PUBLICATION NOTE

University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign Library
Who Is Ben?
by CHARLOTTE ZOLOTOW
Full-color pictures by KATHRYN JACOBI

Ben finds his own reassuring answers to his questions
"Who was I before I was born? ... where will I be when I die?"
as he looks out at the black, black night and feels a part of the
huge trembling universe.

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the same way that the text anchors larger issues to a child’s
musing, [Jacobi’s luminous paintings] secure the universe-
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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.

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Cover illustration by Linda Warner, from The Tulip Touch ©1997 and used by permission of Little, Brown and Company.
The Tulip Touch
by Anne Fine

Natalie is thrilled to live in the grand Palace Hotel, and she instantly acquires a friend in Tulip, the neighbor across the fields. Tulip’s family life is grim, so she spends a great deal of time with Natalie; despite—or perhaps because—of Tulip’s tendency towards lying, manipulation, and incipient criminal behavior (which result in Natalie’s parents’ sporadic attempts to disengage their daughter from the friendship), Natalie is obsessed with her. Finally Tulip’s behavior is too much even for Natalie, and she undertakes the difficult task of breaking from Tulip, discovering that dangerous reprisal waits just around the corner.

Horror novels can’t beat the right kind of realistic fiction: this book is energized with guilt and risk, anger and frustration, alert to subtleties yet written with age-appropriate clarity. Tulip is magnetic and explosive, a stick of dynamite playing with matches, whose compulsive appeal is understandable (she’s endlessly creative both in games and conversation—the “Tulip touch” is Natalie’s father’s term for the extra fillip to her lies that makes them seem credible). As she grows older, her mayhem increases in believable and frightening ways: she escalates from setting fires in trash bins to burning down sheds, and she repeatedly visits a bereaved family asking if their drowned daughter can come for a walk. Natalie’s checking of dates and times to ensure the impossibility of Tulip’s involvement in local murders seems absolutely reasonable. And while the withdrawal of Natalie’s friendship makes her angrier, there’s little indication that such friendship would have redeemed her from her increasingly destructive existence.

Problematic friendships are common enough, in their way, but Fine doesn’t let any of the causes or effects go unnoticed, and she’s inspired and brutally fair in her depiction of the adults’ ambivalence and contradictory impulses. Natalie’s parents are good parents (and they’ve indulged or tolerated Tulip, particularly at hotel Christmases, for years), but Natalie is absolutely correct about their flaws. Her mother is more concerned with Natalie’s younger brother Julius than with Natalie (a fact that Natalie exploits when her mother begins to undermine Natalie’s resolve to separate from Tulip); both parents are torn between wanting the dangerous influence away from Natalie and hoping that their daughter will continue to be friends with Tulip so that they don’t feel irresponsible about setting the poor unfortunate adrift.

Nina Bawden’s Humbug (BCCB 11/92) is one of the best of recent books depicting a child whose troublemaking goes beyond mere mischief to willful, destructive, and possibly unstoppable malice. Fine approaches the topic differently, however. The source of Tulip’s problem is very clearly her home life, and the book, without bogging down in psychology or hammering the point home relent-
lessly, offers some harrowing glimpses of Tulip's family through her echoing of what she's heard there (she croons to a temporarily pilfered rabbit, "Who's a smart bunny? Who's going to be a good girl? Who's Tulip's special one? She's not going to make a fuss, is she? Oh, no. She isn't going to do that. Because she enjoys it really, doesn't she? And if she starts struggling, she'll get hurt"). Yet what's to be done about it remains another question—Natalie's father doesn't seem unjustified in his description of the limits and scope of social services, and neither he nor the book are prepared to exonerate Tulip of all responsibility for her own actions. "You want to know if Tulip's crazy, or bad?" Natalie's mother asks an inquiring policeman, and we're not sure of the answer by now, but it's too late for it to make a difference. Either way she's someone from whom Natalie must escape, and in doing so must, in her own self-defense, betray years of friendship.

Readers will find it fitting that Natalie wins her freedom from Tulip only by using the skills Tulip has taught her; Tulip is, as always, better at these games than Natalie, however, so it's savagely truthful that Tulip has the final incendiary word. The book is penetrating about how people are with each other, in big and small ways, and the consequences of every interaction. While many children's books underestimate the intensity of youthful friendship and the seriousness of its repercussions, this one goes right to the heart of the matter. (Imprint information appears on p. 10.)

Deborah Stevenson, Assistant Editor

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ACKERMAN, DIANE  Bats: Shadows in the Night; illus. with photographs by Merlin Tuttle. Crown, 1997 32p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-709198 $17.00 R Gr. 3-6

According to bat expert Merlin Tuttle, bats are "really shy and winsome creatures who have just had bad press." A glance at the plethora of stunning color photographs in this nonfiction offering may leave some readers in doubt, but Ackerman and the real bat-man (Tuttle is a leading authority on bats) are a convincing pair. Their journey to famous bat haunts such as Bracken Cave near San Antonio, Big Bend National Park, and Bat Conservation International (all in Texas) shapes the book's well-researched narrative, and their subsequent adventures serve up an enthralling body of facts (“Flying foxes don't echolocate, so they are as vulnerable as birds are to window-bumping”). Sidebars featuring info-segments about Bat Essentials, Safety, Baby Bats, Echolocation, Feeding, and Bats in Winter provide easy access to chiroptera facts. In addition, several pages of bat “portraits” (looking eerily like yearbook photos of the Bat senior class) will nicely support a success-
ful read-aloud effort. Team this with Laurence Pringle's *Batman* (BCCB 5/91) for an unusual alternative to the typical Halloween fare. PM


Rachel has been an only child for twelve years, and she has only recently begun to appreciate the addition of a stepfather into her and her mother's closely knit world. That world is turned upside down, however, when Tina, her stepfather's distant daughter, not only turns up for the summer (with her mother's new boyfriend's son, Carlos, in embarrassed tow) but also ferrets out the fact that Rachel's mother is pregnant. Prickly, hard-bitten Tina is difficult to like, and she and Rachel are both concerned about their relationship with Tina’s father and their places in their respective families. The set-up here is a bit overlabored, and the ending peters out anticlimactically (Tina and Carlos simply go away). Rachel’s understated but strong affection for her stepfather is delicately drawn, however, and her quiet comradeship (with hints of romance) with Carlos is effective and believable. This is a sensitive if flawed portrayal of a girl’s dealing with her ever-changing family. DS


"Help! . . . He’s coming!" A little white mouse warns a frog, who warns a parrot, who warns a chimpanzee, who warns an elephant that Big Bro, who is rough and tough, and, as "everyone knows," very big, is coming. The fear grows as the tale travels, until we see the animals cowering in terror in the corner of the page, their eyes hidden behind their hands, as Big Bro monopolizes the spread (all we can see of him, from our ant’s-eye view, is one enormous white haunch attached to a foot with terrible claws). Turn the page and we’re in on the joke—Big Bro is mouse’s big brother, and hugeness is in the eye of the beholder. But Big Bro is rough and tough, and with one big "BOO!" he has all the other animals falling backwards in alarm. "I told you he was big," the mouse calls back over his shoulder as Big Bro pulls him off home. The lively candy-colored illustrations are a little slick, but they bring out the humor in this playful if not terribly original tale. Young children will enjoy the joke, even as they sympathize with the little mouse. PMc


At his grandfather’s gym, Curtis is in training for the Golden Gloves amateur boxing tournament, trying to "stay cool" and in control of himself in the ring. He is determined to enter the tournament and win, both for himself and his grandfather, a former middleweight almost-champ. Antle follows Curtis through his activities in the boxing gym as he observes other fighters, teaches a new kid how to jump rope properly, and spars with his friend and fellow boxer, Trevor. Lewis’ watercolors capture the atmosphere of a city gym in a sand and gray palette, with the bright clothing of the main characters adding the only vibrancy to an otherwise muted scene. Characters’ faces are expressive, the lines of their bodies hinting at vigorous action. Antle imparts quite a bit of information about boxing in her
cleanly written text, but it is the warm relationship between Curtis and his grandfather that forms the elegant heart of the story, as the man and boy bond through mutual respect and admiration. JMD

ARMSTRONG, ROBB  *Drew and the Homeboy Question*; written and illus. by Robb Armstrong. HarperCollins, 1997  74p
Paper ed. ISBN 0-06-442047-7  $3.95  R  Gr. 3-6

When there’s an accidental shooting at the local junior high, Drew’s parents decide that sixth-grader Drew is headed to private school next year. For Drew, this is a nightmare: he’ll be the only African-American kid at the Deerwood School for Boys, and his old friends are already shunning him and taunting him about “turning white.” Armstrong skilfully controls his authorial voice, dealing honestly with a weighty subject but maintaining a brisk and energetic tone reminiscent of Louis Sachar. The book wraps things up too easily at the end, but it’s otherwise deftly concise, especially in its depiction of Drew’s family (mouthy younger sister Jessie, calm older brother Kyle, and concerned parents). Art by the author (a professional cartoonist) has a comic-strip flair unusual in chapter books, adding to the book’s appeal for reluctant readers, who will gravitate to the book’s final comic-book scenes. DS

ARNOLD, KATYA, ad.  *Duck, Duck, Goose?*; ad. and illus. by Katya Arnold. Holiday House, 1997  32p
ISBN 0-8234-1296-2  $15.95  Ad  5-8 yrs

In this gaudy picture-book offering inspired by the Russian animated film *Who Is This Bird?*, Goose is dealing with an extreme case of body-part envy: “She was jealous of other kinds of birds, except for ducks. They looked too much like geese to interest her.” So she finagles a neck from Swan, a beak from Pelican, legs from Stork, wings from Crow, a red comb and “cock-a-doodle-doo” from Rooster, and a tail from Peacock (“‘I am a goose-a-doodle-doo!’ crowed Goose. ‘I am the best’”). Actually, she’s a pretty absurd-looking bird. Unpleasantly clashing acrylic hues of fuchsia, red, orange, gold, blue, and green, outlined in rough black strokes, contrast with the bright white of the geese, as they and the other avian-types comically wobble through the story against a sunny yellow background. It doesn’t take long for Goose to realize that being “beautiful” has a price, and when Fox makes a grab for her, it is her homely geese cousins who come to rescue. Told in a simple but lively fashion, this is predictable folktale fun where the bad guy gets his and the once foolish heroine is now “smarter, kinder, and happier and still prettier than a duck.” How the ducks feel about that is another story. PM

BELTON, SANDRA  *Ernestine & Amanda: Summer Camp, Ready or Not!*  Simon, 1997  168p
ISBN 0-689-80846-1  $16.00  R  Gr. 4-6

