The Character

In The Book

Story and full-color pictures by

KAETHE ZEMACH

"In this charming picture book, the main character is the Character who lives on the book's white pages. This likeable young man makes friends, plays music, and cooks there. Then a new adventure presents itself: the Character's aunt invites him for a visit [to her book]. His problem is how to get from his book to his Auntie's. . . . Kaethe Zemach's lively illustrations recall the buoyant outlook of the work of her mother, Margot Zemach, yet are uniquely her own. Younger readers will be charmed by this lively offering. Older readers will find much to ponder about the role each of us plays in bringing a story to life." —SLJ

Ages 2 up $14.95 TR (0-06-205060-5)

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Arlene Sardine
written and illus. by Chris Raschka

From Brer Rabbit to Peter Rabbit, from folklore critter to literary creature, children have consistently identified with any animal as small and helpless as they are. Their expectation is that the vulnerable underling will win his/her way and survive as hero, reassuring them of a similar prospect, and that’s usually the way it goes. Take Leo Lionni’s Swimmy, for instance. When his tiny, bright red companions are wiped out by a hungry tuna, “only Swimmy escaped,” but he manages to brave the lonely, sad, and dangerous sea to form a new and stronger society of which he is the eye. This is Joseph Campbell’s hero with a thousand faces, the isolated youth who undertakes a journey and comes back to society with new knowledge and new status. This is the little adventurer with whom small children traditionally identify. With Chris Raschka’s Arlene Sardine, which at first glance seems to be a successor to Swimmy, kids are in for a big surprise.

The invitation to identify is clear. “So you want to be a sardine,” reads the first sentence. “I knew a little fish once who wanted to be a sardine.” Here we are introduced to Arlene, born in a fjord, happy as a brisling swimming with ten hundred thousand friends, caught in a purse net at age two, held there for three days till her stomach is empty, lifted out of the water, and emptied onto the deck of a boat. Now comes the catch, if you’ll pardon the pun: “Here, on the deck of the fishing boat, Arlene died.” Of course, listeners are quickly reassured: “However, Arlene’s story is not over, because she was put on ice, in a box, with her friends.” At the factory she is sorted by grading machines, given a short salty bath, delicately smoked (“I’ll bet Arlene felt well rested on the conveyer belt”), packed into a little can (“I wonder if Arlene was a little nervous for the final inspection”), covered with olive oil, hermetically sealed, and cooked in her can. Finally, Arlene gets her wish—to be a sardine. So if you want to be a sardine, you know, now, how to satisfy that ambition.

The paintings—watercolor, naturally—are as rhythmic as the text, wriggling with multiple curved shapes and hues of blue, green, red, black, and yellow in a kind of graphically rhyming pattern. The hand-lettered text satirizes informational styles of presentation. Some emphatic segments appear in blocks of color, for instance, or perhaps just the opening word and a half may be overlaid with pink, or a technical term may appear in enlarged print. The compositions seem infinitely varied without becoming fragmented or breaking the flow from page to page. The style is even somewhat reminiscent of Lionni’s collage effects.

And this is no more anthropomorphic than Swimmy. After all, a fantasy is a fantasy, and at least Arlene has an afterlife. Somehow, though, it isn’t quite the
Valhalla we've come to expect for slain heroes. It's more like pickling your pet. Has Raschka underestimated the emotional involvement of his audience, or have we who work with children overestimated it? Who is this book for? And does that question matter if children's literature has become a true art form whose validity depends not on popular appeal but on intrinsic aesthetic merit? Is this a book that's viable for that rarely used Bulletin category, the Special Reader? Is it Charlie the Tuna in a different can? Or is it simply a failure of marriage between form and content, a divorce of art from audience?

A number of Raschka's other books raise the same question. They are brilliant in artistic conception and minimalist text, but they fall clearly into dual categories. Three of them—Yo! Yes?, Can't Sleep, and The Blushful Hippopotamus—are acutely attuned to young children's sensibilities and experience. Four—Charlie Parker Plays Bebop, Elizabeth Imagined an Iceberg, Mysterious Thelonius, and Simple Gifts—are impressive conceptually but will puzzle many picture book audiences. Arlene Sardine is in a category all by itself. It could be a take-off on sentimental anthropomorphism in children's literature. It could be a send-up of best-sellers such as The Rainbow Fish. It could be lesson on moral cannibalism. It could be The Chocolate War for four-year-olds. It could be a defiance of audience definitions and constrictions. Or it could be Chris Raschka following his nose as far as it goes.

Will the shock effect of a dead hero do any damage to unsuspecting children? One librarian did suggest that this is a vegetarian book in a big way: "If I'd read this as a child, I probably would have cried every time I passed the fish section in the supermarket." But that sentiment reflects the three-to-five-year-old mentality for which the book seems to be formatted. Eight-to-ten-year-olds may find the book funny, for better or for worse, in the same way Scieszka and Smith's The True Story of the Three Little Pigs Told by A. Wolf is funny, though the style of art in Arlene Sardine is seductively and deceptively more innocent.

One thing for sure, Raschka's work always surprises, challenges, and intrigues us one way or another. In wake of the conventional clichés that too often plague literature of all kinds, including children's, it's refreshing to have a visual storyteller trying innovative things. The words "interesting" and "postmodern" come to mind; if both adjectives hadn't become such hopeless clichés themselves, it would be tempting to apply them to this ingenious creator of picture books who at best matches his own fresh energy with that of his audience.

Betsy Hearne, Consulting Editor

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE


Through hands-on activities such as carving up cheese slices, arranging pretzels, slicing bread, and connecting dots on paper, readers are encouraged to construct and explore a range of polygons, from triangles to dodecagons. Adler introduces
the shapes in increasing order of complexity, walking readers through scalene, to isosceles, to equilateral triangles, then proceeding to discussion of angles. Likewise, quadrilaterals advance from trapezoid, to parallelogram, to rhombus, to square, and then to pentagons and beyond. Although a glossary on the final page reviews Adler’s terms, right triangles make no appearance on the list; angles, however, are defined in terms of degrees—a concept omitted from the text. Still, Tobin’s colorful diagrams and lanky, baseball-capped tour guide make each definition and direction crystal clear, making this a useful and appealing title for extending classroom lessons or encouraging beginners to charge beyond circle-square-triangle. EB

*Aesop*  The Fox and the Rooster: A Fable from Aesop; illus. by Charles Santore. Little Dipper/Random House, 1998 [26p]
Reviewed from galleys

Illustrator Charles Santore gives the fable of the overly confident fox outwitted by an underestimated rooster stellar visual treatment. Outside a ruined fortress the hungry fox spies a succulent rooster and attempts to trick it into grabbing proximity by telling it of a new law decreeing that “all creatures that were enemies are now to be friends.” Rooster, having the advantage of a lofty perch in a tree, spots a pack of hounds heading toward the fortress, and says “if what you tell me is true, dear Fox, then the hounds that are headed our way will be your friends, too,” precipitating a hasty retreat by “the clever fox [who] went hungry that fine day.” Santore enriches the simple text with his gorgeously detailed watercolors featuring expressive depictions of the wily but unsuccessful fox and the somewhat pompous but clever rooster. The compositions are masterfully drafted, combining color, form, and framed text blocks into a coherent, balanced whole. The architectural details of the ruined fortress and the bucolic landscape help create an idealized setting that suits the story’s classical nature. Aesop’s trickster tale makes a quick and easy readaloud, and only the small trim size will keep this book from being a storytime staple; the size will be an advantage, however, when offering this title to young beginning readers with little hands or to parents seeking effective lap books. JMD

*Antle, Nancy*  *Lost in the War.* Dial, 1998  [144p]
Reviewed from galleys

Mom’s recurrent nightmares and persistent depression, stemming from her tour as a nurse in Vietnam, are troubling and considerably embarrassing to her two adolescent daughters. Narrator Lisa sides with Aunt Rose in trusting the psychiatrist’s advice that Mom openly confront her memories of emergency-room mayhem and her own husband’s death in action; younger sibling Jenny thinks they were all better off when Mom repressed her memories. The upcoming dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington brings matters to a crisis, and Lisa’s junior-high history class on the Vietnam War provides the unexpected means and personal connections that eventually help Mom to bring some stability and even joy back into her life. Antle isn’t forthcoming on specific dates, and readers may have to do some number juggling to realize that the story is taking place in the recent past. Although the book affords its characters many natural opportunities
to discuss specifics of the war, the balance between plot and pedantry tips slightly in favor of the latter. Many views on the War—and the rage, guilt, and pride accompanying them—receive a fair hearing, though, and readers will recognize that post-traumatic disorder entangles more than the immediate victim in its wide-cast net. EB


The avant-garde, as Aronson states, is generally the province of youth, and here he attempts to give today’s young a history of the movement in which many of them participate. Preference is given to the visual arts, but the book examines a wide range of avant-gardeists in history, including Duchamp and the Dadaists, Nijinsky and his choreography (especially *The Rite of Spring*), Abstract Expressionism, the Beats, Woodstock, Warhol, and now the World Wide Web. Particularly insightful are the author’s analyses of these movement’s larger social motivations and implications, as well as the paradoxes and at times hypocrisy such currents have involved (he notes, for instance, that the appeal of jazz to the white avant-garde depended on their conception of African-American music as “bad,” which ultimately is “a kind of contempt”; he enumerates biographical details that make it clear that the Beats’ pursuit of freedom came at a price to those around them). Contemporary readers will perhaps find most provocative his linking of current technology to the avant-garde condition and his questioning the role of an avant-garde when the avant has essentially become the garde itself. Chapter introductions include suggestions for accompanying music or film (the book expresses a hope that it will be “the hub of a multimedia experience”), though no discography is provided; the glossy pages are filled with photographic reproductions (unfortunately all black and white). A chapter-by-chapter chronology of individuals and an index are included. Aronson’s chatty endnotes lead young readers to some classic adult works on this topic; they’ll probably be an appropriate next step for art-intense teens who devour this book to gain a better understanding of just why they’re carrying around that battered edition of Rimbaud. DS


Readers afflicted with *Titanic* fever can not only plumb the remains of the reigning queen of shipwrecks, but also of four of her nearly-as-famous sisters in disaster. And who better to serve as tour guide than Ballard, discoverer of the *Titanic’s* resting site? Opening with comments on how underwater exploration has evolved over the decade since the three-man *Alvin* first probed the *Titanic*, Ballard plunges into the main event—discussion of the sinkings and current states of the *Titanic, Empress of Ireland, Lusitania, Britannic, and Andrea Doria*. Each chapter begins with a recap of the disaster and eyewitness testimony; Ballard then discusses the peculiar challenges in investigating each wreck, and speculation regarding any lingering mysteries (he favors, for example, the probability of ignited coal dust as the agent in the *Lusitania’s* “second explosion”). Heavily illustrated with color under-
water photos of creditable clarity and Marschall’s detailed paintings, this title will
attract browsers like barnacles to a sunken hull; to rely on the pictures, though, is
to miss an equally dramatic and immediate narration: “Effortlessly we rose up the
side of that famous bow, now weeping great tears of rust, past the huge anchor and
up over the rail.” A glossary is included to help sort out some rudimentary nautical
terms, as is a list for further reading. EB

BELTON, SANDRA  Ernestine & Amanda: Mysteries on Monroe Street. Simon, 1998 153p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-689-81612-X  $16.00  R  Gr. 4-8

Ernestine and Amanda are back, and this time they’re dancing at the new Davis
Dance Studio on run-down Monroe Street. At least, Amanda is dancing—
Ernestine, self-conscious about her weight, is playing the piano for the dance lessons.
Amanda is adjusting to her parents’ pending divorce and her sister’s increasingly
serious relationship with Ernestine’s brother, Marcus; Ernestine is adjusting to the
absence of her best friend Clovis and her changing role as big sister to pesty baby
sister Jazz. The excitement over the dance studio (founded and supported by the
African-American mothers seeking an alternative to the segregated, all-white dance
studio on the other side of town) is tempered by vandalism and a fire. At first the
damage is blamed on white hoodlums with nothing better to do, and though it is
finally revealed that the owner of the building housing the dance studio set fire to
it for the insurance, that revelation does little to mitigate the anger and worry
being caused by the still distant but moving ever-closer issue of desegregation. The
volatile relationship between Ernestine and Amanda is seasoned with rare moments
of mutual understanding, the characterizations of the two girls, their siblings, their
friends, and their parents are emotionally true, and the serious undertones of the
plot are leavened by the humor of the personal interactions. Belton keeps her
characters and her series firmly in hand as she leads them out of the 1950s and
toward a promising if potentially stormy future. A selection of captioned black-
and-white photographs at the end of the book acts as Ernestine and Amanda’s
“scrapbook” of historical events. JMD

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027748-3  $14.89  Ad  Gr. 9-12
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027747-5  $14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Barbie is a successful teenage model resentfully living out her alcoholic former
beauty queen mother’s dreams of success, all the while searching Los Angeles and
its environs for the healing power of love. She is assisted in her search by Mab, a
smart-mouthed, redheaded fairy no longer than a teenager’s pinkie finger, who has
been her secret friend since Barbie was eleven years old. Barbie’s search for love—
propelled by the father who deserted her and the slimy pedophile photographer
who sexually abused her—is the basis of the slim plot; the search leads her into the
arms of gorgeous actor Todd Range, to a New York City fashion show, and finally
to the revelatory and healing moment when she exposes the photographer for the
child molester he is. Block paints a heartbreaking picture of the effects of abuse on
children through her characterizations of both the borderline anorexic Barbie and
the beautiful but nearly tragic Griffin, the homosexual friend suffering from unre-
quitied love for the heterosexual Todd. The action is episodic and disjointed, the sex is somewhat self-conscious if understated, and the happily ever after end-tying is ultimately predictable. This plot line doesn't have the narrative cohesion of Block's earlier work (Weetzie Bat, BCCB 2/89, Witch Baby, 10/91, etc.), but Block still has an admirable talent for stringing words and images together like transient gems on ephemeral thread. JMD


