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* Asterisks denote books of special distinction.

R Recommended.

Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.

M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.

NR Not recommended.

SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.

SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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Elizabeth Bush, Reviewer (EB)
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Kate McDowell

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Editorial Correspondence. Review copies and all correspondence about reviews should be sent to Janice Del Negro, The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, 51 E. Armory Ave., Champaign, IL. 61820-6001. E-mail: bccb@alexia.lis.uiuc.edu

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Cover illustration by Jon J Muth from Come On, Rain! ©1999. Used by permission of Scholastic Press.
**Come On, Rain!**

by Karen Hesse; illustrated by Jon J Muth

One of the occasional saving graces of working several months ahead of ourselves, as we do here, is that we get treated to reminders of the oncoming spring and summer while we’re still trudging through the snow and wondering if warmer days are ever coming. And for sheer sense memory of life in the city under the implacable summer sun, it’s hard to beat *Come On, Rain!*

In it, three weeks of city heat are taking their toll on the plants (“Mamma lifts a listless vine and sighs”) and on the people: young narrator Tessie laments that she is “sizzling like a hot potato.” “Cats pant” and “heat wavers off tar patches in the broiling alleyway,” but Tessie is hopefully eyeing the big gray clouds in the distance. She nips down the block to alert her friend Jackie-Joyce to the possibility of sweet, rewarding rain (“Put on your suit and come straight over”). Jackie-Joyce pulls in the other girls from the block, and the neighborhood of swimsuited kids is soon dancing through the streets under the blessed relief of a sudden downpour—and they’re then joined by their “barelegged mammmas,” themselves frolicking through the refreshing shower, all revivified by the benediction of rain.

Hesse’s measured prose is evocative without weighing itself down out of childish perception: the phraseology is freshly apt (gardening Mamma kneels “over the hot rump of a melon”) and the understated details of Tessie’s neighborhood reconnoiterings (“I cross the crackling-dry path past Miz Glick’s window... glancing inside as I hurry by”) give a sense of community. Particularly superlative is the book’s natural inclusion of all the telling details of weather, summer, and city. The smells of hot tar and summer garbage float through the pages, every move is labored with sweat, Tessie kindly makes her mother a glass of iced tea but takes a predictable commission (“I aim a spoonful of sugar into my mouth, then a second into the drink”), and the rain’s advance breeze alternates between fluttering and snatching at the curtains. The excitement of the rain itself is poetically expressed (“tromping through puddles, romping and reeling in the moisty green air”) but never distanced by artistry, revealing the recognized joy of this familiar experience in a new but still authentic way.

In a stunning and worthy counterpart to Hesse’s evocative text, Muth’s watercolors bring the oppressive temperatures to life. Scenes of heat employ appropriately complementary ochre washes over the city and lilac and indigo shadows; specifics ranging from the haze over the city rooftops to the sheen of sweat on Mamma’s brown arms speak volumes about the relentlessness of the heat wave. The art makes the most of perky Tessie’s considerable charm, capturing the wiry liveness of so many young girls as she gallops across the neighborhood and cavorts in the street (a particularly endearing image is a Kilroy-esque view of her peering,
pigtails at a quizzical angle, over the windowsill into Miz Glick's apartment); grown-ups get a fair shake too, with Mamma's harder time with the heat coming across clearly in the tilt of her body as she presses the cool iced-tea glass to her neck. Compositions are consistently imaginative without resorting to distracting flashiness: one page foregrounds the girls' conversation with a shadowed alley stairwell that jealously guards its cool spot; the spreads introducing the rain itself switch from a hands-only shot (as the girls reach up to the ripening skies), to a feet-only picture (as the drops hit the dust and begin to make patterns in the alley pavement); the view then looks down on the gaggle of girls as the rain comes in earnest and balances that perspective out a few spreads later by gazing up at the girls' rejoicing mothers leaning out over their balcony railings. Come the rain, however, all is changed—Muth's decorous draftsmanship gives way to high-action squiggles and washes of liquid color for the frolicking mother-daughter pairs, culminating in a final opalescent spread of the reawakened and rain-cleansed city in which Mamma and Tessie walk hand-in-hand along a shimmering sidewalk.

This has, perhaps deliberately, a timeless feel—there's an absence of air-conditioning and the appearance of a gramophone, but the shoes look fairly sneakerish and the sweat and heat are, of course, eternal. It will therefore immediately nudge the audience into recollections of the previous summer while reminding readers aloud of summers long gone, perhaps even providing a bridge between those recollections. (And if you're looking for a gentle way to break the news about summer to a child from a more forgiving clime, this will let them know what they're in for.) Textually and illustratively, this is unerring and vivid, needing only the smell of rain on hot concrete and waterproof pages to be complete. Come on, summer. Come on, rain. Let's dance. (Imprint information appears on p. 281.)

Deborah Stevenson, Associate Editor

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE


Rizka has a knack for deflating pompous bureaucrats, and that's just one of the reasons the town council of Greater Dunitza (a fantasy city in a fantasy nation that is sort of an Eastern European Spanish Rumania) wants her run out of town. But, as Fibich the city clerk points out, Rizka doesn't live in town, she lives in a wagon, a gypsy vardo, on the edge of town, where she awaits the return of her gypsy father who left some years ago. With the help of her agile mind and her not-inconsiderable allies Big Franco, the blacksmith and Sofiya, the mayor's rascallion daughter, Rizka makes fools look like bigger fools, unites the lovers of warring houses, haunts the town hall, and even (briefly) becomes the mayor of greater Dunitza. In
the end Rizka has the chance to leave Dunitsa but chooses instead to remain with those she has come to love. The pace of Alexander's latest title rises and falls, one chapter setting up the joke (the rise), and the next chapter bringing it to fruition (the fall). It is clear from the outset that Rizka is unbeatable, but that is part of her charm. She is a combination of sly trickster, benevolent witch, and lonely adolescent, and her adventures bubble with slapstick humor and even a little bittersweet pathos. The good guys are good, and the bad guys are, well, stupid—and that makes for a very funny story. One could almost see this as a sort of "Perils of Pauline" type serial, if Pauline were clever, funny, and too smart to wind up on the railroad tracks in the first place. The episodic nature of the chapters will make this a successful readaloud with a heroine to applaud and to admire. JMD


Not merely another biography of the Bard, this visually eclectic book makes Shakespeare the center of theater history, history being uncovered and recreated now in London’s new/old Globe Theatre. Simple text describes Shakespeare’s life, the Elizabethan world and entertainments, and the ups and downs of the theatrical industry (“A deadly plague interrupted the Theatre’s success. For two years all playhouses were closed”), including tidbits such as the Burbage brothers’ piece-by-piece theft of the original Globe Theatre. A fast-forward to the twentieth century then treats Sam Wanamaker’s dream of making the Globe rise again, providing technical insight into the process of building a Tudor theater in the current day (they “added to the thatched roof what Will’s Globe never had—a sprinkler system”). In addition to the main text, pages sport views of the period, people (occasionally overburdened with contemporary glamor), or process, complete with explanatory captions (some of which are rather awkwardly phrased), plus Shakespearean quotes (of varying degrees of relevance); there is also a multitude of diagrams, maps, character galleries, and other variants that result in an inviting exploration of the Wooden O and the world that attended it. End matter includes a list of Shakespeare’s plays and poems and a chronology of theatrical events, both Tudor/Stuart and contemporary, plus a spread of Shakespeare-originated words and expressions (which is a bit overgenerous in credit, but nonetheless informative and entertaining). As well as making a lively companion to Stanley’s Bard of Avon (BCCB 12/92), this could lend a Shakespearean sparkle to explorations of drama or literary history. DS


Charity Chatfield is in a quandary: Mother’s Day is only two days away, and she has no present for her beloved, overly busy mom. Suggestions from her classmates, her father, and even her cousin Fred (whose mom gave him a list and the money to buy her presents) don’t inspire her. In the middle of the night, after spending the day watching her mom juggle errands, job, faxes, and cell phone,
Charity comes up with the perfect gift—a peaceful day. She tells her mom, "I unplugged the little clocks and stopped the big ones. Everything that beeps or bleeps or buzzes is turned off. Your Mother's Day present is time to do whatever you want. Just for fun." Anderson's message may be a tad heavy, but the story doesn't sink under the weight, mainly because of the light, humorous text. Donohue's watercolor, ink, and pencil illustrations add additional buoyancy to this holiday story with a flashy, cartoony style that intensifies the available humor for maximum effect. Characters burst out of energetically crowded compositions, their neon-colored clothes and exuberant body language adding a lively counterpoint to Anderson's tale. JMD

ATWATER-RHODES, AMELIA  
_In the Forests of the Night._ Delacorte, 1999  [144p]  
Reviewed from galleys  
Ad  Gr. 6-10

Risika used to be Rachel three hundred years ago, when she died and was made a vampire. Now she prowls the night, shapeshifting at will and hunting when she needs to, until she realizes that she's encroaching on the territory of her old vampire nemesis Aubrey, and she determines that it's finally time for her to challenge him in payback for his killing of her beloved brother. Though mannered, the prose has style and flow ("This human's blood was thick and hot, boiling with pure life and energy. It wet my parched mouth and brought down my fever, and I drank it like a healing ambrosia"), and the visuals of vampirish existence are evoked with appealing detail. Unfortunately, the structure beneath the surface is often shoddily constructed: the dialogue is flat and overextended, the emotional resonance sometimes lacking when it's most needed (Risika's putative attachment to a caged tiger seems merely a device), and the vampire powers simultaneously overbroad and underexplained, which muddles the great showdown. The style and the world are inviting, however, and readers will relish them as well as appreciating some of Risika's moral struggles (after turning vampire, she feeds on and nearly kills her father's new wife). This doesn't have the tang of _Thirsty_ (BCCB 4/97) or its illustrious and bloody kin, but vampire fans, especially those intrigued by the youth of the author (her bio states she's fourteen), may still find their mouths watering. DS

BANG, MOLLY  
_When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry..._; written and illus. by Molly Bang.  
Blue Sky/Scholastic, 1999  [32p]  
ISBN 0-590-18979-4  $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  3-6 yrs