In this sequel to *Ernestine & Amanda* (BCCB 1/97), the two title characters are attending summer camp, but not the same one. Amanda heads off to the upscale, integrated (though nearly all white) Camp Castle, and Ernestine prepares for the less toney, all-black Camp Hilltop. Both girls are sent by parents who have an agenda: Amanda’s parents are separating, and Ernestine’s parents are trying to adjust to her father’s losing his job. Belton uses the same narrative framework as in
the first E&A book, with each girl narrating alternating chapters set in the consecutive weeks prior to, during, and just after camp. While not as cohesive as in the first book (wherein both girls were commenting on the same experiences), the alternating points of view are still intriguing, as are the girls' reactions to two similar but distinctly different summer sojourns. Ernestine makes friends with an older camper, learns to swim, and becomes conscious of a few things about her still-segregated hometown she was unaware of before. Interacting with her first large group of white people, Amanda has her first real experience with individual and institutional racism, polite-style. Belton reveals the social issues of the day through the reactions of her characters, and Amanda and Ernestine are always of primary interest. This is a solid, meaty sequel to a promising series debut. JMD


Ant’s older brother narrates four new beginning-reader stories (see My Brother Ant, BCCB 2/96). First Ant wants to play bear with his brother—until the realism makes things a bit too scary. Next he decides to be a dog, embarrassing his brother when a friend comes over. Then Ant is determined that something is tapping on the bedroom window while the boys are trying to sleep, and finally he shares his ambitions for adulthood with his brother. Byars keeps things funny and apt: big brother’s exasperated “Now this is the last time I’m saying this. Good night, Ant!” will ring quite a few bells among sibling readers, and Ant’s plans for his future (“I am going to be a man. And after I get to be a man, then maybe I will be a fireman, or a farmer, or a doctor, or a teacher”) are authentically phrased and sufficiently conceptually junior to the readers’ level that they will understand the humor. Simont’s watercolors give the dynamic duo the proper amount of charisma combined with everyday rumples and scowls. Aside from the fact that it’s nice to get first chapter books with genuine style, the Ant stories allow the beginning reader, who often feels at the bottom of a very tall ladder, somebody to feel superior to—a rather clever advantage. DS


Readers will be familiar with the Kane family from other Caseley books (Chloe in the Know, BCCB 4/93; Hurricane Harry, 11/91; Starring Dorothy Kane, 5/92); focusing on Dorothy again, this book follows her everyday grade-school life through six chapters. Most of the events are small—she feels displaced by the new baby, she dog sits for the Irish setter next door, she partners up with overbearing, lime-light-hogging Andrea for a school report—but then Andrea is killed in an accident, and Dorothy has to deal both with her feelings about death and her guilt at her dislike of her late classmate. Caseley does a good job of fitting the tragedy into Dorothy’s quotidian grade-school existence; the book doesn’t feel obligated to make Andrea’s death into its main point and thereby stays truer to its protagonist’s worldview than many books on the subject. Also authentic are the family dynamics and dialogue, with three kids, the new baby, and a pair of hard-working parents making for a lively and at times overstretched household. The discrete chapters don’t pull together into an overall narrative as well as they might, but readers will be happy to take things one chapter at a time. DS
COOPER, Elisha  *Country Fair*; written and illus. by Elisha Cooper.  Greenwillow, 1997  [40p]  
ISBN 0-688-15531-6  $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys  R*  5-8 yrs  
"Canvas tents rise from the ground like wind-filled sails. Workers swing from ropes, tie knots, and hang upside down. One man loses his balance and tumbles into a pile of hay." Lickety-split, empty fields are converted into fairgrounds, and sheep, pigs, judges, prize pumpkins, and fried dough vendors hold court. Cooper's spare watercolor images, reminiscent of James Stevenson's minimalist renderings, dance across clean white pages and are variously boxed, looped, and laced by hand-lettered text. Among the fair's attractions are an oxen pull ("Heaving and straining, lowing and puffing, they're urged on by shouts of 'Haw!' and 'Whoop!'"), a Great Duck Race ("The duck who wins . . . is the only one who goes the right way"), and loggers' events ("A man balances a board on his head, then a canoe, then a nervous woman named Nan"). Children who have sampled the delights of their own state or county fairs can pick out their favorite events, and those who haven't can start hounding their parents to gas up the car.  

COOPER, Helen  *The Boy Who Wouldn't Go to Bed*; written and illus. by Helen Cooper.  Dial, 1997  32p  
R  3-6 yrs  
When his mother says it's time for bed, a little boy shouts "NO! . . . I'm going to stay up all night!" Chugging away in his toy fire engine, the boy encounters an enormous tiger, a regiment of toy soldiers, a train, a band of musicians, and the crescent moon, and they are all too sleepy to play with him. The boy is finally retrieved by his mother, who hugs him as he yawns and who puts him to bed. Cooper's watercolors handily move between the pedestrian reality of the boy's home hallway to the fantastical roadway of his bedtime journey: the toy soldiers march up a hill to a turreted castle; the train cars convey characters from familiar folk and fairy tales; and the boy's walk with his mother to Sleepytown takes place against a background of bedtime accoutrements, including an enormous toothbrush and toothpaste, a giant hairbrush, and stars hanging from the night blue sky on lengths of string. The palette moves from bright summery golds to sunset reds and oranges to twilight blues as the boy is safely tucked into bed. The rhythmic text makes this a readaloud dream, and youngsters will enjoy the boy's independent stance even as they appreciate the cozy and comforting conclusion.  

COOPER, Ilene  *I'll See You in My Dreams*.  Viking, 1997  [144p]  
Reviewed from galleys  Ad Gr. 5-8  
High-school sophomore Karen Genovese's recurring dreams of an attractive mystery man shouldn't be much cause for alarm, except that her dreams are often predictive of future events, and their current object has just transferred into her school. Mark Kennedy, who is something of a social chameleon due to his family's many household moves, gravitates immediately to a popular crowd but is strangely drawn to the wallflower Karen. No wonder—he's been dreaming about her, too. Warily admitting the growing intensity and nightmarish quality of their phantasms, the pair slowly realize that Mark's little brother Brian is in danger of meeting the same fate Karen's dreams had presaged for her father years ago—death in
an auto accident with a drunken driver at the wheel. Cooper metes out clues with a crafty stinginess that should keep readers eagerly flipping the pages, as anxious to see if Karen and Mark become "an item" as to solve their mystery; a double twist keeps the culprit's identity securely under wraps until the last possible second. Still, it takes a powerful suspension of disbelief to accept this oversized package of nocturnal portents, and skeptics may wish this engaging couple would just wake up and get on with falling in love. EB

When a little boy and a little monster awake in the night to discover they share the same bed, each cries out for "Papa!" Human and preternatural papas patiently explain to their offspring that there's no such thing as monsters, but slumber is restored only after the youngsters tacitly agree to co-hibernate—the monster with his arm around a stuffed toy, and the boy with his arm around the monster. If this sounds remarkably like Jackie French Koller's *No Such Thing* (BCCB 3/97), that's because . . . well . . . it is. This text could serve as an underdeveloped outline for Koller's plot (with Daddy as the dupe here rather than Mommy), but the joke is the same. Wide-eyed monsters, a baggy-suited human papa, and petrified tykes rendered in watercolor and charcoal are a hoot, though, and that hair-raising moment of recognition in which the little ones scare the living nightlights out of each other is guaranteed to get some laughs. This may be a poorer relative of *No Such Thing*, but it's still a deserving one. EB

This collection runs from "Pillow Talk" (story number one) to "Locker-Room Talk" (the final novella), on its way treating a broad range of adolescent experience. Parents are particularly significant throughout the seven entries. "Listening to My Father's Silence" and "Lezboy," the two best stories, both tell of teenagers juggling their needs and those of their parents; in the first, the narrator hurts his father by leaving for a job during his mother's sickness; in the second, a boy intoxicated with his Parisian experience is afraid to shatter it by allowing it to include his lesbian parents. Dines' voice is somewhat reminiscent of Martha Brooks (*Traveling on into the Light*, BCCB 12/94) with its graceful compression, but Dines is more accessible, funny, and vigorous. Her young narrators tell of life poised on the boundaries between anger and love, family and self, safety and truth; readers practicing a similar balancing act will welcome the compassionate insight of these stories. DS

Arthur and Stella are a portly, bourgeois wedded pair of dogs, whose placid existence on Davenport Street is marred only by the troublemaking crocodiles hanging out at the corner. When Arthur spares the life of a talking fly, he disdains its claim to be magic and makes three frivolous wishes. Next thing he knows, his toaster has turned into a squirrel, the rude crocodiles have been changed into toasters (the fly
got a little confused about the wishes), and he and Stella have been transported to a tropical island amid elaborately costumed and exceedingly celebratory natives. Finally the magic words “Burnt toast on Davenport Street” bring the couple home, but even with their new toaster (a former crocodile) Arthur still manages to burn the toast. The story’s logic has that random aspect so familiar from dreams, but the plot remains under control. There are some adult tones to the narrative, but a lot of the wryness is accessible and amusing to kids, especially if read aloud with enjoyment. The line and watercolor art is poker-faced and respectful, with restrained hues dominating the canine pair’s tasteful home and the tropical island busier in composition but with a certain staid gravity nonetheless. It’s an offbeat take on the old consequences-of-wishes theme, and many youngsters will enjoy the change of pace. DS

FINE, ANNE *The Tulip Touch.* Little, 1997 [160p]
ISBN 0-316-28325-8 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 5-8

See this month’s Big Picture, p. 3, for review.

GAVIN, JAMILA, ad. *Children Just Like Me: Our Favorite Stories;* illus. by Amanda Hall and with photographs by Barnabas Kindersley. DK, 1997 48p
ISBN 0-7894-1486-4 $14.95 Ad 6-10 yrs

In this companion volume to *Children Just Like Me* (BCCB 2/96), folktales from ten locations on the globe are glossily arranged with loads of browsable stuff. An introductory layout presents photographs of the featured children with a mini-bio, story teaser, and pointer to map location for each. The tales, each complete on two double-page spreads, share space with sidebars which show the particular child, as well as miscellaneous photographs captioned with corresponding geographical and cultural tidbits of the relevant country. For instance, in the Mexican story, “The Corn Maidens,” facts about corn, prayer sticks, a clay flute, and a tray of corn seeds with a roller for grinding the seeds embellish the tale. Story illustrations contribute visual interest with a brilliant palette full of energetic and attractive detailing although the art and the photography often compete for attention, resulting in overbusy compositions. The real weak link here is the story retellings. Their rich diversity is marred by same and tame versions that are too neatly tied up with “happily-ever-after” endings, and no source notes are appended. However, used as a launching pad to the originals, this multicultural hodgepodge may be useful, and this smorgasbord-style format is often a kid-pleaser. PM

GETZ, DAVID *Life on Mars;* illus. by Peter McCarty and with photographs. Holt, 1997 74p (Redfeather Books)
ISBN 0-8050-3708-X $14.95 R Gr. 3-6

