arrive back in a Johannesburg market where “the people wake up to a new day.” Isadora’s watercolors unfold across each double-page spread, and though some capture the vastness of city or veldt, others seem careless in both composition and technique. The black spidery plants flanking the black mamba create a wonderful eeriness, but the watery background seems splotchy in places. The awkwardly executed lionesses seem pasted, almost sticker-like, onto their shadowy background, and an odd-looking hippopotamus, head above water, seems to be curiously lacking the rest of its body. These artistic flaws and the catalog-ish tone of the text probably won’t diminish a young audience’s enthusiasm for wild animals, but they’ll get a bigger kick out of Rathmann’s Good Night, Gorilla (BCCB 5/94). PM


In this tenth installment of the popular Redwall series, Jacques hasn’t abandoned his swashbuckling formula, and why should he when Redwallian lovers eagerly lap up each saga with its requisite cast of heroes and scoundrels? Against his parent’s wishes, the young hare, Tammo, joins up with the heroic Long Patrol (of Salamandastron, BCCB 7/93). Back in the scum department, Damug has become Firstblade of all Rapscallions (“Barbarian-type vermin, too idle t’work, too stupid t’build a decent home”) and decides to savage landlubbers for a change, which means trouble for Redwall Abbey, especially since the south wall of the Abbey has collapsed leaving it open to Damug’s creepy horde. Plenty of reconnaissance work on both sides, Tammo and Midge’s nerve-wracking infiltration of the enemy’s camp, and a calamitous underground excavation below the Abbey are just some of the situations that will keep the flashlight under the covers lit way past bedtime. Readers new to these epics will have to get used to what sometimes seems like a maze of characters (and their dialects), but they will never be confused about who to love and who to hate. Kudos go to the Redwall chefs for once again tantalizing hungry readers with mouthwatering descriptions of woodland cuisine. And for those who are champing at the bit for number eleven, the epilogue strongly hints at just such a possibility. PM


With a simple text and an elegant layout, Johnson presents a selection of portraits by African-American photographer Richard Samuel Roberts. In the early twentieth century, “Mr. Richard Samuel Roberts took pictures all around the town” of Columbia, South Carolina, capturing the people and events of the African-American community. Wedding couples, baseball teams, boxers, musicians, magicians, and preachers gaze solemnly at the viewer, provoking speculation on their captured moments and, by extension, the rest of their lives. The reproduction of Roberts’ exquisite photos is quite good, and the design of the book as a whole, with its subtle framing devices and muted sepia borders, lends itself to an absorbing browse and possibly some animated discussion. The slight text is more specu-
lative than factual, even when the facts are known, and more biographical information up front about Roberts would have been helpful. Still, this would work as an exploration into looking at historic photos, and interested adults can easily make necessary connections between the past and present for younger viewers. An author's note tells how Johnson became interested in Roberts' work and gives adult titles for those seeking additional information about his life. JMD

JOHNSON, PAUL BRETT  
*A Perfect Pork Stew;* written and illus. by Paul Brett Johnson. Orchard, 1998  [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30070-6  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R  5-7 yrs

Well, if Smith and Scieszka can make fun of the Three Little Pigs' giving the Wolf a hard time, why can't Johnson take a few liberties with Baba Yaga's having a bad day? And so he does, with a revolting sequence of events seasoned to the taste of young listeners: "Oh, bat brains!" the witch exclaims, burning her breakfast critter (something toasted on a spit by dragon fire) and spilling an entire vial of snake venom. After her spectacles break (witches are notoriously weak-eyed), she makes a series of trades with Ivan the Fool based on mistaking his load of dirt for a tasty pig. Suffice it to say that Baba Yaga goes to bed that night with a stomachache ("She thought her belches smelled a bit like a damp dirt cellar") and Ivan goes home with a succulent porker. It's all nonsense, as the author readily admits in his introductory note ("a couple of stock characters from Russian lore . . . a pinch of tall tale, a bit of swapping motif, and a good dose of the sillies"). The colored-pencil illustrations could use a little more tonal contrast, but they are suitably repulsive, with the witch's large, warty blue nose featured as prominently as her greenish tongue and two crooked teeth. Ivan plays the cartoon straight man while just about everything else appears slightly askew. The text natters on a bit, but as a picture-book entertainment and companion to traditional trickster lore like "Stone Soup," *A Perfect Pork Stew* will go down well. Burp. BH

KINSEY-WARNock, NATALIE  
*In the Language of Loons.* Cobblehill, 1998  [112p]
Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 6-8

Arlis can't win. He has no friends at school, his attempt to get in with the cool guys led by habitual troublemaker Jackson results in shameful humiliation, his lawyer father won't give him the time of day, and he's being sent to live with his grandparents for the whole summer so his mother can keep to her bed in her third effort to bring a pregnancy to term after two miscarriages. Arlis' summer turns out to be better than anticipated as he and his grandfather camp, fish, and watch the loons. With his grandfather's encouragement, Arlis starts to train to be a long-distance runner, and when he returns to school he snags a place on the track team alongside his nemesis, Jackson. The day Arlis wins his first meet, his father drives him to his grandparents' so he can tell his grandfather in person; instead, Arlis discovers his grandfather dead under a tree, an apparent heart-attack victim. This slim little volume is overwhelmed by entirely too much plot, with only vague nods toward a thin, underlying theme of personal responsibility and redemption to hold it all together. Coincidences rush together to tie up plot threads with little reason or logic, and the internal character changes that transform Arlis, his father, and his
rival are so swift they seem like sleight of hand. Despite some touching moments, this crowded rite-of-passage title lacks the internal cohesion necessary for satisfactory development. JMD

KOERTGE, RON  *The Heart of the City.* Orchard, 1998  [144p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30078-1  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 5-7

Ten-year-old Joy is not happy when her artist father uproots the family to a new house in inner-city Los Angeles. Soon, however, she’s settling in, becoming close friends with Neesha across the street, learning her way around the neighborhood, and getting acquainted with the local characters. She soon discovers that not all the local characters are benign when it becomes clear that a gang plans to take over an empty house on the block, but the girls, aided eventually by the neighborhood, transform the house into an eyecatching piece of message art and stave off the incursion. The book’s pointed cultural upbeatness isn’t original (and neither are some of the colorful cast), but Koertge makes the house-conversion project individual and compelling enough to overcome most of those flaws. His depiction of the friendship between white Joy and African-American Neesha includes some believable prickly moments as well as a credible bonding against parental silliness and drawbacks of other friends, and his wit (ranging from Joy’s smartmouthed exchanges with her parents to Neesha’s attempting to teach Joy to “talk trash,” much to the horror of Joy’s mother) keeps things from becoming preachy. Koertge usually aims for an older audience, but many younger readers will appreciate his wry and humorous take on the gravity of the world. DS

KVASNOSKY, LAURA MCGEE  *Zelda and Ivy;* written and illus. by Laura McGee Kvasnosky. Candlewick, 1998  [42p]
ISBN 10-7636-0469-0  $15.99
Reviewed from galleys  R*  Gr. 1-3

Red foxes Zelda and Ivy are sisters, and Zelda, the oldest, is very good at leading Ivy into regrettable situations, with the best intentions, of course. This cheerily illustrated picture book is divided into three easily mastered titled chapters that will make beginning readers feel very grownup. In “Circus Act,” Zelda announces Ivy’s tricks on the flying trapeze (the backyard swing), inspiring antics of increasing difficulty; in “The Latest Style,” she convinces Ivy to “doozy up” her tail with paint, a haircut, and some glitter, but declines to have her own tail so altered; and in the final chapter, “Fairy Dust,” Zelda tells Ivy that crayon shavings are magical dust that will grant wishes, only to feel compelled to grant Ivy’s wish herself. The gouache illustrations show the bushy-tailed Zelda and Ivy at play in the backyard, “doozying up” in an old-fashioned living room, playing on a cozy front porch, and sharing bunk beds in a sunlight-yellow room. The cotton-candy-colored illustrations, whether full-page, half-page, or panels, are engagingly fresh and lively, with handhewn-looking frames and cunning details that make them worth perusing more than once. Zelda and Ivy are skillfully drafted with an energetic line that lifts them above the frequent cuteness of animal characters. The tightly written text depicting the affectionate if somewhat unbalanced power relationship between the siblings is bound to elicit groans and chuckles of recognition, and younger sisters especially will enjoy reading it to their older siblings. JMD
LEWIN, TED  *The Storytellers*; written and illus. by Ted Lewin. Lothrop, 1998 [34p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-15179-5  $15.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-15178-7  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  5-8 yrs

