PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library
"Elvin Bishop's story, begun in Slot Machine, continues, but there is no need to read that book first. Here readers meet Elvin during the opening weeks of his freshman year of high school, a time when his friendships undergo the tests of changing perceptions of important. . . .
This is a funny, insightful, and wholly engaging novel that addresses many of the worst fears of adolescent boys without preaching."
—Starred review / School Library Journal

"Witty and knowing, this novel will have readers hoping Lynch writes another Elvin Bishop story soon."
—Starred review / Publishers Weekly

"Pudgy, frantic Elvin takes a hilarious, roller-coaster plunge into Young Adulthood." —Kirkus Reviews

Ages 12 up. $15.95TR (0-06-028040-9); $15.89LB (0-06-028210-X)

Chris Lynch's first Elvin Bishop novel
SLOT MACHINE

Ages 12 up. $14.89LB (0-06-023585-3); $4.95PB (0-06-447140-3)
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Anna of Byzantium

by Tracy Barrett

Regard the halo above the head of the lovely young woman on our cover with a measure of skepticism; in light of her story, it may be more a wishful than a merited accoutrement. In this liberally fictionalized story of Anna Comnena, daughter and designated heir of eleventh-century Byzantine emperor Alexius I, the protagonist engages with her closest family members in a battle of will and wit for control of the throne—a battle which we realize from the start she will lose. Writing from a remote mountain convent, Anna reflects ruefully on the missteps that led to her exile, and thereby involves readers in a gripping saga of alliances, intrigues, deceits, and treacheries worthy of a place among the tragic myths.

While Alexius and his men-at-arms are off on the first Crusades, the women and children back home fiercely promote their own interests in the governance of the realm. Anna Dalassena, who was responsible for putting her warrior son Alexius on the throne, is his most trusted advisor and de facto regent in his absence. She recognizes Anna Comnena’s aptitude for statesmanship and begins to instruct her granddaughter in her own style of ruthless politicking, certain that she will be able to control the next empress as handily as she controls her son. Empress Irene, Anna’s mother, is a devout Christian who exerts little power at court (and that mainly through the loving indulgence of her husband); she opposes her mother-in-law’s influence over Anna at every turn and fruitlessly warns Alexius during his infrequent appearances at home that their daughter is turning into a cold, amoral young woman under his mother’s tutelage. Prince John, the younger brother whom Anna has despised since his birth, is an ignorant, temperamental sneak who senses that Anna Dalassena is the power broker within the family and deliberately drives a fatal wedge between his sister and grandmother.

Anna Comnena comes of age amid these rivalries, freely turning to her grandmother for instruction, ignoring the more temperate messages of her mother and the family’s tutor Simon, and underestimating the cunning of brother John. Confident that the throne is hers upon her father’s death, she recklessly boasts to Simon about her intention to overthrow Anna Dalassena’s power and about her childhood attempt on her baby brother’s life (actually, no more than a prayer to the pagan gods to strike him down). John overhears her harangue, reports the treasonous talk to Alexius, and in one swoop has her removed from succession and himself designated royal heir. From that day forward, Anna tries to maneuver back into her father’s good graces; when that last hope evaporates upon Alexius’s death, Anna and her mother conspire unsuccessfully to poison John at his coronation feast, entangling innocent Simon and Anna’s personal slave, Sophia, in their
machinations. The plot is discovered, Irene suffers a complete mental collapse, and John mercifully spares Anna from execution, sending her instead into exile.

Knowledge of Anna's lineage is essential to understanding power plays between the ruling Comnenus (Alexius and Anna Dalassena) family and the vanquished Ducas (Irene) family, now tenuously allied through the royal marriage. Whereas many historical fiction writers would scurry to construct elaborate explanatory dialogues or extensive notes, Barrett cleverly delivers a far more entertaining lesson through venomous barbs hurled among lead characters. Anna Dalassena reviles the Empress Irene and her vanquished family: "If the Ducas family knew how to rule, how did [Alexius] take over the throne from them?" Irene ridicules her mother-in-law's "barbarian" roots: "I, after all, was raised in a palace, not in an Armenian goatherd's tent." Wickedly delightful though this asperity may be, Barrett never loses sight of the fact that in the triumph of either royal lies the welfare of their subjects.

Although separated from contemporary readers by foreign custom, social rank, and almost a millennium of Western history, Barrett's protagonist nonetheless commands YA empathy. Anna is a loving daughter, who questions whether her parents' teaching is adequate guidance for her own life; an able student, who masters the content of her lessons before realizing their meaning and purpose; a favored child, who is bitterly jealous of the meteoric ascent of a sibling; a disappointed adolescent, who is unable to fathom the decades ahead and believes that life's best opportunities have passed her by. But teen readers who tend to cast elements of their own lives in equally tragic light can take heart from the concluding pages of Anna's tale. She begins to find solace and tranquility in small daily tasks, softens her contempt of those lower born, and turns her historian hand to what will become her great life's work, writing *The Alexiad*, a tribute to her father's reign (which in real life now serves as a major source of information about Byzantine history). Perhaps she earned that halo after all. (Imprint information appears on p. 379.)

Elizabeth Bush, Reviewer

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE


At the behest of their mother, Sara, three brothers seek their wives and their fortunes in this lengthy retelling of a traditional Spanish folktale. A wise woman sends Santiago, Tomás, and Matías on a quest to a far-off garden, warning them to work together and return directly to her with "three golden oranges on a single branch" in order to obtain the wives they desire. The two elder brothers ignore the old woman's advice, but Matías pays attention and frees the lovely Blancaflor, her sisters, and her mother from a sorcerer's evil spell. Blancaflor's sisters turn down
the proposals of the two older brothers, but Blancaflor ("It is a woman’s right to choose whom she wants to marry, don’t you think?") decides to marry Matías, and they "returned to the little white house next to the sea, where they filled the windowsills with potted geraniums, and Sara’s heart with joy."). The momentum sometimes bogs down in the details, and the text lacks the storytelling verve necessary for a crisp delivery. The formal language is leavened by the humor and dash of the oil illustrations, however, which feature dark-eyed, near-monumental characters in a sunny green countryside spotted with white, stucco-roofed villas. Stylized geometric design elements inform the varied compositions, and the overall impression is that of a land where the sun shines from a consistently blue sky onto perpetually verdant fields. Ada’s note adds cultural context, although no specific sources are given. JMD


In beautiful Provence lives a "lazy, foolish man named Pierre" who has "no job, no interests, and no hobby besides sitting under the olive trees in the afternoon, thinking of dinner." One day Pierre, exhausted from this taxing schedule, is napping under the trees when the Grand Circus des Étoiles pitches its tents and prepares for its show. Pierre, convinced that what he sees upon awakening is actually a dream, faces down a lion, prances across the high wire, acts as ringmaster, and engages in a variety of other death-defying feats, periodically murmuring "Very realistic" at the manifestations of what he considers merely a naptime illusion. This is an entertaining inversion of the old fantasy-that’s-really-a-dream idea, and Armstrong’s text gives a dreamy flavor to the proceedings without foregoing the exotic pleasures of the circus delights and the humor of Pierre’s misperception. Gaber’s acrylics make much of the lush green of Southern France, with mottled frescoesque textures that fill the spacious landscapes with light and softly sculpted people who have an appropriate air of slight unreality; motion effects and creative perspectives (a trapeze-dangling Pierre is depicted from above with tigers and audience reduced to miniature below) never dazzle at the expense of the mood. Between this and Priceman’s Emeline at the Circus, reviewed below, it’s a festive time for picture book circuses; pass out the peanuts and let the show begin. DS


See this month’s Big Picture, p. 377, for review.

BAT-AMI, MIRIAM Two Suns in the Sky. Front Street/Cricket, 1999 223p ISBN 0-8126-2900-0 $15.95 R* Gr. 7-12

Chris is a fourteen-year-old Catholic girl living a circumscribed life in the small town of Oswego, New York; Adam is a fifteen-year-old Jewish refugee assigned to the refugee shelter at Fort Oswego the summer of 1944. Chris is filled with yearning—for love, for experience, for a future that Oswego simply cannot offer. Adam is also filled with yearning—for safety, for freedom, for romantic love. They see each other across the barbed wire fence of the refugee camp and eventually in class at the local high school. Their relationship is tinged with tragedy as the two, so different, fall in love against the express wishes of Chris’ bigoted Irish-American father and the implied wishes of Adam’s long-suffering mother. Bat-Ami captures
the startled awareness of young adolescents in love for the first time, the awareness
of two individuals who, briefly, exist only in relation to one another. Told in the
alternating voices of Chris and Adam, the story has the intimate tone of confes-
sion, interspersed occasionally with facsimiles of official documents related to the
refugee situation. Each chapter opens with quotes from real Oswego refugees,
from Oswego residents who witnessed the camp, or from Shakespeare's Romeo and
Juliet, allowing echoes of history and tragic love to resonate in this tale of romantic
destiny. The gestalt of world events is reflected in the small-mindedness of those
town residents who are prejudiced against the religion and race of the refugees and
resent their presence. Day-to-day life on the homefront is documented without
awkwardness, melding smoothly with the characters' voices, but always the rela-
tionship between Adam and Chris is foremost. Poignant, passionate, and bitter-
sweet, their story is a moving reminder of the power of first love. An author's note
and extensive acknowledgments give historical context and specifics about Bat-
Ami’s research. JMD

Beaton, Clare *One Moose, Twenty Mice*; written and illus. by Clare Beaton. Barefoot Books, 1999 32p
ISBN 1-902283-37-6 $14.95