Sophie loses a tug-of-war altercation with her sister over a stuffed monkey, and her anger propels her out of the house and into an anger-reducing run. After running, crying, climbing a tree, and being soothed by the breeze, Sophie feels better and goes home, where everyone is happy to see her. Bang has captured a young child's uncontrollable eruption of anger in both language ("She kicks. She screams. She wants to smash the world to smithereens") and images (when Sophie "roars a red, red roar," she really does). In the scenes where Sophie's rage is the impetus, the objects in the hotly colored illustrations are outlined in a flaming orange red; as Sophie calms down, the outline changes to a soothing pink, then to cool blues and greens, and finally to the cheerful yellow outlines of the domestic scenes. The double-page spreads are colored in a fiesta palette of warm yellows, saturated blues,
and acid greens. In the closing spreads the yellow floors, orange walls, and pink woodwork combine to create a cozy home and hearth, where “everything is back together again and Sophie isn’t angry anymore.” Simple but effective, this title has a cohesive narrative of both words and images that could well be used in storytime programming or to start a discussion of what to do when you’re mad. JMD


Upon the eve of dedication of the national cemetery at Gettysburg, freeman Abraham Small recalls the event which prompted his involvement in the Battle of Gettysburg. A chance encounter with a teenage Rebel soldier, Lamar Cooper, results in the unlikely pair’s sharing nostalgia for their home state of Georgia, and discussing their views on the reasons for the present war. Cooper moves on to rejoin his company, leaving Small feeling guilty about letting others fight against slavery while he stays safe in the shadow of the abolitionist family that helped him escape to Pennsylvania. Small joins the Union army for a stint as an ambulance driver, finds Cooper injured, and brings him to the Union field hospital where, as Small later learns, he succumbs to his wounds. Action moves sluggishly, stalled by lengthy conversations of obviously pedagogical intent, couched in folksy idiom: “Tell me again what that word [secesh] means.” . . . “Somebody wants to leave the Union, the United States of America...’cause they hate Yankees or they’d scart that President Lincoln’s gon’ take their right away from ’em.” Although the character of a young girl named Ladysmith makes an appearance on the cover and in the text (presumably as a child connection to these events), she has precious little to do. Banks offers no historical note, so there’s no verification or refutation of Small’s meeting and conversation with Lincoln at Gettysburg. EB


Readers who were captivated by Joy Masoff’s account of urban firefighters and the blazes they battle in populated areas (Fire!, BCCB 4/98) will certainly want to take a look at the hotshots and smokejumpers who extinguish—and sometimes set—fires in the most remote regions of the country. Beil leads off by following Tracy Dunford and his Flame-n-Go Hotshots at a devastating fire in Idaho’s Salmon National Forest: “Ferocious winds whipped at Tracy’s crew from every direction and blew sparks underneath Tracy’s [fire] shelter. Some men were lifted clear off the ground as their shelters filled, like sails, with wind.” She then turns her attention to the training requirements for firefighting’s elite corps of smokejumpers, who parachute into conflagrations, tackle fires for days on end, and finally pack out on foot. Forest fires, canyon fires that threaten upscale residential areas, and prescribed burns that control wildfires or maintain ecosystems are discussed as well. Plenty of crisp color photos of firefighters taking on exploding trees, wind-driven flames, and “fire whirls” are a sure draw for browsers, and the glossary of terms will be useful to readers taking a studious approach to the topic. EB
Reviewed from galleys R 3-7 yrs

The jargon and the moves, the rules and the proud parental cheers are geared here to draw the youngest spectators into the melee on the soccer field: “Soccer is a game of long runs and short stops,/ quick turns, even grass burns./ When the ball’s too high/ for the fleetest of feet,/ heads join the dance,/ butting the ball/ with a leap/ and a soar.” Wild-eyed teams disgorge from cars and minivans on the title page and take to the turf for a rousing match, which O'Brien captures in line and watercolor close-ups, aerial views, and sideline shots, several of which are tipped at precarious angles to accelerate the action. Blackstone tosses in a bit of brutal honesty (which will probably ring true with younger siblings relegated to the sidelines)—“In soccer there’s always more shooting than scoring./ At the end of the game the score may be so low/ that it’s still zero to zero.” Regardless of what happens on the field, this title is bound to make points. EB

Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

Leora has always been warned that the world beyond the village gates and guarded fields is fraught with dangers—man-eating “birmbas” who killed her father and sister, and an inhospitable forest filled with poisonous mutant plants. When Leora learns for herself that the birmbas can be quite harmless if kindly treated, she begins to doubt other “truths” handed down by the Rulers, their guards, and her own stepfamily. Guided by her webbed hand (a genetic mutation with extrasensory powers), she treks through the wilds of Maynor (once the state of Maine, now devastated in the aftermath of a comet strike) in search of her sister Reba, whom she believes to be alive and in charge of a rebel outpost. Perils may surround Leora, but the author insulates her from any real danger with a host of stock devices and guides, including a protective family of furry birmbas, chunks of regained memory, friendly servants, a set of lockets bequeathed to the two sisters, an infallible sixth sense, a disguise, and a host of rebel sympathizers who always appear at the right moment. Good guys and bad guys are easy to spot; count on Latino and Native American descendants to fight on the side of the angels, while male guards are inevitably treacherous. Readers who enjoyed the dark futurism of Lowry’s *The Giver* won’t find much intellectual challenge here, but newcomers just venturing into the genre might be diverted by this offering of Post-Apocalypse Lite. EB

Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-9

Before bidding farewell to winter, middle graders may want to take a look at the misadventures of the famed emigrant band whose winter of 1846 in the Sierra Nevadas makes our outgoing season look like a day at the beach. Calabro offers a clearly told account of the events which brought the Donners, Reeds, and their
traveling companions to such a, well, sad pass. Readers familiar with David Lavender's version of the story (Snowbound, BCCB 6/96) will find a slightly different emphasis here, particularly Calabro's attention to the host of interpersonal problems among the party members, the later lives of the survivors, and the physical and psychological vulnerabilities or defenses that may have meant life or death throughout the ordeal. Maps, period photos, reproductions of letters, an extensive bibliography, an index, and a complete list (by wagon family) of all Donner party members make this a fine resource for researchers, as well as a hypnotically engaging adventure for recreational readers. EB

**COOPER, ELISHA** *Building*; written and illus. by Elisha Cooper. Greenwillow, 1999 [40p]
ISBN 0-688-16494-3 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

The planning and toil involved in converting a trash-strewn vacant lot into a snazzy, white sided building are retraced in Cooper's cunning watercolor lines, blots, dashes, and squiggles, and in text lines that rise, stretch, and bend to the actions and rhythm of laborers and their tools of trade. The burden of description is carried by the often humorous text (“A worker tightens pipes to the toilets and sinks, then checks his work with a level. Another worker consults plans, shakes his head, then turns the plan right side up”), and browsers in search of visual details will find only the sketchiest suggestions of backhoes and generators, scaffolding and circular saws. Evoking the sounds, smells, and energy of a site, though, is what Cooper does best (see Country Fair, BCCB 3/98, and Ballpark, 9/97), and the sweaty activity comes through in spades as workers haul garbage and push brooms and hoist up their sagging pants, while “hot sawdust fills the air and changes everyone’s skin color,” and a nail “pulled out with the claw of a hammer... screeches as if it were happy right where it was.” Children ready to step up from simpler truck and tool books can report directly to this work site. EB

**COWLEY, JOY** *Agapanthus Hum and the Eyeglasses*; illus. by Jennifer Plecas. Philomel, 1999 [48p]
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 1-3

Agapanthus Hum has new eyeglasses, and she's having a bit of a problem keeping them on her nose. “Good little Mommy” and “good little Daddy” both understand Agapanthus' need to hum, whirl, twirl, and stand on her hands, but even if she is an acrobat in training they still want her to be careful. At a tent show Agapanthus is overwhelmed by the sights and sounds of the acrobats: “Agapanthus forgot her ice cream. She even forgot to hum. She was a famous acrobat. She had acrobat arms and acrobat legs and they were getting all whizzy wanting to do acrobat things.” When Agapanthus and parents go in search of some water to clean up the ice-cream covered Agapanthus, they meet one of the show’s acrobats, the “beautiful lady on the swing,” wrapped in a bathrobe and with reading glasses firmly fixed on her nose. The lady acrobat laughingly tells Agapanthus that “all the best acrobats” give their glasses to their mothers to hold, whereupon the happy Agapanthus stands on her hands, her glasses caught by the fast-moving acrobat. Plecas’ watercolor and ink illustrations feature a dancy Agapanthus, with stick-out red pigtails and slightly bent glasses cavorting under the loving eyes of a benign set
of good little parents. This seven-chapter easy reader introduces a happily energetic character in the irrepressible Agapanthus Hum, and beginning readers will find her thoroughly engaging. JMD

ISBN 0-395-89132-9 $20.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-8

Cummings has a friendly knack for drawing people out and for asking the kinds of questions that matter to young readers. In this third volume of interviews (see BCCB 10/95 and 4/92 for the first two), Cummings talks to Lisa Desimini, G. Brian Karas, Keiko Narahashi, Betsy Lewin, Peter Sís, and Paul O. Zelinsky, among others, and their responses are as varied as the art they produce. Artists answer queries about work habits, creative sparks, home life, and even the inclusion of real people in their illustrations. Photographs of the artists, illustrations from their books, and samples of their childhood drawings and paintings are included. What stand out in Cummings' interviews are the candid, encouraging words of the artists to the children reading these books, from the illustrators who knew art was their destiny from early childhood to the others who found their vocation later in life. Karas says reassuringly, "No work is so dismal that you have to throw it out and start over again. Try to fix it, or paint over it, or cut it in shreds and glue those together to make a great collage," and Anna Rich, more pragmatically, says, "If you like to do this kind of thing, do it, because it can't hurt you and it probably helps your brain develop." The intended audience is never forgotten, and that results in a certain humorous ease of expression that young readers should find most diverting.