Starting out like a descriptive travelogue, this narrative follows Abdul and his grandfather through the vividly varied market stalls of Fez in Morocco, with observations on each of the craftspersons they pass. Not until they settle on a rug beside the city gate do we discover that Grandfather is a traditional storyteller who releases a white pigeon to bring down a “story from the sky.” Unfortunately, we hear only snatches of the tale that engrosses the gathered crowd and that would probably be of most interest to young listeners. Despite some close perspectives and intensely intimate hues, Lewin’s panoramic paintings are curiously distant in tone, emphasizing the outsider status of the audience. The details are carefully, almost photographically observed; the patterns and play of light and dark are striking; and the warmly projected affection between the old man and the boy save them from generic profile. Although the text stays in the realm of the descriptive, this does indeed offer children a walk through streets they might never see otherwise. BH

ISBN 0-7636-0357-0  $15.99
Reviewed from galleys  R  4-8 yrs

Francis of Assisi’s hymn of thanks to the Creator is granted glowing life in this oversized picture book. The graceful words of this Italian saint (“Lord, we offer thanks and praise/ For the Circle of our days”) are illustrated in a mixed-media mélange of collage, gouache, and watercolor. Between the opening orange endpapers covered with bright yellow suns and the closing dark blue endpapers dotted with gently glowing moons, viewers are treated to beautifully composed, scenic idylls. Double-paged spreads of countrysides and seascapes, whirling fireworks and urban scenery are rendered with subtle power. The paper textures and drenched palette combine to create a sumptuous visual narrative, whether in the large spreads or the smaller pictures that underline and enrich them. This combination of poetic text and pleasing imagery will be a lovely and well-loved addition to any collection of devotional materials. JMD

LONDON, JONATHAN  *Froggy’s First Kiss*; illus. by Frank Remkiewicz. Viking, 1998  32p

Froggy is distracted by “the prettiest girl frog in the world,” and a series of awkward recess encounters (“Froggy was so busy gazing into her eyes ... the ball hit him in the head—bonk!—and knocked him down”) and lunch rendezvous (“I have a goody for you, Froggy. Close your eyes. And she gave him a cookie shaped like a heart”) seem to be leading up to a Valentine’s Day card from Froggy to his new sweetheart. When Frogilina tries to fast-forward the relationship by planting a kiss on Froggy’s face, the results are definitely age-appropriate (“BLAAAAAAAAH!” spluttered Froggy, looking more red in the face than green”). Brightly clashing colors assist an expressive animal cast in extending the slapstick humor in this
comical interpretation of the silly schoolboy/frog who comes to his senses: “And he gave his mother the big heart with the I LOVE YOU.” Potential valentine recipients in your audience will appreciate this fifth installment about Froggy, and they’ll be shouting “be mine” after this readaloud—to the book, not to each other.


In this bilingual collection of traditional tales from Latin America, storyteller Loya divides her retellings into four categories: Scary Stories, Tricksters, Strong Women, and Myths. Each of the fifteen stories (presented first in English, followed by a Spanish version) is introduced with a brief note explaining where Loya first encountered the tale; specific story notes with written sources and cultural variants are given at the end of the book. Within each category, Loya presents these folktales as if she is arranging a storytelling performance, starting out with an attention-grabbing dramatic tale, followed by a gentler, more introspective piece, then usually a humorous entry, and finally a strong concluding tale. From the tragic “La Llorona” from Mexico to the funny “Tía Misericordia” from Puerto Rico to the sly “Uncle Rabbit and Uncle Tiger” from Nicaragua, Loya’s collection has something for everyone. The style is distinctly conversational and the occasionally slow pace is more than compensated for by the immediacy of the language and the variety of the content. The stories cover a wide range of emotion and appeal, and they will be exceedingly useful to readers aloud and storytellers, as well as to those readers looking for an unusual cultural foray. JMD


This autobiographical picture book follows the author as she considers a variety of life choices, such as making neon signs like her neighbor’s, becoming a tightrope walker in the circus, or going to the moon as an astronaut. Instead, she grows up to write books, trying to make words glow like neon, balancing words to create stories, and sending them to the heart of the reader instead of on a rocket to the moon. The similes are forced, but there is no denying the appeal of the detailed child’s-eye-view memories of a not-so-distant past. Soentpiet’s watercolors lend the text concrete form, and the near-photorealistm of the illustrations suits the tone of Lyon’s reminiscences and gives the locale and its inhabitants a grainily nostalgic veracity. The conclusion, in which Lyon tells the readers what she actually did wind up doing when she grew up, may be a bit vague given the specificity of the memories that came before; still, young readers will easily identify with the child’s changing desires for her future. JMD


Ruth, Naomi, Rachel, and Phoebe Conroy (from The Exiles, BCCB 11/82, and The Exiles at Home, 1/95) are older but, fortunately, no closer to boring normality.
in this account of “the spring we all fell in love.” Ruth, the eldest, is the worst afflicted, smitten with an array of males from her bus driver to a classmate, but the entire family falls head-over-heels with the charming young Philippe, a gracious and amusing visitor from France (“Ironing I adore . . . also to clean the bath, and if Phoebe so kindly reads to me every night why may I not polish her shoes?”). When Big Grandma attempts to cure Ruth of the “family failing” by taking all four sisters to visit France, the Exiles encounter hints of a mystery surrounding Philippe’s family and sow the seeds of the future destiny of one of the sisters. This is more episodic than the previous titles, but plot really isn’t the point in an Exiles book, it’s the girls’ ebullient, idiosyncratic, and vividly funny struggles with the vagaries of life. Here there’s an additional treat: the beginning of each chapter offers a paragraph of conversation which clearly takes place well after the events of this book and which cumulate to reveal a most enjoyable glimpse of the future. The Conroy clan are some of the most consistently engaging heroines currently wreaking havoc in literature, and their friends will follow them into love and beyond. DS


The Amundsen-Scott Antarctic base at the South Pole was first built in the ’50s and expanded and rebuilt in the ’70s, and plans are underway for a third bout of construction. Markle documents the logistical problems of the cold and snowy location (“Despite lots of digging out, it was impossible to stop the first South Pole Station from slowly being buried and crushed”) and the increased hunger for research that have led to the rebuildings and expansion; her use of photographs and planning sketches (including a floor plan for the projected structure) from the various incarnations will give readers a sense of the concrete reality of this unusual architectural project, and there are some intriguing details about Antarctic life. Sometimes the book leaves readers hanging, however (if the old residential quarters “do not even have bathrooms,” for instance, what do their residents do?), some of the pictures don’t make their point as clearly as the text seems to imply, and an indication of scale would have been very helpful in many illustrations. The focus is still well-maintained, the glimpse of science in daunting circumstances is appealing, and the topic is a piquant one despite its chilly nature. A combination glossary/index is included. DS