From one to twenty, this book counts animals ranging from the titular moose
(one) through tigers (a half-score) through monkeys (a baker's dozen) to mice (as
promised, twenty). There's a catch to this countup, though: a big orange cat stalks
his way through the book, so each spread's text not only enumerates the critters
counted therein but also asks "Where's the cat?", who makes his presence fully felt
in the last spread when he can't resist the lure of the mice. The illustrations—
appliqué fabric, stitchery, and beadwork that give a collage effect—are comfort-
ably tactile and they offer some clever effects, such as the dark felt “shadow” that
gives some numerals an illusion of three-dimensionality; the hide-and-seek feline is
sometimes just a curling tail, sometimes a peering green eye, sometimes some deli-
cate mittened paws dancing along the top of the page until his final mouse hunt.
The constructions often seem to be more about their creation than illustration,
however, with a multitude of chachkes confusing the counting issue, compositions
sometimes busy and unfocused, and colors losing impact from an overuse of con-
trast. Young viewers will nonetheless find the fuzzy menagerie endearing, and
they'll giggle through the rollicking kitty hunt. DS

Bell, William *Zack*. Simon, 1999 [192p]
ISBN 0-689-82248-0- $16.95

Reviewed from galley Ad Gr. 7-10

An extra-credit research project is all that stands between senior Zack Lane and a
failing grade in history. He decides to trace the origins of a box of artifacts he
found buried in the yard of the family's new home and, with the help of the cura-
tor of a local museum, learns that an ex-slave (who won his freedom by fighting for
Britain in the Revolutionary War) had once owned the property. The discovery
prompts Zack, biracial Canadian child of a Rumanian Jewish father and an Afri-
can-American mother, to explore the rift on the maternal side of his family, which
no one will discuss. A clandestine road trip to Mississippi leads him to his grand-
father, who welcomes him cordially as a dark-skinned stranger and, in the course
of their conversations, reveals a deep-seated bigotry against whites. Zack returns to
his family more than willing to share his mother’s lingering bitterness against the father who cut her off upon her marriage: “Now I know why you and your father are apart. . . . He’s no better than a redneck or a skinhead.” The artifact-in-the-yard motif is a handy contrivance, and Zack’s written report (which improbably wins a history prize despite its lack of documentation and frequent asides directed to Zack’s teacher) awkwardly breaks the tale in two. Zack’s condemnation of his grandfather’s bigotry also seems overdrawn, given the fact that the grandfather’s response to indignities suffered over his long lifetime has apparently been limited to harsh verbiage rather than violent reprisal. At the heart of the novel, though, is an involving road story replete with teen-pleasing details such as police harassment, a storm-damaged truck, and a basketful of white lies and clever dodges to keep parents in the dark concerning his mission; that’s probably enough to lure YAs along for the ride. EB

BRISON, PAT  *Sky Memories*; illus. by Wendell Minor. Delacorte, 1999 71p ISBN 0-385-32606-8 $14.95  R Gr. 4-8

The ten-year-old narrator of this short novel begins her story on an ordinary day that her mother encourages her to see as “regular-wonderful.” Mother and daughter capture the scene by gazing upwards until they are ready to make a “sky memory,” squeezing hands and saying “click” once they decide they are “really seeing everything.” The story goes on to describe the changes that take place in the lives of this mother and daughter starting the “very next day” when the daughter tells us “my mother found out she had cancer.” This accessible narrative handles its emotional subject with restraint, communicating the difficulties of this tragic situation from the point of view of the girl who has to deal with the disruption of the rich family life she shares with her single mother. In clear, concrete language Emily describes her feelings during her mother’s illness and her sadness after her mother’s death (“I was still so tired when I woke up that it seemed as if my body was held to my mattress with sacks of sand”). Full-page watercolors with an airbrushed quality illustrate each sky memory, softening the effect of the brief word pictures describing the physical deterioration of Emily’s mother while emphasizing the theme that memories can mitigate the pain of loss. FK

BURCHARD, PETER  *Lincoln and Slavery*. Atheneum, 1999 [208p] illus. with photographs. ISBN 0-689-81570-0 $17.00  Reviewed from galleys  R Gr. 7-12

Two years before his death, Lincoln promoted the idea that blacks were inherently inferior; he supported efforts to return African Americans to Africa; and, as Burchard reports, he was also one of our greatest and most enigmatic presidents. The author looks at the complexities behind the Lincoln myth, recounting Lincoln’s political career, his social and racial beliefs, his reputation with his contemporaries, and the effect of his leadership on emancipation and the future of African Americans. Fluent and engaging language, historical anecdotes, excerpts from primary sources, and unfamiliar information (e.g., Lincoln defended a slaveholder and helped blacks emigrate to Panama) maintain interest, and the glimpses of the men and women of Lincoln’s day (Charlotte Forten, Frederick Douglass, Fanny Kemble, and Sojourner Truth) are especially compelling. The book gives a balanced presentation of Lincoln’s strengths and flaws, showing him to be a man of his times: “I am not,
nor have ever been, in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes.” Burchard fictionalizes Lincoln’s feelings and reactions, but he tempers his novelistic style with frequent use of excerpts from Lincoln’s speeches and writings and from newspapers of the day. This in-depth focus on Lincoln and slavery complements Russell Freedman’s *Lincoln: A Photobiography* (BCCB 1/88) and Albert Marrin’s *Commander in Chief: Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War* (BCCB 1/98) and provides a sharp image of a multifaceted leader. Clearly captioned illustrations, historical facsimiles, maps, and photographs are interspersed throughout the text, which closes with an informative afterword, engrossing endnotes, and extensive bibliography. An index will be included in the bound book. JNH

**Cadnum, Michael**  *Rundown*. Viking, 1999 [160p]  
Reviewed from galleys  

Sixteen-year-old Jennifer Thayer, angry at her older sister’s eternal family prominence (worse now in the face of her upcoming wedding), makes a dangerous bid for attention by falsely claiming to have fought off a would-be-rapist while out running in the Berkeley hills. And it works: the police are eager to use Jennifer’s information to convict a serial rapist, her parents are protective and anxious to compensate (her father buys her the horse she’d have killed for in her preteen days), and her old boyfriend comes back to town. Pressure builds as the stakes get higher, but only her sister suspects the truth, and Jennifer is not sure how far she’s prepared to take this and how it’s all going to end. Cadnum sets up an intriguing and unusual situation and plays it out fairly credibly. Jennifer’s periodic contemplation of how differently various stages would have gone had this been happening to her sister operate ambivalently, possibly strengthening her claim to family-leftover status but also calling her narrative reliability into question, especially in light of the book’s suggestion that it’s her father, who may be having an affair, with whom she’s really angry. The story takes some odd turns toward the end (a detective believes that Jennifer’s mother is abusing her) and the wrap-up, wherein Jennifer calls the police (presumably to confess) after taking an overdose of pills, doesn’t match the satisfying complexity of the rest of the novel. The strangeness of the situation is nonetheless vividly evoked, and readers will puzzle over their stand on the matter in a way that would make this a provocative companion to Walter Dean Myers’ very different *Monster* (BCCB 5/99). DS

**Cahoon, Heather**  *Word Play ABC*; written and illus. by Heather Cahoon. Walker, 1999 [32p]  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8683-9 $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys  

This alphabet takes a sportive approach: B is for “bare feet,” but the feet are bear (Teddy, to be precise) as well as bare; P is for “pantry,” which features an oak festooned with saucepans. Other entries flirt with metaphor (“night-light” captions a flock of fireflies) or literal interpretations of the metaphoric (the weeping willow’s tears drip piteously into the stream below it). Though diverting, the result lacks the focus of Cathi Hepworth’s lexical games in *Bug Off!* (BCCB 9/98), and some examples are cleverer than others (and some are simply unsuccessful). Cahoon’s art is more consistent: her smudgy black line, cloudy washes of color,
and sturdily humorous figures recall the work of Will Hillenbrand. Each spread is united with crossover from one letter's illustration to the other, and the openings are also visually connected, in their attractive layout, by thick bottom borders that anchor the color schemes. Though the book doesn't always pull off its conceptual gamesmanship, the fluid visuals and pleasurable brain ticklers may still add some welcome frivolity to language arts. An appended glossary provides the real definitions of the included terms. DS


There's something primally appealing about peanut butter, and kids seem to bond with the stuff emotionally as well as physically. Charlip gives the goo its festive due, with unusually feasible yet still whimsical activities such as Art Gallery Fun (how to make a landscape, seascape, or abstract dreamscape out of basic foodstuffs: "Try a cheese moon, sour cream hills, coconut snow, fettucini window trim"), Monsters You Can Eat (sculpting clay made from PB and other edibles), and a Peanut Butter Play (chunky and smooth face off), with peanutty songs and jokes. Each spread offers a peanut gallery, pardon the puns, on the left side, where a diminutive collection of kids offer bits of peanut-butter wisdom in verbatim quotes from real kids (the pleasure one child takes in "sticking a plastic straw in a jar of peanut butter and squeezing wiggly strings into your mouth" will inevitably prove contagious). The right-hand pages offer lighthearted creations and descriptions of the various projects, which are sometimes hampered by confusingly phrased or placed captions and occasionally seem more filler than filling, as with the Quiet Time All by Yourself Party, where one engages in Zen contemplation of a jar of peanut butter. There's a touch of Hole Is to Dig spontaneity here, however, that sandwiches pleasingly with the creative approach to playing with your food; this is as close as you'll get to a book that sticks to the roof of your mouth. DS

CLEMENTS, ANDREW Workshop; illus. by David Wisniewski. Clarion, 1999 [32p]
ISBN 0-395-85579-9 $16.00 R Gr. 3-8 yrs