A closing section on "Secret Techniques" (first seen in Volume Two of this series) includes some artistic tricks of the trade; a selective bibliography of each artist's works and an index are included. JMD

DURBIN, WILLIAM *Wintering.* Delacorte, 1999 [192p]
ISBN 0-385-32598-3 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

Having survived his first summer as a voyageur (*The Broken Blade*, BCCB 2/97), fourteen-year-old Pierre is back to meet the challenge of *hivernant* with the North West Company in the French Canadian wilderness. As the company establishes a trading post during the winter months on the shores of Lake Vermilion, with the approval of the Vermilion band of Indians, former schoolboy Pierre learns to hold his own in the motley crew. He discovers, through the help of Commander McKay, that his interest in books and learning does not necessarily make him ill-fitted for the rigors of voyageur life and may even prepare him well for life beyond the paddle. The deaths of Pierre's former mentor La Londe and his Indian friend Kennewah haunt him, prompting him to contemplate the injustice of their deaths while irritating crew member Jean Beloit is allowed to live. Though Pierre's resentment of this unfairness is understandable, his righteousness distances the reader from his honest struggle, and his esoteric ruminations on love fall equally flat. The book hints at some complexities in Beloit's character but never explains his sudden turnabout in behavior from relentless sadist to tender guardian of an orphaned bear cub. Durbin's failure to develop the interactions among the characters, including the friendship between Pierre and his Indian friend Red Loon, does a
disservice to his material and brings him dangerously close to relying on stereotypes to carry his story. Wintering will be difficult to sell alone, but fans of The Broken Blade will want to paddle along. A map will be included. EAB

DURRANT, LYnda Turtle Clan Journey. Clarion, 1999 [192p]
ISBN 0-395-90369-6 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 6-8
This sequel to Echohawk (BCCB 10/96) finds Echohawk and his father and brother trekking west toward the Ohio River to make a new home away from the encroachment of New York colonists. The arduous journey is particularly treacherous for Echohawk—a white boy, captured and adopted by his Mohican father—because the colonial government now offers ransom payments to anyone who "frees" a captive. Waylaid by soldiers and forced back to Albany, Echohawk is reunited with his paternal aunt, but after a brief flirtation with the luxuries of the colonists' life, he makes an escape and rejoins his Indian family. Worse is in store for them all, as they are captured by Mohawks who intend to enslave Echohawk, adopt his younger brother, and execute his father. Durrant convincingly conveys the perils and numbing exhaustion of the family's journey but merely pays lip service to Echohawk's purported internal conflict over his dual heritage; other than doughnuts, bed linens, and such creature comforts, she throws little in her hero's way to tempt him back to white society, and he and his aunt discover no real affection to help them reestablish a family bond. Readers who have followed the Turtle Clan's adventures and travails will naturally be relieved to see them safely rafting downstream at last toward a new home, but those in search of a more thoughtful probe of a "captive's" life will prefer Durrant's Beaded Moccasins (BCCB 5/98). A detailed historical afterword and a list of sources are included. EB

EBOCH, CHRIS The Well of Sacrifice; illus. by Bryn Barnard. Clarion, 1999 [240p]
ISBN 0-395-90374-2 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 5-8
Eveningstar, a Mayan preteen girl, tips off older brother Smoke Shell to the presence of an enemy band lurking nearby; he leads fellow warriors to rout the party, thereby gaining personal honor and launching his family into the ranks of the nobility. But his fame and popularity eventually spell his own doom and imperil his family when the evil high priest Great Skull Zero appoints Smoke Shell for human sacrifice upon the death of the present king. Eveningstar is on to Great Skull Zero's malicious plot to make himself ruler, and soon she, too, earns a place on his hit list; after a series of escapes and chases, she is tossed into a well, whence she must bring back a message from the gods—should she survive the ordeal. She does, of course, and upon her own authority advises her people to disband their urban civilization and move into the country. Eboch has done enough homework to fashion elaborately detailed costumes and trappings for his characters, but sloppy plotting (how does Eveningstar know so much about the layout of the dead king's tomb in which she's trapped?), and ludicrously modern dialogue ("Wait until I get to the bottom of the steps, then make some noise. Yell, or throw something. Get them to chase you for a while. But don't get caught!") demonstrate that the Mayan setting is little more than a soundstage for a tired old melodrama. A concluding note discusses speculation on the sudden disappearance of classical Mayan city
Everyone knows orphan boy Mbi’s name when they have work to be done, but no one remembers it when they have games to play or food to share. Mbi goes to sit under a udara tree, thinking that “maybe if he did not watch other people as they ate, he would not feel so hungry.” Even though it is not the season for udara, “as Mbi was sitting under a tree, all of a sudden a large ripe fruit fell from it, pom!” The fruit not only tastes delicious to the hungry boy, but it speaks to him, telling him to sing to the seeds. Mbi sings, and a udara tree grows from shoot to shrub to bush to tree. When the villagers investigate, they discover that no one but Mbi can retrieve fruit from the tree; when the meanest boy in the whole village tries to steal some of the fruit, Mbi makes the tree, mean boy attached, grow taller until its top disappears into the clouds. The villagers promise Mbi gifts, affection, and a place of honor in the village if he will return the would-be thief to Earth. He does so, “and from that day on, everyone was kind to Mbi.” The ending is a bit abrupt, but the ride to get there is worth it. Echewa’s melodic storytelling voice rises and falls in rhythmic language that effectively uses repetition and refrains to create flowing and seemingly effortless prose. Lewis’ watercolors have a light-filled luminosity that reaches out from the pages to arrest the viewer’s eye. The character’s faces are beautifully articulated, their expressions faultlessly capturing emotion and action. No source notes are included. JMD


Here comes yet another nervous flower girl down the aisle—this time, in a cousin’s Pakistani wedding. Warned by past flower girls of the perils that accompany the honor, Nadia is assured by adult relatives and the bride herself that she’ll do just fine. Most troubling to Nadia, however, is the fact that her aunt will dye her hands with henna in traditional patterns (mehndi), and she will have to appear in school on Monday and face her classmates’ comments and questions about this exotic body art. Although Nadia’s concerns are genuine and will surely be appreciated by young listeners, disappointingly little is mentioned or shown about the wedding itself. Two brief glimpses of the lavishly garbed and bejeweled bride (and Nadia in her traditional shalwar pants and tunic) will have viewers yearning for detail that neither artist nor author supplies. Weiner’s brilliantly tinted pastels evoke the strong bonds among members of this extended family, while rendering the star attractions—Nadia’s intricately patterned hands—ill-formed and unattractive. While neither as visually or emotionally appealing as Johnson’s The Wedding (BCCB 3/99), this title will nonetheless be useful as a cultural variation on a popular theme. EB

Fisher opens with a methodical recounting of the persecution of the Jews in Europe, particularly Spain, and their search for a safe haven in which to practice their faith. After a brief history of the Jewish immigration to the Americas starting in the sixteenth century, he discusses the establishment in 1658 of the first Jewish congregation in religiously tolerant Newport, Rhode Island, the history of the Jewish presence there, their support of the American Revolutionary forces, and the eventual establishment of the Touro Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in America and the first historic building to be supported by endowment. Sparked by 1990's two hundredth anniversary of the correspondence between the synagogue and General George Washington, this history is illustrated with a generous number of captioned black-and-white photographs and reproductions of period material, including facsimiles of the historic letters. Inclusion of the portraits of those individuals important to the establishment of the synagogue adds to the immediacy of Fisher's account. Fisher touches on the larger issues of religious freedom and persecution in this history, opening a door to discussion of the founding fathers and the Bill of Rights. A list of sources and an index are included. JMD


Reminiscent of Bing Bang Boing (BCCB 11/94) in its generous collection of humorous short verse decorated with offbeat drawings in thick lines, this roundup of poetry treats subjects near and dear to the grade-school heart. There are monsters ("Hello, my name is Dracula./ My clothing is all blackula./ I drive a Cadillacula/ I am a maniacula . . ."—from "Hello, My Name Is Dracula"), food ("Here's the latest news from Mars:/ Mars is made of candy bars . . ."—"Plan-eat-ery"), pantsing ("One was a black belt./ One was a brown./ One had a loose belt;/ His pants fell down"—"Karate Kids"), and sibling repugnance (". . . Your teeth are green./ Your hair is blue./ Your brother's underwear—P.U.!"—"Brush Rush"). The occasional bobbles in precision mean that this isn't quite up to the dazzling display of Bing Bang Boing but it's an effervescent collection nonetheless. Florian's pithy poems echo playground chants (and sometimes, better yet, jeers) in their rhythmic recitability (so don't overlook readaloud possibilities for younger audiences as well), and his focus on orality and absurdity makes them thematically irresistible. The line drawings have a sophisticated quirkiness that will make the book legal tender for older kids, and they might get a particular kick out of teaching their innocent younger siblings some of the more raucous rhymes—encourage them if you dare. Indices of first lines and of titles are included. DS


A solid primer on the undersea world and its exploration, this begins by following a fictional trip below in a submersible, noting the different conditions and resi-
dent as the vehicle goes through the "sunlight zone" and the "twilight zone" to the "dark zone," stopping when it hits this ocean section's bottom at 7,500 feet. The book goes on to discuss the abyss and the trenches, even deeper parts of the ocean, and the history of ocean exploration. Gibbons' step-by-step approach works extremely well here, offering a personally immediate perspective that, paradoxically, some of the photodocumentary treatments of the subject don't manage. Critters floating around the submersible are identified and sometimes annotated with intriguing tidbits, giving the spreads a pleasing touch of treasure hunt. The watercolors effectively depict the otherworldly milieu, with the submersible's headlight sending rays into the murk and strange life forms effortlessly gliding by. An evocative and fact-filled entree to oceanography, this'll whet kids' appetites for more technical and detailed approaches. DS


Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 4-8

Miracle worker, seer, moral guide, emissary from the Almighty—the Biblical prophet Elijah plays many roles in the body of lore passed down through the millennia and among several religious cultures. Goldin radically recasts her tales over space and time to demonstrate how Jewish communities have been dispersed throughout the world and to suggest how the elements of the Elijah stories may have been grafted onto different cultural traditions. "Elijah and the Three Brothers," in which three young men respectively claim from Elijah rewards of wealth, wisdom, and a good wife, is set in Curacao; "The Blessing," in which a greedy older brother gets a tragicomic comeuppance, takes place in a tiny seventeenth-century Jewish community in China. The retellings are engaging and accessible, though not necessarily as rich in detail or poesy as Nina Jaffe's offerings in *The Mysterious Visitor* (BCCB 6/97). Pinkney's watercolors are alluringly lush, and his craggy-faced Elijah makes himself equally at home as a beggar squatting among the moonlit temple ruins in Persia and as a tattered and patched traveler dropping in on a family of twentieth-century Yemenite Jews. A substantial bibliography is included, but specific source notes for each tale, unfortunately, are not. EB

HAMANAKA, SHEILA  *In Search of the Spirit: The Living National Treasures of Japan*; written and illus. by Sheila Hamanaka and Ayano Ohmi and with photographs.  Morrow, 1999  [48p]