Following up on his *Floating Home* (BCCB 5/97), which sent a kid into outer space, Getz now shoots a youngster off to Mars. In between the second-person accounts of long-term space travel and Martian conditions (“You weighed 80 pounds back home. You will weigh 30 pounds on Mars”), the book devotes chapters to the history of Mars and Martian research, the prospect of terraforming, and the recent discoveries indicating past life on the red planet. The book avoids the common nonfiction pitfalls of burying readers in a litany of facts or leaving them sated with format but starving for knowledge. It’s excellent at providing informa-
tion clearly and conveying its implications in accessible terms; even the astronomically uninclined will understand the problems of months without gravity or adjustment to the Earth for those who've spent their life on Mars. Readers just starting into topical orbit and the starstruck but bookshy will gravitate towards this one. While recent television events have raised the visual ante considerably, and the black-and-white photographs are on the stodgy side, McCarty's softly textured art is appropriately spacey. A refreshingly current bibliography (including many recent articles as well as books) is included. DS


Using writings about Baldwin and his work as well as Baldwin's own words, Gottfried has fashioned a window to a turbulent time in American history in addition to an intriguing biography. Gottfried follows Baldwin from his childhood in Harlem to his discovery of the artistic community in New York's Greenwich Village, to his expatriate life in Paris and to his return to the United States and his involvement in the Civil Rights movement. Baldwin's search for his artistic voice, his recognition and acceptance of his homosexuality, and his realization of his responsibility to his people and his country are at the core of this involving piece of nonfiction. Gottfried gives a picture of an artist struggling to express himself in a less than hospitable environment, clearly showing Baldwin's growth from an idealistic if somewhat callow youth to a renowned author of power and authority. This biography carefully blends Baldwin's life with the volatile political events that surrounded it, and the result is an intriguing synthesis. Black-and-white photographs, a list of Baldwin's writings, chapter by chapter source notes, and an index are included. JMD


After her mother lies to her about losing her job, teenager Danny Finzheimer suspects that some other stories her flamboyant drama-teacher mother has been telling her aren't exactly true either. Distracted by her mother's secrecy, Danny absentmindedly sends her long-gone, never-seen father her entry to a writing contest instead of the letter she meant for him, and it results in his showing up on their doorstep. As contrived as this plot device sounds, it doesn't result in a rosy reunion. Danny has problems with being a poor kid in a rich school (she gets free tuition because Mom works there), wonders about her unknown father, writes short stories and enters literary contests, misses friend and neighbor Elliot who died of AIDS, has a crisis when her date backs out of the Spring Fling, worries about the family finances, and finally comes to terms with everything. The conversational immediacy of Danny's first-person narration is involving, but there is too much going on here, and it all ties up a little too slickly into a package that's a little too neat. While this doesn't have the emotional resonance of Griffin's first book, The Rainy Season (BCCB 2/97), it does have a more relaxed, humorous tone, and Danny's interpersonal relationships have a natural, easy flow. The drama club and community theater touches have a built-in charm, so the junior-high set may still find Danny's trials and their (relatively) easy solutions appealing. YA readers seeking a richer read on a similar theme should try Margaret Mahy's Catalogue of the Universe (BCCB 3/86). JMD
HAAS, IRENE  *A Summertime Song*; written and illus. by Irene Haas.  McElderry, 1997  32p  ISBN 0-689-50549-3  $16.00  Ad  5-8 yrs

Young Lucy receives a party invitation and a magic hat from a visiting frog, and when she goes outside, the hat enables her to shrink to the size of a leaf. She then takes a baby-bird-driven taxi to the party, en route picking up a milliner mouse, an inchworm in search of cake, and an abandoned old doll; they evade the beak of the hungry owl and arrive safely at the party whereupon they offer their felicitations to the birthday boy—the very same owl. Oversized squarish pages, creamy paper with elegant use of framing margins and spot art, and text placed in centered verse paragraphs combine for an elegant designerly impression. Unfortunately, there's more showcase than show: the conceit is cloyingly whimsical, the plotting arbitrary, and the text’s vacillation between poetry and prose unsettling. The watercolor illustrations display what could be a fascinating Lilliputian world, teeming with insects, closeups of vegetation, and discarded objects. Unfortunately the subdued and brown-tinged palette, while appropriate for night views, muddies the events depicted and makes it hard to distinguish the dramatis personae, and compositions tend to diffuse rather than focus attention, exacerbating the problem and diminishing the interest. Junior insectophiles should go see *Microcosmos*, and young listeners with a taste for fantastical poetry will fare better with Nancy Willard’s contributions; this is more for adult fans of the Flower Fairies. DS

HISCOCK, BRUCE  *The Big Rivers: The Missouri, the Mississippi, and the Ohio*; written and illus. by Bruce Hiscock.  Atheneum, 1997  32p  ISBN 0-689-80871-2  $16.00  R  Gr. 3-5

Here is the perfect step-up from Mary Calhoun’s *Flood* (BCCB 4/97). Calhoun emphasized the tribulations of a fictional family along the Mississippi River during the 1993 floods, and now Hiscock supplies an admirably lucid explanation of how the confluence of three mighty rivers conspired with a plain ol’ nasty streak of weather to produce devastation in the Midwestern states. With virtually seamless concision, Hiscock integrates typical activities and efforts of residents along the three rivers as the “rain machine stalled over Iowa, Missouri, and neighboring states, drenching some places with two to five inches of rain each day,” levees collapsed along the upper Mississippi and Missouri, and the Ohio experienced a dry spell which, mercifully, militated against even greater damage. Watercolor pictures not only offer glimpses of human heroics and helplessness through the flood, but also cross-sections, maps, and other graphical representations of the rising rivers’ relation to the terrain through which they flow. Middle-school science students who have wrestled with the water cycle and still “don’t get it” might want to slap the textbook shut and take a peek at this picture-book presentation instead. EB


This Johnny Appleseed bears but little resemblance to Steven Kellogg’s rollicking tall tale hero or to Laurie Lawlor’s more savvy entrepreneur (*The Real Johnny Appleseed*, BCCB 11/95). Hodges’ sentimentalized take on the American legend borders on devout, portraying Appleseed as an eccentric but universally-loved do-
gooder: "[The Indians] saw that he was unlike other white men on the frontier. He was wise, and ready to help anyone in need"; "Children loved him. He would bring them simple gifts." The heavy, dark type jars against the softer watercolor and colored-pencil pictures, creating a somewhat disjointed visual presentation. Any of the tall-tale humor of the Appleseed legend is to be found in the illustrations, which gently hyperbolize baby Johnny as he catches falling apples in his hammock and, later, as he bounds several feet above the snow in his hastily woven beech snowshoes. The outline of Chapman's travels is accurate, and an author's note supplies historical background on Westward migration in the early republic. Pair this title with Kellogg's hyperkinetic Johnny Appleseed (BCCB 11/88) and launch a discussion on how legends are made. EB

HOOPER, MEREDITH  
* A Cow, a Bee, a Cookie, and Me; * illus. by Alison Bartlett. Kingfisher, 1997 32p  
ISBN 0-7534-5067-4 $14.95  
R 4-7 yrs

Grandma is going to bake honey cookies with her young grandson, Ben. "What do we need?" asks Ben. Reminiscent of Priceman's *How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World* (BCCB 2/94), the book takes young readers to visit a cow in the field (for the milk which "is shaken up and down until it turns into smooth yellow butter"), a sugar-cane field, a beehive, a hen house, and so on, in response to Ben's repeated question, until we have "exactly what we need." Rainbow hues brighten double-page spreads with text cavorting around buzzing bees, fields of wheat, and pecking hens and often landing at the left quarter of the page so we can view the cooks measuring, adding, beating, and baking the ingredients until the honey cookies come out of the oven and meet with Ben's approval. This is an affectionate step-by-step look beyond the grocery store and the pantry at a shared activity to which kids will relate. The recipe is included. Team this with Priceman's book or *Pancakes, Pancakes* by Eric Carle (BCCB 4/71), and don't forget to preheat the oven. PM

HOPKINS, LEE BENNETT  
ISBN 0-689-80658-2 $17.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
R Gr. 2-5

In a dozen + 4 short poems culled from over forty years worth of collections, mathphobes and -philes each get their moment in the spotlight. In an excerpt from *Near the Window Tree* Karla Kuskin laments, "And four and six and nine times nine/ Make me want to cry and whine," while Madeleine Comora observes with quiet awe in "Pythagoras," "All things are numbers./ The universe/ counted and measured/ even or odd,/ forms rhythmic patterns/ of emotion and harmony/ like the beating/ wings/ of birds." There's a little bit of wonderment here, as Mary O'Neill urges readers to consider a mathless world with "No zero, no birthdays,/ No way to subtract/ All of the guesswork/ Surrounding the fact," and some outright silliness, too, in Beverly McLoughland's "SOS": "Sammy's head is pounding—/ Sammy's in pain—/ A long division's got/ Stuck in his brain." These numerical musings and adventures are set in Barbour's candy-colored, quasi-tropical gouache dreamscape. Purple fish teem around a sinking Sammy while tiny, boldly outlined plumbers and doctors and locksmiths swarm his head in an attempt to dislodge the offending long division; curly blue waves roll improbably onto the beach from a placid green sea as J. Thomas Sparough's beachcomber
ponders, "Forever rhythm/where I stand/now estimated/in grains of sand." A delight for independent readers, this anthology will also be a boon to teachers attempting to integrate math across the curriculum. EB

**Hopkinson, Deborah** *Birdie's Lighthouse*; illus. by Kimberly Bulcken Root. Schwartz/Atheneum, 1997 32p ISBN 0-689-81052-0 $15.00 R 5-8 yrs

It is 1855, and ten-year-old Bertha "Birdie" Holland and her family move to Turtle Island off the coast of Maine, where her father is to be lighthouse keeper. Birdie describes the excitement and sadness of moving and her growing fondness for the solitude of the island and the lighthouse itself. She becomes her father's helper, trimming the lantern wicks, refilling them with oil, and polishing the reflectors. When her father falls ill, it is up to Birdie to keep the lanterns shining. Birdie effectively tells her own story through journal-style entries in this picture-book survival story, and the tale of the young girl bravely facing the dark night and stormy sea will rivet young listeners. Root's watercolor-and-ink illustrations have an almost historic feel to them in their depiction of the details of a livelihood formed by and dependent on the sea. The deep blues of sea and sky are interspersed with the glow of lantern and lighthouse light, while the combination of thumbnail and full-page illustrations add a salty flavor to the text and suit the unusually tall and thin format. An author's note states that Birdie's story was inspired by "many true-life lighthouse heroines." They would be proud to have Birdie as their spokeswoman. JMD


This account of the famous composer focuses primarily on his youth, describing in simple language his early affinity for music and his prodigious pan-European success, then going on to chronicle his marriage, the high points of his adult career, and his early death. The book manages to convey the unusualness of young Mozart's talent and life, but there's an odd sense of placelessness (Isadora never mentions where Mozart lives, merely where he performs) and a disappointing lack of energy. The watercolor illustrations tend to be pale and blurry and the figures awkward and indistinct, further distancing an already chronologically remote figure, but the broad cityscapes and rich court scenes provide atmosphere. This is a competent if uninspiring early biography, but it might achieve a more interesting effect if paired with that fictional account of another European prodigy, *Mirette on the High Wire* (BCCB 10/92). DS