Browne's famous chimp, Willy, goes on some elaborate, banana-focused journeys of the mind as he dozes. The text is simple: "Sometimes Willy dreams that he's a movie star or a singer, a sumo wrestler or a ballet dancer" and other dreamy possibilities. This is an illustration-driven book, however, and the art tells a rich and intricate story as each stated possibility captions a framed view of an art-historically touched (Magritte is quoted with particular frequency) vision teeming with bananas. Willy's dream of being a famous writer, for instance, puts him in a simian Wonderland, with bananas as the Cheshire Cat's grin, part of several headdresses (the Mad Hatter's hat now states "This is not a hat"), the beak of Alice's croquet flamingo, and quite a few other aspects, as Willy sits placidly amid it all writing with his banana pen. Willy's scary dream that he can't run takes place in a de Chirico landscape, where a freight engine tows banana-laden flatcars in the distance as Willy is literally rooted to the ground while a menacing figure (Buster Nose from Willy and Hugh, perhaps?) approaches. The book's various appeals are aimed rather differently—the text is a bit youthful for the art ID games, and it's unlikely that many of Willy's regular fans will catch the Chaplin homage and other references. The enjoyment of the otherworldly scenes, however, and the pure monkey pleasure of hunting for bananas in the pictures (some are obvious but some sneak up stealthily) will keep youngsters, as well as their parents, engrossed. And if you want an adventurous addition to an art curriculum, use this to spur youthful artists to try their own takes on the modern masters. DS


Twelve monster tales from a variety of American Indian tribes are retold in this collaboration between noted storyteller Joseph Bruchac and his son, James. From the cautionary tale of "Ugly Face" (a Mohawk boheyman that steals disobedient children) to the ultimately touching tale of the Passamaquoddy "Chenoo" (in which a young woman welcomes a monster, thereby transforming him) to the grisly cannibalism of the Penobscot "Keewahkee" (wherein a young boy discovers the truth about his "older sister"), these pithily retold tales are short enough for reading aloud and easy enough to learn to tell quickly. Brief notes at the end of each tale give cultural context as well as specific written and oral sources. Full-page black-and-white pen and ink drawings and spot art effectively evoke the spooky but concrete creepiness of the tales. The combination of applicability across curriculum lines, a wide range of reader appeal, and a clean, unaffected storytelling style
makes this a successful, accessible collection. An appendix with a pronunciation guide is included. JMD

BURLEIGH, ROBERT

Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-5

This winning title is less a biography of George Herman Ruth than Burleigh's homage to The Babe. Across the spacious white of each left hand page runs Burleigh's poetic reflection on what made Babe Ruth an innovator: his instinct to swing "through the ball." Always "through the ball"; his introduction of the home run as phenomenon rather than fluke; his superstar status with the fans ("He trots with short steps. Across the loose dirt of the infield. Over the soft hardness of the bases/ beneath his spiked shoes./ Under the roar of cheering voices/ that falls on him like warm rain"). Beneath the clip of free verse is an info-bite on Babe's career, cast as the vita on a baseball trading card. On each facing page is a riveting, photorealistic painting of Babe's action on the field and the crowd's reaction in the stands. Wimmer eschews borders for his pictures, allowing each monumental pose to spill off the page as it will, thus heightening the larger-than-life stature of his subject and projecting to viewers a sensation of being in the middle of the fray. Younger fans whose baseball interest outreaches reading ability will find this a great readaloud and a worthy teammate for David Adler's Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man (BCCB 4/97) EB

BUSH, TIMOTHY

Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-79984-7 $17.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-8 yrs

When his parents have an evening out at the Rings of Saturn Preservation Dance, Benjamin McFadden is left alone with his automated cat, Fantastic, and his Babysitter. Annoyed at the restrictive ways of the robot, Benjamin reprograms it "to be more fun," then proceeds to teach it what fun is. Unfortunately, when Benjamin gets tired and actually wants to go to bed, his fun-loving Babysitter just wants more and more pleasure and begins to make fun-loving robots in order to expand the hedonistic whirl. This has some similarities to Ted Dewan's robot-centered adaptation of The Sorcerer's Apprentice (BCCB 7/98), both in its sci-fi-ish atmosphere and in its robots-upon-robots plot. The predictable message here is more heavy-handed, but Bush deftly plays with textual rhythms ("Bed,' said Babysitter. 'No,' said Benjamin") and offers some humorously poker-faced dialogue ("Games are fun," Benjamin explains to the six-armed Babysitter. "But two arms per player, or it isn't fair"). The watercolor art offers an enticing view of life on what seems to be a residential satellite in outer space; the look is sort of retrofuturistic, with dorkily unwieldy machinery reminiscent of early sci-fi films dominating the proceedings, and there are some amusing visual jokes (the robotic books with "Catch" in the title are playing a game of catch with a book of football plays). The dominant muted ochre turns muddy in some of the illustrations, however, and the spreads of the household chaos often become visually disorganized themselves, resulting in sensory overload rather than gleeful exuberance. Nonetheless,
plenty of kids will find the alluring gadgetry and entertaining disarray to be—to borrow a word from the Babysitter—fun. DS

CAMPBELL, ERIC  
Papa Tembo. Harcourt, 1998  [288p]
Reviewed from galleys  

An elephant herd struggles for survival on the Tanzanian veldt, guarded from afar by ancient rogue bull Papa Tembo; researcher John Blake and his children Matt and Amanda track and study the herd; adventurers Hyram Johnson and Mike Taylor search for poachers they had witnessed decimate a herd for ivory tusks; master poacher Laurens van der Wel obsessively pursues Papa Tembo, who had crippled him in his youth. These four stories converge in a fiery climax as the poacher corrals the herd and sets their pen ablaze to lure Papa Tembo to their rescue, Johnson and Taylor get their chance to nail van der Wel, and Amanda works in empathy with Papa Tembo to free the trapped herd. It would be difficult to match the evil van der Wel for sheer villainy as he sadistically gloats over the elephants he attempts to burn to death (“He turned his back on them, leaving the doomed herd to its graceless, galumphing dance toward death. No wonder they use them in circuses, he thought”), or to match the satisfying propriety of Papa Tembo’s retribution. But while villainy and its comeuppance never go out of fashion, Campbell’s close brush with anthropomorphization doesn’t wear nearly as well. Although John Blake airs the case for scientific dispassion loudly and often, it’s clear that Campbell’s sympathies lie with Amanda, who reads human-like motivations into most of the elephants’ behaviors. Still, there’s melodrama and adventure aplenty on the Serengeti Plain, and readers not quite up to following Ahab on his mission of vengeance against Moby Dick can take on this behemoth instead. EB

CAZET, DENYS  
Minnie and Moo Go to the Moon; written and illus. by Denys Cazet. DK Ink, 1998  [48p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7894-2516-5  $12.95
Reviewed from galleys  

Minnie and Moo are a fetching pair of bovine friends who are propelled into various adventures, usually precipitated by Moo’s succumbing to the temptation to think (“‘Oh, Moo, Moo,’ said Minnie. ‘You have been thinking again.’ ‘It was only a small think,’ said Moo”). In Go to the Moon, M&M borrow the farmer’s tractor and take off for a wild ride that crashes in a place so strange they assume it’s the moon. In Go Dancing, Minnie distracts Moo from her longing for thumbs by proposing an excursion; dressed as lovely ladies, they win the hearts of a pair of eligible bachelors. Moon is bright and amusing; in Dancing, the proceedings attain a Far-Side-esque bizarreness that gives them a rare and delicious effervescence (at the dance, the gals are horror-stricken by the hamburger refreshments, which they suspect used to be their Holstein friends), but it’s not aimed over the heads of the
intended audience. The vocabulary is limited but extraordinarily flexible, with none of the stilted flavor that sometimes curses early readers. Minnie (milk chocolate, tuft of blonde curls) and Moo (darker, spiky brunette thatch) are a portly pair with a vaguely hippopotamusish overtone, but their stylish dancing and general zest marks them as star cowgirls; hurtling livestock and grinning dance partners provide some frenetic supporting action. If you're looking to butter up some new readers, these would be USDA prime. DS

**CONLY, JANE LESLIE** *While No One Was Watching.* Holt, 1998 233p
ISBN 0-8050-3934-1 $16.95 R Gr. 5-8

Earl and his little brother and sister, Frankie and Angela, are staying with their aunt Lula while their father is away trying to earn money for a place they can all live. In thrall to their dangerous cousin Wayne, the boys go roaming in search of bicycles to steal; on one such jaunt, Frankie falls in love with a backyard pet rabbit and Wayne steals it for him. Addie, the girl who owns Flag the rabbit, is devastated, and with the help of her neighbor, Maynard, she sets out to retrieve her lost lapine friend. Conly takes this detective-story-ish plot and turns it into an investigation of the collision of different worlds. Addie and Maynard's lives are quiet and circumscribed (though Maynard, adopted from India by an eccentric single father, is a social outcast due to his thoughtful strangeness), and the book astutely depicts the shock and excitement of their discovering very different existences just a few neighborhoods away, where they'd never set foot before. There's no patronization in the portrayal of Earl, Frankie, and Angela, either; they're good kids from a good if overstretched father but they're going through a bad time, and their longing for the more replete life symbolized by Addie's soft affectionate rabbit and Maynard's nice house is understandable. The shifting viewpoints, the distanced tone, and the abstractness of some of the plot movement may interfere with some readers' involvement with the story, but the cultural contrast and the eventual benefit of the relationship to both sides of the track is an interesting and unusual exploration. DS

**CORMIER, ROBERT** *Heroes.* Delacorte, 1998 [192p]
ISBN 0-385-32590-8 $15.95 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-10

Cormier returns to familiar turf in the Frenchtown section of fictional Monument, Massachusetts with this tale of eighteen-year-old Francis Cassavant, who has returned from World War II with a Silver Star for heroism and a face hideously deformed from a grenade blast. Readers follow Francis on his real-time mission to kill Larry LaSalle, another decorated Frenchtown hero, while reconstructing through Francis' flashbacks the events which brought him to this pass. Struggling to maintain his anonymity, Francis finally tracks down and confronts LaSalle, the town's former social director, who once nurtured the talents and confidence of Frenchtown youth—and, as is eventually revealed, raped Francis' girlfriend. Guilt over not preventing the rape had driven Francis to suicidal enlistment at fifteen, and now he seeks revenge. While neither plot nor structure is particularly innovative, the pacing is meticulous, the mood is tense, and the climactic confrontation between Francis and Larry is charged with ethical ambiguity, as LaSalle challenges Francis to consider, "Does that one sin of mine wipe away all the good things?" Young adults struggling with their own moral choices may be sparked to discussion by the novel's ambivalent conclusion. EB
Joseph Jacobs' gripping ghost story "The Sprightly Tailor" has been adapted in a new version that reflects the oral rhythms of a traditional storyteller: "When wishes were horses and beggars could ride, in a stone castle by the sea there lived a rich laird." This superstitious gentleman commissions seamstress Lucy Dove to sew him a pair of lucky trousers in the local graveyard—which is haunted, of course—and she must outwit a fearsome bogle to get the bag of gold that will ensure her of an easy old age. Dramatically darksome illustrations intensify the tale. BH

Carlotta Carusa is no mere opera singer—she sings "with a voice so melodious that audiences throbbed, sobbed and swooned from its sheer beauty." But she's bored with triumphant tours and easy audiences, and she heads for the American West to find new ears to conquer. On the way to Deadeye, North Dakota via stagecoach, Carlotta soothes ferocious wolves and ends a drought with her operatic trills; on arrival in Deadeye, she defeats outlaw chief Skullneck by filling "his soul to almost overflowing" with "a soul-shivering aria." Fleming's operatic tall tale, with its outrageous premise and flamboyant language, is a musically inclined storyteller's delight as it goes from a sophisticated opera house to the lawless frontier town run by "Skullneck Sam and his gang of plug uglies." Catrow's watercolors reflect the exuberant hyperbole of the text, with outrageously exaggerated facial features, uncannily effective (if nearly impossible) perspectives, and more views of operatic uvulas than have been seen in children's picture books before. This delightful diva is going to provoke a lot of melodic accompaniment, and if the reader-aloud can actually sing, well, gild that lily! Operatically, of course. JMD

A glitch in the morning office routine at Paulson Elementary School leaves the absent Mr. Fabiano's sixth-grade class without a substitute teacher and the staff without a clue that the kids are unattended. Karen, the natural class leader, spontaneously seizes an opportunity to keep the office in the dark and convinces her classmates that they can and should follow Mr. Fabiano's lesson plans for the day and thereby prove their maturity and trustworthiness. Not all agree, and those who do have a variety of reasons—from noble to childish—to accept the plan; they do, however, make it relatively smoothly through the day, until a farewell ritual for a departing student unleashes an emotional maelstrom and nearly blows their cover. Sharply drawn classroom personalities, each of whom totes emotional baggage from home, play out a neatly balanced ensemble drama, reminiscent of The Breakfast Club dynamics and will-they-get-caught? plotting. A climax fraught with touchy-feely introspection nearly downs the flight, but Fletcher keeps it aloft
with the honesty of adult reactions to and student assessments of the day and the almost eerie credibility of how such a contretemps could actually occur. EB


Early one Texas morning, the narrator, a Vietnamese-American boy of about eight years old, accompanies his fisherman father to the docks. The boy helps his father with their catch of shrimp, crabs, and fish; while they lunch, the father sings songs from his childhood in Vietnam and tells his son about “the mountains and rivers and fields of waving green rice and graceful sampans that glide along the shore.” The father tells the boy about his own father, the boy’s grandfather, a fisherman on the South China Sea: “He taught me all that I know, and all that I am teaching you. But when war came to our little village on the other side of the world, he could not leave the land he loved, and I could not stay.” Garland handles this emotional story with a fairly delicate hand, giving readers an idea of both the loss felt by the father and the hope felt by the son, who ends the tale with the fragment of a dream: “I dream that we are together, my grandfather, my father, and I, out on the lonely sea in my father’s beautiful boat.” The tale slips from effective father-son fishing story into less effective sentiment, but Rand’s watercolor and chalk illustrations somewhat mitigate the purposive tone of the story. From sunrise-streaked endpapers crowded with flocks of white gulls, to small boats shrouded in morning mist, to sampans with rose-colored sails on the South China Sea, the images provide a salty, healthy dose of fresh air. JMD