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-14607-4  $16.00

Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 4-8

In the 1950s the Japanese government began to identify elder craftspeople skilled in artistic traditions such as *yuzen* (dyeing kimonos), sword making, potting, etc. and encouraging them to take on apprentices to ensure that the traditional ways would not die out. In this combination of photoessay and collective biography, readers encounter six artist-elders, men who represent some of the ancient artistic traditions of Japan. (Although the introduction states, "Today more than one hundred men and women have been given the special title of Bearers of Important Intangible Cultural Assets," no women artisans are featured.) Each artist is introduced with brief biographical information that tells how he became involved in his
chosen path, but the bulk of each essay focuses on the origin of the art and the craft of the featured individual. The opening verso page for each essay features a color photograph of a piece of art, thinly outlined in red, with the Japanese character(s) for the name of the art form; a photograph of the artist (accompanied by text) appears on the facing recto. Each essay is illustrated with exceptionally well-reproduced, captioned color photographs; each concludes with a section (numbered frames, some with illustrations, some with photographs) that leads the reader through the basic steps in the artistic process. Conversational without being casual, the writing includes quotes from each artist that give a sense of the men behind the art and their feelings about individual artistic creation and the importance of tradition. This is an illuminating look at one culture’s attempt to preserve its artistic past. An opening map of Japan is accompanied by a geographic overview, and a brief index is included. JMD

Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 2-4
Unlike the contributors to Lee Bennett Hopkins’ anthology of the same name, who offer poems about daily activities around the clock, the Heide clan takes a larger view, examining the concept of time and attitudes toward its passage. “Telling Time” pokes gentle fun at our enthrallment to the clock: “Do this, do that, just do, do, do! Hey—you’re not telling time—it’s telling you!” A concrete poem in the shape of an hourglass reduces “EONS” to a narrow “NOW,” which accrues again into “EONS.” “Time Zones” addresses the confusion of pinpointing the hours around the globe; “Wasn’t It Fun Tomorrow?” wildly scrambles tenses to produce some deliciously silly party plans. Falwell’s mixed-media collage features a jumpsuited, pointy-eared sprite who, with his pet dog, reacts with delight, dismay, mirth, or confusion to the symbols and scenes that the poems conjure; the kids’-cereal palette and the figure’s cuteness sometimes confer a slightly babyish air. Although Y2K is never overtly mentioned, confetti colors set just the celebratory mood to kick off festivities as the millennium rounds the bend. EB

Reviewed from galleys  R*  5-8 yrs
See this month’s Big Picture, p. 269, for review.

Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 3-6
After some quick historical/geographical background, Jenkins gets to the action, pulling readers in with a strategic use of the second person (“When you arrive in the bustling capital city of Nepal, you’ll collect your gear, meet your guides, and pay for your climbing permit”) as he describes the major steps of an Everest ascent. Details about weather, equipment, and hazards provide a sense of drama as well as immediacy; other information about Sherpas, waste problems, and mountain life
at various levels fills in the picture. The book jumps around a bit, which under-
mines the effect of the fictional journey, and the absence of a glossary will leave
youngerst scratching their head over "col" and perhaps even "summit." The in-
ventively presented information and the lure of the trail, however, make this an
enticing package indeed. Jenkins' collage art demonstrates some impressive flex-
ibility here; the textured paper's solidity suits the physical obstacles, but it still
manages to convey the motion of avalanche and wind. Despite some glitches, this
is an invigorating and fact-filled look at the great peak with much of the you-are-
there appeal of Mark Pfetzer's *Within Reach* (BCCB 11/99); you might even use
this as a vivid introduction to a readaloud of the Pfetzer. A bibliography and list of
Everest records (as well as pointers to some fascinating websites) are included. DS


In *Alphabet City* (BCCB 11/95), Johnson's paintings depicted aspects of the urban
landscape that constituted letters of the alphabet, and now he turns to numerals up
to 21 (for the 21st century). As in his previous book, figures are formed by the
spaces between buildings, by ironwork, by abraded pavement markings, by pat-
terns in brick, all painted photorealistically and all authentic items one might re-
ally find in the urban landscape. He often tips into the obscure here, however,
with numerals that are evident only because one knows their place in the order
(and even then it takes some doing to figure them out); the shadow of branches on
the wall could as easily count as an eight or a seven as the five he uses it for, and the
nineteen in archway ironwork is more in the eye of the beholder than anywhere
else. Still, there's an interesting subtlety to the demonstration of how you could see
the images, even if it's not how you can't avoid seeing the images; though it feels a
bit like reading the bottom line in the eye chart, there's a pleasure in seeing familiar
forms anew that might well inspire some lively field trips and projects. DS


Christopher (from *Mommy Go Away!*, BCCB 12/97) is eagerly anticipating his
birthday celebration, and he's making sure his little brother, Robbie, doesn't horn
in on the action: "You are not the birthday boy," says Christopher sternly. "You
are just the brother." Robbie finds a loophole in Christopher's exclusion policy
and attends his brother's party as a puppy, which tickles Christopher's guests but
begins to wear thin on Christopher after its initial novelty. Though the ending
that has Christopher preferring a brother to a puppy seems likelier to indicate
parental eavesdropping than honest sentiment, the brotherly dialogue and the
struggle for birthday supremacy have an authentic edge, and the brother-as-puppy
theme (reminiscent of a chapter in Betsy Byars' *Ant Plays Bear*, BCCB 9/97) pro-
vides an engaging twist on the sibling drama. Mathers uses the same childish
stick-figure and crayon style as in the previous volume, with the characters' dot-
and-line faces expressive despite their simplicity. An entertaining tale of hard-won
brotherly love, this will doubtless prompt a few kids to brandish leashes at pesti-
lential younger siblings. DS
KEHRET, PEG  Shelter Dogs: Amazing Stories of Adopted Strays; illus. with photographs by Greg Farrar. Whitman, 1999 [134p]
ISBN 0-8075-7334-5 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys

A canine collective biography of eight dogs, this tells of critters adopted from the Seattle/King County Humane Association that have gone onto happier, sometimes even heroic lives. The breadth of dogdom and of eventual roles is effective: Tyler, who cured his young mistress of her fear of dogs after a traumatic childhood incident gets as much attention as Bridgette, who is a seizure-alert dog for her epileptic master; the underlying point is that dogs obtained from animal shelters are no slouches in the worthwhile-companion department regardless of what it is they’re actually doing for their humans. Though the accounts sometimes lose some drama amid setup and explanatory details, this is an engaging collection of puppy tales. Kehret intersperses the chapters with quick facts on relevant matters—a brief history of flyball, information about the American Humane Association’s film guidance and their website, suggestions for helping at your local shelter—that give the anecdotes some useful context. Youngsters will wish there were more photographs than the one black-and-white portrait per chapter, but they’ll still want to collar this for an undemanding doggy read. DS

KIMMEL, ERIC A., ad. Sword of the Samurai: Adventure Stories from Japan. Browndeer/Harcourt, 1999 [80p]
ISBN 0-15-201985-5 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys

A rousing tall tale probing the comic possibilities of a severed head launches this collection, sure to satisfy every taste, of eleven tidbits from samurai lore. “Tomoe Gozen,” with its bloody battle scene and noble warrior protagonist, is the tale likeliest to meet most readers’ initial expectations of samurai exploits (except, of course, that its samurai hero happens to be a woman). But Kimmel explores more subtle, equally vital, aspects of samurai life as well—the rigorous psychic discipline of a reluctant warrior in “The Ronin and the Tea Master”; the cunning strategizing of “The Battle of Chihaya Castle,” in which the emperor’s stronghold is defended by twenty-four dolls; the problematic heroism of the governor in “The Burglar,” whose steely coldheartedness rather than compassion saves a girl’s life; the pacifist message of “No Sword,” in which wits triumph over warfare. The brevity and concision of the stories make the collection accessible even to early middle grade readers; masterly pacing and pithy endings will be especially attractive to adults in search of readalouds or material for oral tellings. Notes supply historical background or context for each tale; source information and a glossary/pronunciation guide are included. EB

KROLL, STEVEN  Robert Fulton: From Submarine to Steamboat; illus. by Bill Farnsworth. Holiday House, 1999 [32p]
ISBN 0-8234-1433-7 $16.95
Reviewed from galleys

The life of an American artist/engineer/inventor is retraced in this serviceable, if unfocused, account. Report writers will find most of what they need to know about Fulton’s early career as a painter of miniatures and panoramas, his later
business ventures into marine engineering, and his eventual perfection of the commercially viable steamship which plied the Hudson River. Farnsworth's hazy spreads underscore the romance of this era of invention in the young Republic, and add considerable allure to the arid text, which rushes through an eventful life with little opportunity to pause and reflect on its milestones. A list of "Important Dates" and a brief note on James Watts' earlier steam engine are included. EB


Alfred and Mo are two honeybee drones, a poet and a philosopher, respectively, who think differently from the other drones. Bella and Thora are worker bees, bemused by the fast talk of Alfred and Mo. Alfred becomes disenchanted by the carnality of the Queen's mating flights; Mo decides the bees have to make friends with their natural enemies, the wasps and the ants, and believes that the worker-women bees need to be emancipated. The drones think they're masters of the hive, but in the end it is the workers who force them out to die of starvation and cold in order to maintain the hive through the winter. The drones are male, the workers are female, and clichéd parallels between the bees' roles and the gender roles of human men and women are easily drawn. The overfed, lazy drones meet their destiny and their doom; Bella dies in battle defending the hive from wasps, and Thora dies of old age. If the point of this allegory is that we are all fated by our inner natures and positions in life, it is forcefully brought home. Lally is a capable writer, and can certainly put language and plot together to form a coherent whole. Unfortunately, this novel never coalesces into anything more than an allegory without a center, a detailed anthropomorphization of honeybees. Spot art of bees with human faces à la the Flower Fairies adds little to this mix of natural science and fantasy. JMD


After primary-grader Cassandra compliments the buttons on her teacher's blouse, the teacher then praises the school custodian. Good words, good feelings, and random acts of kindness trigger more of the same through the community until they circle back and culminate in Cassandra's father's bringing her a new kitten. Everyday language conveys a straightforward plot, and while the repetition of the word "so" gives the narrative an uninspired sameness—Sharon is "so tickled," Rhonda kicks the ball "so hard," Philip was "so proud," and the cats eyes are "so big and bright"—it also adds a certain rhythm. Flat acrylic, gouache, and watercolor pencil illustrations depict appealingly comical characters, but the faces all have the same googly eyes and cartoonishly smiling expressions. Cheerful hues and the lack of pronounced shadows or shading emphasize the story's upbeat tone. The message—our smallest acts have large repercussions—may resonate for readers familiar with folklore traditions that reward good deeds, and this title will certainly hit the mark with teachers seeking a painless way to communicate this lesson. JNH
LAYTON, NEAL  *Smile if You're Human;* written and illus. by Neal Layton. Dial, 1999 [32p]
Reviewed from galleys  R  3-7 yrs