Clements and Wisniewski pair up for a look inside a woodworker's studio. The text on each two-page spread personifies and explains a different tool: ruler, axe, saw, hammer, anvil, grinder, chisel, shears, knife, screwdriver, drill, pliers, wrench, and toolbox. As each tool is named and its purpose described, a woodworker and an assistant use it to assemble part of a project that eventually proves to be an amusement-park carousel. Wisniewski's cut-paper illustrations and collage ably illustrate Clements' spare, poetic text: "Saw is a biter./ Tooth after tooth,/ saw rips away by bits./ Saw turns boards to dust." The strong and woody palette on parchment background brings the warmth and rigor of the workshop to light. The papercuts are most effective demonstrating motion, as in the sparks flying off of the grinder, and the illusion of motion, as in the carousel horse's manes, but the almost still-life pictures often need more energy or the depth of landscape to shine. Clements' metaphorica' text ("Grinder wears away. / The blade, the bolt, the chain— / grinder does not care") may sometimes be lost on young listeners when there is so much activity to absorb on the page, and it's confusing that occasionally
more than one tool is pictured in a spread. Look elsewhere for detailed information on woodworking, but offer this as a unique introduction to the world of wood and art for budding artisans. EAB


Annabel wants "to be a movie star someday. Or at least a soap opera star." To that end she studies how actors act, on television and in the movies, and practices emotions in front of the mirror. Her first opportunity to make it big comes when she's hired to be a gorilla at five-year-old Dennis' birthday party. Annabel doesn't have a gorilla costume, but that doesn't stop her because she's confident of her abilities (when told that Dennis likes big gorillas, Annabel retorts "I am an actress. . . . I will act tall"). On her way to the party in a safety-pinned gorilla suit and a borrowed mask Annabel is waylaid by her lifelong enemy, Lowell Boxer, who takes off with her headgear. But Annabel will not be defeated—not only does she pull off the birthday party with triumphant ingenuity, but she gets the gorilla mask back from the easily suggestible Lowell. Divided into five acts, this easy chapter book introduces a new continuing character. Annabel (who appears to be about nine years old) is an invincibly enthusiastic actress-to-be, and Conford's smartly funny characterization of her heroine is reflected in the energetic, motion-filled black-and-white line drawings. The sprightly-and-spunky Annabel is sure to find a receptive audience. JMD


Cretzmeyer reconstructs the Kapps' experiences from 1942 to 1946 as the Jewish family flees from Toulouse to the tiny hamlets around Albi, always just a step ahead of the French police and, later, the Gestapo. Although Mr. Kapp's service in the French Foreign Legion should have placed his family legally beyond the reach of Vichy authorities, they are in fact driven from one home to the next until, without income or reasonable hope of safety, they find themselves totally dependent on the protection of sympathetic gentile neighbors and Resistance workers. These events are ostensibly seen through the eyes of Ruth, who, as an adult, would become Cretzmeyer's French teacher in the United States. Ruth learns from her earliest days at school to pass herself off as French Catholic, assuming the name Renée in public, taking refuge in churches, avoiding any reference to her Jewish heritage. Although her plight is undeniably compelling—particularly her innocent excitement at the arrival of Marshal Pétain (she cannot understand why her Jewish relatives do not share her enthusiasm) and her residence as an "orphan" at a Catholic school that shelters Jewish children—frequent change of voice between the child Ruth and an omniscient narrator proves a cumbersome device. Five-year-old Ruth's ability to recount lengthy adult conversations is also less than convincing. Nonetheless, readers moved by the Anne Frank diary and Reiss' The Upstairs Room will want to add this to their reading list. Family photos, a map, and historical notes are included. EB
DALY, NIKI  *The Boy on the Beach*; written and illus. by Niki Daly.  McElderry, 1999  32p
ISBN 0-689-82175-1  $16.00  R  3-6 yrs

The boy on the beach is having a good old time racing around the sand, splashing in the surf, and pretending to be a pirate in an abandoned, half-buried boat. Sitting among the “sand dunes [that] rise like monster waves . . . the boy on the beach feels lost and alone” and calls out for his mom and dad. A lifeguard (“cool as a coke and copper-tanned”) piggybacks the boy to the Lost and Found, where his parents wait. The text captures the kid’s adventurous spirit, and the watercolors capture the busy sun-bleached beach. Sun and surf lovers lounge under red, striped, and flowered umbrellas, and the boy on the beach can barely contain his exuberance at “sandy toes . . . sun-cream nose . . . camera smile—click! And off he goes . . . castle-bashing . . . sea-pool splashing, wet, wet, wet . . . .” Nearly transparent washes of color infuse the blue sky, blue water, and white dunes with sunlight. More than a list of things to do on a day at the beach, this is an exhilarating adventure complete with excitement, danger, and rescue. Use this with Marie Gay’s *Stella, Star of the Sea* (BCCB 5/99) for an inspiring seaside storytime. JMD

DESPAIN, PLEASANT  *The Emerald Lizard: Fifteen Latin American Tales to Tell in English and Spanish/La lagartija esmeralda: Quince cuentos tradicionales Latinoamericanos*; tr. by Mario Lamo-Jiménez; illus. by Don Bell.  August House, 1999  [184p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-87483-551-8  $21.95
Paper ed. ISBN 0-87483-552-6  $11.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 4-8

Fifteen tales from as many cultures are presented in English and Spanish in this accessible collection. DeSpain’s spare, streamlined style lends itself to reading and telling aloud in stories from Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, Haiti, etc.; the tone varies from humorous to meditative, and the selection provides a simple introduction to a variety of tale-types. As in Olga Loya’s previous collection (*Momentos mágicos/Magic Moments*, BCCB 4/97) the tales are told in both languages in their entirety (as opposed to one page in one language, one in another), allowing uninterrupted flow whether reading in English or Spanish. Bell’s black-and-white illustrations (full-page ink and wash and smaller scratchboard spot art and borders) break up the large-type text blocks and add a certain naïve folksiness to the proceedings. Sources and collection information for the tales are included. JMD

DINGUS, LOWELL  *The Tiniest Giants: Discovering Dinosaur Eggs*; written and illus. with photographs by Lowell Dingus and Luis Chiappe.  Doubleday, 1999  42p
ISBN 0-385-32642-4  $17.95  R  Gr. 4-8

This description of the expedition that led to the 1997 discovery of tens of thousands of dinosaur eggs in Patagonia is a timely addition to dinosauriana. Though the authors—two of the scientists involved in the expedition—reveal a perhaps surprising truth of science when they state that “we didn’t find any of the things we were looking for,” readers will nonetheless learn much about the realities of field research here as well as about dinosaur eggs. Only the third chapter of five details the actual expedition, the other chapters extending the chronological narrative in both directions. Early chapters explain the historical and geographical back-
ground of Patagonia and give a refreshing attention to a variety of practical matters, such as the necessity of finding funding for the expedition and the difficulties of transporting supplies. Later chapters explain what scientists learned from these fossils when they got them back to the laboratory and give equal attention to the "years of hard detective work" ahead. Illustrations include photographs, maps, line drawings, and visual information in a variety of other forms in a layout that is clear and engaging. While the narration falls into cliche at times, the photos of real scientists at work—male and female, Argentinian and American—make this story come alive. A glossary reviews vocabulary and the suggestions for further reading highlight age-appropriate sources. By the end, the reader will have a much more complex understanding of the thrill a paleontologist feels when "suddenly something on the ground catches your eye." FK


Seven-year-old Omakayas (which means "Little Frog") and her family follow the ways of their people, the Anishinabe, on the Island of the Golden-Breasted Woodpecker in Lake Superior. On the surface, the story of Omakayas is the story of any girl growing up: she envies her beautiful older sister, adores her father, is exasperated by her five-year-old brother, tries to get out of hated chores, and wonders about her future. The deeper story of the Anishinabe and their struggles to maintain their way of life is the richly textured infrastructure of this deceptively simple, lyrically written novel. Erdrich divides Omakayas' story into four seasons, beginning with the summer of 1847 and the family's move from their winter cottage to their summer birchbark house. As the seasons pass, Omakayas takes care of her adored baby brother, Neewo, and learns herb lore from her grandmother; she meets two bear cubs and their mother and discovers her calling as a healer; she cares for her family when smallpox breaks out, and she mourns the death of Neewo and others in their community. The details of everyday life are unobtrusively and skillfully woven into the text; the encroachment of white settlers into Indian land has clearly had impact but that encroachment is still held off by geographic isolation and deliberate choice. The relationships among the family members, between the family and their community, and between the community and the land come through clearly here in an emotionally involving style that will draw readers into the world and worldview of Omakayas and her family. The acknowledgments state that this novel, which provides a cultural counterpoint to the Little House titles, is the first in a series retracing Erdrich's own family history. JMD


Wesley, "an outcast from the civilization around him," is a worry to his mother and father: "He had no friends, but plenty of tormentors. Fleeing them was the only sport he was good at." Despite these difficulties, Wesley is smart and well-adjusted. In his solitude he creates a new civilization built around a mysterious crop grown from seeds blown in by a wind from the west. Towering blossoms give way to magenta fruits, and Wesley finds a purpose for every part of his plant: he eats the fruit, drinks the juice, boils, fries and roasts the root tubers, wears cloth
woven from the stalks' inner fibers, and uses the oil from the seeds as insect repellent and suntan lotion. His garden becomes his domain, complete with new time-keeping devices, a new counting system, and new sports, which he plays with his curiously delighted former tormentors. This story about a nonconformist creating his own reality resonates with imagination and humor. From the opening spreads Wesley is depicted as a bright-eyed, amiable character, and his natural creativity is reflected in Hawkes' vivid recreations of Wesley's altered environment, lush illustrations that have a realistic whimsy reminiscent of David Wiesner. While the transformation of Wesley's tormentors into followers is a dénouement rosier than Wesley's flowers, this unusual story will act as a solid bridge to discussions starting with the phrase "If I ran the world..." JMD