Just as folklore has a crossover audience of children and adults, pioneering folklorists such as Harold Courlander and John Bierhorst have crossed over by publishing the finest products of their research for children as well as adults. And Jaffe, in her turn, has brought to this juvenile biography of Courlander the integrity of primary-source research usually accorded to adult nonfiction only. She supplements a clear narrative with quotes drawn from interviews with Courlander, with passages and stories from his publications, and with photographs of his family, friends,
informants, and books. Her bibliographic notes include meticulous citations and
the addresses for institutions where his work is archived, as well as lists of his life
events, books and articles, and recordings. All of this, along with the first-class
index, will guide students pursuing various trails of information: Courlander worked
with Haitians, Cubans, several African groups, East Indians, southern African
Americans, and southwestern American Indians. Best of all, Courlander and Jaffe
have shared a gift for fine storytelling that enables Jaffe to shape Courlander’s life
story into an eminently readable text—one that is supported by a spacious, unob-
trusively decorative page design. BH

with photographs
ISBN 0-689-81520-4  $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 3-5

Rules of the review demand an age level be assigned here, but anyone with a pen-
chant for the more macabre aspects of biology will be riveted by the huge, stom-
ach-churning photos of the stuff that makes us us. Each double spread includes a
teasing lead (“A dog’s dinner? . . . Is it a spooky bat cave?”), a dollop of wise-
cracking but scientifically sound text tucked under a fold-out flap (“Most blood is
made in the thighs, skull, ribs, spine, and breastbone. No doubt the best bones for
making soup—if you’re a cannibal”), and a mind-boggling enlargement of fea-
tured cells, tissues, and organs, not to mention a smattering of parasitic critters
that use the human body as a bed and breakfast. Any science teacher who holds
this up in class obviously has the group’s undivided attention; but with its bones,
blood, flaking skin, tooth decay, and head lice, let’s not ignore its possibilities for
a shuddery Halloween read. EB

JOYCE, WILLIAM  Buddy: Based on the True Story of Gertrude Lintz; written and
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027660-6  $14.95  Ad  Gr. 3-6

Gertrude Lintz led an interesting life, and between the lines of Joyce’s somewhat
fictionalized biography (timed to coincide with the recently released movie Buddy),
readers may pick up a few indications to that effect. The story concentrates on
Lintz’s acquisition of Buddy, an African gorilla, his upbringing at her estate, and
his final home in a Philadelphia Zoo. Joyce anthropomorphizes Buddy, interpret-
ing his feelings through a human emotional filter. The text is wordy and some-
what clumsy, focusing so much on the acquisition and development of Buddy that
it is difficult to get a handle on Lintz’s personality or driving motivation. Joyce’s
illustrations, in a burnt ochre monochrome, may be enough to carry the day with
his devotees, and the story may well appeal to cinematic Buddy fans. This is a slick
package very nicely produced, with art on nearly every double-page spread to break
up the large blocks of text. JMD

KNIGHT, DAWN  Mischief, Mad Mary, and Me; illus. by Jared Taylor
Williams.  Greenwillow, 1997  95p
ISBN 0-688-14865-4  $15.00  R  Gr. 4-6

In the bitter cold Minnesota winter, fourth-grader Brit longs for spring and for a
dog of her own. Spying on an eccentric neighbor lady known to all the local kids
as Mad Mary, Brit, and her friend Oly come across a big brown bear of a dog, and Brit loses her heart immediately. She knows that Mary is feeding the stray dog, but that doesn’t stop her from adopting (co-opting?) the animal the first chance she gets. From the opening paragraph describing peering through Mad Mary’s hedge, Knight invites the reader into Brit’s world, with a voice that has a real handle on the dreams and desires of a nine-year-old girl. The dynamics of a loving family are effectively portrayed, as Brit matter-of-factly copes with the worries of a sick younger sister, a roof that needs replacing, and a family budget that needs an infusion. As the wintry landscape slowly succumbs to spring, Brit slowly succumbs to the realization that her dream of owning a dog can only be fulfilled with the assistance and friendship of (the not so) Mad Mary. In this “girl and her dog” story, a basically good kid manages to do the right thing without a preachy subtext or overtly moralistic conclusion, and the result is as satisfying as a big brown dog keeping your feet warm. JMD

KROLL, VIRGINIA  

Abuelo has been in a wheelchair since an unspecified illness, but Emilio wheels him outside every warm day. The boy reads to his grandfather, and they watch the butterflies together. Neither Emilio’s Mama or Papa believe that Abuelo listens to, understands, and even communicates with Emilio, but he does. It is Emilio who finds the book that identifies the butterflies, and it is Emilio who convinces his parents that his grandfather is still aware and conscious of what is going on around him. Bright, saturated colors and Peter Max-ish compositions and elements (floating butterflies, flowers, hearts, etc.) are the hallmark of these illustrations. The graphics are very poster-like, but the use of watercolors, acrylics, and salt give the paintings a rougher, more interesting textural depth than the smooth, almost glossy finish acrylic paintings sometimes have. Kroll’s text is touching but crisp as she skillfully balances on the line between sweet and saccharine. Emilio wears his heart out in the open, if not literally on his sleeve. In fact, this whole sentimental story is wearing its heart out in the open, as the boy and his grandfather connect to each other and then to the rest of the world over a group of red admirals, the brown, red and white butterflies that sun themselves on the white garage door. JMD

KURTIS-KLEINMAN, EILEEN  

Musical-matinee-mad Aunt Lena takes a tumble in the kitchen (“In the middle of a showstopping number, Aunt Lena slipped on a piece of cooked cabbage and landed, THUMP, right on her big rump”) and winds up missing her next theatrical outing. Sophie, her niece, convinces Grandma, Uncle Solly and Uncle Dutch to put on a show in what can only be called Lena’s boudoir, and the result is a happy panoply of show biz schmaltz and flashy color illustrations. Greenseid’s acrylic paintings are loud and wonderful, just like Aunt Lena, with their nearly neon glory of purple bed curtains, teal carpeting, and bright yellow and blue-squared kitchen linoleum. The text smoothly presents young Sophie’s point of view and reveals her loving (and cornily talented) family members. Aunt Lena
recovers, and, in her own inimitable style, rewards Sophie's generosity with a "Get your patent leather pumps and pink pocketbook, honey—have I got a surprise for you!" trip to a Broadway musical. This book is certainly going to appeal to the kids and adults who have an Aunt Lena—but it's going to appeal to the ones who only wish they did as well. JMD


A camel named Habibi decides he can't go on without a fez, and thus ensues a lively chase through the local bazaar, where Habibi trades his owner's slippers for a new chapeau and then dashes dashing through the marketplace showing it off. Habibi's hapless owner Ahmed finally finds his camel back where he belongs—giving camel rides to tourist kids, red fez rakishly balanced on his head. Lewin's watercolors, while less sophisticated than James Stevenson's, have that same kind of appeal with their utilization of white space and strong dark outlines that give movement and character. This has the pace of a good readaloud, as Habibi trots through the bazaar, "the black tassel jouncing merrily atop his fez." "Inspired by a camel driver and his camel . . . met on a recent trip to Egypt," Lewin's story is slight and predictable, but the slapstick humor has appeal and the lovable Habibi certainly has personality. JMD


A brother and sister share the delightful scariness of a nighttime thunder and lightning storm and awaken to a rainwashed world of—what else?—puddles. The duo cheerfully puddle jump, mud splash, and slog through wet grass, then dry off, warm up, and do it all over again. London's poem is a rhythmic readaloud with splashy sound effects and many invitations to be declamatory, dramatic, and participatory. The illustrations are more naïve and cartoony than Karas' earlier work; large figures and objects fill compositions well suited to group viewing. The big double-page spreads show bright greenery dotted with yellow butterflies, white daisies, and blue-sky-reflecting puddles as the slickered children joyously "drip in the doorway shouting, 'We're home!' 'You're wet!' Mama howls." The duo's delight is reflected in their cheerfully dramatic countenances. Karas outlines each image in soft black, suggesting a coloring book filled in by a very careful and artistically assured child. This will be a storytime favorite in any weather. JMD


In Mount Stilly cemetery, Boogie Bones is the best dancer ever born . . . errrr, died . . . whatever. When the lively skeleton community finds a flyer announcing a dance contest, Boogie Bones longs to strut his stuff. Dressed in an old cap and tuxedo, he goes to the Town Hall, where he does indeed impress all and sundry with his spindle-shanked choreography. When he gets too excited during "Jump-
ing at the Woodside,” his cover is blown and his good time is over—that is, until a little girl named Maggie Brown announces, “I’m not afraid of any old bones!” and she and Boogie win the dance contest with “the best lindy hop the crowd had ever seen.” A bizarre and weird premise? Sure, but still a rollickingly fun one as Hawkes’ humorously macabre illustrations show a remarkably unspooky bunch of skeletons amusing themselves in the graveyard (observed by a carefully hidden Maggie), the disguised Boogie dancing up a storm at the Town Hall, and a gleeful Maggie with “her braid . . . a blur and her skirt spread like a blossom” during her dance with the bony, lindy-hopping Boogie. Loredo’s jolly sense of the madness of it all combines with Hawkes’ cheerfully haunting paintings to make this a dandy, danceable readaloud. JMD


Following a prelude that covers the history of the world from glacial retreat to the present in under ten pages, McClung discusses the endangerment or extinction of some of the largest animals on earth’s major land masses, island groups, and oceans. The focus here is on the role of humans—Western humans, in particular—in the animals’ disappearance (McClung acknowledges but largely downplays the tangled issue of developing nations’ rights to manage their own territorial environs), and a naïve reader could be led to believe that nothing ever goes extinct except through human predation. Some of the African information is already dated—Zaire has been renamed, and the total ban on ivory trade has been lifted in several nations. Plentiful black-and-white illustrations are stodgy and serviceable, reminiscent of stuffed specimens in museum displays rather than animals in the wild. Given the broad scope of the survey, however, this title should be an inviting first stop for report topic hunters, who will find well organized and indexed encyclopedic information on a host of lesser known species (how about the Philippine monkey-eating eagle or the elephant bird of Madagascar?), custom-made for “scooping” classmates and impressing the teacher. Final illustrations and index not seen. EB