From the title page art depicting an eager young extraterrestrial playing with his telescope and a book entitled *Animals of the Universe,* the audience will rightly suspect they’re in for an alien adventure with a twist (“Here we are landing at a place I’ve wanted to visit my whole life. It’s a planet called ‘Earth’”). Viewers won’t take long to figure out that the alien family has landed its bulbous craft in an atypical spot on the globe—a zoo. In front of each cage, the ET questions his parents whether they have finally spotted a sought-after human (“What about these? They walk on two feet and they seem very smart”) and, after consulting the guidebook, the parents inevitably reply to the contrary (“... they’re penguins. Humans don’t have wings or webbed feet”). At last they locate the creature that fits the correct description, and the ET takes a snapshot of a “human” to tape in his album—a grinning ape with a banana. Layton creates a congenial clan with cubist-style bodies, friendly and alert eyeballs atop slender stalks, and those necessities of every vacationer—handbag, car keys, sunglasses, and baseball cap; large figures and bright colors will easily reach children at the farthest edge of the story-time rug. These bizarre adventurers should prove welcome visitors in just about any pre- or primary school setting. EB

ISBN 0-374-33548-6  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 3-6

When animals take shelter from the monsoon deep within an abandoned temple, a haloed statue of Buddha calms them with stories from his past lives and gently leads them to discover ways to live in harmony. Two of the six ensuing Jatakas have recently received picture book treatment in Demi’s *Buddha Stories* (BCCB 4/97); however, the simple Aesop-styled moral appended to Demi’s tales are replaced here with the stranded animals’ contrived reactions to each offering. The turtle realizes, for instance, that his fear of thunder is much like hare’s fear of noise in “The Flight of the Beasts,” and the lion admires the bravery of the lion who traced the beasts’ panic to a fallen mango. While this intellectual give-and-take may come closer to the pedagogical intent of Buddha’s teachings than a simple bon mot, it interjects a preachy tone into otherwise lively (and largely self-explanatory) tales and makes a strained and clumsy segue between entries. Thick ink drawings with muted earthtone washes illuminate the Jatakas themselves, while black, white, and graytone illustrations punctuate the temple scenes. An afterword on Buddha’s life and two recommended sources for Jataka tales are included. EB

LESTER, JULIUS  *When the Beginning Began: Stories about God, the Creatures, and Us;* illus. by Emily Lisker. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 1999 [100p]
ISBN 0-15-201238-9  $17.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7-10

In a moving synthesis of folktale, Bible story, legend, and language, Julius Lester retells the story of God’s creation of the earth and all that dwell within it. Basing
his retelling of the divine creation on Judaic midrashim, the Torah, and world folklore, Lester offers a nontraditional rendition of the creation story, underscored with mythological motifs and illuminated by flashes of poetic language. God appears in the guise of "ribbons of soft red light undulating... in circles as wide as the future," "a woman with skin as brilliantly black as the backside of lightning and hair as green as a flower's heart," and "a golden band [that] encircled the heavens like a wedding song," just to mention a few of Lester's divine evocations. All that is created by God has a voice to praise and thank him (or her, or it, depending on the mood God happens to be in at the moment). Eleven of seventeen chapters open with a traditional verse from Genesis, followed by Lester's retelling of the Biblical event described. In between new takes on old tales of the creation, Lester retells and recasts some traditional folktales in a Biblical mode, using a poetic and yet accessible voice. Each chapter is illustrated with a full-page, full-color painting in a naïve style that provides a softer edge to Lester's text. A pronunciation guide, bibliography, and source notes are included, as is an extensive introduction and afterword in which Lester discusses his process and motivation. JMD

LOURIE, PETER  
*Rio Grande: From the Rocky Mountains to the Gulf of Mexico*; written and illus. with photographs by Peter Lourie. Boyds Mills, 1999  [48p]  
ISBN 1-56397-706-0 $17.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 3-6

Lourie recounts his trek along the course of the Rio Grande—via car, rafts, and rowboats—from the Colorado town of Creede near the headwaters, to the Gulf of Mexico, where it joins the ocean "no wider than it had been in Creede, almost two thousand miles upriver." Although he discusses some of the agricultural practices and demographic forces that impact (and in places endanger) the river, descriptions of the towns, wild terrain, and eccentric characters he encounters along the route dominate the narrative. At Creede, Lourie considers its Wild West heyday, when gunslinger Bob Ford shot up the town; he explores and photographs New Mexico pueblos, but honors the Indians' request not to take pictures at their ritual Cochita dance; at El Paso, he joins a U.S. agent on her border patrol rounds; further downriver he crosses into Mexico to meet the single remaining resident of the ghost town Guerrero Vieja. Crisp color photographs and some well-chosen black and white historical photos of the region are closely coordinated with the text, and although Lourie occasionally indulges in the breathless prose of an old-fashioned travelogue ("The sun blasted out of the clouds. All around me the surf and sea wind sang their ancient songs"), his traveler's tale will appeal to readers whose imaginations wander toward distant horizons. EB

LYNCH, CHRIS  
*Whitechurch.* HarperCollins, 1999  [192p]  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028330-0 $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R*  Gr. 9-12

Oakley, the narrator, is the requisite levelheaded sidekick to his manic friend Pauly, in a friendship so close that town gossip occasionally paints them as lovers. It might be simpler if that were true: Pauly's girlfriend, Lilly, will soon leave town for college, which sends Pauly into deep denial and desperate plans to entice her to stay; Oakley has loved Lilly even longer than Pauly but has accepted the role of her friend, and he knows that her departure is necessary and inevitable. Part of why
her departure is necessary is that Whitechurch is a small and circumscribed town of little opportunity, but a bigger part is Pauly, whose inclination towards the grandiose, the extreme, and the dramatic makes him not just frustratingly impractical but genuinely dangerous. The blurb refers to this as a short-story collection, and readers will recognize the first chapter here from Harry Mazer's anthology *Twelve Shots* (BCCB 10/97), but the flavor is more that of a sequential novel, with tension building and with Oakley's poems providing links between chapters as well as hints at the pressures he contains within him. Lynch masterfully depicts the small town and its inhabitants. Pauly, the boy heading for what can only be disaster, is heartbreakingly credible and as unstoppable as a meteor. Oakley is a characterization tour de force in that he is effectively evoked yet defined by what he doesn't have, his will ("... most of the time 'Yes' is my word. Acquiescence my mode"), until finally his passivity changes to action, the one action sure to result in terrible tragedy. The book crackles with intensity and often with hilarity (the thoroughbred rat derby, in which one of Pauly's schemes of course goes horribly awry, is raucously funny); ultimately, this is a taut and unforgettable portrayal of friendship and its sometimes terrible price. DS

**Marchetta, Melina** *Looking for Alibrandi.* Orchard, 1999 [256p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30142-7 $16.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-10

Seventeen-year old Josephine Alibrandi is on scholarship at a relatively posh Catholic all-girls high school. She and her girlfriends, Anna, Lee, and Sera, are a nun's nightmare—irreverent, smart-mouthed, and just plain smart, they exert more influence over the student body than they realize. Senior year is a year of revelation for Josephine: she meets her father (absent since before her illegitimate birth), discovers a secret about her strict Italian grandmother's past, weathered the rocky beginning and ending of her first real romance, and suffers through the suicide of an old friend. Marchetta skirts the many possibilities for melodramatic overstatement and holds this eventful plot together with strong characterization and the dryly funny narrative voice of Josie Alibrandi. The Australian setting is sharply but not intrusively realized, and the few colloquialisms tossed about by the characters are easily understood in context. Josie fights to discover her place in the world and denies the right of class, privilege, and tradition to tell her what that place is; her struggle is laced with humor and a dawning self-awareness that young adults may well recognize and appreciate. JMD

**Meister, Cari** *Tiny's Bath;* illus. by Rich Davis. Viking, 1999 [32p] (Viking Easy-to-Read)
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. K-2

What could be better than a huge, goofy, lovable hound, unless it's being able to read about him independently? Tiny, whose wholly inadequate doghouse perches precariously on his rear end, is simply too big for standard dog washing tactics: "He is dirty. He needs a bath. The pail is too small. The sink is too small. The bathtub is too small." But the bespectacled narrator has a winning idea and manages to "scrub, scrub, scrub" Tiny in his plastic wading pool. His pet is so elated at
his newfound cleanliness, though, that he splashes joyously in a mud wallow, and now "Tiny is dirty. I am dirty. Back to the pool." The comic exaggeration of Davis’ richly hued paintings (which gain an unusual solidity from the textured brushstrokes and the figures’ sharp contrast with the white space behind them) lends some useful prompts to the bare-bones, repetitive text and thereby aids youngsters with their decoding. Even the predictability of the bubble-thin plot should prove a welcome advantage to readers struggling for their sea legs in an ocean of printed vocabulary. EB

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027887-0  $12.95
Reviewed from galleys  R 2-4 yrs

Ten smiling children pick ten roses on their way to school: “Ten rosy roses standing in a line,/ Jan picks one and now there are nine./ Nine rosy roses near the garden gate,/ Nina picks one and now there are eight.” This simple countdown has the attractive cadence of a nursery rhyme. Gorton’s graphics have a computer-enhanced look with their geometric shapes and symmetrical shading, and they’re rendered in digi-friendly techno-color, with a bright blue sky interrupted by white clouds, and splashes of red red roses brightening up each page. Each double-page spread has a large black numeral isolated in a white box and accompanied by the appropriate number of red blossoms. The multicultural cast of children is surprisingly emotive despite the stylized draftsmanship, with varied facial expressions and other nuances. The figures are somewhat flat, but the perspectives are modulated by careful insertion of shadow that softens the sharper edges and adds a collagic depth to the scenes. Use this in a springtime lapsit, and let the sun shine in. JMD

MICHELSOHN, RICHARD  *Grandpa’s Gamble*; illus. by Barry Moser. Cavendish, 1999 [32p]
ISBN 0-7614-5034-3  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R Gr. 2-5