ISBN 0-8050-5484-7 $18.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 7-12

This companion to Giovanni's *Grand Mothers* (BCCB 12/94) is a multicultural patchwork quilt of almost fifty pieces, most composed for this collection. The majority are prose reminiscences, but a significant number are poems, and Giovanni also includes one drawing and one woodcut (both by illustrators with whom she has collaborated previously), one song (by Mari Evans), several recipes, and a number of black-and-white photographs. Among the names here are Rita Dove and Lori Marie Carlson, but most contributors are neither well-known writers nor authors for children in particular; a significant number are not professional writers at all. Consequently, though the quality of writing is generally competent, it is inconsistent. Contributors range from a sixteen-year-old to a number who are grandparents themselves, including one who can "reach back" 100 years through her memories of an ancestor born in slavery and also look forward through her grandchildren to a "future world of technology and multiracialism." The result is a work that Giovanni hopes will "encourage young people to solve some of their family's mysteries," though neither the selections themselves nor her organization and presentation of them consistently address the needs, experience, or interests of youth. However, with assistance, this anthology of individual voices sharing their impressions of grandfathers—good, bad, and indifferent—may provide a useful variety of models for young readers and writers. FK

GOURLEY, CATHERINE  *Good Girl Work: Factories, Sweatshops, and How Women Changed Their Role in the American Workforce.* Millbrook, 1999  96p  illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-7613-0951-9  $23.40  R  Gr. 6-9

Gourley presents a well-organized overview of girls' and women's struggles in the workplace, from the shops and cottage industries of colonial times to the immediate aftermath of the devastating Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire of 1911. Although famous names, places, and events necessarily spring up (Mother Jones, the Lowell mills, the garment workers' strike of 1909-10), the spotlight shines here on unsung "girls" whose testimonies to daily drudgery and endangerment are culled from letters and diaries, exposés, and public documents. Gourley examines the details of a wide range of labor experiences and their occupational hazards—fingers and ankles slashed from oyster shucking, skin burnt from citrus processing, limbs crushed at laundry mangles, lungs inundated with lint from spun threads,
fingernails dissolved from toxins in shoe factories. Perhaps even more signifi-
cantly, she incorporates these specifics into the broader account of how public perception
of "good" (i.e., submissive) girls transmuted into "bad" (i.e., intractable) girls as
the young women organized in labor actions. Although no bibliography is in-
cluded, quotes are documented in concluding notes; period photos and an index
are provided. EB

GOWER, TIM  
This Book Bites!:  Or, Why Your Mouth Is More Than Just a Hole in
Your Head.  Planet Dexter, 1999  64p  illus. with photographs
If you rock the optical-illusion book cover, the larger-than-life teeth chatter. Yep,
it’s one heckuva gimmick, and it accurately sets the tone for this yucked-up cruise
through the ol’ oral cavity. Though this is mostly trivia and corny gags, there’s a
little science slipped in, and browsers may inadvertently find themselves learning
the scoop on tooth decay, the many uses of spit, the miseries of malocclusion, and
the mechanics of chewing. Gower debunks a few mouth myths along the way—
tongue rolling does not appear to be an inherited trait; a cold beverage will make
the pain from a hot chili pepper worse (try rice or bread instead)—and passes along
some truly kid-useful advice (“Some orthodontists offer covers that slip over braces,
protecting your lips. If you want one, but don’t think your smooching habits are
any of your orthodontist’s business, tell him or her you play tuba in the school
band”). Don’t look here for the kind of organizational coherence to support an A+
science report; just enjoy the tasty little “Did ya know?” tidbits. EB

HÄNEL, WOLFRAM  
Rescue at Sea!:  tr. by Rosemary Lanning; illus. by Ulrike
Heyne.  North-South, 1999  60p
Library ed. ISBN 0-7358-1046-X  $13.88  R  Gr. 2-4
Paul’s father is a volunteer lifeboatman, and when a violent storm rakes the coast,
he sets out to rescue a boat in trouble. With the reluctant permission of his mother,
Paul accompanies his father and witnesses the rescue, from the ponies hauling the
lifeboat into the pounding surf to the dangerous boat-to-boat transfers. Though
the lifeboat returns and triumphantly brings the boat’s crew to safety, dog-loving
Paul sees a frightened pooch left aboard the doomed ship and determines to rescue
him. The story is spun out a trifle longer than it needs to be, but it’s enticingly full
of adventures, heroism, and literal Sturm und Drang, rolling along accessibly with
a doggy reward at the end (the fishermen agree that Paul can keep his hard-won
prize). As it did in Midnight Rider (BCCB 10/95), Heyne’s art has a scope and
drama rare in easy readers, and her personable patch-eyed pup is infinitely desir-
able, well worth the rescue, without being sweetened into an unrealistic cartoon.
With its touch of wildness and canine appeal, this will make an absorbing stepping
stone for young pups not quite ready for Gary Paulsen. DS

HEHNER, BARBARA  
First on the Moon:  What It Was Like When Man Landed on the
Moon;  illus. by Greg Ruhl and with photographs.  Hyperion/Madison Press,
1999  48p  (I Was There Books)
ISBN 0-7868-0489-0  $16.99  R  Gr. 3-6
As with other books in the Madison Press copublications, this one balances factual
explanation of a historical event with fictionalized accounts of someone present.
The device is more effective than usual here, however, because it describes the reactions of Jan Aldrin, daughter of astronaut Buzz Aldrin (and resource for this volume), as her father became one of the first travelers to the moon. The result is a compact and capable account of life in space and life back home during one of the most celebrated events of the twentieth century. Sidebars and diagrams explain matters ranging from flight trajectory to space meals to the composition of the three-stage Saturn V rocket (a particular boon to the less technical) while the text smoothly details the progress of the astronauts and the waiting of their families back home. Human-interest tidbits, such as Jan’s visits to her quarantined father (“She could see her father through the window of the trailer and talk to him by telephone”), expand the audience beyond the aeronauts, and the browsable format will entice readers of various levels (though the paintings are not only as bland and stiff as old textbook art but also superfluous, since they add little to the views provided by included photographs). Got a kid you want to shoot off into space? Hand him/her this. An epilogue, timeline, glossary, and brief list of recommended reading round out the account. DS

HILL, ELIZABETH STARR   Bird Boy; written by Lesley Liu. Farrar, 1999  56p
ISBN 0-374-30723-7   $15.00   R Gr. 2-4

Young Chang is mute, but that doesn’t stop him from connecting with the family’s cormorants, birds that help them earn a living fishing on the Li River in southern China. In fact, it seems that Chang’s awkward squawks and squeaks are akin to the sounds of the cormorants; they apparently understand him perfectly, and he, them. When his father puts him in charge of a new cormorant egg and the hatchling that emerges, Chang takes his task seriously. Bullying neighbor Jinan, however, convinces him to leave his watch with the promise of a ride on Jinan’s new bike; while Chang rides, Jinan steals the baby cormorant. In finding and defending his chick (which he nurses back to health), Chang also finds the confidence to withstand Jinan’s aggressive bids for attention. Hill has written an excellent little novel here, showing an uncanny ability to be right where kids are. Beginning chapter-book readers will identify with Chang and his desire to do grownup things. The text is quietly spare and the plot’s sturdy exposition is old-fashioned—in a good way. Hill allows kids to see not only the distant world of cormorant-diving and river life but also Chang’s world of nonspeaking communication, and she light-handedly offers a worthwhile moral to boot: “And Chang had found trying made all the difference.” Charcoal and wash illustrations expand the story with rosy-faced river kids and elegantly precise cormorants. EAB

HITE, SID  Cecil in Space. Holt, 1999  [160p]
ISBN 0-8050-5055-8   $16.95
Reviewed from galleys   Ad Gr. 6-9

It’s the summer before senior year, narrator Cecil Rowe is license-less after twice failing his driver’s test, and the only happenings in the tiny hamlet of Bricksburg, Virginia that relieve his boredom are his crush on flirtatious Ariel, visits to his schizophrenic aunt at the mental hospital, and pondering whether his best friend Isaac might indeed be responsible for the vandalizing of the town welcome sign, which has caused a local stir. Cecil is quite right—nothing much does happen in Bricksburg, Virginia, and the main source of interest for this slim novel is the genial, American Graffiti-esque flow of these minor events. Cecil predictably sees
the error of his infatuation with Ariel, crazy Aunt June’s ramblings turn out to be far less histrionic than the reader might hope, and the revelation of the culprit behind the vandalism is nothing short of a fizzle (a midlife-crisis fling on the part of Ariel’s father). Still, beach-bound YA readers might do worse than spend a few hours soaking up Cecil’s wry account of how he spent his summer vacation. EB

JOHNSON, SCOTT  Safe at Second. Philomel, 1999  [224p]
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-10

Edgeview High School junior Paulie Lockwood has made a life out of tailing and supporting his closest friend Todd Bannister, a senior pitcher courted by college recruiters and pro scouts; the only future Paulie can really imagine is becoming Todd’s “personal assistant” when he signs a major league contract and begins his certain rise to baseball legend. However, fate throws Todd a nasty curve when a rogue line drive during scrimmage play hits him in the eye; a prosthesis restores Todd’s good looks, but his emotional devastation cannot be so easily masked. Loyal Paulie considers it his duty to keep up Todd’s spirits and guide him back into the game, but he soon discovers that neither quiet devotion nor in-your-face admonitions are enough to pull Todd through the stages of depression, anger, false hope, and resignation he simply must face on his own. There’s no heroic comeback tale here—Todd attempts to reclaim his spot on the mound, but he is stymied at every turn by a resentful coach, the ascent during his absence of several other competent pitchers, and a crippling sense of overcaution that keeps him from burning pitches into the strike zone with his former abandon. Paulie, for his part, must reinvent a vision for his own future that does not include Todd. It is a measure of Johnson’s craft that he can deprive these two worthy young men of the future they covet yet convince his readers that the unimagined life beyond the diamond may still hold some charm. This title should join the starting lineup in any YA baseball collection. EB