Ernest Shackleton’s third Antarctic trip has progressed from legend to historical footnote in less than a hundred years (it began in 1914 just after the outbreak of World War I). McCurdy tells the story of Shackleton and his team aboard the Endurance, which was trapped in the Antarctic pack ice, carried away from the land towards the open sea, and then crushed between floes. The group then had to make their way off the ice and to two islands—first the uninhabited, closer Elephant Island where most of the expedition landed and then the second, South Georgia, where after an unprecedented cross-island trek Shackleton contacted the whaling station to arrange for rescue of his men. It’s an exhilarating story, which McCurdy has understandably pared down considerably for compression’s sake.
Unfortunately, some of the more necessary and atmospheric details have been pared out as well: kids will want to know just how cold it was (no estimates of temperatures appear), how many miles the various legs of the adventure were (the only measure given is for the sail to South Georgia, and that’s confusingly mentioned), and how things frozen in a sheet of solid ice can move away from shore (the absence of any mention of the dogs is also notable, though perhaps more understandable in light of their fate). McCurdy has eschewed his usual woodcuts in favor of paints here; the lavender and green undertones of sky, ice, and sea recall Edward Wilson’s Antarctic watercolors, but figures are stiff and awkward and the scenes and people dubiously tidy. It’s still one of the great true adventure stories, however, and this will be an effective entry to it for many youngsters. An afterword explains what happened to the main figures in the saga; a bibliography and index are included. DS

MEYER, CAROLYN  
*Jubilee Journey.* Gulliver/Harcourt, 1997 [256p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-15-201377-6 $12.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

In this sequel to *White Lilacs* (BCCB 1/94), Rose Lee Jefferson’s granddaughter and biracial great-grandchildren accept her invitation to visit over the Juneteenth holiday, which also happens to be the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Dillon, Texas black community’s forced move from Freedomtown to The Flats. As the family becomes reacquainted, granddaughter Susan faces up to the unpleasant memories surrounding her mother’s death, the grandchildren learn that their integrated and enlightened Connecticut community doesn’t set any national standards for racial harmony, and Rose Lee realizes that her repository of paintings and memories of Freedomtown is a treasure to be shared rather than hoarded. This novel deals largely in personalities, not plot, and lacks the dramatic tension of its predecessor, but ample references and introductory genealogies will reacquaint readers with the Jeffersons and the Bells, and they can compare and assess whether Jim Crow lingers in Dillon as a living presence or a troublesome ghost. Newcomers will require a proper introduction through *White Lilacs.* EB

MOCHIZUKI, KEN  
*Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story;* illus. by Dom Lee. Lee & Low, 1997 [34p]
ISBN 1-880000-49-0 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 3-6

Hiroki Sugihara was five years old in 1940, when his father, Chiune Sugihara, served as Japanese consul to Lithuania. One morning, the family awakes to find hundreds of Jewish refugees from Poland standing at the consulate gates. In a family decision, Chiune Sugihara defies an order from the Japanese government and issues visas to the hundreds of Jews fleeing from the Nazi advance. Narrated by the five-year-old Hiroki, this is a powerful personal story based on the adult Hiroki’s own words, and told in an informed voice cognizant of the historical context of his family history. Oil paint and colored pencil over images scratched in encaustic wax have a softly etched quality that gives the sepia-toned, photograph-like compositions a somberly realistic yet consistently interesting array of textures. The gently mottled illustrations have several textural layers, avoiding the smooth glossiness of pencil drawings while retaining realistic evidence of the me-
The monochromatic palette includes only a few colorful details: the pale pink of Hiroki's cheek; the faded inks of the visas' blue and purple stamps. This is a successful rendering of complex historical and moral issues into a form that younger readers can understand and appreciate. An afterword from Hiroki Sugihara concludes the text. JMD

MOORE, ROBIN  Hercules; illus. by Alexa Rutherford. Simon, 1997  75p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-689-81228-0 $15.00

Translating Hercules from Greek mythology into easy reader requires chutzpah—the story isn't exactly laden with family values, and the oversimplification of the myth results in some notable omissions. Moore never explains, for instance, why Hera pursues Hercules with such vengeance (her husband Zeus begat the hero during one of his famous dalliances with a mortal); nor do we learn that Hercules killed, among many others, his first wife and their children, and in one night slept with fifty of a king's daughters, each of whom bore a son or two thereby populating Sardinia. What we do get here are the action-packed battles with threatening creatures: the snakes attacking his cradle, the lion(s), the Hydra, the various Labors. Indeed, the gods' antics are presented as historical fact which, even with the sex deleted, admittedly makes for livelier reading than *Dick and Jane* despite the undistinguished writing style. Black-and-white drawings, though exaggerated in facial expression, adhere literally to the action. BH

NAYLOR, PHYLLIS REYNOLDS  Saving Shiloh. Atheneum, 1997  [144p]
ISBN 0-689-81460-7 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 6-8

The concluding volume of Naylor's Shiloh trilogy finds Marty, to his own surprise, in the role of Judd Travers' defender. As Judd recovers from the physical trauma of a truck accident, he appears to be recovering from some emotional traumas as well as he attempts to redefine himself in the community. Unfortunately, not everyone is willing to believe that Judd is really turning over a new leaf; and, after an unsolved murder and a rash of petty thievery, community suspicion falls on Judd. Marty awakens to the realization that rumor and gossip can cause serious damage, and in spite of himself—and the apparent evidence—he champions his old nemesis. As in the previous volumes, characterization is complex; moral dilemmas unfold with an ethical clarity that is unlike real life but still dramatically effective. Marty's thought processes have matured, his language is more formal (when he remembers, that is), and his conclusions, while well-thought out, appear to be his and not the author's. Judd, too, has changed, trying to fumble his way into a place in the community with a little help from Marty and others, as those not so quick to judge extend themselves in an appropriately neighborly fashion. The telling details that added heart to the first two novels are present here: the family dynamic that gave the first installments a sense of liveliness is still present; David and Marty are still friends; and Judd, reformed though he may be, is still unpredictable and scary. The conclusion in which Judd saves Shiloh from a river in flood may be a bit pat, but it is satisfyingly, emotionally right. Judd has been moving toward this moment for a long time, and readers will be grateful when he finally gets there. JMD

Johnny Nesbit wakes up one morning to find himself inside a bottle held by classmate Cheryl Zennor. It seems Cheryl has been willingly transported to the land of the Strangers (the fairy folk) where she happily keeps house for her "Master" and takes care of the other children he has secreted away. At the heart of this sequel to *The Same Place but Different* (BCCB 7/95) is an adventure story, with Johnny finally convincing Cheryl of their need to rescue the kidnapped children and to escape. Johnny is still a likable character, but the tension and suspense that propelled the first book is missing from the second, resulting in a story that lacks the cohesion necessary to sustain its own momentum. Characterization is a bit thin, and some plot elements are dependent upon knowledge of the first book or are offhandedly explained. Still, it's an enjoyable spin through the "otherworld," and fans of the first book will probably tolerate the ambiguities fairly well. JMD


Beginning with "One small Rose," this birthday counting book adds up to a satisfying rhyming readaloud. The birthday girl (the aforementioned Rose) unwraps her gift amidst "four shiny ribbons . . . seven bright colors . . . ten happy fingers" to discover "one small kitten with a soft, wet nose. One small kitten for one small Rose." Concerned adults will be looking for air holes, but toddlers and preschoolers will be happy with Noll's canny recreation of birthday-gift-unwrapping suspense. In bold graphics and saturated colors, Noll's cartoonish illustrations depict shiny ribbons, fancy paper, and family glee in a very kid-pleasing fashion, even if the big-cheeked dollface art is a tad sweety. The kitten (with any luck an informed gift from prepared parents) is the gratifying climax to a blissfully celebratory event. Noll's slight text is toddler-pleasing simple, and this should find a cozy niche in lapsit storytimes. JMD

O'Brien, Claire  *Sam's Sneaker Search;* illus. by Charles Fuge. Simon, 1997 32p ISBN 0-689-80169-6  $10.95 Ad 4-6 yrs

Sam, stuffed penguin clutched to her chest, is on a quest to find her missing sneaker so she can finish dressing for school. Under the bed is a lion and a bunch of dust mice, in the closet is a family of bats watching the moths dance (the lindy, apparently), and in the bathroom is a huge python squeezing the toothpaste tube. Well, you get the picture—and so will readers, because Fuge's color illustrations are what makes this predictable cumulative tale worth reading. The animals have distinct personalities, and the pictures are full of the sort of details kids like to point out: the lion under the bed parallels the stuffed lion on top of the bed and the drawn lion adorning the wall; the octopus in the bathroom is seated discreetly on the potty with one arm wrapped around the commode, one holding a sailboat, one holding a plunger and one trying to wrest Sam's penguin from her determined grip; and the hen in the kitchen is chasing her chicks in and around a variety of...
colorful jars and pots. The drafting of Sam herself is stiff and awkward, but the animals’ expressiveness more than makes up for it. Fuge effectively stages his caricatured animal characters to make the most of their activities, making this a strong storytime contender. JMD

**Orgill, Roxane** *If I Only Had a Horn: Young Louis Armstrong;* illus. by Leonard Jenkins. Houghton, 1997 [32p]
ISBN 0-395-75919-6 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R 5-7 yrs

**Schroeder, Alan** *Satchmo’s Blues;* illus. by Floyd Cooper. Doubleday, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-385-32046-9 $15.95 Ad 5-7 yrs

These two picture-book biographies are remarkably different not only in tone and graphic interpretation but also in their stories of Satchmo’s first encounter with a horn. In her introductory note, Orgill explains that Armstrong was inventive about the facts of his life and gives the sources for her version, while Schroeder terms his text a “fictional re-creation” and suggests two titles without indicating if he drew his version from them. Orgill’s text is brief, rhythmically readable (complete with a poetic refrain), and innovatively illustrated; Jenkins’ jazzy paintings teem with collage effects, unexpected color contrasts, and musical movement. Schroeder’s text carries a heavy freight of words, and Cooper’s monochromatic images—some haunting, some moody—have depth but may not offer young listeners enough visual detail to support the longer readaloud. Most striking are the contrasting values represented by the different accounts: Orgill shows young Louis getting arrested, not unusual for a poor young African-American in the streets of New Orleans around 1900, and learning how to play the horn in the Colored Waifs’ Home. Schroeder has him saving up his pennies toward a pawnshop cornet by reselling old market produce—and then giving up enough for his sister’s birthday dinner, only to be rewarded with the final silver dollar for his generosity. (Mama cooks jambalaya with shrimp, crab, and thick slices of spicy Cajun sausage in Schroeder’s book; Mayann cooks fish-head stew with beans, rice, and fish heads in Orgill’s.) It’s interesting that Orgill’s book, which is less literal in both text and illustration, seems more realistic than Schroeder’s, but an audience of elementary-school listeners could have a terrific time comparing them after a session of Satchmo’s music. BH

**Page, Debra** *Orcas Around Me: My Alaskan Summer;* illus. by Leslie W. Bowman. Whitman, 1997 40p
ISBN 0-8075-6137-1 $15.95 R 6-10 yrs