Grandpa Sam spends a lot of time davening (praying), and his grandchildren think it’s boring: “He never does anything but pray./ Esther’s grandpa owns a movie theater./ Yetta’s grandpa played for the Yankees./ Molly’s grandpa is a millionaire!” A credenza gets bumped by the entertainment-seeking grandchildren and “the door swings open, and photographs/ are flying like a swarm of locusts.” One photograph is of a handsome man whose “hat is tilted, just so, on top of his head/ like the hat of a millionaire”—a youthful Grandpa Sam. Prompted by the photo, the old man tells his grandchildren how he came to America, became a successful professional gambler, a good husband, and proud father, only to nearly lose it all when his daughter, their mother, became gravely ill. Everyone told him the child needed a miracle, but Sam said, “I’m a gamblin’ man. . . . I’ll bet all my money on God’s mercy.” So Sam gave up his fancy hat for a plain black yarmulke, and prayed, “as stubborn as Moses standing before the Pharaoh, and miracle of miracles/ the Angel of Death passed over.” Complex issues are simply and poetically dealt with in Michelson’s family tale *cum* free-verse poem. The form lets him tell this story of faith in elegantly streamlined language, without excess explanation and
without interfering with the flow of the plot. Moser's portraits enhance but never overwhelm the story. He uses an understated, soft approach in these graphite and sepia-wash illustrations, eschewing his usual flashily capable style. Full-page illustrations highlighted with white chalk and paint look like old leaves of a diary, brown and curling at the edges, set against crisp white pages. Based on a true story, this effective family narrative joins a growing body of successful work in this genre. An author's note and a glossary are included. JMD

MONTGOMERY, Sy The Snake Scientist; illus. with photographs by Nic Bishop. Houghton, 1999 48p ISBN 0-395-87169-7 $16.00 R* Gr. 3-7

Those who reveled in Bianca Lavies' A Gathering of Garter Snakes (BCCB 2/94) will remember the red-sided garter snakes in question, which convene in amazing numbers in Manitoba; what's new here is Bob Mason, "snake scientist" (really a zoologist at Oregon State University), who studies the Manitoban motherlode to uncover snake secrets. Montgomery's zippy text gives an engaging portrait of the scientific work, with assistants weighing snakes in margarine tubs and putting them by the handful into pillow cases, as well as the specific discoveries that Mason's group has made (the female-snake pheromone that signals male snakes, for instance); Mason's general and unstudied enthusiasm for science in general will also galvanize many young readers. The layout and reproduction doesn't always show the photographs to their best advantage (and the captions are sometimes lame), but the images themselves are arresting, whether of a snake cheerfully sucking down a huge tadpole or of schoolchildren draped with dangling garter snakes. The liveliness of the text and the synthesis of narrative and science make this a particularly stellar entry; another excellent and imaginative touch is the page listing "Unsolved Mysteries" about the snakes that research is addressing—and budding scientists may wish to contemplate. Other end matter includes information about the location of the snake dens, a brief bibliography, and a note about snake-human interaction. DS


Bee, orphaned as a teenager in 1893, recalls how she began to work on the railroad as a loader to support her younger brothers and sisters, assembled an all-women crew of loaders, and eventually studied, pestered, and connived her way into her dream job, driving the steam engine True Heart along its Wyoming run. Moss bases her fictional heroine on a photo of a women's freight-loading crew from the turn of the century and accounts of women engineers from a slightly later period. It requires quite a bit of wishful thinking to accept all of Bee's lucky breaks and helpful male mentors in an era when, as Moss admits, there is no evidence that women had yet risen to the rank of engineer. Payne's earthtoned paintings, textured with gritty flecks, are convincingly realistic, however; these young women are sinewy and work-hardened, with long noses, straggly hair, and countenances alight with determination and a measure of joy in their work. Keep this tale of might-have-been in mind for discussions of women undertaking "men's work." EB
Hattie is left with her mother’s brother Mike while her mom, a gifted clarinet player, goes on a year-long European tour with a jazz band. Uncle Mike is a pretty cool guy, and Hattie even learns to love the bats her biologist uncle researches, but the small town of Nugget, with its tiny school and insulated lifestyle, only intensifies her lonely feelings of abandonment. Her rescue of a young bat (which she picks up despite the express wishes of her rabies-conscious uncle) and her decision to bring the bat to school result in disaster, discovery, and a return of the bat to its natural habitat. The bat-infobites interspersed throughout are minimally intrusive, and the depiction of the relationship between Hattie and her possible new friend, Brady, is both sincere and realistic. Hattie’s abrupt change of heart, however, is not credible. In a tearful telephone conversation with her mother, Hattie has a sudden revelation: “Hard as it had been, she had returned Smoky [the bat] to his home in the wild, to be free. Now she must do something even more difficult. She must let her mother go... to be happy... to be free.” Seen primarily through a few overwrought long-distance phone calls, the relationship between Hattie and her mother is underdeveloped and unsatisfyingly shallow; it is Hattie’s interaction with the bats that will hold readers until the end. Information on the bat’s life cycle is appended. JMD

Twenty-two traditional tales of vengeful ghosts, murderous magicians, and evil witches are presented here with the sensational air of modern urban legend. The stories come from Russia, China, the United States, Iraq, Germany, and Eastern Europe, but they have an unfortunate sameness of language and style. They are also structurally repetitive in that, with the exception of a simplified version of Lafcadio Hearn’s “The Boy Who Drew Cats,” each ends in death or living horror for the protagonists or with the promise of more horror to come. Olson and Schwartz’s retellings are sometimes abrupt and often unsubtle, but they are sure to grab the attention of middle grade and reluctant readers and enjoy the same success as Alvin Schwartz’s Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark (BCCB 6/82) et al. With a cover design featuring a shrouded, grinning skeleton holding an open box apparently filled only with darkness, you’ll have trouble keeping this one on the shelf. Detailed source notes are appended. JMD

In rhymed verse, a little girl narrates her adventure/near-tragedy with a dragon she meets on a beach and invites home to tea. Pepper sends the dragon into a sneezing fit, and “Our tablecloth sparked and then burst into flame./ And the curtains that hung right beside did the same!/ The smoke alarm rang. What a loud, piercing
sound!/ It meant 'Get out fast!' so I dropped to the ground." The little girl knows just what to do. She quickly crawls to the nearest door, and meets her mother beside a designated tree; Mom then summons the fire brigade from the safety of a neighbor's house. Dragon has not been so smart, though, and along the route to the door, the girl must yank the panic-stricken beast from his hiding place under the rug and direct him to the exit. Although two pages of appended notes clearly present commonly accepted rules for fire safety and emergency evacuation, these rules are not as readily evident within the fictionalized situation at hand. Viewers may not perceive from the few wisps of smoke wafting near the ceiling the urgency of crawling to an exit. Nor do the (female) firefighter's consoling words to the guilt-ridden dragon make much sense: "Don't be sad./ You knew what to do, and of that we're quite glad." It will be obvious to even the most safety-oblivious listeners that he didn't know what to do at all. Gourbault's colored pencil illustrations do bubble with energy, and the tousle-haired heroine who befriends fantasy creatures shines as a paragon of self-assurance and common sense in the emergency. A bit of adult reader intervention may make this a useful introduction to fire safety. EB

POWELL, RANDY  
Tribute to Another Dead Rock Star.  Farrar, 1999  [224p]  
ISBN 0-374-37748-0  $17.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 7-10

Fifteen-year-old Grady is going to a rock-concert tribute to his mother, heavy-metal queen Debbie Grennan, three years after her death. He is temporarily staying with Mitch, his mother's ex-lover and father of Grady's twelve-year-old, mentally retarded half-brother Louie. Mitch is a born-again Christian, now married to born-again supermom Vicki, nemesis of Grady and his loyal if confused memories of his mother. Grady's already adversarial relationship with Vicki is strained further when she forbids him to take Louie to the concert; it is additionally complicated by the possibility that Grady will be moving in with the family permanently. There are two conflicts here: the obvious external conflict between Grady and Vicki, and Grady's internal conflict about how he feels about a mother who abandoned him for her music and then died. Narrator Grady is an emotionally complex character who grows and changes while he tries to figure out what's going on in his heart and his life. Vicki grows, too, and it's a tribute to Powell's strong sense of characterization that she never becomes a one-dimensional Bible-thumper. She moves from struggling against Grady's presence to believing that he belongs with them. The revelatory conclusion, where Vicki realizes that Grady has feelings for them as a family ("My goodness," she says. "My goodness. You want us") is touching not only because she has taken steps toward Grady but because he has taken steps out of his grief and toward his future. JMD

PROIMOS, JAMES  
The Loudness of Sam; written and illus. by James Proimos.  Harcourt, 1999  [32p]  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  4-7 yrs

On the day he was born, "Sam cried loudly. Because that is what babies do." But the emotionally charged little guy has never learned to let up, and his parents simply find this part of his great charm. "Did someone throw nuts and bolts into the blender and turn it on?" 'No, Honey, that's just our boy.' 'I'm so proud.'
When Sam and his vociferous pet duck visit Aunt Tillie in the big city, they find a host of amazing sights to command their laughter and tears—from hilarious fuzzy bunny slippers in a store window and a dog with gas, to a dolorous lost and hungry kitty and garbage in the streets. Sam’s reactions garner shushes from the urbanites, and even kindly Aunt Tillie can’t quite see what all the fuss is about, until the day “she looked up and saw a cloud that looked like a funny nose and glasses” and becomes Sam’s true (and loud) kindred spirit. The pacing begins to lag somewhat at the slightly overdrawn conclusion, and the message that it’s good to be in touch with your feelings isn’t half as much fun as Sam out of emotional control. Proimos’ cast of cavernous-mouthed cartoons—best described, perhaps, as mutant Rugrats on amphetamines—are hip and entertaining, however, and Sam’s brashness and his parents’ adoration should provoke fits of laughter. Do not attempt this at bedtime. EB

RASCHKA, CHRIS  Like Likes Like; written and illus. by Chris Raschka. Jackson/ DK Ink, 1999  [40p]
ISBN 0-7894-2564-5  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R  4-7 yrs

An unadorned free-verse text tells the tale of a lonely white cat left without a partner after the unexplained pairing off of a variety of animals who “Two by two,/ he and she,/ curly and/ straight, fancy/ and plain,/ different and same/ go.” The unlucky cat wanders off, observing “flowers and fliers,” “round mounds” and “heaps of stones” and finally finds a mate. The white and brown cats hug, groom, and romp, “not alone now,/ two together,/ in rows and rows of roses.” Raschka’s text has a distinct rhythm that will carry readers along, and the energy of his pastel and watercolor illustrations is nearly palpable. The strong curving lines of his felines have a solidity that invigorates compositions already enlivened by compelling color choices. Across flat, colored-paper backgrounds the expressive white cat engages in a quest for love that leads him through a garden of red roses, to the edge of a dark blue sea, to the scene of recognition where white cat and brown cat reach out to one another across sunny yellow space, then meet in a hug set against valentine pink next to the words “like likes like.” The approach leans toward the cute and messy, but adults and older children will seek (and probably find) layers of intended meaning in Raschka’s deceptively simple tale; younger children will appreciate the vibrancy of the visuals and the happy ending. JMD

ROTNER, SHELLY  About Twins; by Shelley Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly; illus. with photographs by Shelley Rotner. DK Ink, 1999  [32p]
ISBN 0-7894-2556-4  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad  3-5 yrs

Exuberant color photographs of over forty sets of twins grace the pages of Rotner and Kelly’s book exploring the concept of twinship. Whether it is capturing a moment of quiet understanding or sudden surprise, Rotner’s photographs succeed in communicating the ups and downs of being and having a twin. Accompanying text answers basic questions about twins, such as similarities and differences, whether or not they like to dress alike, and whether they fight. Unfortunately, the text and pictures are sometimes out of synchrony, the words failing to answer questions in the order the photographs raise them. Included quotations would seem to be from the twins on the page, but a small-print note at the end of the book explains that
they’re not from the pictured twins at all. An introduction for parents begins the book. The disarming diversity of photographs makes this ripe for sharing with your favorite set of twins, especially if you supplement it with Elaine Scott and Margaret Miller’s Twins! for some good discussion for twins and singletons alike.