KAY, VERLA  Iron Horses; illus. by Michael McCurdy. Putnam, 1999  [32p]
ISBN 0-399-23119-6  $15.99
Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-8 yrs

With clipped verses that mimic locomotive rhythm and scratchboard double spreads that recall period engravings, Kay and McCurdy offer a primary-grade introduction to the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. The opening illustration of a steam train that had reached the end of the line demonstrates the impulse for connecting existing track (“Huffing, puffing./Smoking stacks./Screeching, stopping./End of tracks”). Robber barons and politicians wrangle, road crews are assembled, and the mammoth project begins. Throbbing rhymes serve more as captions to the pictures; visual explications of the challenges of terrain and weather are more powerful than “Granite mountain,/Tunnel through./High Sierras,/Flowers, blue.” But the illustrations can be a bit misleading as well, showing cooperative gangs of Chinese and European laborers rather than segregated crews, and a tender piled with oak logs while the engine stack belches black coal smoke. A concluding author’s note and map clarify some of the cloudier points in the text, and children who can interpolate the somewhat disjointed scenes will enjoy chuggin’ on through. EB
John Spencer’s brush with death in *The Wreckers* (BCCB 6/98) has not diminished his enthusiasm for a seafaring life, and he happily agrees to take charge of the cargo on his father’s new schooner, the *Dragon*. Sailors who know the *Dragon*, though, swear she is cursed (“Death she’ll bring you, and I’ll promise you that. It’s the way of a ship that was christened with blood”), and only a highly suspect crew of four can be enlisted to make what should be a short and simple trip along the coast to London. The captain, as it happens, is a smuggler, who makes an unscheduled stop for contraband in France; but after a series of life-threatening adventures, John Spencer delivers the villains into the hands of British customs men and exorcises the “ghost” of the *Dragon*. A corpse that bobs eerily in the ship’s wake, a dastardly captain who communes with his dead son, a wizened old innkeeper who waits vigilantly for the return of her long-gone husband, a pistol-packing highwayman who abhors blood, and a rakish sailor who is terrified of water shine among a cast that could have sprung from R. L. Stevenson. As in *The Wreckers*, Lawrence pitches the action fast and furious; cunningly devised cliffhanger chapter endings virtually mandate that the novel be devoured in a single sitting.

EB

**LAWRENCE, MICHAEL**  *Baby Loves*; illus. by Adrian Reynolds. DK, 1999 32p ISBN 0-7894-3410-5 $9.95 R 1-3 yrs

The androgynous baby of the title loves a lot: Mommy and Daddy, breakfast, Teddy, kitty, Granny, hat, bath time, sunshine, and other components of early existence. In each spread, Baby loves that particular subject “more than anything else in the world except” the item featured on the next spread following the page turn. Though the catalogue gets awfully lengthy for its tiny toddler audience, many of the favorites will have readily available real-life counterparts that allow the read aloud to expand into a game, and the refrain has a roundly satisfying final twist when it’s made clear that “Mommy and Daddy love Baby more than anything else in the world. . . Anything at all!” Reynolds’ illustrations are blander cousins to Helen Oxenbury’s, with simplified lines and emphases on primary colors; Baby is no sweet cipher, however, demonstrating a taste for loving things to distraction (breakfast is upended on Baby’s head, Teddy loses an arm, and Daddy’s nose is seriously endangered) that adults will recognize ruefully as genuine toddler affection. Trim the chant down by skipping the spreads that don’t apply, and let your ever-lovin’ baby rip—er, enjoy.

DS

**LEFT HAND BULL, JACQUELINE**  *Lakota Hoop Dancer*; written by Jacqueline Left Hand Bull and Suzanne Haldane; illus. with photographs by Suzanne Haldane. Dutton, 1999 32p ISBN 0-525-45413-6 $15.99 R Gr. 3-6

This biographical photo essay features Lakota hoop dancer Kevin Locke (Tokeya Inajin) in a survey of his life’s work and his art form. Beginning with a description of one of Locke’s hoop dancing performances, the text segues easily into a discussion of Locke’s cultural roots, his family history, and his commitment to preserving Lakota culture. The text is interspersed with numerous color photographs—of
Locke dancing, of the landscape where he lives and works, in the process of hoop making, etc.—that give readers a sense of Locke's connection to his physical environment and the way that connection nurtures his artistic process. The discussion of how Locke learned hoop dancing is a bit slight, occasionally items are mentioned in the text that are not reflected in the photographs, and the glossary is limited, but altogether this provides an informed, insightful look at one individual's passion for and celebration of his art. JMD

LE GUIN, URSULA K. Jane on Her Own: A Catwings Tale; illus. by S. D. Schindler. Orchard, 1999 42p  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30133-8 $14.95
Ad Gr. 3-5

Jane is one of the winged cats whose adventures have been chronicled in Catwings (BCCB 9/88) and its sequels. Now she’s feeling fettered by the predictability of life at Overhill Farm, and she ignores the warnings of her family (“If human beings saw cats with wings, they’d put us in cages in zoos”) to seek the excitement of the city. She flutters through an open window and thrills an opportunist, who doesn’t quite cage her in a zoo but still puts her on display—for the news media and for advertising dollars. Though Jane is royally coddled, she eventually chafes at the restriction and makes a break for it, finally ending up in a cozy home with her mother and her mother’s loving owner. This is a pretty standard alien-on-show plot, and the story is more episodic than climactic, with Jane’s final home seeming really not that different from her first. Le Guin’s precise and fluid style remains effective, however, and makes the story of the flying feline an engaging entry-level fantasy. Schindler’s artwork contains his usual tracery of hatching and crosshatching, giving the catwings a crisp and straightforward realism that ensures a sophisticated look. The plot doesn’t quite soar, but this will still set fans of the previous volumes purring. DS

Reviewed from galleys R 2-4 yrs

The format here is straightforward—a big text block obscures most of an animal while the words ask the critter’s identity (“Who has a waggy yellow tail and a sticky lickly tongue?”); opening a flap reveals the subject, covering the text block with the riddle-ee’s missing part and providing the answer (“dog”). The answers are hinted at outrageously, so even the teenies won’t be stumped (the canine face, panting tongue, wagging tail, and “woof” explanation don’t leave the dog much mystery), but that’s the point—as the series title says, this is a “Peekaboo Riddle Book” and the emphasis here is on the peekaboo. A toothy crocodile, floppy-eared elephant, curly-whirly-tailed pig, and their ilk offer young viewers plenty of playful pleasure if not genuine surprise (though the duck’s blue tail feathers may give pause to youngsters unfamiliar with mallards), and the final noisy spread appropriately features a bumptious toddler in the gallery of beasts. The riddling questions run to rhyme, onomatopoeia, and flavorful adjectives, which join with bestial vocalizations to make for a gleefully participatory readaloud. Though the colors get a bit overwhelming in the text lettering (and the character spacing can be somewhat disorienting), the intensely hued illustrations employ black crayony lines and strong
contrast for simplicity and impact. This high-spirited menagerie will be just the thing for biped zoo babies. DS

LEVITIN, SONIA  The Cure. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 1999  184p
ISBN 0-15-201827-1  $16.00  R Gr. 7-10

In the not-so-distant future all passion has been extinguished, music is forbidden, cloning has taken the place of sex, and serotonin shakes are the drink of choice. Gemm 16884, a member of this antiseptic if orderly society, is having disconcerting dreams that include music, dancing, and singing. Picked up by the Leaders for his deviant behavior, Gemm’s choice is either recycling (death) or the cure, a virtual trip to the past where he will experience music-associated distress so painful that his desire to make music will be forever banished. Gemm chooses the cure, and this is where the story really begins. Gemm 16884 virtually become Johannes, a sixteen-year old Jew, gifted flautist and son of moneylender Menachem, in fourteenth-century Strasbourg. In a society riddled with rabid anti-semitism, he and his family struggle for both survival and dignity. Levitin’s characterizations are substantial, from the naive, maturing Johannes to his wiser more knowledgeable father, from persecuted Jew to privileged gentile. The details of day to day life provide the backdrop for an emotionally nuanced family drama set within a maelstrom of historical events—the persecution and later the murders of Jewish communities blamed for the spread of the ever more deadly plague—that play out with mounting suspense until the horrifying and chilling conclusion. Gemm’s return to his own time, his resultant healing and promotion to the powerful position of Elder (from which he hopes to effect positive change), is a weak addenda to the riveting historical fiction previously forged, but readers still reeling from the impact of Johannes’ story will hardly quibble. A historical note and bibliography are included. JMD

LEWIN, TED  Touch and Go: Travels of a Children’s Book Illustrator. Lothrop, 1999  67p
ISBN 0-688-14109-9  $15.00  Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 9-12

In a series of vignettes, Lewin gives brief, nearly photographic impressions of various peoples he has met on his travels throughout the world. Incidents of illegal money changing, a boy’s being beaten for not selling his grandfather’s wares, a woman selling fry bread for gas money, etc., provide a touristy approach to cultures and individuals that is unsatisfactorily sketchy and ultimately limited. The titles of the chapters give the locations of each encounter, which references at least provide some geographic specificity. The insert of color photographs and Lewin’s art is reproduced on poor quality paper, and as a result the pictures look like a faded bulletin-board display. While this sort of scrapbook approach might be interesting to informed adults, there is little here to appeal to younger readers, as Lewin provides little context for his impressions or remarks. JMD

LINDQUIST, SUSAN HART  Summer Soldiers. Delacorte, 1999  [224p]
ISBN 0-385-32641-6  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys R  Gr. 5-8

The only neighborhood father not to enlist for military duty in the summer of 1918 is Jim Morgan’s dad, who sees no need to prove his heroism but prefers to
stay on the ranch with his beloved horses and to help the surrounding families
tend and market their sheep. However, war fever runs high in the community,
and the local bullies—the elder Thornton brothers—keep public sentiment sim-
mering against the Morgans. The neighborhood alliances and aggressions, which
parallel the European belligerence, are seen through the eyes of narrator Joe
Farrington, a close friend of Jim whose own father goes missing in action. Twelve-
year-old Joe, Jim, and their friends manage to hold their own against the Thornton
boys and prove their mettle on a sheep drive; although Mr. Morgan demonstrates
his own bravery unequivocally, losing his life rescuing a ship’s cargo of horses,
many of his neighbors flatly refuse to soften their condemnation of his unpatriotic
“cowardice.” Lindquist provides a glimmer of hope for Mr. Farrington’s return
but realistically leaves the sting of hometown hostilities unassuaged. Amid the
bounty of World War II novels, the first War to End All Wars remains somewhat
underserved; Lindquist offers a thoughtful, well-crafted tale of the other homefront.