Glass’s yarn-spinning prowess is at its peak in these eight accounts of the VIPs of the lawless West. He kicks off with a lively essay on the societal causes for the rise of gunslinger culture and cult following the Civil War—from disaffected Rebs out for vengeance, to the invention of Colt’s “equalizer,” to the proliferation of dime novels. The exploits of Wild Bill Hickock, Calamity Jane, Doc Holliday, Jesse James, Belle Starr, and Billy the Kid follow in rapid-fire succession, winding up with the nonexistent Joaquin Murieta, whose very name conjured as much terror as a live gunslinger, and the trickster Black Bart and his gang of painted broomsticks. Lots of wry humor is brandished among the bullets and bloodshed, making each brief chapter a readaloud delight: “[Doc Holliday] was as deadly as a steel-eyed viper, dangerous as a wounded wolf, and by all accounts a pretty good dentist.” Copious illustrations and caricatures, though energetic to say the least, display more compositional restraint than Glass’s recent offerings (A Right Fine Life, BCCB 1/98). Although Glass purports to reveal the “true story” of each villain, and does counter some of legend’s wilder claims, his own renderings have a distinctly cracker-barrel flair that, in the absence of source notes, should probably be taken with a grain or two of salt. Still, most of Glass’s subjects indulged in a fair bit of self-aggrandizement, and their restless ghosts undoubtedly appreciate this tribute. EB
GRAEBER, CHARLOTTE  Nobody’s Dog; illus. by Barry Root. Hyperion, 1998  32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2093-4 $12.95  R Gr. 2-4
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0109-3  $13.49

Abandoned canines tug at the heartstrings of even those readers who don’t particularly like dogs, and Graeber’s first lines—“Nobody on River Road wanted the dog. One night someone stopped their car for a moment then sped away—leaving behind the small white dog with one brown ear (the right one), two brown paws (the front ones), and a feathery tail”—are just the opening salvo in this paean to puppy-love-not-quite-at-first sight. The elderly Miss Pepper “didn’t have any pets, but she did have her lovely garden,” already fenced in to keep dogs out. Graeber’s tale unfolds with a subtle momentum that never falters as it follows the small white dog under the gate, into Miss Pepper’s garden, and, finally, into her lap: “Miss Pepper had never owned a dog. She had never fed, cuddled, played with, patted, or petted a dog in her whole life. But she began to pet the small dog’s ears.” It may be a foregone conclusion to grownup readers that Miss Pepper and the small white dog are going to get together, but younger readers (and listeners) will anxiously await the satisfyingly heartwarming outcome. The gold-warmed palette of Root’s watercolors sublimely suit the small trim-size of this beyond-beginning-reader easy fiction title; the combination of spot art and full- and half-page illustrations keeps the layout diverse and involving. But while the human countenances evince a wide variety of expressions, nothing beats the soulful dark eyes and feathery tail of the finally at home hero, the small white dog. JMD

GRIMES, NIKKI  Jazmin’s Notebook. Dial, 1998  102p
ISBN 0-8037-2224-9 $15.99  R Gr. 7-10

Fourteen-year-old Jazmin writes constantly about her life, her perceptions of her life, and the view from her stoop on Amsterdam Avenue in 1960s Harlem. Her father recently died in a car crash, her mother is in a mental institution, and Jazmin has been bounced from relative to foster home to her final destination with now old-enough-to-support-her older sister CeCe. Jazmin has a lot to deal with, but she isn’t about to let it stop her. The journal format of this account of nearly a year in Jazmin’s life gives an immediacy to her voice that is instantly engaging; the inclusion of Jazmin’s poetry at the beginning of the entries adds another dimension to what she reveals in the text itself. Jaz and CeCe cope—with rats, poverty, racism, and a violence-laden environment—and part of that coping is Jazmin’s plan to take herself to college, and, beyond that, to a successful life. The voice, though sometimes self-conscious, is that of a sensitive, intelligent adolescent with a strong sense of self and a firm grip on reality. Jazmin’s creative impulses fuel her awareness, and her writing becomes the way she captures the moments of her life and holds them, providing her with a sense of her own history and presence in the world. JMD

HALPERIN, WENDY ANDERSON  Once Upon a Company . . .: A True Story; written
and illus. by Wendy Anderson Halperin. Orchard, 1998  [36p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30089-7  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys  M  5-8 yrs

A family of bored siblings transforms ennui into enterprise as they use their holiday spare time to launch two seasonal businesses, Christmas-wreath manufacture and
sale, and an extravagant lemonade stand. Jacket-flap information indicates that Halperin, as the voice of child-narrator Joel, knows whereof she speaks: the children involved are her own, and their businesses form an ongoing concern. However, an air of unreality pervades the initially attractive volume, as Joel breathily extols the ease with which the children make their first $16,000—largely through the hard work and donated supplies of an army of adults and underpaid labor, as even the most naïve listeners will discover. The only evident setback, the denial of a health permit to market sloppy joes at their summer stand, is frothily dismissed as the kiddies consume vast quantities of the precooked sandwich filling. The siblings gleefully tuck their earnings away in a College Fund, even though no child seems to have a very clear understanding of what college is (“College is a place where you can learn where lizards sleep at night. . . . At college you can learn to make an eighteen-layer cake or build a rocket to the moon”). Busy spreads of muted watercolor vignettes show the many steps to business success; tiny insets of glowing faces at the foot of the text introduce the many players in the commercial game. Listeners smitten with the prospect of upward financial mobility who crusade, “Can’t we do that, too?” are likely to meet with a resounding parental reply, “Get a grip.” EB

**Hamilton, Jake** *Special Effects: In Film and Television.* DK, 1998 63p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-7894-2813-X $17.95 R Gr. 3-7
Man-eating monsters, raging infernos, numbing blizzards, spectacular crashes—all in a day’s work for the SFX producers who employ every trick from low-tech makeup to high-tech “computer-generated wizardry” to make their illusions both convincing and safe. In brief spreads, Hamilton explores such techniques as blue-screen editing, animatronics, matte painting, morphing, model building, explosives detonation, and rear and front projection. The techniques are loosely organized in chronological order of development, from the turn-of-the-century work of pioneer Georges Méliès to current experiments in motion capture, which “may make it possible to show dead screen icons such as Marilyn Monroe or James Dean in new films,” and interactive cinema, in which 3-D movies are projected for an audience which is moved in hydraulic seats. Lots of familiar flicks are included, and readers over a wide range of ages have the opportunity to gush, “So that’s how they did that!” The book tosses in a few examples constructed just for this title, however (an “alien” mask; a car explosion), which may set readers futilely wondering “What movie’s that from?” Hamilton also presumes a degree of media savvy among his audience that precludes the need for carefully defining terms. This is undeniably browser heaven, though, and young film buffs will find themselves on cloud nine. EB

**Hepworth, Cathi** *Bug Off!: A Swarm of Insect Words;* written and illus. by Cathi Hepworth. Putnam, 1998 [32p]
ISBN 0-399-22640-0 $15.99 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-5
As she did in *Antics*, Hepworth finds bugs in words and uses them for visual play: “Frisbee” shows a disc-shaped insect, sweat dripping from his black-and-yellow stripes, whirling across a grassy expanse; “Slanted” shows an otherwise respectable businessman ant tilting precariously to one side. Hepworth emphasizes the visual
possibilities of the interpretations, which means that some treatments are cleverer about the sense of the actual word than others, but the level of illustrative inventiveness runs entertainingly high. The grainy colored-pencil illustrations rely on subdued earth tones, which keeps their subjects' elaborate segmentation and multiple legs creepily realistic despite their placements in school cafeterias ("Ticklish"), in caves ("Stalagmites"), and in the New York Stock Exchange ("Frantic"). Use this as the inspiration for youngsters to create their own entries, and readers will be as happy as ants at a picnic.

Hesser, Terry Spencer  
Kissing Doorknobs. Delacorte, 1998  149p
ISBN 0-385-32329-8  $15.95  Ad  Gr. 8-10

From counting cracks in the sidewalk, praying every time someone swears, having anxiety attacks if family members sit in the wrong place at the dinner table, and kissing her fingers before applying just the right pressure to doorknobs, Tara Sullivan’s "quirks" are taking over her life. Tara’s mother is being driven to distraction (and violence) by her behavior, her girlfriends have pretty much written her off, and her younger sister is forced into the position of beating up anyone who picks on her. After visits to four psychiatrists, all of whom misdiagnose her, Tara’s malady is finally identified as OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) and her long road to recovery and a reasonably normal life begins. As a well-written, sensitive case-study of obsessive-compulsive disorder, this works; as a novel, it has serious weaknesses. Narrated by the anxiety-ridden Tara, this is a list of increasingly uncontrolable behaviors in search of a plot. Characterization is minimal: Tara’s friends have flat, one-dimensional personalities, and Tara herself is undefinable by anything except her OCD. This may work as bibliotherapy, but it lacks the depth and momentum necessary to emotionally involve readers in the life of the main character. An extensive afterword explains OCD and its repercussions, listing contact organizations for additional information. JMD

Hill, Pamela Smith  
A Voice from the Border. Holiday House, 1998  [320p]
ISBN 0-8234-1356-X  $16.95  Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 6-9

Fifteen-year-old Margaret Reeves O’Neill thought she knew her father to be a man of steadfast principle before he left to fight for the Confederacy. Although he considered himself a loyal son of Virginia (now transplanted to Missouri) and kept slaves, he had abolitionist leanings and had, in fact, drawn his will to free all his slaves upon his death. But just as the border state of Missouri bred a mixed bag of views and loyalties among its citizens, so the war had compromised O’Neill’s priorities, and when he is killed in action, a battlefield codicil postpones the freeing of his “servants.” As Margaret Reeves works through her feelings of betrayal, she discovers that nothing in wartime Missouri is as simple as abolitionist/Unionist or slave-holding/Confederate. Some neighbors turn longstanding personal vendettas into political issues; other neighbors with opposing sympathies remain close friends; enemy soldiers can out-charm allies; slaves are divided among themselves on the value of immediate freedom with no economic prospects. Hill navigates skillfully through the tangled causes and shifting commands and occupations of 1861 Missouri, and an appended timeline assists readers in need of a quick review. Although Margaret Reeves may not “get her guy,” as in war novels of a more romantic ilk, Hill leaves her with the promise of a fulfilling career as a journalist, whose skill in capturing the foibles of her fellow citizens was honed on the misery of war. EB
Reviewed from galleys

Thirteen-year-old Cassandra is undampened by the distant roar of World War II and she’s looking forward to an exciting summer, but her plans are yanked out from under her: her family is moving from their comfortable Connecticut home to rooms in New York—in Carnegie Hall, to be exact—where her father will attempt to advance his career as a band leader. Though she’s reluctantly enjoying her blossoming friendship with the boy who lives down the hall, Cassandra chafes in the confines, both physical and emotional (her father must pretend to be single, so she and her sister are technically visiting cousins and her mother is ostensibly his secretary), and yearns to return to her country home. This is light and predictable, with Cassandra coming to see that you can’t go home again and that she can find a place in the big city after all, and the pretend non-family situation seems more device than drama and never really goes anywhere. It’s also a pity that more isn’t made of the Carnegie Hall setting, but there is a lively period flavor, with celebrities such as Lana Turner and Judy Garland popping up and some traveloguish scenes of 1944 New York providing atmosphere. Those who enjoyed Elizabeth Starr Hill’s books about a stage family (The Street Dancers, BCCB 7/91, etc.) might appreciate this undemanding read about a girl on another side of showbiz. DS

ISBN 0-694-01072-3 $9.95

The opening phrase (“Pots and pans,/ Pots and pans,/ Baby’s in the kitchen/ With the pots and pans”) sets the tone for this rhyming romp. Baby investigates the kitchen cupboards, pulling out every pot, pan, can, and lid and performing a percussive symphony for the sometimes participating, sometimes bewildered audience of Puppy and Cat (“Cat’s in a pot./ Puppy’s in a pan./ Baby’s in the middle/ With a great big can. Listen to the cymbals/ Clash and clang./ Listen to the drums go/ Boom! Bam! Bang!”). The square trim, tight stitching, and heavy paper stock makes this a sturdy addition to toddler collections. The awkwardly composed and drafted watercolors (photorealistic and muddy) are a bit too literal to capture the essence of this spirited cacophony, but in this case the words matter more than the visuals. Haul out some pots and pans, and let your listeners pound away for a rollicking lapsit or toddler time—that is, if you can stand the noise. JMD

JAY, BETSY Swimming Lessons; illus by Lori Osiecki. Rising Moon, 1998 [32p]
ISBN 0-87358-685-9 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys

Jane, the protagonist and narrator of this humorous monologue on learning how to swim, is not at all enthusiastic about her mother’s notion that she take swimming lessons: “I told her and told her, but she just talked about how I wouldn’t be scared of the water if I knew how to swim. She said it’s very important that I know how to swim, because everyone else she knows who is my age—or who has ever been my age—can swim. I don’t want to know how to swim.” She spends the days before swim lessons coming up with reasons why she doesn’t have to learn to swim: “Momma said, ‘What if you’re in a boat and it tips over?’ I said I will never ride in a boat.” Jay’s tone of voice for the motor-mouthed, bespectacled Jane is
close to perfect, with the outcome in doubt until Jane's increasingly desperate monologue reaches crescendo: "I don't care who can swim and who can't... I don't care about anything for the rest of my life; I don't care, I'm never going to get into that swimming pool. Momma said 'Oh, yes you are.' You can't make me," I said. 'You're not my boss,' but I should have left that part off." Her fate is sealed, and, standing at the edge of the pool, goaded by budding chauvinist and swim-lesson classmate Jimmy Henley, Jane takes the plunge. Osiecki's illustrations combine traditional scratchboard with computer graphics, and the result is a stylized presentation of a square-jawed Jane in light summer scenes that include palm trees, pool water, and blue sky. Figures and objects are outlined in a squiggly black line that gives the illustrations a sense of perpetual motion, while the artist's skillful depiction of emotion on the faces of her characters enhances the humor of a familiar situation. This story of one girl's journey to aquatic bliss can double as a group readaloud and a giggly readalone as both grownups and kids recognize themselves in the recalcitrant, and ultimately buoyant, Jane. JMD

Koss, Amy Goldman  
*The Trouble with Zinny Weston.* Dial, 1998  
[112p]  
Reviewed from galleys  
R Gr. 4-6

Ava is happy when she and the new girl in fifth grade, Zinny, become fast friends. The only fly in the ointment is parental: Ava's veterinarian parents have crammed their house to the gills with creatures, whereas the Westons have a fierce loathing of animals. The girls ignore an unneighborly skirmish between the parents, but they can't manage to do the same when someone reports Mrs. Weston to Animal Protection for reportedly drowning a trapped raccoon; convinced Ava was the rat, Zinny cuts off the friendship. Interparental problems don't get much play in juvenile literature, and Koss tackles the subject readably and capably without undermining the seriousness of the situation. She's fair-minded in her treatment of the parental sets, making it clear that Ava's father's extensive ragging on the Westons is hard on his daughter and suggesting that Ava's family menagerie may not be as universally charming as she assumes ("Does it stink in here?" Ava wonders after another classmate's visit. "Is that why Zinny always ran around opening the windows?"). There's little doubt, however, that Mrs. Weston actually did perform the rumored act, and the book also raises some questions about the relative value of life but wisely leaves them open-ended. A friendship-in-trouble story with a twist, this will appeal to many middle-graders who consider themselves champions of the small and furry. DS