EAB

RYDEN, Hope  Wild Horses I Have Known; written and illus. with photographs by Hope Ryden. Clarion, 1999 [90p] ISBN 0-395-77520-5 $18.00 Reviewed from galleys  R Gr. 4-8

Ryden is the primary documentarian of the contemporary mustang, and here she returns to the subject, focusing particularly on aspects of equine behavior she’s observed. Chapters include “Young Males,” “Stallions,” “Stallions with Harems,” and “Mares,” going on to discuss the ferals’ situation more generally in “The Return of the Native.” The first-person observations make the events dramatic as well as informational, with the author nervously talking down challenging stallions and cheerfully personifying her subjects. The real draw here, however, is the collection of elegantly displayed color photographs depicting the mustangs observed in the text; between twilit pictures of gamboling youngsters and sun-drenched views of thundering herds, the book effectively testifies to Ryden’s longterm advocacy for the protection of the mustang. The title recalls Ernest Thompson Seton’s Wild Animals I Have Known, but the recollective flavor is particularly relevant—though the text only briefly alludes to the fact in passing, several of these pictures originally appeared in Ryden’s landmark 1971 National Geographic article on these same horses, and the herd observations are therefore mostly of horses probably long gone. That doesn’t detract from the worth of this particular literary experience, however, which combines visual appeal with an unusual behavioral twist to make a useful counterpoint to more staid how-to-ride books. An appendix on “The Colors of Horses” has a factual hiccup or two but offers a luscious color-photography gallery; a list of sources, including Ryden’s previous publications on the subject, is included. DS


The title is misleading and the real subject’s ironic topicality hard to get around: the president of the United States visits Marvin’s classroom and discusses citizenship with the kids. Once you put current affairs aside, however, this is a bouncily entertaining tale of a classroom suddenly thrust into the spotlight (and on “hole day,” yet, when kids, teachers, and even the principal are wearing clothes with holes in them). Even Marvin’s normally unflappable teacher, Mrs. North, is reeling from the gravity of the occasion: “Now, I know I don’t have to tell everybody how to behave when the president gets here,” she said. Then she told everybody how to behave.” Sachar doesn’t completely eschew the civics lesson at the expense of the jokes here, but it all fits together satisfactorily and with surprising realism. The end’s a bit abrupt, but the easygoing and humorous adventure confirms Marvin as a staunch friend of the intermediate reader. Illustrations not seen. DS

A kindly woodcutter wins a heavenly wife by concealing her garments while she bathes, which, in the best folkloric tradition, keeps her earthbound. Desiring his wife’s happiness, the woodcutter returns the clothes, at which point his wife promptly returns to heaven. The good-hearted hero then gives up his place on a transport to heaven to his aged mother, and loses his chance to join his wife. His kindness and self-sacrifice are rewarded when a dragon-horse, sent by the heavenly king, comes to reunite the woodcutter with his family. The lengthy narrative opens with an extended introductory subplot, but the pace is fairly rapid, and patient readers will be carried along by the magical and romantic elements. Neilan’s acrylic paintings are a strong inducement for readers. The subtle tension between warm and cool colors and the balanced choreography of double-, two-thirds, and single-page spreads combine with eyecatching points of view and compelling compositions to provide a strong sense of movement and drama. Human and animal figures are well-drafted and realistically expressive; brush strokes, almost scraped across the illustrations, add texture and depth. Jacket notes refer to the story as “ancient” and “one of Korea’s most beloved,” but no specific sources are provided. JNH


You’ll get the drift from the title: Ella is a “sweet little pig” afflicted by stepmother and stepsisters, who cruelly suggest she lacks beautiful porcine fatness (“She was just a skinny runt in ragged clothes”). When the Goldsnoots of Diamond Snout Hay Ranch have a fancy shindig, Slender Ella’s hogfather appears and gives her a boost, making her Harley Joe Goldsnoot’s prime dancing partner; the separated lovers are reunited when the lost cowboy boot fits Ella’s little pink trotter. Sathre has a chipper and breezy style that keeps this oinking along. Ella’s trials with her “steppies” and her emergence into hoedown stardom, especially her flirtatious dialogue with Harley Joe, are wittily depicted and subtly perfumed with pork. Lambert’s illustrations have some of the vigor of Ann Schweninger’s Oliver and Amanda Pig creations, but these fairy-tale pigs are more frou-frou and lighthearted (the scene of Ella reveling in the mudspray as she ploughs the field on her tractor is a glorious interlude) without being excessively whimsical. Though this is textual enough to be a semi-beginning reader rather than a beginning reader, kids’ familiarity with the underlying story will clue them in enough to enable a longer read than they realize they’re ready for, and they’ll get a giggle out of this country/western slice of ham. DS


Farmer Puckett loves the Fourth of July, because he gets to haul the fireworks to town in his wagon for the Independence Day Social. Unfortunately, his new
mule, Jake Johnson, is not amenable to the plan: instead, Jake sits down and won’t get up, and though "Farmer Puckett pulled for all he was worth, and pushed for all he was worth . . . he still couldn’t lift up that mule, not even the bottom half." Mrs. Puckett agitates for a strong approach, but Mr. Puckett is reluctant to hurt the "poor, sweet animal" and continues to feed and water the firmly en-sconced mule. Finally, in desperation on the Fourth of July with the firework-full wagon hitched to the mule, Mrs. Puckett literally lights a fire under Jake—who promptly gets up, leads the wagon over the fire, and sits right down again, with the predictable and literal resultant fireworks. Seymour’s countrified tone has an easy rhythm and bucolic flavor to it that keeps the tall tale taling along (if some wince at the motivational use of fire, it may help to demonstrate the book’s fictionality by noting that in real life, mules rarely sit down at all, let alone for months). Carrington’s acrylic art brings the ridiculousness to its peak, however, with whiskery-faced Jake a bug-eyed, bucktoothed cartoon who manages somehow to be lively despite his recalcitrant immobility and the gaudy colors of the townspeople’s garb outshining the fireworks for sheer sparkle. Youngsters, particularly longears fans, will get a kick out of this. DS


As long as they’re safely distant, tornadoes are one of the most fascinating and dramatic phenomena weather has to offer. Simon provides a succinct yet vivid introduction to twisters, filling his text with memorable accounts of flattened cities and unusual tornadic effects ("A tornado once sucked up a pond full of frogs and rained them down on a nearby town"); he also offers technical information about tornado formation and measurement and explodes some tornado myths. The photographs of tornadoes in situ and the devastating aftereffects are memorable indeed; often the images are bleeds on full pages or double spreads, providing a stormy backdrop for the text that describes them. The diagrams are less successful, unfortunately, with their features poorly differentiated and explained; the book also makes a startlingly large error in its description of a tornado watch (the text confuses a watch with a warning, stating that a watch indicates that a tornado "has already been spotted either on the ground or on radar"). The combination of technical information and spectacular storm scenes, however, will suck readers right in. DS


Farmer Brown lives a cheerful bucolic life that contains “pigs that oinked,/ Cows that moo’d,/ Sheep that baa’d/ Doves that coo’d,/ Hens that clucked/ While donkey brayed” and other sundry barnyard inhabitants offering their traditional utterances. When a twister roars through the farm, everybody is tossed topsy-turvy with problematic results: "His cows oinked,/ The pigs moo’d/ His sheep clucked,/ The cat coo’d,”—in short, things are wrong, wrong, wrong, including the COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO-ing farmer. After a nightmarish day of milking sows and slop-
ping cows, Farmer Brown is relieved when a second tornado whirls through the farm and returns everything to its original state. The rhyme is inviting, the inversions ripple like toppling dominos through the inventory of animals, and young audiences will find the resultant chaos irresistible. Westcott's palette, as usual, has the translucent and colorful cheer of lollipops, and her transposed animals hurtling through the air are gleefully loony and cartoony. Use this to create a barnyard ruckus and it'll be hard to return to the tidy world of "Old MacDonald." DS

Beginning with a detailed author's note on shadows and shadow creation, Swinburne then introduces shadows found everywhere: on the edge of cliffs, under horses, and behind you on a sunny day. Photographs, generally crisp and clear, illustrate Swinburne's simple narrative as he finds shadows on the schoolyard, under bugs, and at the beach. Midway through the book begins a "Guess whose shadow?" game, which uses shadows from kids, critters, inanimate objects, and combinations thereof. The child subjects will particularly appeal to young viewers, but the scenes' busy backgrounds sometimes interfere with the shadows' visibility. Scale problems hamper the comparison of big and small shadows, as the shadow of a pine tree appears smaller than the shadow of a spider. This lacks the draw and polish of Margaret Miller's guessing games, but few shadow books offer the lure of photography, and kids will appreciate the visual puzzles here. Pair it with Clyde Robert Bulla's What Makes a Shadow? (BCCB 11/63) for a more detailed introduction to shadows and a prelude to shadow hunting. EAB