Lisle, Janet Taylor. *The Lost Flower Children*; illus. by Satomi
Ichikawa. Philomel, 1999. [112p]
Reviewed from galleys

After the death of their mother, nine-year-old Olivia and five-year-old Nellie are
taken to live with their Great-Aunt Minty by their traveling salesman father. Olivia
has been taking close care of Nellie, who, bossy to begin with, has become increas-
ingly demanding. It is up to Olivia to educate Great-Aunt Minty about Nellie’s
rules for behavior, and Great-Aunt Minty, elderly but no slouch, catches onto the
dynamic between the two girls pretty quickly. Nellie clings to Olivia, tyrannically
proclaiming that they need no one else, just each other; it is only after Olivia reads
Nellie a story about a party of children turned into flowers in Great-Aunt Minty’s
garden that Nellie begins to take some interest in expanding their closed emo-
tional circle. Minty unobtrusively and compassionately unfolds the petals of the
girls’ grief, allowing the work of reclaiming the garden and the search for a
countercharm to release the flower children to work their magic on the two sisters.
Lisle’s finely balanced tale takes place in a neglected garden choked with weeds, a
place wherein the two sisters, no less caught in a spell than are the lost flower
children, find an outlet for their own wildly overgrown grief. The reality of the
girls’ own emergence and the magical possibility of freeing the enspelled flower
children combine into a delicate blend of realism and fantasy that will charm read-
ners. JMD

Lunge-Larsen, Lise, ad. *The Legend of the Lady Slipper: An Ojibwe Tale*; ad. by
Lise Lunge-Larsen and Margi Preus; illus. by Andrea Arroyo. Houghton,
1999. 32p
ISBN 0-395-90512-5 $15.00

During a winter blizzard, an Ojibwe girl risks her life to find the herbs that will
save the lives of her sick family and neighbors. Her courage, wits, and determina-
tion bring success and, in the spring, “ma-ki-sin waa-big-waan” (lady slippers),
grow in the footsteps of her treacherous journey. This *pourquoi* tale smoothly
integrates Ojibwe words and phrases into an accessible narrative that draws its
metaphors from the natural world and uses strong action verbs to maintain inter-
"Falling snow stung her face. 'Mash-ka-wi-zin,' it hissed, 'Be strong.' The girl bent her head and stalked like a bear into the storm." Watercolor illustrations in complementary reds and oranges, blues and greens, and a subdued palette suggestive of winter, fill a mix of double- and single-page spreads. Curving lines give a sense of movement, and subtle patterning adds texture, but excessively stylized dot-eyed human and animal figures are more toylike than expressive. Strong contrasts and shading are minimized, which gives the oversimplified illustrations an uninteresting flatness. Ojibwe motifs and cultural artifacts (wigwams, clothing, baskets, etc.) are shown throughout. A courageous heroine, regional interest, and Native American lore may give this a place in elementary school curricula. Source notes list thirteen separate titles covering the Ojibwe, Native American plant lore, or wildflowers, including the three sources which form the basis for this adaptation. A prominent foreword identifies the lady slipper, its habitat, and growing pattern. JNH

McMahon, Patricia  One Belfast Boy; illus. with photographs by Alan O'Connor. Houghton, 1999 54p ISBN 0-395-68620-2 $16.00  R Gr. 4-7

Don't knock on this door expecting an optimistic account of innocent children struggling for peace in a tragic arena of adult politics. McMahon's photodocumentary, which follows a boy around his walled Catholic neighborhood, Turf Lodge, in Ulster, exposes instead the entrenched mistrust and the cyclic violence and vengeance that touch nearly every aspect of eleven-year-old Liam Leathem's life. The opening chapter sets the current configuration of Northern Ireland into historic perspective; the focus then shifts to Liam's daily rounds of school and his passionate hobby, boxing. Although Liam takes no active part in the street warfare between Catholics and Protestants, reminders of confrontation envelop him, from the political song "What about Ulster? What about Sinn Fein?" now taken up by children as a street chant, to his friends' fascination with an "accident" between an IRA black cab and a joy rider (which, they casually predict, will undoubtedly bring about a counterattack), to his own chilling poetry submission for school: "I am a tank. I have a machine gun./ Bang bang bang. I kill a wee nun." He trains hard in the boxing ring, setting his sights on a city meet that takes him beyond the walls of Turf Lodge. There he does his best and is confident he has won, only to hear the decision fall to his opponent: "Did I lose because I'm from Turf Lodge? . . . Liam's anger begins to grow." Plentiful color photos present an unglamorized view of Liam's milieu, although most are too small for the kind of group sharing which the text seems to command. Powerful and provocative—let the questions fly. EB


It's been a decade since the famous oil spill, and the world's attention has generally moved on to newer disasters. Markle starts with a brief overview of the accident and its ensuing cleanup attempts, addressing not only environmental effects ("The oil killed the unborn baby salmon, greatly reducing the population of future pink salmon") but also effects on the area economy ("A number of people in fish pro-
cessing plans moved away and took other jobs”) and even on the neighboring town (“It was a boost to the economy to have so many people in Valdez, but it was also hard for such a small town to support so many people”). While there are useful bits of information both about recovery and problems with same, the text sometimes confuses or provokes questions that it doesn’t answer (How can Prince William Sound be “once again a good place for eagles to fish” if the fish are as damaged as the book suggests? Is every tanker now escorted by a SERVS vessel? What kind of cleanup efforts are still in place?). Photographs vary in effectiveness, and greater assistance in contrasting oil damage with healthy land and animals (whether it be with paired images or explanations of a picture’s features) would have been helpful. Still, this is a useful reminder that it ain’t over just because the fanfare’s moved on, and readers will leave the book with a greater understanding of the different kinds of impact such an event can have. A combined glossary/index is included. DS


Airlifted out of the Australian war zone to a safe haven in New Zealand, Ellie and her four remaining mates (from *Tomorrow, When the War Began*, BCCB 4/95, et al.) have just spent five months recovering from their harrowing, heroic sorties as amateur guerrilla fighters. However, occupying forces are now firmly entrenched in the Wirrawee area, and only guides intimately familiar with the region stand any chance of leading a troop of Kiwi saboteurs through the bush to the new enemy airstrip. Physically weak and emotionally drained, the Aussie teens reluctantly agree to accompany the mission, with the barely expressed hope of finding their families again. Often horrified by their own proven capacity for violence, the teens now tend to hesitate at the brink of action, making costly mistakes that result in two abortive sabotage attempts and possibly in the disappearance of the Kiwi soldiers. Although this volume delivers the same edge-of-the-seat action of the previous titles (notably, a break-neck bareback ride through enemy fire and a raging brush fire set to drive off approaching soldiers), the failures and self-doubt that dog the teens through *Darkness* now compel readers to reflect on the limitations of emotional endurance and the price of loyalty. The conclusion finds the friends stranded once again in the outback region they’ve dubbed Hell, and it’s clear this war is far from over. Thank goodness. EB

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-205172-5 $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-205171-7 $15.95 R Gr. 3-5

In this previously unpublished story by the late great James Marshall, a hungry wolf looking for a meal stumbles onto the Bolshoi Ballet’s production of *Swine Lake* (“Leaping, swirling, bowing, juicy pigs”) and considers this an opportunity for prime pickings. Though initially slavering over the porky dancers, the wolf gets caught up in the story, becoming so besotted with the ballet that he returns the next night and leaps in at the strategic moment to play the role of the horrible monster. Though the ending is quite abrupt (the wolf receives fine reviews and dances with pleasure), it’s refreshing to see not just a twist on the folkloric wolf-pig relationship but a genuinely new and imaginative direction, and Marshall’s text
has some savory bits that young readers will find tasty. While the illustrations aren’t Sendak’s most luminous (the compositions more often seem crowded than replete, and there are some continuity problems in the colors, as in the blue of the wolf’s coat), his love of stage design results in a delightful production of Swine Lake; diverting details abound, especially in placards and signs (“Pigs do fly!” the New York Times raves about the ballet) but also in well-dressed porkers and the operatic, stage-struck wolf. Kids looking for an offbeat theatrical story will want to poke their snouts into this. DS

MASUREL, CLAIRE  
Too Big!; illus. by Hanako Wakiyama. Chronicle, 1999  36p  
ISBN 0-8118-2090-4  $13.95  
R 3-5 yrs