Krensky, Stephen  
*How Santa Got His Job;* illus. by S. D. Schindler. Simon, 1998  
[32p]  
ISBN 0-689-80697-3 $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
R 5-8 yrs

"When Santa was a young man," this cultural *pourquoi* tale begins, "he went out looking for a job." His early work career is checkered: though jobs as a chimney sweep, letter carrier (he loved delivering packages), diner cook, zookeeper, and human cannonball eventually end in theoretical failure, it's clear that they were instrumental in making Santa Claus the skilled nocturnal reindeer-driving toy-deliverer he is today. The text's earnest explanatory approach results in some wonderfully poker-faced drollery ("He was very organized about the animals. I know..."
when they are sleeping,' said Santa, 'and when they are awake'”), and the gradual
cumulation of Santastical skills gives the story a pleasing momentum. Schindler’s
understated art is the book’s real engine, however, as it plays with and expands the
text’s bright idea. His meticulously lined, thickly hatched watercolors have a tongue-
in-cheek realism to them that makes the touches of caricature all the funnier (the
gleeful reindeer playing the concertina seems quite at home in the elves’ work-
shop), and the images appropriately portray Santa’s gradual metamorphosis into
himself, as it were, as the colors get brighter. The decorous depictions of slapstick
disasters (an early polar-bear-drawn version of the sleigh thunders out of control
across the snow as presents fly and elves cover their eyes in horror; a page turn
reveals the sleigh stalled at the edge of the icy sea into which the polar bears have
apparently plunged, leaving just their two noses above the water) will elicit ho-ho-
hos from young viewers. Goofy yet somehow sweetly reverent, this will appeal to
many who want something new yet also old for the Yuletide reading season. DS

KROLL, STEVEN  The Boston Tea Party; illus. by Peter Fiore. Holiday House, 1998  32p
ISBN 0-8234-1316-0 $16.95 Ad Gr. 3-5

Gather a group of Boston hotheads with little love for Mother England, incite
them with the harangue of colonial leaders with specific political and economic
agendas, dress them in crudely contrived Indian garb, and set them loose on a
cargo of tea at low tide in the dark. This should be the making of history at its
most exciting, but Kroll offers little more here than a staid and workmanlike ac-
count of the famous episode of 1773: “The tax on tea made people angry, but
with all the other taxes gone, many decided to buy English products again. Still, a
large number continued their protest by buying cheaper tea smuggled in from
Holland.” England’s previous attempts at taxation and the colonists’ retaliatory
measures are discussed, and the Sons of Liberty’s effort to coerce tea agents to
return their cargo is detailed. Readers who are looking for the bald facts (with a
decidedly Patriotic spin) will find them here, illustrated with dappled watercolor
pictures of the meeting houses and harbors in which the action was staged. How-
ever, history buffs looking for a more revolutionary approach to a revolutionary
event should pick up Peacock’s Crossing the Delaware, reviewed below. A timeline
of events leading to the American Revolution is included. EB

KRULL, KATHLEEN  Lives of the Presidents: Fame, Shame (and What the Neighbors
Thought); illus. by Kathryn Hewitt. Harcourt, 1998  [96p]
ISBN 0-15-200808-X $20.00 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-8

The Lives formula is pretty well-known by now, but it’s particularly well-suited to
the presidential suite: the common aspects of the subjects makes the comparisons
particularly piquant. All commanders-in-chief aren’t equal here—some receive a
few pages and some have to share a spread with several of their presidential breth-
ren—but everybody still gets an energetic caricature (many First Ladies get one,
too) and at least a few spicy details. The book makes particularly interesting use of
White House domestic staff opinions and reactions (the housekeeper kept instruct-
ing cooks to prepare broccoli for FDR because she “felt he should like it”) and
insights into relationships within presidential families (“McKinley’s devotion to
his wife, Ida, was so saintly that other husbands complained that he made them
look bad). Liberal notice of "firsts" both significant and quirky (Martin Van Buren was the first president born an American citizen; his predecessors all "started out as British subjects") also adds zest to the thumbnail sketches. Each biography includes birth and death location and year; the dates of the presidential terms are unfortunately confined to the table of contents; a bibliography is included. This will provide an easy quick-energy boost for historical curricula. DS


If it weren't for Marna Marshall's First Annual Rising Star Contest, sixth-grader Ellen Cummings could just concentrate on being an archaeologist someday, getting her big sister, Olive, back together with her boyfriend, Ron, and standing up to her best friend, Valery. But the lure of country-music stardom is just too hard to resist, so Ellen and Valery team up to write songs about dogs, love, and the Pennsylvania turnpike ("They were on their way. The dog's name would be Ned, partly because it sounded so homey, but mostly because it rhymed with dead"). Eventually Ellen does find a semi-interesting artifact in her own backyard, a more self-confident Olive finally gets back with her boyfriend, Ellen faces off with Valery, friendship still intact, and instead of winning the contest they end up with a gig at the local Kiwanis cookout. Though there is a maze of plot-twisting details, Kuhn keeps everything in hand with easy, humorous dialogue and fast pacing. Plenty of ridiculous but recognizable preteen triumphs and woes will propel this funny debut novel into the hands of many readers whether they like country or not. PM


Sahay, who hid when most of her family was killed earlier in the year by armed raiders, must now flee famine-stricken Ethiopia with her uncle in hopes of finding safety and food in Sudan. Rahel, a blind Jewish girl whose people are targets of prejudice in the same area, also tries to escape hunger and approaching danger with her brother, but in hopes of getting to Israel. The two girls' paths cross on their journey when their menfolk are stopped near the Sudanese border. Allowed to continue to the refugee camp and, secretly, to board a plane to Israel, the unlikely duo overcome mutual prejudice and fear in order to help each other survive. Sahay's flashbacks of traumatic memory and Rahel's blindness are well integrated into the action, and the characterizations bring an immediacy to the mid-1980s setting that will involve readers to the end, which is suspenseful despite a schematic plot. Israel's secret airlifts, starting with Operation Moses, have also been the subject of Sonia Levitin's novel The Return (BCCB 3/87) and Jeffrey Schrier's picture book On the Wings of Eagles (5/98); here the inherent drama of the situation brings faraway suffering into clear focus for young readers. BH


Lewis and Desimini offer a close collaboration of word and image in this collection of concrete poems. A basketball supplies the "o" in each line of "Lashondra Scores!"
waning and waxing with the trajectory of the ball as it approaches the net: "Only/ seconds left/ on the/ clock!/ Lashondra's/ coming/ off a/ block!" Text fans out over the head of a rain-slickered girl in "Umbrella": "Skinny Bonnie Bumber/ wears a long tall hat. I hide her/ in the closet till the clouds get fat." Desimini employs a more subdued palette than usual throughout her mixed media illustrations, and although her compositions are imaginative (the squiggle-haired, winking blonde in "Mirror" and the textual bud that sprouts from "First Burst of Spring"), the aggregate of muted tones lends the volume an unexpectedly sober air. This probably won't trouble fans of wordplay, though, who will happily wind their way through the snaking text and lap up Lewis' quiet humor. EB


The house next door is finally occupied by a newspaperman and his wife and daughter, and Emmy Frailey, surrounded by brothers and half-brothers, is delighted to learn that newcomer Miranda Champion is her own age. However, the Champions are Gentiles, and although Emmy's own Mormon family is cordial, they are also suspicious of whether Mr. Champion is among those journalists speaking out for the enforcement of 1885's new anti-polygamy laws. Friendship between the Champions and Fraileys is tested when Pa is forced to go into hiding to avoid arrest by federal deputies, and Emmy ferrets him out to "lay hands" on Miranda, who is critically ill with a fever. Emmy and Miranda make a likable pair, even though much of their conversation revolves around interpreting each other's lifestyle. The unflappable harmony of Pa's two families and the ease with which they cope with his absence seems a bit suspicious, though, despite Litchman's appended acknowledgment in the afterword that "some polygamous families got along well and some did not." Litchman presents the conflicting views on plural marriage with delicacy and respect, though, and if an instructional intent regarding the Latter Day Saints seems evident from time to time, at least the lessons are palatable and effective. Sturdily realistic pencil drawings appear throughout. EB


Most of Charlotte Haines' ten years have passed during the colonies' War for Independence, but now that it is over, her extended family is still far from settled. Her father, a staunch Patriot, has forbidden all contact with his Loyalist brother, David, and David's wife and children. Charlotte has handily evaded the stricture, because she sees her cousins Betsy and Sally at school; now, though, all Loyalists are being exiled from New York to the wilds of Nova Scotia, and Charlotte defies her father in order to bid them farewell. Learning of her defiance, Haines thunders, "You have made your choice. I never wish to see your traitorous face again." Charlotte takes refuge with her uncle, who is unable to persuade his brother to take his daughter back, and Charlotte is forced to flee with her cousins to Nova Scotia. Children's books generally overlook the plight of wars' losers, and many young readers may find Charlotte's disowning, which Lunn indicates is a true story, more disturbing than a bloodier fate. Despite the inherent drama of the situation, this account features corny and suspiciously fictionalized dialogue ("'Charlotte, oh Charlotte,' Betsy cried. 'Oh, Betsy, oh, Sally,' cried Charlotte, as they..."
rushed at each other to hug and cry") and stiff, awkwardly rendered figures in Deines's hazy paintings. Still, this may offer fans of *American Girls* Felicity something to mull over. EB

**McCAUGHREAN, GERALDINE**  
_The Pirate's Son._  
Scholastic, 1998  [304p]  
ISBN 0-590-20344-4 $16.95  
Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 6-10

Tamo, teenage son of deceased eighteenth-century pirate Thomas White, jumps at the opportunity to leave the hypocritical gentility of his English public school and take newly orphaned classmate Nathan Gull and his sister, “mousy Maud,” back with him to his birthplace on Madagascar. Tamo’s guardian, Captain Scheller, supplies the transportation as part of his regular business run to trade with local pirates, but he betrays the trio, who are forced to flee and set up housekeeping in the island village of Zaotralana. Maud flourishes in her new environs, and Tamo and Nathan could find contentment too, were it not for the arrival of cutthroat buccaneer King Samson and his “wife,” Queen Delilah, who is Tamo’s mother. Each of the trio grapples with the transformed island dynamic according to his or her view of destiny—Tamo’s belief that he is doomed to follow his father’s profession, Maud’s faith in a prediction that she will be “strong and happy,” and Nathan’s adherence to the precepts learned from his minister father. In a polished text bristling with vivid description, subtle wit, and the fluid cadence of a born storyteller, McCaughrean offers readers a full plate of piracy and shipwreck, exotic tradition and personal transformation, all ingeniously plotted and spiced with tantalizing considerations on the nature of fate. EB

**MACDONALD, MARGARET READ**  
_Pickin’ Peas_; illus. by Pat Cummings.  
HarperCollins, 1998 32p  
ISBN 0-06-027235-X $14.95 R 4-8 yrs

Little Girl is happily picking peas in her lush green garden and singing a little song (“Pickin’ peas. Put ’em in my pail”) when she notices an addition to her simple refrain (“Pickin’ peas. Land on my knees!”) and realizes that a “pesky rabbit” is picking her peas, too. She catches the larcenous _lapin_, swearing to keep him locked up “until pea-picking season is OVER,” but in the tradition of the trickster bunnies who came before him, Mr. Rabbit tricks Little Girl into letting him go, fully intending to come back and raid her garden another day. The full and double-page spreads show a young African-American girl in modern dress—a yellow shirt, purple shorts, blue sunglasses, and pink hairbows—and a big-eyed rabbit amongst the curling green tendrils of the pea patch and in the yellow-walled, black-and-white checkerboard linoleumed kitchen. The illustrations are garishly colored and the compositions are oddly jarring up close, but the pictures work well from a distance, and the strong text balances the somewhat off-kilter visuals. MacDonald includes a detailed source note with tips for telling this highly tellable tale; music for the pea-pickin’ refrain is also included. JMD

**MCKINLEY, ROBIN**  
_The Stone Fey_; illus. by John Clapp.  
Harcourt, 1998 52p  
ISBN 0-15-200017-8 $17.00 Ad Gr. 9-12

In this picture-book setting of a tale first published in *Imaginary Lands* (BCCB 4/86), Maddy tends sheep in the hills of Damar, waiting for the return of her fiance, Donal. The two of them plan to buy a farm by combining the money Maddy will
Maddy is distracted from her upcoming wedding by a meeting with a stone fey, a supernatural creature dwelling in the mountains. Maddy becomes obsessed with the fey, Fel, and begins to lose touch with the realities of her life. Realizing that Fel cannot return her love, she abruptly refuses to respond to his call and comes slowly back to herself and the returned Donal. McKinley has a nice touch with the slow seduction of the pragmatic Maddy by the elusive fey, but even a story about a slow seduction needs a plot to keep it moving, and this tale provides little action. The characterization is too much for folktale, and the motivation is not enough for short story. Full-page graphite and watercolor illustrations reminiscent of Barry Moser feature well-articulated faces, starry skies, and green vistas that emphasize the pastoral nature of the fantasy. Readers familiar with folklore and fairy mythology will be able to fill in the blanks, but others will be left outside in the cold. JMD

**MAHY, MARGARET**  

A variegated bunch of kids and canines go for a stroll on a summery Saturday morning, encountering cats, a boy on a bicycle, and a gaggle of geese. The dogs gleefully chase everything in sight but are surprised into retreat when "the geese turn round and flap and hiss,/ Flap and hiss, flap and hiss. / The dogs were not expecting this/ On a summery Saturday morning," thus ending the adventure. Mahy successfully pulls off this merry narrative outing, aided and abetted by Young’s energetic watercolors. Echoing a jolly Helen Oxenbury, the illustrations depict the children, the two dogs, and their one intrepid grownup hiking happily down to the seashore, with varying perspectives of (presumably) New Zealand vistas. Mahy’s tale has the familiar rhythm of a favorite Mother Goose rhyme, with lots of knee-bouncing potential. JMD