Ellie and her troop of teenage friends have survived the invasion of Australia (Tomorrow When the War Began, BCCB 4/95) and have pulled off several attacks on their unnamed enemy (The Dead of Night, BCCB 11/97). Now, six months into the war and no end in sight, they escalate their guerrilla maneuvers; with fertilizer, fuel, a kitchen timer, a mob of sheep, and their usual guts and ingenuity, the band blows up the enemy’s naval installation at Cobbler’s Bay. Enemy trackers pursue
them relentlessly, and although the kids manage to evade them for awhile, they are at last ambushed and incarcerated in a maximum security prison administered by their nemesis, Major Harvey. Leaving Ellie and Lee's love life (which loomed large in the previous novel) simmering on the back burner, Marsden redirects his attention to the tense, chilling, and seductively credible account of the teens' bone-wearying struggle for survival and their alternating bursts of courage and despair. Even though their ranks have been tragically thinned once more by the novel's end, it's clear that Ellie's gang has more to contribute to Australia's liberation. Fans of this powerful series will not look forward to an early armistice. EB


Although a casual flip through the pages seems to promise little more than a cluttered assortment of info-bites, closer examination reveals a lively text and an orderly arrangement of material, which progresses from the physics of fire, to the gear and garb of firefighters, to the broad range of firefighter missions, to the past and future of firefighting. Each topic is developed in detail, and readers are frequently challenged to imagine themselves in the firefighters' boots, experiencing the force and pressure of an attack line hose, the heft and unwieldiness of the "jaws of life" rescue tool, or the grueling strength and endurance tests required to "make the team." Each spread is heavily illustrated with crisp color photos—except, of course, those that capture the frightening darkness of smoke-filled space ("There is nothing wrong with this picture. This is what a firefighter might see as he or she nears the heart of the blaze"). Cover art featuring a firefighter silhouetted against a wall of orange flame assures that this title will respond to a great many calls. EB


This original tale inspired by folk traditions opens with the animals' meeting at the foot of the baobab tree to choose their king. Dume, the lion, pretty much elects himself by virtue of his powerful roar and then proceeds to abuse his power by ordering his subjects around with no concern about their well-being. When hunters enter the forest, it is wise Kobe, the tortoise, who saves the day by tricking Dume into an awe-inspiring, fear-inducing roar that chases them away. This is a fairly well-presented little story, with appealing elements and opportunities for audience participation, but the conclusion lacks both logic and punch. After being tricked by Kobe and the other animals into that earth-shattering roar, Dume wants to reward them for their presumed help and promises to be a good, wise king—but he has basically been depicted all along as a foolish windbag, so the animals' satisfaction with this promise is a little hard to understand. Roman's illustrations, while adequately reflecting the text, rely too often on the same compositional arrangement of animals across double-page spreads, resulting in a monotony that is ultimately wearing. The animals are awkwardly drafted, although their expressions sometimes contain a human slyness or other emotion that lends them a welcome comic touch. Still, considering the enthusiasm with which young children make animal noises, this may result in a roaringly loud storytime. JMD
MORA, PAT  This Big Sky; illus. by Steve Jenkins.  Scholastic, 1998  [32p]
ISBN 0-590-37120-7  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 3-6

Rich imagery, best savored at a leisurely pace, evokes the terrain and denizens of the American Southwest in these poems. The riddle-like “Mountain Silhouette” limns the shape of the rugged horizon (“I know an Indian/ who never moves./ I watch him sleep/ when snow covers/ his rock face”). With a tinge of melancholy, “Tall Walking Woman” describes a woman making her way through the pueblo (“The sun stares/ down with two amber eyes/ on the woman, grandchildren/ near her knees, who walks tall/ to the slow drum beat/ of her heart”). Some entries will appeal to readers of more literal bent: “Horned Lizard” playfully turns the watcher into the watched. Others, such as the deceptively simple “Noche” (“Mountains black/ Canyons black/ Valleys black/ Rivers black/ Sky black”) are better appreciated with closed eyes and open imagination. Jenkins’ cut- and torn-paper collages impose their own visual poesy on the landscape, with meticulously detailed lizards, roadrunners, ravens, and raccoons populating a stylized world of angular skies, broken stormclouds, and shadow-blackened canyons. Readers-aloud will welcome the glossary of Spanish terms with pronunciations that is included. EB

ISBN 0-395-69847-2  $18.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 5-8

Murphy takes a fresh look at the “golden age” of whaling, focusing on several boys who launched their whaling careers as cabin boys or common seamen. Readers are initiated into sailing duties and lingo through the eyes and experiences of these “greenies,” and they learn of the particular rigors of whaling through the boys’ oft-quoted testimonies and Murphy’s carefully selected gallery of contemporary photos and artwork. The analysis of witnesses’ probable biases, which Murphy applied so effectively in The Great Fire (BCCB 5/95) is also evident here as he considers how the boys’ accounts reflect the prejudices and preconceptions endemic to the lowest rung of ship life. However, his own bias frequently breaches as well, intruding into the historic account as anthropomorphizing, or as self-righteous twentieth-century hindsight (“If the whale [that stove in the Essex] could argue its case, it would have insisted it was doing nothing more than defending itself and the rest of the herd against attack”; “How could anyone drive a harpoon into a gentle creature like this and not feel shame and guilt?”). In addition to the period art, text boxes describing various species of whales visually counterbalance the main narrative. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century shipboard life is vividly realized here, but readers who want to consider the historic whaling industry on its own terms should weigh this title against those of Carrick’s Whaling Days (BCCB 7/93) and Gourley’s Hunting Neptune’s Giants (1/96) as well. A bibliography, index, and excellent glossary are included. EB

NAYLOR, PHYLIS REYNOLDS  Achingly Alice.  Karl/Atheneum, 1998  [128p]
ISBN 0-689-80355-9  $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7-10

There are advances on the love front in this new Alice title: Alice realizes that there’s another boy she could like quite handily if Patrick weren’t around, but her
relationship with Patrick leads to a bit of self-discovery (after a kiss, Alice “felt wet and tingly, and began to realize I was definitely a sexual being, as Lester would call it”). Her father’s relationship with Alice’s adored Miss Summers gets closer (Miss Summers spends the night with the McKinleys on Christmas Eve) but not close enough (she shares the bed with Alice—and she’s also dating the vice principal in addition to Alice’s father). Naylor’s use of the three friends—the worldly wise Pamela, the naive and uptight Elizabeth, and the between-the-extremes Alice—is unobtrusively effective in validating a whole range of response to blossoming sexuality, and her depiction of romantic trials in the older generations makes it clear that this isn’t the easiest matter in the world for any age. The book also captures the intensity of youthful female camaraderie (“We had to know everything there was about being a woman,” says Alice determinedly when the three attempt to figure out Elizabeth’s doctor-prescribed douche bag) while still remaining safely and successfully funny about these matters of immense importance. Alice fans will be grateful that, aching or not, Alice is everlastingly Alice. DS

Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 6-9

When her drug-addict mother goes into the hospital, twelve-year-old Molly is packed off to her great-aunt-by-marriage Fay. Despite a flashy beginning at her new school (she decks the school thug in the girls’ room), quiet, watchful Molly feels an outsider to everything. She’s on cordial terms with the boy next door, himself a transplant, but senses that there’s something going on with his family that Great-Aunt Fay won’t share with her; Molly’s one brief friendship ends when the girl’s mother takes silent exception to Molly’s blue-collar poverty; and she’s waiting longingly for her mother to take her home at Christmas. Peck examines some of his favorite themes here—the frequent barrenness of apparent privilege, the strength and importance of family bonds—and employs them in a sensitively drawn chronicle of a girl who gradually discovers connections to the world. Molly’s understated narration is effective, allowing a variety of elements, ranging from a neighbor’s death from AIDS to arson at school to the surprise identity of Molly’s grandmother, to enrich the plot without taking it over. The dilemma of the outsider will strike a chord with most readers; Molly’s gradual thawing into an insider in her own life will provide them with a quiet message of nascent hope. DS

Philbrick, Rodman  Max the Mighty.  Scholastic, 1998  [176p]
ISBN 0-590-18892-5  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7-10