Page recasts her experiences as a commercial salmon fisher in the words of eight-year-old Taiga (Page’s son’s real name), who spends the school year in Fairbanks and his summers trolling for salmon on his parents’ boats. A significant amount of information about marine animals and the fishing industry is woven throughout Taiga’s narration, but his choice of family stories and details of life afloat in the coastal waters provide plenty of action to engage primary grade listeners. A hooked porpoise thrashes in panic, hindering Dad’s attempts to help it, until their old dog Akimu leans over the side of the boat and calms it with “a strange sound, almost like singing. Dad had never heard a dog make a sound like that before.” Wearing a life jacket is vitally important, as Taiga discovers when he falls off the boat, and
"Mom says she didn’t know if I’d come up under her boat, under the dock, get crushed between them, or sink to the bottom.” Despite some awkward drafting, Bowman’s watercolors convey the austere beauty of Alaska’s southwestern coast and suggest how the vast land- and seascapes dwarf the sturdy fishing craft. An appended wildlife glossary provides additional data on fish and mammals Taiga mentions in his narration. EB

PATENT, DOROTHY HINSHAW  Back to the Wild; illus. with photographs by William Muñoz. Gulliver Green/Harcourt, 1997 70p ISBN 0-15-200280-4  $18.00 R Gr. 3-7

Examining the reintroduction of captive-bred endangered species into the wild, Patent discusses the issue generally and focuses specifically on reintroduction programs for the red wolf, the black-footed ferret, the golden lion tamarin, and several species of lemur. She deftly interweaves personal experience, relevant details, and consideration of larger influences and repercussions into a clear and understandable account of such efforts (particularly welcome is the mention of monetary expense including specific figures, which many books on ecological topics avoid). Muñoz makes good animal photography look easy: his images clarify technical details of the text as well as personalizing the species in question, and young readers will find the intimate closeups on bright-eyed subjects irresistible. Useful for a younger audience than Nicholas Nirgiotis’ capable No More Dodos (BCCB 2/97), this will give some shape to zoo visits and provide concerned youngsters with some specific referents. An index is included. DS


Young Larry is a polar bear growing up in the north with his mother and his brother, Roy. Of course, youth must end, and “the day finally came when Larry and Roy’s mother called them to her, and hit each of them in the head. ‘Get lost,’ she said. ‘Go and fend for yourselves.’” The bear-boys figure they know how to fend (“more or less”), but Larry floats south on an ice floe and ends up in Bayonne, New Jersey. He’s in search of a job that will pay him his favored food, muffins, but ursine employment is problematic until he saves wealthy hotelier Mr. Frobisher from drowning and thus earns himself a job and a home for life. In At the Hotel Larry, Mr. Frobisher’s young daughter happily describes the pleasures of having an on-site bear (he works as the lifeguard at the pool, which bears a sign “Make sure the bear likes you before using the pool”). When Larry and his young friend visit the zoo one day, Larry is delighted to find his brother Roy in the polar-bear enclosure, and he’s happy to be able to fête Roy and his friends with a party at Hotel Larry. This is classic Pinkwater, with the cheerful absurdity and kid-appealing concepts he’s famous for, plus the compression that his stories sometimes lack. Larry is amiable and straightforward (“I am sure any bear who has eaten a person has a very good reason”), an Algeresque hero whose rewards are only his fair due. The concept of a bear-staffed hotel is sure to tickle young readers, who will find Motel 6 sadly lacking in comparison. Jill Pinkwater’s art has an upbeat sturdiness, with its emphasis on color and scraggly line, that is most appropriate to the stories. Though the text’s length makes it more suitable for reading alone, eager younger siblings might also enjoy hearing this from their literate older brethren. DS

Martial arts books are phenomenally popular in libraries, and having enough of them on the shelves is always a challenge. Finding books on this subject for youth that offer more than a few diagrams of stances is also a challenge, and Rafkin meets it with this browsing compendium of philosophy, story, and history. Rafkin discusses the origin and history of martial arts, martial arts practices around the world, the rudiments of training today, and the selection of a personally suitable form of martial arts training. Throughout the book, the history and philosophy of martial arts from karate to tae kwon do to kendo are interspersed with stories of ancient masters and modern champions both male and female. Rafkin’s style is accessible and informative, and the text will appeal to reluctant readers as well as martial arts aficionados. The attractive layout and design includes black-and-white photographs, line drawings, and text boxes (sometimes surrounded with red borders) containing interesting, informative tidbits. A bibliography, a list of books for further reading, a short list of martial arts associations in the United States, and an index are included. JMD

RODDIE, SHEN  Toes Are to Tickle; illus. by Kady MacDonald Denton. Tricycle, 1997 20p ISBN 1-883672-49-X $13.95

A day in the life of two toddlers, an older sister and her younger brother, provide the backdrop for this concept book. This is pretty to look at, with a cheerful, sunny-hued palette of watercolor and pen, featuring a cartoonish Oxenburyesque family and their pets in kid-friendly situations as the children get dressed (and undressed), visit the park (“A see-saw is for feeling funny in the tummy”), play (“Blankets are for making tents”), eat (“Jell-O is for wobbling”), and go to bed (“Mommy is for one more cuddle”). Although some of the textual patterns seem a little awkward (“Boxes are to see what’s in them”), there is enough visual humor to gently enamor most young lapsitters: the bare little backside of the boy at his bath, the children making faces in the mirror, the boy emptying the contents of Mommy’s purse. Roddie and Denton have provided youngsters with a happy concoction of fun and warm childhood scenes. This isn’t a bad way for the little loves in your life to end the day. PM


Mama Provi prepares some arroz con pollo for her granddaughter Lucy after Lucy comes down with the chicken pox and cannot make her usual Friday visit. On her way from her first floor apartment to Lucy’s eighth floor apartment with her poultry treat, Mama Provi passes the doors of her neighbors. The cooking aromas that waft from under each door triggers a culinary trade-off—white bread from Mrs. Landers, frijoles negros from Señor Rivera, fresh green salad from Mrs. Bazzini, collard greens from Mrs. Johnson, etc.—that results in Mama Provi arriving at the top floor with a foods-from-around-the-world feast that cheers the chicken-pox-ridden (but apparently unstoppable) Lucy right up. Kids will catch on to the pattern of this cumulative story quickly, but that won’t limit their enjoyment of it as cozy Mama Provi bustles about her kitchen, huffs up the stairs with her pot of
chicken and rice, and trades happily with her neighbors. Roth's watercolors have a light, airy feeling not usually found in picture books about urban apartment dwellers, and his tipsy perspectives lend a whimsy to the compositions that contributes to their effectiveness and appeal. This is going to make those looking for a culturally inclusive readaloud very happy. JMD


SULLIVAN, GEORGE  Alamo!  Scholastic, 1997  96p illus. with photographs Paper ed. ISBN 0-590-50313-8 $5.99 R Gr. 4-6

Santella's entry in the popular American history series offers a barebones but lucid outline of the events leading up to the battle and the Mexican capture of the mission compound, concluding with a mere two-paragraph summary of the Texans' subsequent rout of Santa Anna. Due undoubtedly to the space constraints of its series format, the account focuses on the major players—William Travis, Jim Bowie, and Davy Crockett—and portrays the trio as, if not exactly noble, at least self-sacrificing freedom fighters. Sullivan's longer work is more nuanced, alerting readers to the opposing views of the battle and site held by various cultural groups (Mexicans, Tejanos, American Indians) and to the diverse opinions among the defenders' contemporaries regarding Texas independence and the wisdom of attempting to defend the makeshift fortress. Tensions arising from the split leadership of Travis and Bowie, the roles of lesser-known soldiers and civilians, and the inadequate communication and support from other Texas outposts are also considered. Students looking for a quick read will be drawn by the brevity and attractive layout of Santella's work, but history buffs (and report writers chasing an “A”) willing to tackle the double-columned text and stodgy black-and-white illustrations will be rewarded with Sullivan's more thorough, but equally readable, narrative. EB


Chill, frost, a respite of warmth, and a blast of cold—fall gives way to winter by fits and starts as Schnur's acrostics trace the close of the year. The best entries lyrically convey seasonal images: "In the north/ Cones of/ Ice/ Cling/ Like whiskers to the/ Eaves" and "On sky-dark/ Wings this hunter needs no/ Light to find its prey." Alphabetical demands do strain the text, however, as "U" takes fanciful leave of its homier companions—"Up beyond the/ Night sky, an/ Indigo darkness like/ Velvet/ Embraces the farthest/ Reaches of the mind,/ Sun, moon, stars./ Everything." Although the ever-problematic "X"—"Xylem" in this case—is cleverly incorporated, non-botanists will probably need to consult a dictionary. Hand-tinted linoleum cuts in an array of bold autumnal hues offer pleasing, literal interpretations of the verse, but the monotonous perspective, which provides the same point of view for every subject, offers little spatial depth. Wordplay fanciers will probably dismiss these shortcomings, though, and admire Schnur's verbal craftsmanship. EB
SCHROEDER, ALAN  *Satchmo's Blues.*

See review under Orgill, p. 22.

SHANNON, GEORGE  *True Lies: 18 Tales for You to Judge;* illus. by John O’Brien.  Greenwillow, 1997  64p  ISBN 0-688-14483-7  $15.00  Ad  Gr. 3-6

In eighteen short traditional tales, Shannon presents characters that are experts at manipulating the truth. As in his *Stories to Solve* series, these brief tales from many cultures (in which the protagonist has somehow lied and not lied at the same time) are presented as riddles to answer or mysteries to solve, with the solution given following the tale. Illustrated with squiggly pen-and-ink drawings, this is a good browsing book and should have appeal for a broad audience. The setup isn’t always fair (a key piece of information is withheld in story #14), and the short stories are more fragment than folktales, but they are pithy and unvarnished and will intrigue the same kids who decimate shelves of riddle and joke books. Shannon’s detailed source notes are a good starting point for those interested in seeking out additional variants. JMD


Michelle—almost always called Mike—is determined to find her Romeo, her Him, the boy who’s her soulmate for life. And she does: Bill is older and gorgeous, and they have tons in common (they both like Cel-Ray soda and they go to the same dentist), and she goes to basketball games with him (even though she doesn’t like basketball) and out for pizza (sausage, even though she’s a vegetarian, but Bill forgets). The book is skin-crawlingly accurate about the absorption, self-centeredness, and simple tedium of teen love: Mike is Bill’s doormat, chucking her friends aside for even the smallest dab of attention from Bill but getting annoyed with them when they don’t want to hear her prattle on about him endlessly. Readers will spot early on that Bill isn’t the most wonderful guy in the world and that he’s wrong for Mike, who would be far more suited to her platonic friend Bobby Bone, who clearly adores her. Though this is more a book about competing romantic ideologies than ideology vs. realism, Sheldon avoids predictability by having Mike realize Bone’s suitability too late—he has already become an item with their mutual close friend Hope. The writing keeps things energetic even when Mike’s convictions get flabby, and readers will be happy to see Mike getting a second crack at a soulmate at the book’s end. DS