**MILLER, SHANNON**  
*Winning Every Day: Gold Medal Advice for a Happy, Healthy Life*. *Bantam*, 1998 136p illus. with photographs  
Paper ed. ISBN 0-553-09776-8 $12.95 M Gr. 4-7

While gymnasts may be somewhat overshadowed by ice-skaters in a Winter Olympics year, gold medalist Shannon Miller is still an athletic luminary. Here she mixes an account of her approach to gymnastics with advice to readers about managing their own lives. Chapters such as “Motivation,” “Setting Goals,” “Training,” and “Stress” detail various aspects of a competitor’s life, drawing on some unusually explanatory diary entries and ending with one of Miller’s “Golden Rules.” Though Miller’s intensity about her pursuit and her religious faith come through clearly, the book is often disorganized (the themes meant to focus the chapters are poorly defined and adhered to, so we hear about the same issues in chapter after chapter), Miller’s Rules are often rather mystifying (“Charity is the bond of perfection”), and her advocacy for the sport leads her to tapdance around its problems (“as for bulimia... who likes to throw up?”). Though there are a few hints at a harder-edged and less blandly motivational persona (“Winning is all it’s cracked up to be,” Miller says in the introduction), ultimately this lacks the insidery pleasure of Tara Lipinski’s *Triumph on Ice* (BCCB 3/98) and never comes close to the concentration and vigor that Miller herself displays. Color photographs appear
THE BULLETIN throughout; addresses for further information on Miller’s fan club, her preferred charities, and gymnastics are included; there is no index. DS

MODARRESSI, MITRA Monster Stew; written and illus. by Mitra Modarressi. DK Ink, 1998 [48p] ISBN 0-7894-2517-3 $15.95 Reviewed from galleys Ad 4-8 yrs

A cast of monsters gently up-ends three fairy tales familiar to most young listeners. The king and queen in “Peas” seek an appropriate bride for their son Thugmond. The beautiful human princess, who arises sore and grumpy from her night atop a pile of mattresses and a single pea, fails the test for monstrous royalty: “A girl so rude and fussy could never make Thugmond happy.” His childhood playmate, the rambunctious Griselda who jumps on the bed, certainly can, though, and they live happily ever after. “Beans” features a justifiably ticked-off giant who catches Jack stealing his golden goose. When the giant crash-lands at the bottom of the bean stalk, Jack’s thievery comes out and he’s in deep trouble with Mom. The convalescent giant, however, finds he enjoys farming their land, and that trio lives happily ever after. “Monster Stew” finds voracious Hansel and Gretel monsters literally eating the evil witch out of house and home, forcing her to flee the land forever. No tale boasts the sparkle and punch of Scieszka’s The True Story of the Three Little Pigs (BCCB 9/89), and Modarressi’s watercolor monsters, despite their dusky hues and atmospheric habitats, are as nonthreatening as rubber tub toys or Jim Henson furballs. Each entry, though, could be an amusing follow up to traditional tales for listeners new to deconstruction. EB


There are plenty of riddle books floating around library collections, but not many are aimed at the preschool child. These nine simple, rhyming riddles have simple, easy answers: the sun (“What wakes you up at the beginning of the day? It’s bright, round, and yellow—at night it goes away”), an elephant (“What has wrinkly skin and a very long nose? It carries its trunk wherever it goes”), and so on. Even potentially tricky answers like “raincoat” (“What do you wear when rain falls from the sky? It has pockets and buttons and helps keep you dry”) and “teddy bear” (“Who’s near you all day and beside you at night? He’s cute, soft and furry—when you’re scared, hold him tight!”) are easy to get, because this book is specially designed for success. Each riddle page has an obvious visual clue to help youngsters guess its answer, which appears on the verso. Corwin’s bright quilted cloth collages are baby’s-room-mobile cute, with textured cloth, stars, buttons, and attractive bric-a-brac keeping the compositions lively if somewhat overdone. This is a cozy lap book for caregiver and child as well as a good guessing-game addition to preschool storytime. JMD


Ten-year-old Eileen is trying to adjust to her parents’ recent separation and pending divorce. Her adjustment has received a nearly mortal blow with the discovery that when her father moved out, he took not only his clothes and books, but the
piano that Eileen considered the family's. Eileen practices piano in the auditorium after school, finding solace in her music and in a new friendship with the janitor, Mr. Poole. She grudgingly begins to cope with the changes in her life, even while denying them by not telling her friend Stephanie about the divorce: she starts babysitting for the grandson of a neighbor, confronts her father about what she perceives as his theft of the piano, and tentatively forgives both her parents. Eileen's realistic resentment of her situation and her eventual adjustment are handled with a light but not lighthearted hand; Napoli's characterizations are well-rounded, clearly delineating Eileen's perceptions of people and events beyond her control. This is a low-key, gently evolving narrative of a young girl's emotional maturation, as Eileen realizes the imperfections of the adults around her and starts trudging unwillingly down the road toward self-possession. JMD


Brad Gold is irritated. He's irritated that his best friend Coll has fallen for new girl Anastasia and forgotten him; he's irritated that his high school is going to adopt a code of conduct for students and let faculty get away with, well, nearly everything; and he's irritated about being insulted at a PTA meeting when he tries to provide school-board-required student input to the pending code of conduct. His irritation causes him to raise the banner of righteousness and crusade for mutual respect between faculty and students, a crusade that attracts unwanted attention from administrators, bullies, and drug dealers, as well as more welcome attention from Stephanie, the current love of his life. Narrated in an exasperated tone by the somewhat hapless Bradley, this is a medium-paced, low-key farce that never quite gets up to speed. Characterization is flat: most of the personalities are described by Brad as opposed to being exhibited by actions or behavior. There are, however, some genuinely funny moments that smack of Chayefskian sensibility: the list of student suggestions for the Code of Conduct, and the encounter between Brad and Amber, a physically challenged student required by her physical education teacher to "jog" in her wheelchair around the track until her battery runs out in order to be "part of the community group of the class." Brad concludes by summing up dangling plot points in a top ten list of things he finds bewildering, which is more arbitrary than expository; still, this will find an audience with students who already have a well-developed sense of irony. JMD


The Bogeyman finally gets a chance to speak his piece: issuing his proclamation from under the bed, he makes it clear he's annoyed at the calumnies being told about him. He wasn't actually pictured in the tabloids (it's against his contract to appear in photos), he doesn't say BOO ("Boo's a baby word, Bubbie"), and he's not going to get you ("If I got ya, what would I do with ya?"); he just likes to frighten, and he's easily put off by a pair of smelly sweatsocks. Park gives her bogey-narrator a slick Zappa-esque voice eminently suited, with its emphases, sound effects, and slangy alliterative epithets, for reading aloud. The humor's sometimes
a little forced, but the book's still rife with possibilities for laughter and chills. The cut-paper art depends on high color contrast and cheerful exaggeration; the bogeyman's would-be victim, who appears throughout the spreads, is somewhat cartoonish and some of the compositions are on the haphazard side, but the creepy blue bogeyfingers that trace their blood-red nails across the spread are an effectively sinister touch. Listeners jaded by scary jack-o'lantern tales will relish this jazzy '90s take on a Halloween stalwart. DS


This anatomy of a Union soldier's career, based on the life of First Minnesota Volunteer Charley Goddard, follows the doomed boy from his jaunty leave-taking and exhilarating train ride to Maryland ("Girls gave them hankies and sweets and Charley figured later he had fallen in love at least a dozen times"), through his face-offs with death at Manassas and Gettysburg, to his return to Minnesota, "tired and broken, walking with a cane and passing blood." Doomed he is, despite survival on the battlefield, for it is clear that if his injuries don't claim his life, he will surely succumb to suicidal temptations resulting from post-traumatic stress disorder—or "soldier's heart." In a style and tone similar to The Rifle (BCCB 10/95), Paulsen records Charley's experiences in a remote, almost clinically dispassionate voice and allows readers to supply the inescapable and wrenching emotion for Charley's plight. The brevity, power, and deceptive simplicity of this novella again demonstrate why young adult readers greet new Paulsen titles with unabashed enthusiasm. Sources are documented in an appendix. EB


"No Man, I believe, ever had a greater choice of difficulties and less means to extricate himself from them." This excerpt from a letter of General Washington captures the commander at possibly the nadir of his career, contending with a series of defeats, dwindling supplies, the imminent demobilization of his soldiers, and a winter of extraordinary severity. Through adroitly chosen quotes from participants in the 1776 engagement at Trenton, letters from a fictional soldier, and Peacock's editorial comments and reflections, readers are empathetically drawn into the disillusionment of the rank-and-file, the desperation of the officers, the shared rigors of their preparation for battle, and even the smug overconfidence of the enemy. Hessian Colonel Rail gloats, "[They are] nothing but a lot of farmers. . . . If they come, all they can hope for is a good retreat," while fictional Harry laments, "Every battle's been a defeat. . . . It takes the heart out of a man." A clean, spacious design sets Peacock's commentary in a pale yellow box, Harry's letters in script, and quotations in bold type, with period engravings or Krudop's reverential paintings embellishing each spread. If Peacock's oft-reiterated "It was such a desperate thing to do" tends toward melodrama, it is nonetheless effective,
and her tour of the battle sites is thoroughly engaging: "When the officers called them to reenlist [after their victory], the soldiers stepped forward. Not just one or two, but hundreds, thousands ... I shiver when I think about that." Readers will too. EB

PETERS, JULIE ANNE Revenge of the Snob Squad. Little, 1998 120p ISBN 0-316-70603-5 $13.95 Ad Gr. 4-6

Jenny's overweight, Max (Maxine) is a hulking bully, Lydia is an overprotected whiner, and Prairie Cactus has a prosthetic leg—which makes them an unlikely athletic team. That is, however, what they are, drawn together in gym class by a collective loathing of the Neon Nikes, the snobby popular sixth-grade girls; soon they are friends as well, banding together against persecution and trying to best the Neon Nikes in any way they can. This book doesn't have the fresh iconoclasm of Peters' How Do You Spell Geek? (BCCB 10/96); the characters are more devices than people, and there's little emotional logic behind many of the plot-furthering events. Jenny's narration, however, is full of gleeful sass and backtalk that young readers will enjoy, and the book eschews the stereotypical athletic victory ("If you think we're going to exercise, get energized, and rally from behind to win in the end, you've OD'd on Disney," says Jenny, and in fact the triumph is that their overall record doesn't leave them dead last). The story's style of goofy exaggeration, reminiscent of Gordon Korman, isn't usually seen in school stories about middle-schoolers of the female persuasion, and girls looking for some literary popcorn may relish having a tub just for them. DS


The story of the Maid of Orléans shows no sign of diminishing its luster after 500 years, and Poole gives it its full dramatic due, from Joan's early encounters with her Voices to her first meeting with the dauphin (here referred to as the King) and then her inspiring leadership of French forces into battle. This is more hagiography (appropriately enough, since it is the story of a saint, after all) than biography, so the focus here is on Joan's drama, power, and tragedy; those seeking more historical context should look to Diane Stanley's biography, reviewed below. It's no less effective for that, however; Poole treats Joan respectfully but simply, generally allowing her most unusual life to speak for itself. Barrett's illustrations echo art ranging from the Unicorn Tapestries to Dürer, showing Joan as a plain and serious young woman amid glories of natural beauty and richly colored court and military scenes. With its focus on the story for the story's sake, this will make an alluring introduction to Joan for younger listeners as well as for those reading the legend on their own. DS


See this month's Big Picture, p. 3, for review.
ISBN 0-7894-2530-0  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 2-3

It's not enough that almost-eight-year-old Alex's household and friendships are falling apart with the family's imminent move from Texas to California; now, between normal dental attrition and some unexpected tooth rot, her mouth is falling apart too. An exchange of letters with the Tooth Fairy (who proves to be a wise and witty correspondent, with verbal mannerisms amazingly like Mom's) steers her through extraction, relocation, and most important, acceptance of a lively new friendship with toothy neighbor Peggy. Alex's concerns regarding life after Texas ring as true as her older and more adventurous siblings' enthusiasms for the big move ("Everything's better in California, Alex. The future is there, the boys are cuter, they have a beach"). Ray surrounds Alex, though, with overly earnest, and even precious, adults (Dad is heavily into "quality time" and the dentist patronizes her with promises of "sleepy juice") who lend a treacly coating to her serious affairs. Alex seems to unravel the identity of the Tooth Fairy by the time her last baby tooth bites the dust, but readers who insist on T. F.'s reality can cling to Ray's coy ambiguity. Sturdy typeface should make this title accessible to ambitious primary readers, despite its length; consider the possibility of a read-along, though, for those who haven't yet achieved reading independence. EB

RINALDI, ANN  *Cast Two Shadows.*  Gulliver/Harcourt, 1998  [288p]
ISBN 0-15-200881-0  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 6-9

Inspired by the same Revolutionary War era family upon which Anna Myers based *The Keeping Room* (BCCB 1/98)—the Kershaws of Camden, South Carolina—Rinaldi fictionally explores what life may have been like for a Patriot family, here named the Whitakers, whose home was occupied by British troops. A secret has just tumbled out of the family closet: fourteen-year-old Caroline, younger daughter of a prosperous plantation owner, discovers that her mother was actually a slave woman he sold off to the West Indies. Laden with this new burden of knowledge, Caroline travels with her estranged slave grandmother, Miz Melindy, to bring home her injured soldier brother, so he can spy for the Patriots on the occupying Lord Rawdon. Rinaldi's pacing and dramatic flair are sufficiently disarming that readers may actually forgive the wild improbabilities that Mrs. Whitaker treasures her husband's love-child above her birth daughter (who is, incidentally, Rawdon's "doxy"), that strangers in wartime instantly confide alliances and strategies to Caroline, and that anyone actually spoke like Miz Melindy ("We's gonna git Mistuh Johnny home arright, Miz Sarah. You doan worry none 'bout that"). Rinaldi's fans will scoop this up as another historical adventure, but readers with a keen interest in the Revolution will find that Myers' work casts a clearer light on the same event. EB

Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-2323-7  $15.89

Cagemate Snowball greets fellow gerbil Cinnamon with a shout of relief: "Where were you? I looked everywhere!" In answer, Cinnamon's got a tale to tell—after
escaping from his cage, he climbed down a mountain into a busy city, across from which was a green meadow and a refreshing pond. A frightening encounter with a wolf and a tiger sent Cinnamon into hiding in a well-stocked barn, from whence a giant scooped him up and flew him "over all I had seen, until I came back... home to you." The preschool audience will have quite another take on this adventure, though, as they watch him descend a pile of books onto a city play set, cross a green carpet, drink from pet bowls, flee from the family dog and cat, and nibble in the cupboard, until the "giant" hand of the solicitous pet owner returns him to his proper home. Roth's torn and cut paper collages, although occasionally difficult to decipher and insufficiently supportive of the minimal narrative with its dramatic irony, serviceably trace the gerbil's odyssey, and the titular critter is appropriately inquisitive and engaging. For a much goofier animal adventure, point preschoolers toward Stoeke's Minerva Louise titles. EB


Stanley Yelnats (yes, that's a palindrome) is sent to Camp Green Lake Juvenile Correctional Facility for a crime he didn't actually commit. Once there, he discovers that the inmates' days are spent digging holes out in the Texas desert, with the bait of getting a day off if they find something the Warden considers "interesting or unusual." Stanley forms a bond with an expert hole-digger named Zero, whom he teaches to read, and when Zero runs away into the desert, Stanley, after initial hesitation, follows him. The two boys then struggle for survival, aided by lore and leftovers from their ancestors, who sowed the seeds for the drama that's being enacted now. This reads much more clearly than it explains: Sachar has cunningly crafted his fiction, precisely placing snippets of historical backstory within the chronicle of Stanley's travails, so that the focus of the book is the coming together and resolving of the manifold strands of karma (including Stanley's no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing great-great-grandfather, the feared nineteenth-century bandit Kissin' Kate Barlow, a cheated gypsy, a gentle onion fancier, and more). Sachar's dry, wry tone assists in making the book's aim something other than gritty realism; though there is indeed wicked villainy and triumphant virtue, the point is less the struggle of the individual characters than their place in the working out of the larger pattern. Though this isn't as much a puzzle book as Raskin's The Westing Game, readers who appreciated that book's detailed construction as much as its story will enjoy watching Stanley's saga unfold and fold together again. DS


In this spirited little memoir, Edith Schaeffer as Mei Fuh (her Chinese name) chronicles the first five years of her life (starting with her birth in 1914) growing up on a missionary compound in southern China. Mei Fuh's self-portrayal is energetic, and the engaging vignettes provide singular glimpses into China long ago. Young readers will meet Adjipah, the compound gatekeeper who, instead of pet-sitting Mei Fuh's goldfish, succumbs to temptation and cooks and eats it instead. They will go on hazardous rickshaw rides, experience silkworm ownership,
and watch Mei Fuh learn how to “drink tea with the rice packed on one side of her mouth.” Although most of the stories have a lighthearted touch, Schaeffer does mention more disturbing practices: “Oh, those are baby girls, newborn baby girls that have been thrown away. Their mamas wanted boys. They didn’t want girls.” Whimsical black and white drawings capture the energy of the twirling little toddler and extend the breezy quality of the text with observable details of Mei Fuh’s world. A pronunciation guide for the Chinese names and terms is all that is missing from this amusing, sometimes tender tribute to a young life. PM


The text rings soooo true, comprised solely of “off stage” warnings and directives to an obstreperous toddler from his exasperated mom: “No, David, no!”; “DAVID! BE QUIET!”; “That’s enough, David!” Each double spread gloriously realizes the breadth of havoc that can be wrought by a small guy who tracks mud across a cream-colored carpet with weeds sprouting from his encrusted feet and mushrooms springing from his hair, dive-bombs his bath toys in a overflowing tub, runs naked down the street, jams his finger up his nose (full frontal nostril alert!), and hits fungoes among Mom’s delicate gewgaws. Shannon’s genius lies in his ability to switch off among the little miscreant’s many moods—from the shark-toothed wickedness of David beating the cooking pots, to the gleeful innocence of David sprinting bare-butted down the sidewalk, to the tear-streaked contrition of David sitting on a stool in the corner, surrounded by china shards and an errant baseball. David is just cartoonish enough to allow the audience to disavow any similarities, even though his antics may be guiltily familiar (or even inspirational—David’s potato/green bean/chicken leg/fork man creation is pretty cute). If David is beyond reform, he’s not beyond forgiveness, and the final spreads offer comrades-in-crime hope of reconciliation: “Davey, come here. . . . Yes, David . . . I love you!” says Mom, as he angelically nestles in her arms. EB

SIMMONS, JANE  Come Along, Daisy!: written and illus. by Jane Simmons.  Little, 1998  32p  ISBN 0-316-79790-1  $12.95  R  3-6 yrs

Daisy Duck is out for a swim with Mama Duck, but Daisy is so distracted by the wonders of the pond—fish, dragonflies, frog—that she strays further and further away from her protective parent. Suddenly the wonders of the pond are more menacing than distracting, and Daisy takes refuge in the tall reeds, where she is found by her exasperated mother: “Daisy, come along!” she said. And Daisy did.” Simmons’ baby cautionary tale has a great deal of downy charm, much of which comes from her appealing portrait of sunshine-yellow duckling Daisy, whose innocent grin of pleasure at all she sees is positively beguiling; when that happy grin turns to a worried frown as Daisy peers from the safety of the reeds, young listeners will identify strongly with the wandering duckling. Illustrations depict an idyllic scene of pond flora and fauna above and below the waterline in a moody blue-green palette lightened by Daisy herself glowing in their midst. The images spill across oversized double-page spreads suitable for large group viewing, and there are opportunities for listener participation both in Mama Duck’s repeated “Come
along, Daisy!” and in the bouncy noises, quacks, and ribbits provided by Daisy’s encounter with a friendly frog. With all the earmarks of a preschool storytime standard, this title has just enough suspense to keep your storytime listeners on the edge of their floor. Come along! JMD


Simon is working his way through the human body (see Brain, BCCB 11/97); in now-familiar form, he describes the functions of physiological systems in simple terms while sharp images from scans and ’scopes (and occasionally pictures of models) illustrate. Muscles is generally a smooth and accessible introduction to those movers of our bodies: Simon describes the complementary actions of contraction and relaxation, differentiates between skeletal muscle, smooth muscle, and heart muscle, and explains how muscles can be affected by usage (“A warm muscle contracts more quickly and easily, receives more oxygen, and can perform for a longer time than a cold one”). Bones, however, is particularly prone to raise questions it never answers. How do “minerals that we get from food make the bones as hard as rock”? Which bones are hollow, and how does that relate to the “honeycomb of spaces” in spongy bone? How are the false ribs “connected to the ribs above”? Pictures (which are also occasionally confusing in Muscles) and references thereto can further baffle, since all the ribs in the picture seem to be attached to the breastbone despite text describing other arrangements, it’s hard to find the fracture in the X-ray “showing two metal screws that have been placed into a fractured upper arm,” and it’s never stated what the arresting image on the back cover (which is presumably some flavor of bony closeup) actually depicts. There’s still information and entertainment in both books, however, and the drawbacks in Bones probably don’t necessitate amputation for those contemplating the body literary; just be prepared to answer a few questions as well as listen to Oohs and Aahs. DS


In these ten short stories about hard luck lives, Soto’s young-adult characters rebel, cope, and despair their way through their days. Soto sees his Latino protagonists with amazing clarity, limning their physical surroundings and their emotional landscapes with equal skill. From Alma, who tries to assuage her grief over her mother’s death by buying Mom’s clothes back from thrift stores, to Norma, who gains status with her classmates when she finally hits back, to Tomás and Miguel, who wind up giving their fathers’ funeral suits to a pair of threatening gang members, Soto’s characters have depth and pathos. Sparks of humor and evidence of familial love and loyalty to friends leaves the tales, but the bitter reality that Soto depicts has a taste not easily washed away. JMD

The author was three in 1938, when the wartime preparations in England began to affect her young life. She relates the details of her childhood under the shadow of war, ranging from the frightening smell of gas masks to the presence of congenial and uncongenial evacuees to the accidental ingestion of a friend’s aunt’s cremains (they were sent in a package alongside cake ingredients and baked up with them for a Christmas treat). She’s enhanced her recollections with careful interpolation of relevant larger historical facts, sometimes effectively linking the personal and the public (a fellow villager’s boat had, under its new owner, participated in the Dunkirk evacuation). Stalcup’s simply written narration retains some of the child’s naïve tone, which enhances the immediacy of the memoir and could also make this an effective readaloud, and her sense of the pleasures as well as the fears of life under threat of occupation make the picture compellingly complete. Readers looking for a factual counterpart to wartime sagas such as Michelle Magorian’s Good Night, Mr. Tom (BCCB 3/82) or Rachel Anderson’s Paper Faces (BCCB 11/93) will find much to pore over here. Black-and-white photographs are somewhat dimly reproduced but offer effective visual images of the period; a map, bibliography, glossary, and index are included. DS


Stanley takes a more detailed and contextual approach to her subject than Poole (see review above), explaining more specifically Joan’s initial difficulties in winning over authority and providing more Joanian anecdotes in general. The book also elaborates on Joan’s position among the French, mentioning that the high command considered her essentially a mere mascot, which gives rather a different grounding to the final French betrayal of their apparent heroine. Political and military information (the book opens with a brief overview of the Hundred Years’ War) are seamlessly interwoven into the narrative and give a greater sense of where Joan’s actions fit historically; the text also remains aware of more prosaic concerns and differing interpretations for various events (such as Joan’s re-donning of men’s clothing during her imprisonment). Stanley’s acrylic illustrations have a sturdy if occasionally over-stylized serviceability; full-page tableaux offer scenes of Joan in media res while spot art sometimes decorates and sometimes provides more insight (detail maps of battle scenes, for instance). With attention paid both to details of Joan’s life and the progression of her legend after her death, this will appeal to readers searching for a story beyond the shining saint’s tale. Pronunciation information and a bibliography are included. DS

Steiner, Joan  Look-Alikes™; illus. with photographs by Thomas Lindley. Little, 1998 32p ISBN 0-316-81255-2 $12.95  R*  All ages

Eleven oversized spreads depicting a fictional journey offer photographed views of a train traveling down the tracks, a train station, a city scene, a general store, a
park, fairgrounds, hotel, etc. Standard stuff, you might think, but you’d be wrong indeed—the components of each scene are everyday objects imaginatively recycled, so that curving pretzels form the chair-backs in the sweet-shop parlor, plump garlic cloves are the clown’s ballooning harem pants, a tessellation of doggie bones comprise the facade above the grocery store, and a row of gold safety pins become the elegant tassels on the floor lamp in the hotel lobby. Those details barely scratch the surface, however, of the intricately fashioned worlds that Steiner has created, where everything but the miniature people and animals (and not always all of those, either) is an item better known to us from another context; the result is eerily reminiscent of the Borrowers’ scaled-down and appropriated existence (pair the two titles for an intriguing booktalk). Each spread includes a superfluous four-line verse that directs viewers to a particular item or two; the jingly rhyme is far more babyish than many appreciators of the images will be, but they’ll hardly notice it in their headlong pursuit of nutmeg-grater wall sconces, pistachio-nut flowers, tortilla-chip boat sails, and playing-card ceilings. End matter includes an extra challenge, the rules of the game for object-counting (including the useful “As long as you can identify an object, you don’t have to get the name exactly right”), and lists of the items in each scene (hard-to-find items are enticingly asterisked). There are easy and difficult details in every spread, and viewers of a wide range of ages will enjoy the paradigm shift that comes from seeing a familiar object rendered alien by its unusual context. Those interested in miniatures or art will undoubtedly find this an inspiration for collecting miscellanea in aid of projects of their own. DS

THESMAN, JEAN  *The Moonstones*. Viking, 1998 [208p]  
Reviewed from galleys  

Jane accompanies her mother, Abby, to Puget Sound to help prepare her deceased grandmother’s house for sale; Mom’s sister, Norma, and her daughter, Ricki, are supposed to help as well, but instead they preen, complain, and tear open family wounds, compromising Jane’s closeness with Abby. Wild and flirtatious Ricki entices Jane to sneak out at night to the seedy, forbidden amusement park, where Ricki deftly maneuvers among a clique of local teens and Jane falls for intelligent, handsome Carey, who always skirts along the edge of the pack. Ricki, unfazed that Norma might learn of their escapades, blackmails Jane with the threat of disclosing their nocturnal jaunts and torments her with family secrets concerning the animosity between their mothers. Norma and Ricki epitomize the self-absorbed, vicious villainesses readers love to hate; their dysfunction stands in bold relief against Jane and Abby’s temporarily strained but ultimately loving relationship. Although the aura of mystery and danger with which Thesman surrounds Carey proves to be deceptive (he’s really quite a nice, ordinary guy who hangs with some weird acquaintances), his blossoming romance with Jane should satisfy junior-high girls looking for some cathartic amour. EB

THOMAS, ROB  *Satellite Down*. Simon, 1998 266p  
ISBN 0-689-80957-3 $16.00  
Ad  

What starts out as a naïve Texas high-school student’s bemused journey into the artificial world of television infotainment turns into a quest for lost ideals in this bumpy coming of age novel. Patrick Sheridan lands a spot as anchor on Classroom
Direct, a television news show sent to participating high schools throughout the United States. He thinks he got the spot because he's a good journalist, but discovers it's really because he looks good on camera. That discovery—and the discovery that fake news gets higher ratings than real news—begins Patrick's downward dabbling into the world of semi-celebrity, a world with easy access to sex, drugs, and pseudo-nihilism. Patrick's ethics take a nosedive that is only checked when he is sent on location to Northern Ireland to do a story on eighteen months of peace. While there, he slips out of his hotel room and goes in search of his lost self, taking refuge in the town of Kilbeg, the birthplace of his deceased, beloved Grampa. While Thomas' fans will recognize the realistic dialogue and first-person immediacy, this format is a departure from the author's more recent titles—this book has a single narrator and thus a single point of view, and the chronology is linear. The action leaps from scene to scene disjointedly, however, and the inclusion of a subplot revealing that Patrick is actually his sister's illegitimate son adopted by his religiously strict grandparents is a loose, unresolved thread. Patrick's desperate reach for redemption is gripping; that his reach exceeds his grasp is the sad, not inevitable, and surprisingly cynical conclusion to his story. JMD

THOMPSON, KATE. Switchers. Hyperion, 1998 [224p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2328-3 $15.49  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0380-0 $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-9