Max, gargantuan young hero of Freak the Mighty (BCCB 1/94), is lonely after the death of his friend Kevin. When a younger girl, Rachel (known as Worm, short for bookworm), latches onto him, he resists at first but then is drawn in by her boundless appetite for the imaginative life and by her obvious need. Max intervenes when Worm’s abusive stepfather goes on a rampage and then, finding himself reported to the police as a kidnapper, takes off with Worm to Montana to find her real father. The book turns picaresque with their cross-country outing that involves a bus-driving hippie, a train-hopping hobo, and eventually a showdown with the truth and their families in a Montana mining town. Max narrates in an effective and individual voice, and the book keeps the pacing of the disparate ad-
ventures smooth and quick. The colorfulness of the enterprise and characters is a bit studied, as is the inevitable discovery of the fate of Worm's father (dead in a mining accident years before), but the book, like Max, possesses a rueful and rawboned sparkle that makes it engaging. The first book has reportedly been made into a movie; those who enjoyed the story in either form will wish to join Max on this new adventure. DS


Pierce follows the first title in this series about the training of four young adult mages (Sandry's Book, BCCB 11/97) with a walloping page-turner as marauding pirates attack the defenseless-since-the-earthquake Winding Circle Temple. Tris, the "weather-witch," is the center around which this tale revolves, as her exploration of her powers provides the magic to destroy the pirates and their dastardly mage-lord. While the plot has all the dashing derring-do fantasy readers yearn for, with the added attraction of feats of daring and magic accomplished by sympathetic young adult characters, it is the depiction of the relationships among the four friends and their mentors that provides the emotional core that will hold readers. Pierce has a nicely realized fantasy world going here, and the plot does not sacrifice human relationships and ethical dilemmas for blood-and-guts sensationalism. The opening pages quickly build to a running momentum that will keep the pages turning, and will make series readers impatient for the next installment. JMD


Mr. Goose has been warned by the "proper and serious" geese that, with his silly hats and silly songs and generally silly behavior, he will never find a wife. Au contraire. The banjo-strumming goose of his dreams falls out of a hot-air balloon and into his life; taking one look at her feet, he says, "You have the most beautiful eyes," and they're off to the altar. Their two triplets seem tragically to have been born blind—happily, the dentist suggests they take the shells off their heads, and the Gooses can all look forward to living sillily ever after. It's a long, long way from the subtlety of Pilkey's The Paperboy (BCCB 3/96) to the, well, silliness of this offering, and the titular birds are just poor relations to Allard's seriously silly Stupids. The mixed-media illustrations use scrawled lines and punched-up colors to cheerfully loud and unsubtle effect. The book is merely contrary rather than truly absurd, but the broad humor, chapter format, and comic-book-type characters (akin to Daffy Duck in both appearance and deportment) may be powerful incentives to youngsters who have just embarked on independent reading. EB


Wei Fong and his parents are on their way to the courthouse to be sworn in as
American citizens when Wei Fong loses—and then really loses— his first tooth. The young boy is distraught—how will the Tooth Fairy visit him for the very first time if he doesn’t find his tooth? With the help of others on their way to the naturalization ceremony, the tooth is found, joy is restored, everybody gets sworn in, and “that afternoon, Wei’s family and their friends feasted on dim sum and hot dogs. Everything was just right.” This is an introduction to naturalization that works because it concentrates on character instead of process. Young listeners will easily recognize Wei’s dental crisis, and they will be happily engaged as they witness Wei’s Pledge of Allegiance, after which “Wei opened the hand that had been over his heart. He smiled at his tooth.” The text is simple and funny, and the scene in front of the courthouse, in which passersby of many nationalities join together to locate the lost tooth, has a buoyant hilarity. DiSalvo-Ryan’s gouache and pencil illustrations are rendered with lots of red, white, and blue accents, a generous scattering of stars, and a celebratory multi-ethnic bunch of characters. Oh, and the ending ties up the real tension of the book—Wei does get his first visit from the Tooth Fairy, complete with currency and flag (American, of course).

JMD


From the excitement of the occasional ride in the schoolteacher’s Model A Ford to scrap-iron drives to a blizzard that resulted in ten-foot-high snowbanks, the author reminisces about the final year he spent in a one-room schoolhouse in 1944-45. Unfortunately, the memories are a disjointed compilation instead of a cohesive narrative, and while individual elements may interest some children, the overall effect is one of nonspecific adult memories vaguely remembered. In an apparent effort to be simple enough for younger children, the text is so general as to be uninvolving (“Sometimes, I covered my ears to shut out the voices of the other kids and Miss Shackelton. Sometimes, though, I enjoyed listening to lessons of the other grades”). Garrison’s collagraphs (a combination of collage and etchings) are done in a subdued sepia palette and framed like photographs in an old-fashioned album; while the process is intriguing, the resulting illustrations suffer from an unfortunate sameness that renders many of them flatly uninteresting. According to a note, great attention has been paid to the historical details of clothing, automobiles, etc., but that may not be enough to engage children in this well-intentioned but lackluster slice of retrospection. JMD


In this compelling addition to several recent titles about abolitionist John Brown, Rinaldi has skillfully woven the threads of fact and fiction into a textured historical tapestry. The voice of Annie, Brown’s teenage daughter, resonates with emotional clarity and coherent observations as she narrates her account of life at the Kennedy Farm and her supporting role in the assault at Harpers Ferry. Her strained relationship with her father, her harrowing experiences as lookout at the farm, and her bittersweet, ill-fated romance with one of Brown’s men (Dauphin Thompson)
provide a strong focus. Well-paced prose reveals Annie’s thoughts, which are chronicled with the simple eloquence of the young (“You can be growed and still be scared about things. I felt cheated somehow. Like being growed wasn’t worth all the effort that went into it”) and tempered with striking honesty (“I was always trying to put myself in a good light with Pa. Martha, now, she saw it different. She saw me as taking sass from Pa to put myself in good with him”). Mounting suspense charges the story with dramatic intensity as Annie attempts to keep the goings-on at the farm a secret from the local busybody, Mrs. Huffmaster, as well as grapple with her imagined part in the death (years earlier) of an infant sibling. Readers unacquainted with John Brown will profit from the brief paragraphs (preceding each chapter), which elucidate Brown’s past, and they are sure to find the corroborating facts in the author’s note as gripping as the book itself. Pair this young woman’s story with the account of the young man in Douglas Rees’ Lightning Time (BCCB 1/98) to provide readers with a view of history that is not easily forgotten. PM


This illustrated poetic creation myth is adapted from Kato Indian lore collected in 1906 and offers a fascinating comparison with the Old Testament story of Noah: “Water, they say, was everywhere and land was not. Mountains were not. And neither were there trees or grass or fish or deer or grizzlies or wolves. People, too, had all been washed away, they say, along with all these animals of every kind. Only water lived anywhere.” Then comes the Great Traveler (the “God” of the title) with his companion, the dog, to make the world good with growing things. Even as an understated presence, the dog will add child appeal to a text rich with oral rhythms. Fellows’ watercolors open with ghostly sketches emerging from a blue wash background and take on distinctive shape and hue as the earth and all things living acquire form. The compositions are open and varied while the style is more suggestive than definitive, leaving room for the story’s sweeping implications. Give this one to children studying mythology or American Indian cultures, or simply read it aloud at the beginning of an American history unit on the first settlers. BH


The portly pig’s third set of easy reader adventures finds him variously star gazing, furniture-shopping, and sailing. In “The Sky,” mouse friend Hudson invites Poppleton to admire the night sky, a problem for Poppleton: “The sky is so big and deep, I get seasick... I wish I could look. But I can’t.” Hudson cleverly and accommodatingly narrows the view with a peephole cut in a blanket. Then Poppleton is definitely “NOT RELAXED!” as he’s heaved and tossed and flipped right out Fillmore the goat’s little craft in “The Sailboat.” In the strongest entry, “The New Bed,” Poppleton drives a saleslady to the edge as he replicates his bedtime rituals (cracker, book, lamp, TV, early morning bluebirds) before committing to a purchase. Teague’s watercolor pictures cheerily extend the tales (although
the solution to Poppleton’s stargazing problem as pictured simply won’t work as the text suggests) and poke only the gentlest fun at our Everypig. These brisk tales are enticing confidence-builders for the chapter-book set and quickie readalouds for even littler listeners. EB