"Father, I’m going out into the world, where I can do things as I like," says young Leif, who is as stubborn as he is good-looking. Warned against working for the Troll, Leif sets out to do just that in this shortened version of the traditional Norwegian tale. Luckily for Leif, the clever and lovely Master Maid takes a fancy to him and tells him how to complete each of the tasks the Troll sets for him. On the fourth day, when the Troll asks Master Maid to cook Leif in the stew, she outwits the Troll and the lovers escape together. The young couple marry soon after (Shep-
herd leaves out the last third of the traditional story, in which Master Maid must win back her forgetful beau) and, in a twist on the old tale, the once-stubborn Leif promises to obey his bride, “and he did—which is why they lived happily ever after.” The full-page watercolor paintings, framed in mustard-colored borders, attempt to place the story in medieval Norway: copper pots hang on the walls of the Troll’s cottage; thick wooden dishes line the shelves; Leif helps Master Maid clean lingonberries while they flirt with each other. Unfortunately, the fairy from the hills is much too gauzy, the stylized landscape too tame, and the figures stiff and oddly proportioned. Nevertheless, this is a strong tale with good readaloud and storytelling possibilities. Source notes are included. PMc


In this latest offering in the Let’s-Read-and-Find-Out series, young sleepyheads and insomniacs alike can learn about the importance and value of sleep (as Mom has been saying all along). Animal sleep habits introduce the concept to youngsters (“When a horse goes to sleep, its eyelids go down. When a chicken goes to sleep, its eyelids go up . . . when you go to sleep, which way do your eyelids go?”). Facts about infants, toddlers, schoolkids, grown-ups, and their respective sleep needs are presented in a blend of simple text and cut-paper shapes punctuated by starry night scenes and bright dayscapes sprinkled with the sleepy and the wide-awake. A sleep experiment, which produced grumpy scientists with grumpy, tired faces (“The scientists grew cross and mean. They got mad at their friends”) is sure to provoke some lively discussions among kids on how long they could stay awake. Although such newly acquired knowledge may not change young listeners’ natural aversion to naps and bedtimes, this first dose of science might serve to tuck a few little ones in for the night. PM

SPEED, TOBY. *Whoosh! Went the Wish*; illus. by Barry Root. Putnam, 1997 32p ISBN 0-399-23000-9 $15.95 R 4-8 yrs

Henry loves his little house at the foot of the mountain. It has “four windows, from which he could see the whole world.” The only thing missing from Henry’s life is companionship and, more than anything else, he wishes for a cat. Meanwhile, in the big city, a wishing fairy has had it with urban life and moves to the mountain, where she sees Henry’s sincere, shiny wish floating by. After several failures to communicate (Henry’s wishes keep losing the “cat” part with some amusing results), the fairy loses her patience with the whole process: “Old hill,” she muttered, “find yourself another fairy. I wish Henry had his house back. And I wish I were his cat.” All ends happily as Henry gets his wish and the fairy gets some well-deserved rest. This wish-fulfillment tale belongs in a storytime along with *Millions of Cats* and *Barney Bipple’s Magic Dandelions*. Speed’s straightforward style keeps the magical elements under control and lends an air of realism to the whole fantasy. The comical tale is given added impetus by Root’s gouache and watercolor illustrations that depict bucolic hillside and urban traffic with the same appealing aplomb. Henry is a flannel-shirted, suspended old gentleman just
longing for a feline; the fairy, with her feather boa and star-tipped wand, floats above the landscape (urban or rural) just hoping for a sensible wish. When Henry and the fairy finally get together, it's a match made in picture-book heaven. JMD


A puppy-sized hardback complete with leash attached to its spine, this book insists that it's a dog under a wizard's curse. It points out that it can wag its tail (a tail pups—sorry, *pops* up) and bark (Bow-wow! streams across a spread), then it tells how it passed through the hands of various magical owners, survived various curses, and ended up in its current form. The book/dog is quite persuasive about the advantages of this kind of pet ("I don't have fleas and I *never* bite"), and it even offers a fuzzy dog-shape to pet ("I love sitting in your lap"). The story starts to roam when it goes into flashback country, so the best part is the encountering of the concept and the changes rung on it. The chunky line-and-watercolor art shows an appealingly generic orange puppy; flashback scenes segue into thicker acrylics, which are less effective and busier on the page but are livened up with the occasional photograph. It would be too mean to hand this book to dog-yearning youngsters and tell them to make do, but the original approach and dorky humor will make many kids eager to get their paws on it. DS

Spinelli, Eileen  *Lizzie Logan Gets Married.* Simon, 1997  91p ISBN 0-689-81066-0  $15.00 R Gr. 3-5

Heather's first day in third grade doesn't start out very well—she wakes up with a wart on her thumb and runs frantically to her mother, who doesn't seem to appreciate the seriousness of the situation. Never mind—Heather always has her friend Lizzie to fall back on. Lizzie's response is gratifying: she diagnoses Heather with "toaditus" and applies her homemade cure of "tame toadstools" (mushrooms). But Lizzie has other things on her mind: her mother is marrying Sam, and Lizzie has a wedding to plan. Irrepressible and loving, Lizzie teaches Heather the "wedding walk," decorates a football helmet to protect the chiropterophobic Heather from bats, and generally keeps things lively. Spinelli's breezy humor belies the skill with which she presents the two girls, their friendship, and their concerns. In this sequel to *Lizzie Logan Wears Purple Sunglasses*, the dialogue is unforced and funny, the adults are present and caring, and the plot situations have the smack of real life about them. If your Cleary lovers haven't discovered Heather and Lizzie, they are in for a treat. JMD

Stevenson, Harvey  *Big, Scary Wolf*; written and illus. by Harvey Stevenson. Clarion, 1997  [32p] ISBN 0-395-74213-7  $14.00 Reviewed from galleys Ad  4-6 yrs

The bedtime bogies strike again. This time, little Rose can't sleep because she is certain that a long-eared, sharp-toothed wolf is lingering in her room. Viewers will quickly recognize that the shadow she mistakes for a wolf is cast by a hat on her toybox and that the sound of the wolf salivating over his tasty meal is actually a faucet dripping in the bathroom. Rose flees to her parents' room, and Papa turns
on the child psychology to convince her that a wolf wouldn't like it very well at their house ("In his warm, furry coat, he'd want to be outside playing with his friends"). Adopting this logic, Rose agrees he'd probably get his claws caught in the carpeting, and he wouldn't enjoy "getting his hair washed or having it brushed to get all the tangles out." The lurid combination of teal, rose, and purple acrylics suits Rose's imaginary terrors, but the color pattern scarcely tames as she succumbs to peaceful slumber. The expressive wolf steals the show, from his menacing crouch in the shadow of the toybox to his wide-eyed amazement at finding his hair set in pigtails. This pop-psychology approach to bedtime fears lacks the bite of Jackie French Koller's *No Such Thing* (BCCB 3/97), but it's a good weapon in any parent's arsenal to combat the midnight jitters. EB

**SULLIVAN, GEORGE  *Alamo!***

See review under Santella, p. 25.

ISBN 0-395-82745-0  $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys**  

R  Gr. 2-4

Shingebiss, the merganser duck, defies Winter Maker and refuses to be miserable during the cold, icy months of the year. With his sharp beak he pulls up reeds at the edge of the frozen lake, dives into the water, and gets himself some fish to fill his stomach, making the freezing winter days bearable. Winter Maker tries everything to thwart the little duck but to no avail, and in a showdown in the heated warmth of Shingebiss' lodge, it is the mighty Winter Maker who must relent and flee to the restoring cold outdoors. This is a thoughtfully designed, well-written retelling; Van Laan's text, though formal and somewhat stately, communicates the irreverent joy of Shingebiss as he happily overcomes winter's cold. Bowen's woodblock prints have a richness of detail and depth of color unusual in this medium, as the little green duck battles the blue-faced, abominable-snowman-like Winter Maker. Some of the text blocks are framed with a colored outline, topped by the moon in phases and with the logs that burn on Shingebiss' fire providing a connecting visual motif on the bottom. The single and double-page spreads alternate between woodcuts on rich background colors of purple and orange and woodcuts on white, and Bowen's mastery of her white space makes this book's design remarkably effective. Van Laan includes a glossary of Ojibwe terms (spelled phonetically) used in the text and a list of sources consulted. JMD

**VAN STEENWYK, ELIZABETH  *My Name Is York;* illus. by Bill Farnsworth. Rising Moon, 1997 32p  
ISBN 0-87358-650-6  $14.95  
Ad 6-9 yrs**

It's unlikely that the typical picture-book audience is up on the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and this title, which focuses on one of its lesser known participants, William Clark's slave York, won't do much to fill them in. The fictionalized protagonist recounts only a few of the journey's highlights—a sojourn among the Mandans, the birth of Sacajawea's baby, a rescue from a rushing river—frequently interjecting his own dream of freedom which, as listeners learn from a concluding note, is never granted. Younger children are likely to become impatient with the
general dearth of action and with York's mannered formality ("The wilderness increases in determined fierceness along the shores. It hides the owners of curious eyes. Yet, we know someone is there, following our journey closely on silent feet"). Farnsworth's earth-toned oil paintings freeze the expedition members and their Indian hosts into heroic, rigid poses that elevate them to legendary stature while draining them of their humanity. While this entry may not significantly enhance the history curriculum, it does, however, remind listeners that it took more than historically noted expedition leaders to expand and explore our country's frontiers.

EB

WADSWORTH, GINGER  
Laura Ingalls Wilder: Storyteller of the Prairie.  
Lerner, 1997 128p illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-8225-4950-6  $17.21  R  Gr. 4-6

Little House fans will welcome this new biography about one of children's literature's most beloved heroines, Laura Ingalls Wilder. An abundance of black-and-white photographs as well as many of the trademark illustrations by Garth Williams grace a straightforward text which begins with the lives of Laura's parents, follows Wilder until her death in 1957 at age ninery, and concludes with her daughter Rose's death in 1968. Wilder enthusiasts will recognize many of the experiences which she culled from her life to share in her books, and they will enjoy some new ones as well. More thorough glimpses into her adult life with her husband, Manley (Almanzo), and daughter Rose, and into her late-in-life career as a children's author, serve up a satisfying finale to her celebrated series. Especially fun for the reader are the photographs, which turn Laura into a flesh-and-blood person every bit as much as her stories do. Twelve readable chapters, the addresses of the Little Houses, a map titled "Laura's Tracks," sources, a bibliography, and an index make this a fine contribution to any biography collection. PM

WARNER, SALLY  
Ellie and the Bunheads.  
Knopf, 1997 150p  

Ellie (friend of Case, whose story appears in Dog Years, BCCB 5/95) is a bunhead—a baby ballerina. She's been taking classes since she was five (she's now twelve), she doesn't know what life would be like without it, and she's keenly aware of the upcoming auditions for the local youth dance company. She's also, however, beginning to be aware of how much she's living out her mother's dreams through dancing and what kind of toll the ballet can take on a young girl's life, and she starts to question whether this familiar, taken-for-granted thing is really what she wants. This isn't the first book on the subject (another recent example is Martha Southgate's Another Way to Dance, BCCB 1/97), but it's knowing and sympathetic about terpsichorean desire and its cost. Even thoughtful Ellie has a hard time seeing just how Draconian the strictures can be and just how hard she is on herself as a result (excerpts from her diary tell matter-of-factly of her dislike of her body and her plans for further self-denial), but the book eschews melodrama in favor of a realistic appraisal of possibilities—Ellie continues to dance, a talented older girl drops out to have some fun in high school, Ellie's troubled classmate puts off her audition on the advice of her therapist. This will give young fans a clearer idea of what Isadora's Lili at Ballet (BCCB 4/93) is getting herself into. DS
WILSON, LORI LEE  The Salem Witch Trials. Lerner, 1997  [112p] (How History Is Invented)
ISBN 0-8225-4889-5  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 5-10