At a carnival with his father, Charlie wins a stuffed dinosaur at the ball-pitch booth. Big Tex the dinosaur (who looks a lot like the Flintstones’ Dino, only with blue and white stripes) is five times Charlie’s size, but Charlie doesn’t mind, although everyone else has reservations. Declaring Big Tex TOO BIG for outings to the park, grocery store, baseball game, and circus, Charlie’s caregivers convince him to take along one of his other, smaller stuffed toys (all of whom are pleased to go). But when Charlie has to go the doctor’s office, it’s Big Tex who bravely stands forth while the other toys hide in drawers, behind the bed, and in back of the curtains. In Masurel’s small drama, Charlie’s stuffed toy friends are comforting alive (as every young child knows, of course) and act their parts with unsentimental efficiency. Wakiyama’s oil illustrations play against their medium with a palette of light, airy colors that suit the realistic magic of this domestic fantasy. Charlie’s delight in winning the huge dinosaur is evident in his expression and body language, as is the adults’ chagrin when they view the huge toy. Big Tex’s benevolent worthiness is never in doubt, however, and young listeners will happily recognize that justice is served in the final illustration, when a boy and his dinosaur go to the movies. JMD

MORPURGO, MICHAEL  
Joan of Arc of Domrémy; illus. by Michael Foreman. Harcourt, 1999  [122p]  

Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 6-9

There’s something millennial about the Maid of Orléans, which is perhaps why we’re getting a spate of books about her these days (Diane Stanley’s Joan of Arc and Josephine Poole’s Joan of Arc, both BCCB 9/98) as well as several movies. As in Morpurgo’s earlier books on legendary figures (Robin of Sherwood, BCCB 1/97, etc.), he provides a contemporary frame, here a modern girl devoted to Joan of Arc, living in Orléans, and bitterly disappointed when another girl is chosen to impersonate Joan in a ceremonial procession. Joan’s story then unfolds, focusing on the little white sparrow she cherishes as mascot, but otherwise fairly orthodox in following her rise from obscurity, her military triumphs, and her eventual martyrdom. Morpurgo draws on historical sources and packs a fair amount of detail into his account, which is inherently dramatic. However, he relies extensively on dialogue for exposition, which stagnates things considerably, especially at the start of Joan’s story when she explains herself to her bird in large chunks of soliloquy; combined with the extraneous framework, the effect is enervation of the story and, particularly at the slow beginning, a distancing of the events. Foreman’s watercolors emphasize the pageantry of Joan’s exploits; his fondness for blue and red, pre-
sumably to suggest the French flag, often suggests a carousel as well with all of the art’s snorting caparisoned steeds of medieval warfare. This doesn’t have the creative imagination of Barbara Dana’s Young Joan (BCCB 4/91), but readers looking to expand the story from Stanley’s biography may wish to ride alongside. DS

PALADINO, CATHERINE One Good Apple: Growing Our Food for the Sake of the Earth. Houghton, 1999 48p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-395-85009-6 $15.00 R Gr. 4-7

Starting with the history of pesticides in the U.S. and Rachel Carson’s famous opening salvo in the war against them, this title then focuses largely on recent issues in food and agricultural safety, documenting important developments such as the Kids Committee that “concluded that the legal limits on pesticide residues did not guarantee protection for children.” The book goes on to describe alternative techniques of farming (such as encouraging pest-eating insects) and distribution (such as community supported agricultural organizations that eliminate the need for crops to survive hard travel). Paladino’s clear partisanship occasionally results in some overly sweeping statements (“Organic farming is our best hope for growing food in a way that does not harm the earth or ourselves”), and the book is relatively quiet on the important connection between consumer expectation and agricultural practice, but ultimately this is an effective combination of analysis and advocacy. Specific examples help flesh out many larger points, whether it be pesticidal effects on birds or the challenges of farming sans chemicals. A lavish collection of photographs brings not only food but pests, pest eaters, and farms themselves into colorful reality; a detailed list of suggested activities/gardening sources, a substantial bibliography including both technical and lay publications, and an index are included. DS

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-88914-5 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

Ten-year-old Keladry of Mindelan wants to be a page (in preparation for becoming a knight) and, according to a ten-year-old yet-to-be-tested royal proclamation, she has that right. Despite the doubts of the royal training master and his public dislike of female warriors, Keladry is given one year’s probation to prove herself. She endures hazing by the older boys, unfair treatment by teachers and trainers, homesickness, and doubt but in the process makes friends and proves her worth to her male counterparts. While this opening title for a new series stands firmly on its own, those readers familiar with the Song of the Lioness Quartet (Lioness Rampant, BCCB 2/89, etc.) will recognize some recurring characters. Pierce spins a whopping good yarn, her plot balanced on a solid base of action and characterization. Keladry is a promising continuing character—a girl and proud of it, she has no desire to disguise herself as a boy or to pretend to be one; she believes in and acts on the ideals of chivalry all knights are supposed to hold sacred, and, although she has a strong sense of justice that is ultimately educational to those around her, she manages not to be a pompous prig. Readers with a soft spot for heroines the like of Menolly from McCaffrey’s Dragonsong trilogy will warm to Keladry and, while waiting for the sequels, may be inspired to seek out other of Pierce’s notable heroines. JMD

Shades of “The Old Lady and Her Pig”! The little gray donkey wants to go to bed, but he can’t because Pig’s in his bed. Pig is in Donkey’s bed because Dog is in *his* bed; Dog is in Pig’s bed because Hen is in Dog’s bed; and Mouse is in Hen’s bed and Beetle is in Mouse’s hole, all because Donkey stepped on Beetle’s burrow. Beetle digs a new burrow after Donkey promises to be more careful, and all the animals happily go to their rightful abodes. This simple cumulative tale has multitudinous opportunities for participation—individual listeners will want to lift the sturdy recto flaps that reveal the displaced animals, and group listeners will join in with vociferous oinks, brays, clucks, and squeaks, as required. Saunders’ compositions are balanced to the front, that is, the animal characters take up most of the foreground, which makes this a handy title for group viewing. Scratchboard-style hatching adds depth and interest, and the animal characters have semi-realistic but expressive demeanors. Ham it up for storytime, and find out where your toddlers like to nap. JMD


The ever-so-knowledgeable Ms. Splinter takes her second graders to the circus, making the trip an educational opportunity by discoursing on the origins of the elephant, the habits of the llama, the etymology of the word “clown,” the mechanism of the trapeze, and so on. Contrasting with the informative lectures, however, are the exploits of Emeline, who wanders away from the group and gets shanghaied, via the trunk of an inquisitive elephant, into the circus. Emeline tumbles with the clowns, gallops along with the equestriennes, escapes doom in the hippo’s jaws when the strongman snatches her up, engages the tiger in a snarl-off, and swings on the trapeze until it lands her back amid her classmates. The layout achieves a tightrope walker’s balance, setting the tightly controlled circle containing a book-wielding Ms. Splinter and her obedient pupils (in changing colors from page to page) against a white background with festive dividing borders, while three-quarter spreads display the full pageantry of the circus. And pageantry it is, with a riot of saturated colors punched up with sharp black lines in a manner reminiscent of Raoul Dufy as well as Ludwig Bemelmans, whose Madeline seems to be happy kin to Priceman’s Emeline; the three-ring effect here, however, is all its own, with continuous action in the foreground and background as well as the sideshow of Ms. Splinter’s lectures. Having cleverly found its way around the plot problem of most circus picture books, this title offers a rollicking production suitable for airing under any Big Top. DS


In an inversion of “The Ugly Duckling,” a goose with the parenting instinct begs his chicken acquaintances for an egg to hatch but suffers disappointment until the farm dog brings him a huge dug-up egg. Mr. Goose patiently sits on the egg and
receives his reward when "wonderful green goose"—a dragon—emerges from the shell. Mr. Goose and his baby are happy together until farmyard bullies taunt the odd gooselet with his adopted status; after a search for his real mother, who would look just like him, the baby comes back to Mr. Goose ("I'm not your mother, I'm your father") and the familial love that defines parenthood. While the messages aren't entirely consistent (if a dragon can be a goose why can't Mr. Goose be mother as well as father?), this is an entertaining twist on the Andersen tale and the story of belonging is tenderly related. Marks' line and watercolor art employs soft squiggly charcoal and cloudy splotches of color, keeping things gentle while still making the little green goose a charming and scaly individual who towers over his avian daddy. Though a bit programmatic, this will pair well with picture books about that other misplaced waterfowl (such as Pinkney's *The Ugly Duckling*, BCCB 3/99); kids will enjoy the contrast and, of course, the dragon. DS

SEULING, BARBARA  *Oh No, It's Robert*; illus. by Paul Brewer. Front Street/Cricket, 1999  [128p]
ISBN 0-8126-2934-5  $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 2-4

Robert Dorfman is stressed: he hates math, his homework needs to be neater, and he thinks his best friend Paul might be the Scribbler, the person who's defacing their classroom library books with magic markers. Trying for some stress-free recognition, Robert becomes a "Super Helper," assisting the art teacher, carrying instrument stands for the music teacher, and becoming classroom library monitor. Seuling writes about primary-school crises with an easygoing humor and in a conversational style that readers just tackling chapter books will find both amusing and encouraging. Robert's classroom worries aren't the stuff great tragedy (or even bad melodrama) is made of, but his successful completion of the school year has a reassuring ring that grade-schoolers will appreciate. Black and white full-page drawings and spot art feature a homogenous but expressive cast of cartoony characters that will help new readers feel secure with this foray into longer chapter books. Seuling has a light hand with her messages (try hard, play nice, be responsible) and they never get in the way of the reader's enjoyment of the ambitious but thoughtful Robert and his satisfying success story. JMD