Where Banks (see review above) is alluring and Blos (above also) is encouraging when it comes to bedtime, Rymill is more pragmatic: her protagonist, in this rhymed narrative, wants nothing whatsoever to do with bed. He’s busy being a chief, an admiral, a king, and these disruptions of bath and bedtime are an affront to his dignity that he won’t lightly accept (“Oh ple-ease no. Don’t kiss me./ I’m covering my head./ Don’t say good night. I won’t ‘sleep tight’/ It isn’t time for bed!”). The pencil lines in Karas’ gouache and acrylic art are thicker than usual, giving a particularly sturdy and vigorous feel to the childlike figures and our hero’s outraged face; the typeface, expanding for accent when needed, is similarly emphatic. While this may be funny to grownups for different reasons than to kids, the energy here will entertain that multitude of youngsters who take day’s end personally, and its acknowledgment of absorbing tasks interrupted may help console them for the lost opportunities. This could serve as a useful segue book, a pre-bedtime read for the kids who are fading around the edges but who just aren’t tired enough yet for stories of sleepy little bunnies. DS


When the spoiled prince, Vachagan, meets Anait, the weaver’s daughter, he meets his love and his destiny. Anait refuses Vachagan’s offer of marriage until such time as he can read, write, and show her the work of his hands, and “at last he wove a splendid carpet with roses twining around a golden tree filled with nightingales. This he sent by messenger to Anait with a letter he wrote himself asking her to become his wife.” They marry and rule the kingdom together. When Vachagan is captured by an evil three-headed dev (an ogre), he sends a message to Anait woven into a remarkable carpet, and she comes to his aid: “Then Anait charged. One powerful stroke of her sword sent the dev’s left head flying all the way to Aleppo. A second stroke sent the right head as far as Chin-ma-Chin. And with the third, the middle head was spinning toward the top of Mount Ararat.” This lively tale has much to recommend it, not the least being the mixed-media illustrations of Raúl Colón. Colón’s signature palette of rich golds and burnt oranges and the details afforded by the combination of watercolors, etching, and litho-pencil are tonally suited to this Armenian tale. Language and visuals mesh smoothly, resulting in a spellbinding story with a wide range of appeal. The elements that comprise this retelling—a concise yet evocative text, romantic liaisons and lush illustrations, an evil villain, a clever king, a brave queen, and an exciting rescue—are a booktalk just waiting to happen. Remember that section of picture books for older readers you’ve been meaning to set up? Start here. A detailed source note is included. JMD
SHREVE, SUSAN  
*Jonah, the Whale.* Levine/Scholastic, 1998  [128p] 
ISBN 0-590-37133-9  $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys  

Jonah’s the new kid in sixth grade and he doesn’t like it much; he misses the city and his mother’s longterm boyfriend, whose departure is the reason for his mother’s move to Connecticut, and he’s not having much luck making friends in his new neighborhood. What really interests him are the glamorous celebrities in *People* magazine, and he’d like very much to be among them, perhaps as an interviewer of celebrities himself. Aided by Blister, a girl who’s half-friend, half-encumbrance, he works on making his dream a reality in the form of a local television show. This is a bit slenderer than Shreve’s usual work, and the book depends on an unlikely sequence of tremendous good fortune (including two separate interviews with Michael Jordan), but Shreve’s understatement and restraint lend a solidity to the kid-success story that such plots rarely possess. The book is pleasantly unpuritanical in its implication that Jonah’s tendency to tell tales is part of his ability to dream that leads to his achievement, and the development of his relationship with Blister from default to genuine friendship is subtly depicted. Booktalk this with Farrell’s *Bradley and the Billboard*, reviewed above, for two very different looks at kids with cool careers. DS

SKOLSKY, MINDY WARSHAW  
ISBN 0-7894-2492-4  $17.95  
Reviewed from galleys  

Hannah’s relatives are convinced President Franklin Roosevelt can pull his countrymen through any hard times, so Hannah writes to him, confident that he can advise her on how to address such thorny problems as a best friend who’s moved and won’t answer letters, and a hopelessly dull pen pal (who’s a boy, at that). FDR, amazingly, responds to her inquiry and soon numbers among Hannah’s many regular correspondents. Through her volley of letters with family, friends, and White House residents and staff, readers are privy to her homely trials (an aunt who compulsively knits unwanted gifts; a case of measles on a much-anticipated trip to visit her grandparents) and her many enthusiasms (the Dionne Quintuplets, her grandfather’s homemade egg creams). Unfortunately, many letters become repetitious as Hannah recaps the same events for each recipient, and her ingenuousness grows a bit cloying. This is an unsensationalized portrayal of life during the Depression, though, and readers who have dipped into historical fiction of that period will be relieved to find that many families weathered the storm with an optimistic spirit and only slightly tightened belts. EB

SOLHEIM, JAMES  
*It’s Disgusting—and We Ate It!: True Food Facts from Around the World—and Throughout History!*, illus. by Eric Brace. Simon, 1998  [37p]  
ISBN 0-689-80675-2  $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys  

This flavorful look at culinary culture is divided into three sections, the first discussing the global breadth of tastes, the second describing some startling dishes of history, and the third revealing some of the colorful truths behind contemporary American favorites. Each spread is an enticing gallimaufry of infosnacks, providing succinct descriptions including region and era of popularity, sly poems, and a
buffet of tidbits about foods from worms to insects to rats to cheese (a firm disclaimer appears on the copyright page). There are a lot of interesting facts in here, ranging from the amount of protein in a ton of roasted spiders to taste comparisons for unfamiliar foods (giant spiders from New Guinea apparently taste like peanut butter, so be ready with the jelly). The overstuffed format is suitable to the subject; the new-wavy cartoon critters in incandescent hues gambol across the pages emitting wisecracks in speech balloons and pulling the spreads together. A list for further reading and a more sophisticated source bibliography are included, as is a detailed index. Don’t miss the endpaper world maps locating all manner of hors-d’oeuvres in their proper global place. DS

ISBN 0-374-35018-3 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  5-7 yrs

Luzolo’s father is set to preach for the first time at Matondo (“celebration of thanksgiving”) in this story from the author’s childhood, set in the Congo. He is sure that it is “impossible” for his little daughter to sit quietly (“Luzolo, can’t you sit still?”), especially if an animal is nearby, but Luzolo takes up the challenge while animals parade under the palm-thatched shelter: a hen and six chicks, a pig and her piglets, two goats, and a banana-eating monkey. Even when the menagerie begins to wreak havoc by rummaging through the food, Luzolo mouths to her mother, “I’m sitting still.” Only after some monkey shenanigans (“The monkey climbed up onto the bench and into her arms”) and the final prayer (“Luzolo sat very, very still. But not for long”) does Luzolo celebrate. The text never really rises above the serviceable; the deep palette looks slightly muddied and the drafting seems intentionally awkward with its primitive shapes and lines, especially when depicting the animals. Select Kikongo phrases are included in the text and may need some practice before a readaloud, but these have real audience participation possibilities that should increase the “sit still” quotient for a young audience. An author’s note provides background information on the region and the story’s origins. PM

Stevenson, James  *Popcorn;* written and illus. by James Stevenson. Greenwillow, 1998 [64p]
ISBN 0-688-15261-9 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 2-4