Unlike Marilynne K. Roach, who offered her own interpretation of the title trials in In the Days of the Salem Witchcraft Trials (BCCB 6/96), Wilson surveys the trends in historical interpretation that evolved from contemporary times to the present. Following some opening observations on the history of witchcraft and a fairly well-balanced and dispassionate account of the trials themselves, Wilson tackles the historical accounts, which, she argues, were variously influenced by self-doubt and guilt among contemporaries, and later by Rationalism, Spiritualism, Psychology, and Feminism. Potent and provocative arguments abound for serious history students, but they are too often tangled together with such digressions as the image of Miz Gulch in The Wizard of Oz, discussion of Arthur Miller's The Crucible (which, despite the parallels between Salem and McCarthyism, hardly qualifies as historiography), and the present day challenge to the citizens of Danvers (once, Salem Village) to tolerate the Wiccan witches who now settle in their community. Nonetheless, students with a defined fascination for this dark chapter in colonial history will want to add this to their reading list. EB

WISLER, G. CLIFTON  Mustang Flats. Lodestar, 1997 116p
ISBN 0-525-67544-2  $14.99  Ad  Gr. 4-6

The few crops and stock left by Confederate foragers on Alby Draper's Texas farm have been claimed by a vicious hail storm. When Alby's Pa limps home from Tennessee on one leg, with a teenage soldier not much older than Alby and a serious case of depression, he sees only Alby's failure to keep the farm in trim. Although serious themes of soldiers' demobilization after the Civil War and the struggle to recreate a family permeate the novel, the brunt of the action revolves around a thin save-the-farm-from-the-taxman tale, in which family and friends pull together to capture and gentle mustangs for sale to federal soldiers at a Texas outpost. Among the time-worn devices are Pa's nemesis, a feral Arabian known as Demon ("He's pure mercury on hooves, that horse"), Pa's miraculous recovery of self-esteem as he faces down Demon ("Maybe all Demon's been waiting for is a broken-down old soldier like me"), and the revelation that Pa's young companion is a deserter, not a hero. Still, younger readers unacquainted with this trusty old plot will gladly saddle up for a quick, brisk ride. EB

WOLKSTEIN, DIANE, ad. Bouki Dances the Kokioko: A Comical Tale from Haiti; illus. by Jesse Sweetwater. Gulliver/Harcourt, 1997 32p
ISBN 0-15-200034-8  $15.00  R 5-8 yrs

The dance-loving king of Haiti invents a new dance, the Kokioko, and offers five thousand gourdes to anyone who can guess the steps. Many dancers vie for the prize, but none succeed, until one night Malice, the king's gardener, witnesses his king dancing the Kokioko in the moonlight. Greedy Malice teaches his old friend Bouki the dance so he can win the gold, all the while planning to trick him out of the riches. The "fat and awkward" Bouki has a hard time mastering the steps of the Kokioko, but finally he is ready to appear before the king ("When it was Bouki's turn, he went in alone and danced for the king. It was a very fat dancer who..."
danced the Kokioko, but it was the Kokioko!). Bouki wins the sack of gold, but on his way home, he is tricked out of his coins by Malice, who sings the little song, "If you have no sense, put your sack on the ground and dance..." Well, Bouki has no sense, Malice has no scruples, and clever Malice wins the day in this rueful tale. Sweetwater's illustrations have remarkable clarity, and their vibrant colors and vigorous compositions dance across the verdant landscape. Tropical pinks, reds, yellows, and greens pop off the pages as king, dancers, Bouki, and Malice complete their dance of foolishness and greed. Wolkstein's text is a masterpiece of humorous understatement as her characters roam through a landscape reminiscent of Françoise. Source notes and a glossary are included. JMD

**YOUNG, RONDER THOMAS**  *Moving Mama to Town.* Orchard, 1997  219p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30025-0  $17.95  R  Gr. 5-8

Thirteen-year-old Freddy James experiences a tough rite of passage when the charismatic father he has hero-worshipped, Big Kenny, leaves the family with no resources on a Georgia farm back in 1947. As the boy moves his mother and nine-year-old brother into town and supports them with full-time work, he and readers both discover the dark side of Big Kenny's past and personality. It's a gradual and skillfully presented revelation, like much of the other characterization in the book and like the protagonist's own emerging self-identity. If Freddy James acts a little too virtuous at times (and if his mother's death at the end seems a heavy load for this already packed novel to carry), Young's development of the situation is believable, her observations of small-town interaction are acute, and Freddy James—in his downhome, upright way—is a smooth narrator with an unpretentious sense of humor. BH

ISBN 0-688-13917-5  $14.93  R  Gr. 3-6

Kitchen science is a perennially appealing topic, and soda pop is a universally appealing kiddie tipple; blend them together in this crystal-clear and smoothly readable book of experiments, and you have a winning concoction indeed. The chapters demonstrate methods for extracting flavors and colors from fruits and vegetables, concentrating their aromas, and retarding spoilage; the reader observes suspended and dissolved pigments, compares flavor strengths, tests the efficacy of various preservatives, and even builds a still to extract essences. Next comes the fizz, generated in turn by yeast, baking soda, and baking powder. Finally reader turns entrepreneur, designing a palatable pop, devising and administering a tasters' survey, refining the product, and comparing the home brew to commercial products. All experiments and processes call for readily available materials—quarter-inch plastic tubing should be the most challenging item to procure—and are prominently labeled when they demand adult supervision or extra caution. This is bound to be a mover when science fair time rolls around; better have an extra copy or two. EB
We spend a great deal of time at the Bulletin trying to find the balance between aesthetic and critical evaluation of literature for youth and the practical considerations of collection development in school and public libraries. Since this is the beginning of our new volume year, I would like to take this opportunity to explain how we at the Bulletin view our evaluative designations.

A starred book (R*) is one that is considered to be of outstanding literary merit by the majority of our reviewing committee; these titles are recommended for purchase by school and public libraries without reservation. A recommended book (R) is one that is considered an excellent choice for any library collection and is also recommended for purchase. An additional book (Ad) is a little harder to define—it may have some strong points, it may have minor flaws, it may simply be unremarkable in content or format—but it is still considered useful for some school and public library collections. The review should make clear those weaknesses in the title that have made it an Ad instead of an unequivocal R. A marginal designation (M) means the book may be marginally useful in public or school library collections, but it has serious flaws; an M should not be considered a recommendation for purchase. An NR designation needs little explanation—a title that receives this designation is so flawed in approach or content that it is not recommended for purchase. SpC and SpR are seldom-used designations that recommend a book for purchase for specialized subject collections (SpC) or special readers (SpR). We tend to think there’s room in public and school library collections for just about everything, so SpC doesn’t get used very often, but it’s there for the unique or unusual title; we also have a tendency to think all readers are special, but the SpR designation recommends a title for purchase for a specific if limited audience.

We go back and forth between what we call “low Rs” and “high Ads,” trying to find the balance between critical evaluation and practical collection development. I would like to formally state that those using the Bulletin as a collection development tool should read all the reviews, even the Ads, carefully. I had a very scary moment at a conference when a librarian told me she never read the reviews, just pulled out the Rs and stars and ordered those. This is a surefire way to miss titles that may have an important place on your shelves or to buy books that are not necessary for a specific collection. An “R” book may have minor flaws but be strong overall; an “Ad” book is a title recommended for purchase in spite of specific problems. The review should point out concrete flaws, as well as mentioning reasons (unique subject matter, etc.) why the book would be a useful addition to a library collection. Our aim is to make sure all our reviews contain enough information about the quality and content of a title so that readers can make up their own professional minds about whether or not to purchase it.
As stated in my debut editorial (BCCB 9/96), one of the major strengths of this journal is its reviewing process. Reviewers meet several times monthly; all books reviewed are seen by all the reviewers, and everyone has a chance to comment—on books, on reviews, on clarity. The results of these discussions, we hope, are balanced, considered, thoughtful reviews, reflecting not only the judgment of the individual reviewer but the input of the entire reviewing and editorial staff. I should point out that as of this volume year's first issue, non-staff members of the Bulletin Reviewing Committee are all librarians, bringing that professional background and practical experience to the evaluation process.

The Bulletin receives approximately 5,000 new books yearly and we review less than one-fifth of the titles submitted. The guidelines for deciding what gets reviewed and what doesn't are fluid and adaptable, and we diligently examine every book we receive, considering every title in light of its individual merits. Generally, we review more fiction than nonfiction, giving special attention to new authors, small-press titles, and young adult materials. We tend to be quite choosy about picture books for preschoolers, and have a highly critical eye regarding retellings of folktales, fairy tales, myths, and legends. We look closely at beginning and easy readers, both fiction and non-fiction, because our subscribers tell us there is a dearth of good ones; we keep developmental levels in mind when examining board books for toddlers because feedback indicates that these have become an important part of early childhood collections. We tend not to review all the titles in a series, although we often review the opening titles in a new series, a particularly good (or bad) title in an established series, or a series title with unusual subject matter that would be useful for school and public library collections. We review books for professional collections on the history and criticism of literature for youth, literature-based programming, storytelling, and anything else we think school and public librarians will find valuable in their daily work. And since every title submitted for review must be evaluated on its individual merit, we reserve the right to make exceptions to any of the above general criteria.

We passed several milestones in the past year: we extensively revamped our website and continue to update it monthly and improve it as often as possible; we published an annotated Guide Book to Gift Books for adults interested in buying well-written, kid-pleasing books for children; we had so many submissions to our first storytelling review publication, The Bulletin Storytelling Review, Volume I, that our publication date had to be pushed back from Spring 1997 to Fall 1997 (see our website at http://edfu.lis.uiuc.edu/puboff/bccb/story.html for ordering information); we are holding an Allerton Conference in October, 1997 called "Story: From Fireplace to Cyberspace" (write us or see our website at http://edfu.lis.uiuc.edu/puboff/bccb/97allerton.html for information); and we moved our offices from one location to another over the winter holidays. It's been quite a year. We're looking forward to the next one.

Janice M. Del Negro, Editor
SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

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

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Animals—stories: Alborough; Egan; Haas; O’Brien; Van Laan
Antarctica: McCurdy
Astronomy: Getz
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Ballet—fiction: Warner
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Wishes—stories: Egan; Speed
Witchcraft: Wilson
Wolves—stories: Stevenson
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