Josh is tired of living out in the Alaskan wilderness with no access to more common teen pleasures, and he's tired of his father's indulgence of Nathan, Josh's idealistic older half-brother. Nathan is a Thoreau devotee, increasingly disapproving of his family's reliance on trapping and hunting and intent on finding a different way to relate to nature. He finds a fan in Shannon, the vegetarian daughter of a neighboring family, who has been at loggerheads with Josh since her arrival in the wilderness; when Nathan disappears during a dangerous cold spell, however, it's Shannon and Josh who find him and save him after he's attacked by a bear. The writing is fairly pedestrian, but there's a great deal of originality in the material here. The book offers a vivid entree into the Alaskan winter world, where the snow machine is standard transport, trips to the outhouse are fraught with danger, and visiting a town of 4,000 is a culture shock; the beauty and danger of the wilderness are both given their due. There's also representation of several different points of view about wilderness use, ranging from Nathan's spiritual impulses to Josh's more pragmatic approach; though the deck is somewhat stacked, since Nathan's view veers into romanticism that leads directly to his downfall, there's still a thoughtful airing of the divergent opinions and a strong implication that everybody's motives are a little more complicated than they realize. Paulsen and Hobbs fans looking for accessible wilderness adventure with a philosophical piquancy will find this a worthwhile frontier to explore. DS
Vande Velde, Vivian  
*Never Trust a Dead Man.*  
Harcourt, 1999  
[192p]  
ISBN 0-15-201899-9 $17.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 6-10

Selwyn, jilted by the beautiful Anora for the less ethical but richer Farold, finds himself accused of Farold's untimely death, convicted on circumstantial evidence, and sentenced to a horrible death—entombment alive with the dead man's decomposing body in the town burial vault. And that's just in the first twenty-five pages of this suspenseful page-turner. Vande Velde's wildly careening yet admirably controlled plot includes a witch who can raise the dead (sort of), magical disguises, mistaken identity, and a search for the real killer of the dead Farold (who has been brought back to life as a talking bat . . . okay, it sounds strange, but it works fine). Vande Velde never sacrifices characterization for plot: Selwyn is an innocent who becomes a bit wiser, Farold is a ne'er-do-well when alive but rather endearing when dead (okay, it sounds strange, but . . . ), and the lovely Anora—well, let's just say handsome is as handsome does. Characterization and plot are supported by a strong sense of place (the burial vault is especially gruesome) and the pace never lets up, not even on the last page. This is a fantasy-mystery-comedy-romance with something for everyone, including the lucky booktalker. JMD

Wallace, Ian  
*Boy of the Deeps;* written and illus. by Ian Wallace.  
DK Ink, 1999  
[32p]  
ISBN 0-7894-2569-6 $16.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  6-9 yrs

James is no stranger to work, having been a "breaker boy, sorting sharp slate from coal with his bare hands," but now he joins his father in men's work, a thousand feet down in a Nova Scotia coal mine. Readers follow James through his day in the tunnels beneath the Atlantic Ocean as he tests the air for toxic gases, learns to blast the coal from the tunnel walls, loads the pony carts, and eats his lunch with greedy rats looking on. Just as his unconditioned body nears its limit of soreness and weariness, "the soft coal floor swelled beneath his boots and snapping timber cracked like gunfire in his ears." He and Da survive the cave in, clearing piles of rubble with their bare hands to reach the rescue party; father and son then exchange a joke and a few words of encouragement, and head for home: "Tomorrow they would go down into the deeps again, for they were miners and that was their job." The matter-of-fact tone in which Wallace recounts the day's tasks allows the suddenness of the tunnel collapse to take the readers by surprise, and more imaginative readers will recognize that the stoicism with which the characters meet disaster thinly masks fear and fatalism. Rigid, literal acrylic paintings manage to capture the looming oppression of the dank tunnel walls, fragile under the ocean's weight and eerily lit by hand-held lanterns. EB

Willner-Pardo, Gina  
*Jumping into Nothing;* illus. by Heidi Chang.  
Clarion, 1999  
[64p]  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 2-4

Sophie's looking forward to summer by the pool hanging out with her best friend Annalise, but there are a few clouds on the horizon: super-cool classmates Maggie and Jennifer, to be specific. The popular pair has apparently taken a shine to Annalise, inviting her to join them in jumping off the high dive—of which Sophie
is deathly afraid. Tired of being sneered at as a chicken, Sophie decides to work her way up to the high dive by performing, with Annalise's encouragement, other fearsome acts such as doing a math problem on the blackboard, telling the boy she likes that she thinks he's cute, and eating some bugs; ultimately, however, a little fatherly encouragement helps her off the board. Sophie's travails are sympathetically depicted, and Willner-Pardo has a knack for conveying realistic human dynamics in simple phrasing; Annalise's quiet ambivalence between her affection for Sophie and her flattered response to the cool girls' attention adds authenticity and nuance. The warmly drawn relationships, insight into preteen fears, and some enticingly squirmy moments (ranging from ant-eating to boy-girl conversation) make this a satisfying and accessible read. Chang's illustrations are a little overly dimpled and darling, but there's an appealing sturdiness to them that matches the text. DS

WOODSON, JACQUELINE  Lena. Delacorte, 1999  [126p]
ISBN 0-385-32308-5  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  

In I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This (BCCB 3/94), Marie narrated the story of her friendship with Lena, who took her little sister Dion and fled their sexually abusive father at the end of the book. Now Lena tells of life on the road as she and Dion hitch rides (they say they're trying to get to their mother who's in the hospital having a baby), miss Marie bitterly, and try to figure out where they can go that won't result in the sisters being split up. Woodson capably paints the portrait of a devoted but desperate Lena, determined to protect her little sister but unsure of just how to manage it. The book is particularly vivid in its limning of life on the road and its depiction of the people Lena and Dion meet in a world filled with passing kindnesses: a truck driver buys them sandwiches, a waitress, formerly a runaway herself, guesses their secret and comps their breakfast, and Miz Lily, who takes them in for the night, lavishes warmth on them and finally connects them back to Marie's family, where the girls find a home. Though the girls' journey is a sad one, occasioned by the behavior of their father and haunted by the indifference of their late mother's family, the book is ultimately a tender and loving story of their encountering much goodness in the world as well as ultimately a place to belong in it. DS
The Newbery Medal will be awarded to Louis Sachar for *Holes* (Foster/Farrar). The Newbery Honor Book is *A Long Way to Chicago* by Richard Peck (Dial).

The Caldecott Medal will be awarded to Mary Azarian for *Snowflake Bentley*, written by Jacqueline Briggs Martin (Houghton). The Caldecott Honor Books are *Duke Ellington*, illus. by Brian Pinkney, text by Andrea Davis Pinkney (Hyperion); *No, David*, written and illus. by David Shannon (Blue Sky/Scholastic); *Snow*, written and illus. by Uri Shulevitz (Farrar); and *Tibet: Through the Red Box*, written and illus. by Peter Sís (Foster/Farrar).

The Coretta Scott King Award for writing will be presented to Angela Johnson, author of *Heaven* (Simon), and the award for illustration goes to Michelle Wood for *I See the Rhythm*, text by Toyomi Igus (Children's Book Press). The King Honor Books for writing are *Jazmin's Notebook*, by Nikki Grimes (Dial); *Breaking Ground, Breaking Silence*, by Joyce Hansen (Henry Holt); and *The Other Side: Shorter Poems*, by Angela Johnson (Orchard). King Honor Books for illustration are *I Have Heard of a Land*, illustrated by Floyd Cooper, written by Joyce Carol Thomas (HarperCollins); *The Batboy & His Violin*, illustrated by E. B. Lewis, written by Gavin Curtis; and *Duke Ellington*, illus. by Brian Pinkney, written by Andrea Davis Pinkney (Hyperion).

The American publisher receiving the Mildred L. Batchelder Award for the most outstanding translation of a book originally published in a foreign language is Dial Books for Schoschana Rabinovici's *Thanks to My Mother*; honors go to Viking for *Secret Letters from 0 to 10*, by Susie Hoch Morgenstern.

The 2000 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture will be delivered by Hazel Rochman.

Anne McCaffrey is the 1999 winner of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for Outstanding Literature For Young Adults honoring an author’s lifetime contribution in writing books for teenagers.

The ALSC Distinguished Service Award goes to Lillian N. Gerhardt.

The Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction goes to Harriette Gillem Robinet's *Forty Acres and Maybe a Mule* (Karl/Atheneum).

The Canadian Library Association's Best Book of the Year for children is Kenneth Oppel's *Silverwing* (Simon). The Best Book of the Year for Young Adults is *Bone*
Dance by Martha Brooks (Orchard). The Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrator’s Award goes to Barbara Reid for The Party (North Winds Press).

The Carnegie Medal was awarded to Tim Bowler for River Boy (Oxford University Press).

The Kate Greenaway Medal was awarded to P. J. Lynch for When Jessie Came Across the Sea, text by Amy Hest (Candlewick).

The Hans Christian Andersen Medal for writing goes to Katherine Paterson of the United States; the illustration medal goes to Tomi Ungerer of France.

NCTE’s Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children goes to Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World: The Extraordinary True Story of Shackleton and the Endurance by Jennifer Armstrong (Atheneum); Honor Books are Black Whiteness: Admiral Byrd Alone in the Antarctic by Robert Burleigh and illus. by Walter Lyon Krudop (Atheneum), Fossil Feud: The Rivalry of the First American Dinosaur Hunters by Thom Holmes (Messner), Hottest, Coldest, Highest, Deepest written and illus. by Steve Jenkins (Houghton), and No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War by Anita Lobel (Greenwillow).
Subject and Use Index

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

**ADVENTURE STORIES:** Butler; Kimmel
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  - Aliens—stories: Layton
  - American Indians—fiction: Durrant
  - Anger—stories: Bang
  - Architecture: Aliki; Cooper
  - Art and artists: Cummings; Hamanaka
  - Art appreciation: Johnson
  - Aunts—stories: Proimos
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  - Bats—fiction: Nielsen
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**FANTASY:** Alexander; Atwater-Rhodes; Butler; Lally; Vande Velde
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  - FOLKTALES AND FAIRY TALES: Echewa; Goldin; Kimmel; Lee; Lester; Olson; San Souci; Sathre
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Transportation: Moss
Twins: Rotner
Uncles—fiction: Nielsen
Vampires—fiction: Arwater-Rhodes
Voyages and travel: Durbin; Lourie
Voyages and travel—fiction: Woodson
Warriors: Kimmel
Weather: Simon
Weather—stories: Hesse
Weddings—stories: English
Women’s studies: Moss
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