Like *Sweet Corn* (BCCB 3/95), this is a tidy little poetical volume, with each spread featuring one or two of Stevenson’s free-verse poems accented with his casual line-and-watercolor art. The poems are mainly observations of the concrete, rather like extended formless haiku, on topics such as a sudden scent of lilacs (“May Morning”), a messy truck (“Tom’s Truck”), and the mystery of inanimate denizens of the beach (“Driftwood”). The voice is friendly and confiding, and some of the imagery and concepts are clever and fresh (“A skunk ran across the road./ . . . I could swear/ He was wearing/A tuxedo”—“Romeo”). Often, however, the poems meander prosily and the payoff is insufficient; the constantly changing typeface seems gimmicky rather than atmospheric, and the poem titles, which are appended to the page numbers like running heads, are easy to lose. These will be convenient introductions for kids just embarking on post-picture-book poetry, but for a better entree try Valerie Worth’s *Small Poems* titles. DS
Young Matt has never seen a real live stadium hockey game, so when his grandfather invites him to the city and promises him a game, Matt is anxious to go. The visit is more than he hoped—the hockey game is exciting, the players zooming, the crowds cheering—but best of all is Grandpa Sam, the Zamboni Man. Grandpa Sam drives the Zamboni during the breaks in the game, "melting and scraping and smoothing the ice." On the last night of his visit, Matt gets to drive the Zamboni himself, and covers the ice in the empty stadium with "circles and swirls and loops." The story ends with a promise from Grandpa to teach Matt to ice skate. If you've ever watched kids watch Zambonis, you know they find them fascinating, and that may be enough to hold their attention in this surprisingly low-key tale. The relationship between Matt and Sam is a loving one, and James Stevenson's text (though oddly divided into four sections) has a cohesiveness that makes up for the meandering pace. Harvey Stevenson does an effective job presenting the stadium setting, especially when depicting the big white space that is the ice rink lit by spotlights and empty of all but the Zamboni. The drafting of the human figures is occasionally awkward, and the faces of Matt and Sam, especially in the concluding pivotal scenes, could be a little more distinct, but all in all this is a pleasant if not stellar debut from this father-and-son team. JMD


In a story based on the author's youth, a little girl tells of growing up to appreciate her hair. The loving relationship between child and hair-combing mother opens the story that consists primarily of the African-American narrator's reflections on how she feels about her hair, her hairstyles, and herself. This is not nearly as self-indulgent as it sounds—Tarpley has a handy way of turning descriptions of trials (long hours spent getting hair properly combed and oiled) and tribulations (being teased about wearing an Afro to school) into triumphs ("I love my hair because it is as thick as a forest, soft as cotton candy"). Lewis' watercolor illustrations depict the attractive protagonist with energetic appeal, and while the compositions vary in effectiveness, they manage to avoid the glamorized nostalgia trap. Tarpley includes an extensive note about how she felt about her own hair while growing up, making this a family story of sorts, and while it does not have the vigor of Herron's Nappy Hair (BCCB 2/97), it does have a clearly articulated intent. On the concluding page our amiable narrator exclaims, "Today I'm wearing it in my favorite style of all: two ponytails that stick out on either side of my head and flap in the air like a pair of wings. One of these days I might just take off and fly!" Thanks to Tarpley and Lewis, readers will believe her. JMD


It is difficult to write the life story of an individual about whom, apart from legend, so little is known, but Tompert's biography of Patrick is an admirable, utili-
tarian effort. Tompert sticks to the few known facts of the patron saint of Ireland's life: from his birth in Britain sometime around A.D. 385 to his death in A.D. 461, the facts of Patrick's life are shrouded in mists of legend and suffering from a dearth of documentation. Tompert bases her biography on Patrick's "Confession," a letter written near the end of his life (and on various interpretations of said letter by unnamed scholars), and includes some quotes attributed to Patrick himself. The full- and double-page mixed-media illustrations are an odd and often agitating juxtaposition of computer-generated art, painting, and collage resulting in discordant photo-like textiles and gaudy coloration that jars with the text, which is contained in frames of traditional, gold-leafed Celtic knots. Putting the lack of visual cohesion aside, this might be a useful title for collections looking for a more factual source than dePaola's unsourced combination of history and legend (Patrick, BCCB 4/92) for information about this popular saint. An extensive author's note describes Tompert's research. JMD

WADDELL, MARTIN Yum, Yum, Yummy; illus. by John Bendall-Brunello. Candlewick, 1998 [22p]
Reviewed from galleys Ad 2-4 yrs

"One day three little bears went off to the Honeybee Tree to get honey for Mummy," and do they get a surprise. The gluttonous (and lazy) Guzzley Bear waits until the little bears have gathered pots of honey and then, with an enormous growl and a "Yum, yum, yummy! The honey went into Guzzley's big tummy." Needless to say, the traumatized little bears run home to Mummy Bear, who makes short work of the bullying but cowardly Guzzley. Waddell's predictable but well-paced text is set in a big, bold typeface that will attract beginning readers as well as the grown-ups who forgot their reading glasses. Bendall-Brunello's nondescript pencil and watercolor illustrations are simply composed and cartoonily drafted, with a cast of characters that reflect the almost slapstick humor. Young listeners are going to get a kick out of the moment when, with a loud "BOO!", Mummy leaps out from behind the bushes at the unsuspecting Guzzley. Despite the familiarity of this plot, these bears will make a quick and easy storytime addition—be prepared to read their sweet story more than once. JMD

ISBN 1-56397-489-4 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys R 4-8 yrs

Grandpa's dog Rambler is one hundred dog-years old, and Maris is determined to throw him a party. While Maris and her friends dress in their favorite doggy clothes, wear dog-tags with their doggy names on them, and have a barking contest in the backyard, Rambler happily snoozes the day away. What makes this title so doggone fun are the interactions among the children, each of whom possesses a unique personality quirk, from Jacob the punster who keeps making "no bones about it" when talking of the "dog-tired" Rambler; to Isaac who wants to be a Tyrannosaurus Rex, not a dog; to Rosie, who is taking being a dog a little too seriously and wants to bite everyone (unsurprisingly, she wins the barking contest); to Maris herself, the organizer of this canine celebration. The oversized full-
and double-page pastel compositions are anything but delicate—Johnson-Petrov's energetic, roll-and-tumble renderings vigorously reflect the kids' happy enthusiasm, from bone-shaped invitations to Rambler's quiet nap in Maris' closet. Wardlaw's text is succinct and funny, and it could easily inspire a pet party program of your own. JMD

ISBN 1-883846-24-2  $18.95  
Reviewed from galleys  

Girls are entitled to their share of bloodlust and derring-do, and Weatherly revels in the dastardly deeds perpetrated for love and money by this "bold, brutal breed of women." The accounts span nearly a millennium and range from the tantalizing legend of the Viking Alfhild to the better-documented exploits of Boston's Rachel Wall and China's Cheng I Sao. Although Anne Bonny and Mary Read may be familiar (especially to readers of Jane Yolen's *The Ballad of the Pirate Queens*, BCCB 4/95), they look almost demure beside their more ruthless sisters at arms, Maria Cobham (a coldhearted murderess with a range of deathly skills) and Cheng I Sao (whose pirates mixed gunpowder with their wine and "ate the hearts of vanquished foes"). Weatherly is too often blown off course by her own enthusiasm, however, and her prose becomes tangled and clunky. A bibliography is included, but no sources are given for the many quotes woven throughout the text. Still, readers searching for a little terror on the high seas will probably want to make this a port of call. EB

WELLS, ROSEMARY  *Read to Your Bunny;* written and illus. by Rosemary Wells. Scholastic, 1998  [26p]  
ISBN 0-590-30284-1  $7.95  
Reviewed from galleys  