Tess is certain no one knows her secret, so it is a stunning blow to discover that the scruffy young man who has followed her from the school bus several days running not only knows of her ability to switch shape into any animal but is a "switcher" himself. Kevin is a loner who survives by shape-shifting into a rat and living with the Dublin rodent community; it is the rats who have told Kevin that the unusual icy weather being experienced across the hemisphere is the result of the awakening of the ravenous, ice-age-inducing krools, a sort of prehistoric, living, devouring glacier. Kevin and Tess switch their way to the Arctic—from dolphin to whale to fire-breathing dragon—to save the world from another ice age. Their task is complicated by Kevin's approaching fourteenth birthday, when he must choose between remaining human or assuming an animal form permanently. Thompson's take on shape-shifting legend is an unusual one, and the feelings of the two adolescents as they share and stretch their previously solitary abilities is touchingly related. When the plot concentrates on the interactions between Tess and Kevin (and, later, their eccentric helper, old Lizzie), the author's control is complete—her evocation of the Dublin sewers, Lizzie's cat-filled cottage, and even the frozen Arctic is unerring. The parallel plot about U.N. forces attempting to discover the source of the icy weather and their danger to the dragons Tess and Kevin become is a bit intrusive but not implausible. The conclusion gracefully balances on the fine line between tragedy and triumph; it will leave readers wondering about Tess' possible choices and quite likely pondering their own. JMD

TOLAN, STEPHANIE S. The Face in the Mirror. Morrow, 1998 [208p]  
ISBN 0-688-15394-1 $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

At the age of fifteen, Jared Kingsley is preparing to meet his actor-director father for the first time; his grandfather's stroke and his actress mother's concentration
on her own career means that he's being shipped off to spend the summer with Philip Kingsley and his theater troupe, who are putting on a production of Richard III in an old Michigan theater. Despite the resentment and harassment of his younger half-brother, Tad, Jared takes to acting like a duck to water; he finds a more supernatural pleasure in his odd friendship with the ghost of a nineteenth-century tragedian, Garrick Marsden. Neither strand of the story works quite as well as it ought—the book generates little emotional involvement with Jared's family old or new, and the ghost is usually too glib and corporeal for atmospheric effect—nor do any of the characters, including Jared, ever attain three-dimensionality. Young would-be thespians will nonetheless relish the details of the backstage milieu and Jared's rise to stardom, and the stage ghost who may not be the kindly caretaker he seems adds both a comic and eventually sinister overtone that gives the dramatic history a difference. Haunt fans in search of a little low-impact reading may find this just the theatrical ticket. DS


The tiny Brazilian blackmouth monkeys featured in this picture-book romp have a lot in common with their preschool audience: neither is very good at delayed gratification. Every night when the monkeys climb up into their thorn-tree beds, they resolve to make new homes the next day: "There's an OUCH over there./ There's an OUCH over here./ They cry, 'Jabba jabba,'/ as the rain draws near./ Comes the rain, PLINKA PLINKA./ Comes the wind, WOOYA WOOYA./ 'EEEYI!' cry the monkeys./ 'It's c-cold out here!'" Of course, next morning brings sunshine to swing in and bananas to munch, and nothing much gets done. With bountiful sound effects in the text and whooshing action in illustrations that jump all over the page, this is a natural readaloud for young mimics, who can take advantage of sound effects as strong as those in "Ten Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed": "JUMP, JABBA JABBA,/ RUN, JABBA JABBA,/ SLIDE, JABBA JABBA/ Tiny, tiny monkeys having fun!” Heo's sense of visual pacing is well tuned to the very young audience. She's allowed plenty of white space to set off her delicate figures and lively compositions in gold, brown, and black. The large type and varied images create a rhythmic effect of bedspring-breaking chants. Unfortunately, the source for this Rio Negro Indian folktale remains unnamed, but the adaptation will get a toddler crowd cheering. BH


This is a lively collection of riddles, jokes, and stories from the American South, punctuated with remarkably energetic watercolor caricatures of both human and animal characters. In an informative (and also lively) introduction, Van Laan discusses her Southern upbringing, her love of Southern lore, and her desire to communicate its humor. The compilation is divided into three sections: Down in the Bayou, Across the Deep, Deep South, and Up and Round the Mountains. Each section contains several rhythmic riddles and rhymes (“I had a chicken./ It
THE BULLETIN grew so tall. It took a month. For the egg to fall.”) and eminently tellable tales for reading aloud or storytelling. The stories include a hilarious version of “Ol’ Gallymander” (in which a clever, kind girl gets a bag full of money), pourquoi tales like the one about why Buzzard has no nest, and even a mountain Jack tale variant of “The Bremen Town Musicians.” Cook’s mixed-media (watercolor, gouache, pastel, and acrylics) representations are full of expression, from the bemused cow being pushed onto the roof by Fool John, to the supercilious Colonel Tiger being hornswwogled by Brer Rabbit, to the bouncy characters illustrating the wide variety of riddles and rhymes. The spacious layout includes a scattering of illustrations breaking up large text blocks, and the text itself is large and easy to read. The selection is prime, the retelling is dandy, and specific source notes are included, as is a map showing story locations and a list of titles for further reading. JMD


During the Nazi occupation of Paris in 1940 and shortly after Lisette’s baby brother is born, her parents send her to the countryside to live with Aunt Josephine, who, it turns out, is harboring Jewish and gypsy children. Not only must Lisette deal with adjustments to a new sibling, an obnoxious cousin, a crew of nervous young refugees, and a new environment, she must also deal with a ghost from the Knights Templar, Gerard, who seems to materialize more concretely as their friendship deepens. Gerard has his own terrible memories of torture, but he nonetheless rescues Lisette from an SS officer when she leaves the safety of some secret caves to distract the Nazis from finding the hidden children. This is an ambitious fantasy reminiscent of Jane Yolen’s The Devil’s Arithmetic (BCCB 10/88) but not as cohesive; the two periods of history represented are less logically associated, and the happy ending is less credible. Although the main characters’ dialogue is burdened with information about the Knights Templar, readers are unprepared both for Lisette’s sudden realization that the Nazis are killing Jews and for Gerard’s sudden news that there are caves to hide in. On the other hand, the separate stories of Lisette’s encounter with Gerard and her problems of adjustment are vividly developed, and the closing action offers considerable suspense. For collections where there’s a demand for materials about the Holocaust, this will involve readers who are not ready for realistic fare such as Pausewang’s The Final Journey (BCCB 12/96). BH


Nicholas Bells has a ton of freckles—5,792, in fact—and he’s tired of being teased about them. When the sinister Mr. Piddlesticks, manager at Uppercrust and Elitist’s department store, offers to buy Nicholas’ freckles (in exchange for wreaking vengeance on Nicholas’ tormenting schoolfellows), Nicholas accepts the offer, not realizing that his freckles are magic. Mr. Piddlesticks uses the freckle magic to cover Nicholas’ little brother with warts and then to turn Nicholas’ entire class into various fitting mutations (a bully gets turned into a pretty girl; a gossip sports fifty pairs of lips); realizing he’s made a terrible mistake, Nicholas seeks to retrieve his freckles through a freckle-contract loophole. This has the nonsensical random-
ness of Sachar's Wayside School stories without their wit; the plot points turn on convenience more than consistency, and there's not much in the way of characterization to keep readers involved. The book's jokiness is awkwardly self-conscious in its portrayal of Nicholas' funny-talking younger brother, Tham (whose name comes from his lisping of "Sam"), and in its periodic asides to the reader. There's some entertainment in the grotesque depictions of foul Mr. Piddlesticks and the bullies' mutation into monstrosities, but they're not enough to lighten the heavy humor and focus the plot. Readers who are drawn by the magical concept and the enticing bits of gross stuff would probably do better with Paul Jennings' short stories (*Uncanny* and *Unreal*, BCCB 9/91) or even Wisniewski's *The Secret Life of Grownups* (BCCB 7/98). DS


Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-70912-0 $18.00 R Gr. 5-9

Viola has selected reminiscences of thirteen American Indian witnesses (some of them scouts for Custer) of the Battle of the Greasy Grass, or Little Bighorn, or Custer's Last Stand, depending on what history readers have read most recently. The words of these witnesses are carefully arranged to provide a rough chronology of the events just before and during the battle. Each entry is headed by the name of the speaker—Antelope Woman, Sitting Bull, Black Elk—and is characterized by the immediacy of the narrative; although the accounts were collected long after the battle, the memories are startlingly vivid. That Custer's own scouts thought fighting the Sioux an error is clear in White Man Runs Him's account: "We scouts thought there were too many Indians for Custer to fight. There were camps and camps and camps. . . . I would say there were between four thousand and five thousand warriors, maybe more. I do not know. It was the biggest Indian camp I have ever seen." Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux, describes his camp: "On the westward side of us were lower hills, and there we grazed our ponies and guarded them. There were so many they could not be counted." This is a thought-provoking, accessible compilation that will give new insight to the study of American history in and out of the classroom. Viola includes brief biographies of each witness, an epilogue giving the repercussions of the battle, and an explanation of his source materials. JMD

**WALGREN, JUDY** *The Lost Boys of Natinga: A School for Sudan's Young Refugees.* Houghton, 1998 [48p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-395-70558-4 $16.00 Ad Gr. 5-8

Reviewed from galleys

Walgren, a photographer who covered the Sudanese civil war for the *Dallas Morning News*, revisited the Natinga refugee camp in 1994 to investigate the education, nutrition, health care, religious opportunities, and recreation afforded the children; she reports here on how everything from climate to bungled international aid to shifting politics conspire against stability in the camp. Her photographer's eye for telling detail, so clearly evident in the crisply reproduced color pictures, also emerges in textual descriptions of excerpts from the first-grade American reader used as a textbook by older, culturally removed students, a hand-carved corpus
affixed with bandages to a cross at Catholic mass, ritual passing of an empty offering basket during Episcopal services, and copious preparations for an airdrop of what turns out to be grossly inadequate medical supplies. Readers may have some difficulty catching the context of the children’s suffering, though, in the garbled chronology of the opening chapter on history of the rebellion, and the occasional mismatch between photo and text. Even more problematic is the scope of the volume, which ends with peace talks “scheduled for the end of October 1997.” Still, readers can hardly fail to be touched by a typical camp resident’s quiet resignation: “I only know that today I am in Natinga. . . . It is God who knows what will happen in the future.” EB

WARNER, SALLY  *Private Lily*; illus. by Jacqueline Rogers. Knopf, 1998 [96p]  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-89137-4  $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
Ad  Gr. 2-4

Lily is the little sister of Case (from *Dog Years*, BCCB 5/95, etc.), and she’s not very happy with the cramped quarters in her family’s new apartment. Jealous that Case gets his own room (really just a bed with a curtain in front of it, while Lily shares the only bedroom with her mother), she feels that six is old enough to deserve some privacy but is frustrated to find that her initially appealing alternatives—the bathtub, a bedspread cave under the kitchen table, and her mother’s closet—are fraught with drawbacks. This isn’t a lot of plot to hang a novel on, and Lily’s narration sometimes tips into the mannered. Her need for her own space and her desire not to be the weird one out among her friends will be understandable to young readers, however, who will appreciate (and perhaps appropriate for their own purposes) Lily’s solution of a painted folding screen to delineate her private space. Amiable and easy, this might please readers who’ve enjoyed Judith Caseley’s books about the Kane family (*Hurricane Harry*, BCCB 11/91, etc.), and it could also provide young listeners with a sympathetic sequential readaloud. DS

WERLIN, NANCY  *The Killer’s Cousin*. Delacorte, 1998 [272p]  
ISBN 0-385-32560-6  $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 7-12

David is living with his aunt and uncle in Massachusetts since his notoriety, as a result of his recent acquittal of murder after a widely publicized trial, makes life in his hometown unbearable. His new situation has its own problems, however, especially the strained relationship between his uncle and aunt, who never converse directly with each other but instead use their eleven-year-old daughter, Lily, to convey messages. Apparently this warped state of affairs has existed since the suicide of their elder daughter, Kathy, who died in the third floor apartment that David now occupies—and whose presence David is sure he sometimes sees and feels. Lily’s resentment of David becomes increasingly apparent and increasingly destructive, and he begins to see that she is genuinely disturbed, that in fact, Kathy’s “suicide” was Lily’s doing. Werlin has a lot going on here (there’s also David’s changing relationship with his own parents, his growing attraction to his uncle and aunt’s tenant, his gradual friendship with an independent classmate) but she manages to keep all the balls in the air; the secondary plot strands inform the central dilemma of David’s situation, as someone whose life has forever been changed by killing someone he loved and who sees that same isolation in his cousin (the
title is, of course, deliberately ambivalent). The book doesn’t stint on the tension, however: Lily may have her psychological reasons, but her addiction to power and her manipulation of her family are classic Bad Seed material. So much of the book’s pleasure is that of an intelligent thriller, in fact, that the promise of hope and redemption for Lily at the end seems a bit anticlimactic despite its thematically useful closure—Lily’s just more fun to read about when she’s evil. The more elevated approach suits the book’s moral questioning, which will pique readers’ interest, and they’ll be sucked right into the supernaturally edged story of the burden of the terrible past and its effect on the future. DS

WILBUR, FRANCES  *The Dog with Golden Eyes*; illus. by Mark Coyle. Milkweed, 1998 [160p]
Trade ed. ISBN 1-57131-614-0  $14.95
Paper ed. ISBN 1-57131-615-9  $6.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad Gr. 5-8

What with the defection of her best friend to the popular girls and her waitress mother’s long work hours, Cassie’s lonely; she’s therefore drawn to the beautiful white dog who appears in the California hills behind her house. She determines to rescue the animal, whom she gives the Alaskan name of Toklata in honor of his wild sled-dog appearance, but more research and better acquaintance with Tokie demonstrate that he’s no dog but a wolf, charming but eminently unsuited for the domestic housebound life she’d envisioned. She realizes, however, that Tokie needs her as an advocate when Animal Control and a panicky neighborhood set out to destroy the “dangerous” wolf. The standoff with the authorities at the end (complete with Cassie periodically repeating the movie-cliché line “the wolf is my friend”) is melodramatic and some of the human-dynamics subplots are awkward and superfluous, but the wolf story is engaging and knowledgeably written. Wilbur eschews both positive and negative romanticizing of her lupine hero, showing him as an entertaining, romping companion one minute and crushing a plate in his powerful jaws in the next. Readers will understand both Cassie’s yearning to keep Toklata and the inarguable reasons why it’s better for both of them if she doesn’t. Lupinophiles will be particularly pleased that Cassie does get her wolves—in an internship at Tokie’s biologist owner’s wolf compound—in the end. Reviewed from an unillustrated galley. DS