A new title by Rosemary Wells usually sends librarians scurrying for their purchase orders. But pause and reflect on this sermonette on the pleasures and benefits of reading, which is attractively packaged for kids but clearly intended for adults: "Read to your bunny often,/ It's twenty minutes of fun./ It's twenty minutes of moonlight,/ And twenty minutes of sun." The watercolor rabbit readers—grownup and child pairs sharing books in airplanes, beach chairs, rowboats, and bathtubs—are as adorable as you could wish; each picture, if enlarged, could be an enticing poster for a reading campaign. However, forty words of exhortation do not a children's book make. Surely no one will dispute Wells' closing remark, "Reading to your little ones is just like putting gold coins in the bank" (although the twenty-minute prescription is probably overambitious for the very youngest listeners). It might be wiser, though, to invest in fresh copies of Ruby and Max; once you've finished *Read to Your Bunny,* you're still nineteen minutes short. EB

ISBN 0-8234-1318-7  $15.95  
R  Gr. 3-6

Fourth-grader Matt is miserable at his new school, and his attempts to make a name for himself get him a reputation for mendacity. This complicates things when he sees the ghost of Edna Whipple, legendary teacher, who sternly enjoins
him to "try hard, and then try harder." Matthew is galvanized into academic action by Miss Whipple's threat (apparently used on past students, now teachers, as well) that she will haunt him forever if his spelling doesn't improve, and he's at least privately vindicated when ghostly manifestations rip down a misspelled sign in the gym, causing the principal (another former Whipple disciple) to believe the truth of Matt's story. Wright, one of the few ghost-story writers who produces titles for readers this young, has a good instinct for appropriate limitations on creepiness; Miss Whipple is ominous but her pedantry gives the book a silly streak that leavens the atmosphere. The story's strung out a little, but there are amusing bits of byplay that keep things moving in the slack times. Rogers' densely hatched illustrations have a restrained darkness and engraving-like texture. Youngsters not ready—or not allowed—to read Goosebumps will appreciate this nice safe dip into ghostdom. DS

WYETH, SHARON DENNIS Once on This River. Knopf, 1997 [144p]
Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 4-6

In this historical novel, which endeavors to give readers a glimpse into the dangers of being black in New York City in 1760, Monday and her mother, Leslie de Groot, a midwife, travel to New York from their home in Madagascar in the hopes of securing the release of Monday's Uncle Frederick, a free man, unlawfully enslaved. Their stay with their relatives, the D'Angolas, results in Monday's friendship with her cousin, Viola, and an encounter with Sampson (who is in love with Viola) and his mother, Dina, slaves of a wealthy Dutch family. Dina's past includes a secret—she is Monday's biological mother. (Dina gave Monday to her midwife, Leslie, to save Monday from a life of bondage.) As eleven-year-old Monday narrates, readers will be no doubt be drawn in by events, but most will soon be suffering from symptoms of tie-up-the-plot "coincident-itis": when Leslie travels to Kingston to intercede for her brother's release she finds lodging in a tavern. Luckily, Leslie's cousin's husband runs the tavern and his chief customer is a justice of the peace (who knows the Attorney General, who has the power to release Frederick) and he just happens to be in the tavern. Coincidences or no, one-dimensional characterizations, wooden dialogue, and an unlikely plot aren't a lucky combination. An author's note provides historical background. PM

ISBN 0-7894-2495-9 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 7-10

Fifteen-year-old Stephen is plagued by bad dreams, and they seem to be the same bad dreams that tormented his older brother, Marcus, when Marcus was himself fifteen. After therapy revealed that Marcus' dreams were based on a hushed-up incident in his childhood (the family fleeing from a burning village-cum-commune), Marcus insisted their mother was holding something else back and he left the family; her disproportionate fear (and increasing secretiveness) at Stephen's dreams seems to prove Marcus right. Stephen's growing friendship with classmate Virginia, a budding filmmaker with her own family problems, helps give shape to his own family yearnings and guilt as he gets closer to the mysteries of the past—and the present. Wynne-Jones is an impressive stylist, and his depiction of Stephen's
family, friends, and thoughts are unforcedly deft; his language is fresh and individual without being flashy, and teens will feel a part of Stephen's world and sympathize with his struggle. Unfortunately, the plot resolution is melodramatic and cheap (Stephen was an irresponsible couple's baby, and his mother abducted him when their family fled the fire), an ungainly solution to the more complex and subtle problems the novel has presented. Readers may, however, find the explorations of the questions sufficiently compelling to overcome the rather pat final answer. DS

YEP, LAURENCE  *The Imp That Ate My Homework*; illus. by Benrei Huang. HarperCollins, 1998  [96p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027689-4  $13.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027688-6  $13.95
Reviewed from galleys

Jim's grandfather is "the meanest man in Chinatown," and Jim dreads having to interview him for a school essay. Sitting around the supper table watching the Chinese news on TV, Jim is surprised to see his grandfather turn pale with fear when an archaeologist in China opens up an ancient vase with the inscription "A curse on anyone who opens this vase." Faster than you can say "The dog ate my homework," an escaped imp shows up in Jim's room and eats his essay. The imp, apparently an ancient enemy of Grandpop, is determined to use Jim to get to his grandfather, who is apparently an ancient Chinese imp-fighter named Chung Kuei. Jim gets into trouble with just about everyone he knows until he's finally desperate enough to turn to his grandfather for help. When his grandfather tries to send him out of danger, Jim won't go: "I wanted to run home. I wanted to hide, and yet I couldn't let Grandpop face the imp all by himself. It wasn't bravery. I just knew I couldn't desert Grandpop. I wanted to be on his team." Yep's depiction of the conflict first-generation-American Jim ("native born, no brains") has with his old-country grandfather is subtle, and Jim's running commentary on how he feels about San Francisco's Chinatown, his description of the sweatshop where his mother works sewing clothes, and his dislike of Chinese school where he is supposed to be learning the language are palpable and realistic. The logic is a little stretched, the humor never quite takes off, and the cultural references could have used a little more context, but most young readers will probably just be caught up in the sheer momentum of it all as young boy and old man ally to conquer the evil imp. JMD

It's approximately a decade since the publication of the first edition of *Trust Your Children,* and the issue of censorship shows no signs of disappearing. Including seven new interviews, this edition allows authors, publishers, librarians, teachers, booksellers, and others who have encountered the censorship battle from the front lines to tell of their experiences. West states up front that his book is "deliberately one-sided," and there is a resultant flavor of preaching to the choir, but the personal narratives here make for absorbing reading, whether it's author Judy Blume talking about self-censorship she's engaged in or librarian Elizabeth Briscoe-Wilson relating her battle against a pro-censorship principal in her school in Kansas. The updating isn't entirely effective—there's very little on more recent censorship targets and battles, and two of the three publishers included no longer possess the affiliation the book states—but this deals with the subject on an individual level that is thoughtful and compelling. Teens looking for resources on the topic will appreciate this title as well. An index and bibliography are included. DS


Author of a similar work about adult literature (*A Reader's Delight*) and husband of the late children's author Anne Lindbergh, Noel Perrin offers thirty gentle essays (about half previously appearing in newspapers) on children's books he feels should be better known. Librarians will be familiar with the majority of the titles (ranging from *The Railway Children* to *Half Magic* to *Watership Down*), but many parents and other adults may not be; Perrin demonstrates in his own informal research that many college-age readers were unfamiliar with several included books. Perrin's demotic style sometimes tips into the flat and amateurish but is often cozily chatty, and his affection for his selections is palpable. His essays might well serve as booktalks for adults looking for time-honored literature they have forgotten or missed but would nonetheless like to share with their children; voracious younger readers who enjoy personal print recommendations may also find it leading them down enjoyable literary paths. A bibliography includes current publication status and information about the titles discussed. DS
Subject and Use Index