ISBN 0-374-32345-3  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad Gr. 5-7

Life in Natalie’s family was permanently changed over a year ago, when her older brother, Jimmy, was killed in a car accident. Now in seventh grade, Natalie still can’t bear contact with her old friend, Zheng, whose brother survived the wreck, and essentially limits her social circle to her beloved dog. When an old lady moves into the neighborhood, Natalie begins a working relationship and then a tentative friendship with Herta, who herself suffered bitter family loss in the Holocaust. Wilson makes a subtle and effective point about the breadth of effect such a loss can have: it’s obvious Natalie’s family is in need of serious repair even though the worst of the grief has gone by, and that Zheng’s family isn’t as unscathed as Natalie believes. This doesn’t have the emotional impact of Rodowsky’s *Remembering Mog* (BCCB 12/96), however; the concluding elements (rapprochement with Zheng
and Zheng's brother, moving into Jimmy's old room, parallels with Herta's experience) are tidily bundled, and the flashbacks to the events surrounding Jimmy's death are somewhat programmatic. It's still a sad but ultimately brave story, though, and young readers will appreciate its message of hope after loss. DS

WOODSON, JACQUELINE  
*We Had a Picnic This Sunday Past*; illus by Diane Greenseid. Hyperion, 1998  32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2192-2  $15.49  R  5-8 yrs
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0242-1  $14.95

Teeka, who appears to be about eight years old or so in Greenseid's neon-bright illustrations, goes to a family picnic with her grandmother ("Grandma wore her blue dress with all those flowers on it. Brought biscuits, and chicken, and me"). Along with relating Grandma's sotto voce asides, Teeka tells the story of each family arrival, giving insight into family dynamics, and imparting the warm feeling of being among those who both know and love you. The acrylic paintings glow with nearly acid-green grass, shiny colored bowls and serving dishes, and Grandma's flowered dress (not to mention Teeka's kitty-cat-print shorts), providing an irresistible visual counterpoint to the story's blend of family humor, good food, and cozy conversation. The text is white or black on brightly colored panels that border one side or the other of the double-page spreads; expression and emphasis are indicated by bold or enlarged typefaces, providing some obvious (and helpful) clues for reading aloud. This is one benevolent feast of a picture book that is bound to provoke memories of family gatherings, or better still, of picnics. JMD

YOLEN, JANE  
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 5-9

No blockbuster asteroids here, folks; this is the real Armageddon, which 144 of Reverend Beelson's righteous congregants expect to occur on July 27, 2000. Marina's Bible-thumping mother and Jed's ex-alcoholic father have come with their children to the mountaintop refuge in Massachusetts which, Beelson assures them, will be spared. Marina is a willing participant, whose recurrent concerns are that her father won't be saved and that her July 27th birthday will be weird; Jed is an outright skeptic, along for the apocalyptic ride to keep an eye on Dad. Each tests the other's strongly held beliefs, and they fall in love at the worst of all possible times. Marina and Jed, each voice strong and individual, narrate events in alternating chapters. Jed's journey from faith into doubt is particularly well realized, as his wisecracking manner barely masks his growing respect for his end-of-the-world companions ("But even though a few of them—like Marina's mother—were seriously over the edge, most of the people were pretty nice and pretty normal. Except for the fact that they believed this one ridiculous thing"). That there will be no actual Armageddon for a grand finale is never a real issue here. Yolen and Coville do, however, eschew a predictable showdown between federal agents and Believers in favor of an ironic and frightening bloodbath between Beelson's devotees and those of lesser faith who crash the gates seeking last-minute salvation. Although the plot is vastly overdrawn, and consequently the doomsday clock ticks mighty slowly, the Caroline Cooney crowd may find this an intriguing spin on the teen disaster theme. EB
ZIEFERT, HARRIET, ad. *When I First Came to this Land*; illus. by Simms Taback. Putnam, 1998 [26p]
ISBN 0-399-23044-0 $15.99
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

Ziefert does some tinkering with the text of the old folk song, turning the traditional hard-luck protagonist into an immigrant farmer achieving success in a new land. The lyric itself has a catchy rhyme scheme and repetitive rhythm ("I called my horse/ I'm-the-boss!/ I called my plow/ Don't-know-how!/ I called my farm/ Muscle-in-my arm!") that make it as good a chant as it is tune, although it does meander some and Ziefert's abrupt conclusion is a bit confusing. Taback's illustrations, beginning with a whimsical endpaper map of the United States and territories circa 1885, lend this version visual energy. From a transatlantic steamship to the Ohio and Pacific Railroad, his immigrant pioneer smiles his way to "Lot #10, 175 acres, U.S.A.,” and proceeds to work his will on the green and fertile land with the help of an ornery horse, a black and white cow, a spotted pig, and, finally, a wife, the spice of his life. The mixed-media, double-page illustrations are framed with a thin brown line and warm yellow borders, and they have a strong touch of the naïve that suits the folk-art interpretation. JMD

NOTE: The text in the bound book of Becki Dilley's *Sixty Fingers, Sixty Toes* (reviewed in the July Bulletin) clarifies that the birthday celebrated at the book's end is the sextuplets' fourth and not the third as the review stated.


This ambitious set encompasses print works of historical fiction, individual biography, collective biography, and history, as well as CD-ROMs and videotapes—all of which have been favorably reviewed or which address a topic on which little is available. Most material has been published in the last decade (through the 1997 publication year), although distinguished books from previous years are also included. Adamson has established an accessible format of thirteen chapters, corresponding to eras in American history (e.g., “North America Before 1600,” “Immigrants and Multicultural Heritages, 1814 to the Present,” “Since 1975”); each chapter is further divided by grades, to which appropriate book and media lists are assigned. Separate annotated bibliographies for books, CD-ROMs, and videotapes follow, as well as author/illustrator, title, and subject indexes. There is significant overlap of recommended works between grade levels, and middle school librarians who balk at purchasing both volumes may want to consider the reading level of the majority of the school population and select a single volume accordingly. Watch for an occasional glitch—Jeanette Winter’s thirty-two-page picture book *The Christmas Tree Ship* has been assigned to grade five through nine, when presumably age five through nine was intended. Nonetheless, this comprehensive title should be valuable as a reader’s advisory tool, a purchasing guide, and a resource for curriculum enrichment. EB


The tone of this book reflects the cheery informality of the title. Valerie Lewis, children’s bookstore owner, and Walter Mayes, aka Walter the Giant Storyteller, have put together a list of personal favorites (2,000 titles) that have proved popular with children individually and in groups. This hefty annotated bibliography is divided into five sections according to age level (Books for All Ages, Books for Very Young Children, Books for Children of Reading Age, Books for Children in Middle Elementary Grades, Books for Middle School Readers and Young Adults) within which titles are arranged alphabetically. Two appendices (Tricky Questions and Frequently Asked Questions and a sample Family Reading Log) and a theme-based subject index (not seen in the galley) are included. Each book entry contains basic bibliographic information (author, title, illustrator when applicable, and
hardcover and/or paperback publisher), appropriate themes, and a brief descriptive annotation. The annotations vary from one-sentence utilitarian hints to longer, more effective synopsis. The writing style is casual and chatty, and the tone is animated and enthusiastic throughout, with both compilers contributing their feelings and impressions of specific titles, authors, illustrators, and issues (picture-book art, how to be an effective storyteller, etc.). Sidebars with information about the importance of books and reading, spotlights on particular authors, even two pages of great opening lines, are scattered throughout the volume for browsers looking for motivation as well as information. The annotations are uniformly laudatory rather than objective, and the compilers are upfront about their focus on books that, while not necessarily critical successes, have, in their experience, been favorites with kids. This title is not so much a selection tool for library collections as an accessible, handy compilation for parents, teachers, and librarians seeking theme-based access to a wide variety of age-appropriate titles. JMD


The presumed scope of this ambitious volume as indicated by the title is enough to give any reader pause, and there does seem to be some confusion (despite the title) as to whether storytelling is oral or written (the majority of storytellers included are literary retellers, not oral storytellers in the modern or historical storytelling arena). This is not a how-to book, nor will it provide content for library storytelling programs. That being said, this is a valuable tool for those seeking background information or starting points for additional research on the subject of storytelling and folklore. Despite minor drawbacks in terms of depth and organization (the index is a bit problematic, as primary indicators are adequate but cross references lack logic), what is contained in this wide-reaching volume is treasure indeed and more than enough to keep devotees of storytelling and folklore busy for quite some time. Opening essays by the consultants to this work include articles by Carol Birch and Melissa Heckler, Jack Zipes, and Emory Elliott and Jackie Stallcup. The more than 700 unsigned entries (arranged alphabetically, including such thematic subjects as “Competition of Lies,” “Hindu Storytelling,” and “A Woman’s Quest,” as well as biographical pieces) are a fascinating compilation that, while a bit uneven in terms of treatment (Charlemagne, as hero of myth and romance, gets four lengthy paragraphs, while Richard Chase, pioneer collector of Appalachian folklore and stories, gets two rather offhand ones), include references for further reading. The selection of literary retellers included will surprise those familiar with the available riches—while Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Croker, Jane Yolen, and Zora Neale Hurston are included, Julius Lester, Robert San Souci, Virginia Hamilton, and Eric Kimmel are not. Although this volume is not going to replace standard works on folklore and storytelling, it will go a long way toward effectively expanding and supplementing them. A ten-page bibliography is included. JMD
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.

Actors and acting—fiction: Tolan
ADVENTURE STORIES:
  Campbell; McCaughrean
Africa—fiction: Campbell
American Indians—fiction: Belton;
  Grimes
African Americans—fiction:
  Belton
  Woodson
American Indians—folklore:
  Bruchac
American Indians: Viola
ANIMAL STORIES: Aesop;
  Roth; Simmons; Van Laan So
  Say; Wilbur
Art appreciation: Browne
Art history: Aronson
Art: Steiner
Babysitters—stories: Bush
Baseball: Burleigh
BEDTIME STORIES: Park
BIOGRAPHIES: Burleigh; Glass;
  Miller; Poole; Schaeffer;
  Stalcup; Stanley
Biography: Simon
Brothers and sisters—fiction:
  Conly; McCaughrean; Warner;
  Wilson
China: Schaeffer
Christmas—stories: Krensky
Civil War—fiction: Hill; Paulsen
Cliquess—fiction: Peters
Commerce—stories: Halperin
Cousins—fiction: Werlin
Cows—fiction: Cazet
Crime and criminals—fiction:
  Glass
  Cormier; Sachar; Werlin
Death and dying—fiction:
  Raschka; Wilson
Divorce—fiction: Napoli
Dogs—fiction: Graeber
Dreams—fiction: Browne
Elephants—fiction: Campbell
EPISTOLARY FICTION: Ray
Ethics and values: Hill; Koss;
  Kurtz; Litchman; Nodelman;
  Thomas
FABLES: Aesop
FANTASY: Block; McKinley;
  Thompson; Vande Velde;
  Venokur
Fathers and daughters—fiction:
  Campbell; Hill; Hopper; Lunn
Fathers and sons—fiction: Garland;
  Tolan
Fear—fiction: Jay
Fish—fiction: Raschka
Fishermen—fiction: Garland
FOLKTALES AND
  FAIRYTALES: Bruchac; Del
  Negro; Modarressi; Van Laan So
  Say; Van Laan With a Whoop
Food and eating—fiction: Raschka
Friends—fiction: Belton; Conly;
  Hesser; Koss; Kuhn; Kurtz;
  Litchman; Napoli; Nodelman;
  Peters; Sachar; Thompson;
  Wilson
FUNNY STORIES: Cazet; Jay;
  Venokur
Gardens and gardening—stories:
  MacDonald
Geometry: Adler
GHOST STORIES: Tolan; Vande Velde
Grandmothers-stories: Woodson
Health: Simon
HISTORICAL FICTION: Antle; Cormier; Grimes; Hill; Hopper; Lunn; McCaughrean; Paulsen; Rinaldi; Vande Velde
History, American: Kroll; Krull; Lunn; Paulsen; Peacock; Viola
History, European: Poole; Stanley
History, world: Ballard; Kurtz; Walgren
Holocaust-fiction: Vande Velde
Insects: Hepworth
Language arts: Hepworth; Lewis
Latinos-fiction: Soto
LOVE STORIES: Block; Thesman
Mental illness-fiction: Hesser
Mischief-stories: Shannon
Money-stories: Halperin
Monsters-stories: Modarressi; Park
Mothers and daughters-fiction: Antle; Block; Jay; Ray; Thesman
Mothers and sons-stories: Shannon
Movies and movie making: Hamilton
Moving-fiction: Ray
Music and musicians-fiction: Fleming; Hubbell; Kuhn; Napoli
MYSTERIES: Belton
Outer space-stories: Bush
Parents-fiction: Koss; Napoli
Picnics-stories: Woodson
Pioneers-stories: Ziefert
Pirates-fiction: McCaughrean
POETRY: Lewis
Presidents: Krull
Rabbits-stories: MacDonald
Racism-fiction: Kurtz
Reading aloud: Bruchac; Garland; Glass; Graeber; Lewis
Reading, beginning: Aesop; Cazet
Reading, easy: Graeber; Warner
Reading, family: Steiner
Reading, reluctant: Bruchac; Burleigh; Fletcher; Glass; Hamilton
Religion-fiction: Litchman; Yolen
Religious education: Poole; Stanley
Revolutionary War: Kroll; Peacock
Revolutionary War-fiction: Lunn; Rinaldi
RHYMING STORIES: Mahy
RIDDLES: My First Riddles
Robots-stories: Bush
School-fiction: Fletcher; Nodelman; Peters; Venokur
SHORT STORIES: Soto
Sisters-fiction: Antle; Grimes; Kuhn; Thesman
Slavery-fiction: Hill; Rinaldi
Social studies: Aronson
Sports: Burleigh; Miller
Storytelling: Aesop; Bruchac; Del Negro; MacDonald; Van Laan So Say; Van Laan With a Whoop
Storytime: Hubbell; Krensky; MacDonald; Mahy; My First Riddles; Park; Shannon; Simmons; Van Laan So Say; Ziefert
Sudan: Walgren
SURVIVAL STORIES: Sachar
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TALL TALES: Fleming
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Voyages and travel-stories: Roth
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