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

Adventure Stories:
Jacques
Africa—stories: Stanley
Africa: Haskins
African Americans: Johnson
African Americans—fiction: Koertge
African Americans—stories: Tarpley
American Indians—fiction: Bruchac
American Indians—folklore: Rosen
Animals—stories: Isadora; Mollel; Stanley; Waddell
Anthropology—fiction: Abelove
Art and artists—fiction: Koertge
Art: Johnson
Asian Americans—fiction: Yep
Asian Americans—stories: Pomeranc
Aunts—fiction: Peck
Bears—stories: Waddell
Bedtime Stories: Banks; Blos; Isadora; Rymill
Bees—stories: High
Biographies: Demi; Harness; Lyon; Tompert
Birds—stories: Pilkey
Birthdays—stories: Hershenhorn; Wardlaw
Brothers—fiction: Hartnett
Brothers—stories: Harber
Bullies—stories: Waddell
Careers—fiction: Farrell; Shreve
Child abuse—fiction: Philbrick
Circuses: Granfield
Civics: Pomeranc
Community and industry: Murphy
Community helpers: Masoff

Crime and criminals—fiction: Burgess
Dating—fiction: Bechard
Dogs—stories: Wardlaw
Dreams—fiction: Wynne-Jones
Drugs and drug addiction—fiction: Burgess
Ecology: Allen; Gibbons
Environmental studies: Murphy
Epistolary Fiction: Skolsky
Ethics and values: Abelove; Bruchac; Rinaldi
Families—fiction: Wynne-Jones
Fantasy: Jacques; Pierce
Fathers and daughters—fiction: Butler; Philbrick; Rinaldi
Fathers and sons—fiction: Kinsey-Warnock
Firefighting: Masoff
Folklore—Armenia: San Souci
Folktales and Fairytales: Harber; Johnson; Loya; Mollel; Rosen; San Souci
Food and eating: Solheim
Foxes—stories: Kvasnosky
Friendship—fiction: Carbone; Naylor; Philbrick; Shreve
Friendship—stories: London
Frogs—stories: London
Frogs: Dewey
Funny Stories: Pilkey
Gangs—fiction: Koertge
Ghost Stories: Butler; Wright
Grandfathers—fiction: Kinsey-Warnock; Yep
Grandfathers—stories: High; Lewin; Stevenson Sam
Grandmothers—stories: Blos
Health: Naylor
HISTORICAL FICTION:
   Bruchac; Duey; Rinaldi; Skolsky; Wyeth
History, U.S.: Harness; Johnson; Pringle
History, world: Haskins
Immigrants—stories: Pomeranc
Jews—stories: Harber
Latin America: Loya
Letters and letter writing—fiction: Skolsky
Love—fiction: McKay
Magic and magicians—fiction: Pierce
Modeling—fiction: Farrell
Monkeys—stories: Ahlberg
Morocco—stories: Lewin
Mothers and daughters—fiction: Peck
Mothers and daughters—stories: Tarpley
Mothers and sons—fiction: Farrell
MYSTERIES: Hartnett
Nature study: Allen; Dewey; Gibbons
Peru—fiction: Abelove
Photography: Johnson
Pigs—fiction: Rylant
Pirates: Weatherly
POETRY: Mora; Stevenson

Reading, easy: Wright
Reading, reluctant: Solheim
Reading: Wells
Religious education: Demi; Lindbergh; Tompert
RHYMING STORIES: Ahlberg
School—fiction: Bechard; Carbone; Wright
Schools: Pringle
Science experiments: Cobb
Science: Bortz; Cobb
Sisters—fiction: Kvasnosky; McKay
Slavery—fiction: Rinaldi; Wyeth
Space shuttle: Branley
Space: Bortz; Branley
Stepfathers—fiction: Bechard
Storytelling: Loya; San Souci
Storytelling—stories: Lewin
Storytime: Ahlberg; Blos; Gershator; Harber; Hershenhorn; Johnson; Rymill; Waddell; Wardlaw
SUPERNATURAL STORIES: Butler; Loya
SURVIVAL STORIES: Duey; Marsden
Urban life—fiction: Koertge
Valentine’s Day—stories: London
Voyages and travel—fiction: Philbrick
War—fiction: Marsden
Weather—stories: Hershenhorn
Whaling: Murphy
Witches—stories: Johnson
Women’s studies: Weatherly
World cultures: Abelove
World War II: Pringle
Writers and writing—fiction: Wynne-Jones
Writers and writing: Lyon
“TALL is terrific... It’s energized and it’s gutsy.”
—Jonathan Kozol

By clearly defining academic expectations and setting specific professional standards, TALL is leading the way in the teaching and the learning of children’s and young adult literature.

“TALL is the Rolls Royce of the field.”
—Joan F. Smutny
National-Louis University

Uniquely organized, each issue brings you 16 inspiring, practical, jargon-free articles guaranteed to enrich and expand your professional practice.

For more information and a catalog call 1-800-337-6525 or write to:
Essmont Publishing, P.O. Box 186, Brandon, Vermont 05733
STONE SOUP
Retold by Heather Forest
(a featured storyteller at the American Library Association annual conference)
Illustrated by Susan Gaber
(both are past winners of the ABA Pick of the List Award)
Hardback $15.95 ISBN 0-87483-498-8

Other titles available from August House LittleFolk:

THE GIRL WHO WORE TOO MUCH
A Folktale from Thailand
Retold by Margaret Read MacDonald
with Thai text by Supaporn Vathanaprida
Illustrated by Yvonne Lebrun Davis
Hardback $15.95/ISBN 0-87483-503-8

THE DANCING TURTLE
A Folktale from Brazil
Retold by Pleasant DeSpain
Illustrated by David Boston

I SCREAM, YOU SCREAM
A Feast of Food Rhymes
Selected as one of the New York Public Library's 100 Best Children's Books for reading and sharing
Illustrated by Nancy Dunaway
Hardback $12.95/ISBN 0-87483-495-3

AUGUST HOUSE
Littlefokk

RO. Box 3223
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-3223
501-372-5450 • FAX 501-372-5579
order@augusthouse.com
1-800-284-8784
Every issue of *Teaching K-8* provides informative articles on the cutting edge of education. You'll also find insightful columns and thoughtful reviews written by some of today's leading educators.

*Teaching K-8* is filled with hundreds of unique ideas and activities that help teachers present new challenges to their students, learn new concepts and develop new skills.

**Monthly columns include...**

- Children's Books
- Teaching in the Library
- The Parent Connection
- Science, Math, Technology and more!

Plus, interviews with children's book authors and illustrators

Don't miss out on this valuable resource for your library — subscribe to *Teaching K-8* today.

**Teaching K8**  
P.O. Box 54808, Boulder, CO 80322-4808  
800-678-8793

One year (8 issues) only $19.77*

* Outside U.S. add $5.00 postage per subscription.
1998 ALA NEWBERY HONOR BOOKS

**Wringer**

By Jerry Spinelli

*Winner of the Newbery Medal for Maniac Magee*

Ages 8-12. $14.95TR (0-06-024913-7)

Joanna Cotter Books

1998 ALA Notable Children's Books

1998 ALA Best Books For Young Adults

**Ella Enchanted**

By Gail Carson Levine

Ages 8-12. $14.89 (0-06-027510-3)

$14.95LB (0-06-027511-1)

**Parrot in the Oven (mi vida)**

A novel by Victor Martinez

Ages 12 up. $15.95TR (0-06-026704-6)

$15.89LB (0-06-026706-2)

$5.95PB (0-06-447186-1)

Joanna Cotter Books

**Winner 1998 ALA PURA BELPRE AWARD**

Honoring the Latino writer whose work best portrays, affirms and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in a work of literature for youth.

1996 National Book Award Winner

HarperCollinsChildren's Books

10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022

http://www.harperchildrens.com
The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books invites you to visit our home page at

http://edfu.lis.uiuc.edu/puboff/bccb

Regular features include:
- Bulletin Stars—what we starred this month
- Bulletin Dozen—a genre- or theme-based list of titles
- Quote of the Month
- Bulletin Blue Ribbons 1990-1997
- the Baby Bulletin—a sample collection of recent reviews

Occasional features include:
- Rising Star—an examination of the work of a talented new author or artist
- True Blue—reflections on a time-honored talent
- Dueling Reviews—a look at the discussion behind the scenes when a book polarizes the editors

• And more . . . updated monthly!