SHIPTON, JONATHAN  *What If*; illus. by Barbara Nascimbeni. Dial, 1999  [26p]
Reviewed from galleys  R  3-5 yrs

A little boy gazing out his window on a rainy day lets his imagination wander through a series of adventures that a break in the weather could bring: "What if it stopped raining and you went outside, and down at the end of the garden you found... a sunflower as tall as a skyscraper!" Atop the sunflower could be a new friend who teaches you to tumble in the clouds and shows you exactly where the storms begin. You could dry your soaking clothes over a desert, dripping on the camels, until your cloud melts and you scoot back to the sunflower and bravely make the "best jump you've ever done." And at the bottom of the sunflower you could discover a secret door that leads to an underground staircase... Such bold speculation demands an equally bold visual realization, which Nascimbeni ably supplies in her rich-hued, thickly outlined acrylic and collage illustrations. With wide-set eyes, a broad belly, and a shock of red hair, the narrator investigates the
world from many angles—marveling at a towering sunflower from the tipsy lawn, pondering the rooftops from a leafy perch, contemplating the sea while sandwiched between storm clouds and at nose level with a lightning bolt. The open red door that leads straight down into the grassy hill should tantalize viewers with the promise of further mysteries, and in case it's just a little too scary down those stairs, Nascimbeni has comfortably provided the soft glow of yellow light and a door handle for quick egress. EB

SLEATOR, WILLIAM Rewind. Dutton, 1999 [128p]
Reviewed from galleys

Deeply hurt and angered by his parents' seeming insensitivity, Peter runs out into the street and is killed by an oncoming car. That's just the start of his story. A voice informs him he has another chance to begin his life again at any point he chooses and to make any changes he feels will lead him away from the fatal accident. After a couple of false starts that result in repeated deaths, Peter finally realizes that his ever-sulky, retiring attitude around his parents may have as much to do with his fated demise as more obvious problems—his parents' announcement that he is an adopted child, and their disinterest in his artistic talents—and finds the way to outwit karma. Sleator creates in eleven-year-old Peter a protagonist to attract the sympathies of a younger audience than his usual middle school coterie, with fantasy plotting accessible to readers new to the genre. The multiple lives premise is far more beguiling, though, than its clunky execution with forced dialogues and a cast of one-dimensional, preposterously gullible characters. This may not be sci-fi at its finest, but children not quite ready for The X-Files can find a few age-appropriate thrills here. EB

SONENKLIAR, CAROL My Own Worst Enemy. Holiday House, 1999 151p
ISBN 0-8234-1456-6 $15.95

Eve is starting at a new school in the middle of eighth grade. Her father thinks Eve should "turn over a new leaf" and make a "fresh start"; Eve, charged by her mother to help her laid-off father rebuild his self-esteem, determines to cooperate. She dresses like a "normal girl" and manages to make friends with the popular girls in her class, essentially reinventing her smartmouthed sweatshirt-and-jeans self. The cost proves too high, however, when Eve realizes that, in order to be the kind of daughter she thinks her parents want, it means she has to lie, cheat, and deny her "self" in ever more damaging ways. Eve's travails at home and at school are punctuated by "vents" in her notebook (à la Harriet the Spy)—she vents all her frustration, anger, and confusion at the multiple roles she's supposed to play and the manner in which she is supposed to play them, and she does so with flashes of real wit and humor (the piece entitled "You Are What You Wear. Not" is particularly cutting). Eve's first-person narration has a veneer of exasperation that occasionally wears thin enough for readers to see her real dilemma and to sympathize with her difficulties, even as they recognize that the cumulative effect of Eve's mountain of lies is the inexorable movement from the peaks of popularity to the valley of the weird (which, in this case, is a good thing). Eve is sometimes a little too self-aware, and the pace flags occasionally while she comments acerbically but extensively on her environment. Still, this is a humorous story with wit, pathos, and heart, making it a discussion-starter for both genders. JMD
Stevens, Janet  *Cook-a-Doodle-Doo!*; written by Janet Stevens and Susan Stevens Crummel; illus. by Janet Stevens. Harcourt, 1999  48p  ISBN 0-15-201924-3  $17.00  R  7-10 yrs

Like most technical manuals, cookbooks are terrific at instructing people who already know what they're doing and arcane as all get-out when it comes to explaining things to complete novices. Stevens entertainingly attempts some mediation here with the story of Big Brown Rooster, a descendant of the Little Red Hen but blessed with more helpful friends than she was, who decides to make strawberry shortcake. As the main story details the labors of Rooster, Turtle, Iguana, and Pig, sidebars offer explanations of terms and procedures (“Always crack an egg into a small bowl before you add it to the other ingredients in case the egg is bad or shell pieces fall in”). The balance is quite effective: the Stevens sisters keep the narration funny and well-leavened, with recurring jokes about piggy Pig (whose expertise lies in tasting) and a slapstick disaster lying in wait when Iguana tips the completed shortcake onto the floor (don’t worry, they make more). The explanations are generally clear and specific (though there are no instructions provided for the often tricky horizontal slicing of the cake), avoiding descent into the over-technical and keeping a light touch throughout. Fibrous beige paper provides a homey background for the mixed-media depictions of the critters’ culinary efforts, and the goofily amiable expressions and thematically appropriate adornments (Turtle wears a saucepan on his head and Iguana an oven mitt) makes the cast endearingly comic; process is discernible but less prominent in the illustrations, and kids may be thrown by the backwards-calibrated oven-temperature knob. Overall, it’s a tasty and joyous romp that comes a lot closer to culinary realism (despite the over-optimistic promise in the narrative’s assessment that the result “looked just like the picture of the strawberry shortcake in the cookbook”) than most cookbooks for this age group and promises messy kitchen fun. *Bon appétit!*  DS


Opening with a history of the longstanding view of wolves as stealers of children and killers of livestock, Swinburne discusses the battle of American cattle ranchers and dairy farmers to eliminate the wolf from the American Northwest. With the emergence of a new philosophy of environmental and ecological stewardship in the mid-twentieth century, however, a movement to return the wolf to its natural habitat began. Canadian wolves, tranquilized and transported to Yellowstone National Park, became the subjects of intensive study. The book relates discoveries regarding the wolf’s life cycle and habits and how they changed the image of the wolf from a vicious natural-born killer to a necessary element in a balanced wilderness. Brandenburg has already shown consummate skill in photographing these shy subjects (*To the Top of the World*, BCCB 11/93), and these crisp color photographs showing wolves in their natural environment are exceptional. Swinburne’s text adds suspense and excitement to the story of the wolves’ return, bringing home the personal commitment of the biologists who lobbied for the restoration of the wolf to Yellowstone. This is an involving study of an attempt to restore an altered ecosystem, an ongoing experiment the description of which makes fascinating reading. A map, list of sources (print and electronic), and an index are included.  JMD
Thesman, Jean  *The Tree of Bells.*  Houghton, 1999  232p  
ISBN 0-395-90510-9  $15.00  R  Gr. 5-9

Thesman follows the fortunes of the Devereaux women, introduced in  *The Ornament Tree* (BCCB 3/96), as they run their boarding house and pursue a host of social causes in 1920s Seattle. Bonnie makes a cameo appearance and then takes off for China as a medical missionary's assistant, leaving Clare at center stage. At sixteen and on the verge of graduation, Clare is both awed by and envious of Bonnie's single-minded pursuit of a medical career (and, if the truth be known, of her apparently devastating effect on the eligible bachelors in their circle of acquaintances). As Clare gradually comes to admit that her own interests take a domestic turn, she fears that her humbler aspirations will disappoint her activist elders. She does, however, share their passionate concern for the poor, and she becomes closely involved in the protection of an abused boy who takes refuge with them, only to return to his father. Thesman convincingly captures the attitudes of the reformer set as embodied in the Devereaux clan—compassionate, yet slightly patronizing of the settlement house clients they serve. Seeds of romance between Bonnie and handsome widower Reynolds and between Clare and gruff war veteran Younger now begin to bear fruit, and readers who have developed an affection for the Devereaux family and their boarders will hang their own wish on the bell tree for the saga to continue. EB

ISBN 1-902283-12-0  $15.95  R*  3-5 yrs

So, how many great big enormous turnips do you need on the library shelf? Make room for this one, because Niamh Sharkey's drolly comic illustrations are going to make this version the new storytime favorite. The retelling itself is a rollicking rendition of Tolstoy's original, with a rhythmic accumulation of helpful farm animals: "six yellow canaries, five white geese, four speckled hens, three black cats, two pot-bellied pigs, and one big brown cow," not to mention the helpful little mouse that finally gets that gorgeous but gigantic turnip out of the ground. Sharkey's illustrations depict a cheerfully crooked little house on a rolling green hill spotted with wildflowers and curling grassy fronds; the jolly participants in all this silliness have a lively demeanor stylistically depicted à la Lane Smith. Sharkey's visual style has a wholesome flair that makes these illustrations bounce with energy and cheer. The imaginative compositions pay little heed to natural law as characters defy gravity, careening off turnips and down hillsides with little more than laughter as a cushion against mishap. A fine combination of illustration and text, this turnip is going to be the new staple crop for the storytime crew. JMD

Tomey, Ingrid  *Nobody Else Has to Know.*  Delacorte, 1999  [224p]  
ISBN 0-385-32624-6  $15.95  Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 6-10

When his doting grandfather lets fifteen-year-old Webb take the wheel on the way home from school, their lives are forever changed: a distracted Webb crashes the car, injuring himself and his grandfather—and disabling for life a ten-year-old girl who had been riding her bicycle on the shoulder. Initially, concussion prevents Webb from remembering the accident, so he accepts his grandfather's lie about being the driver as the truth, as does everyone. Soon, though, memory of his own
culpability returns, and he must grapple with his conscience as he receives accolades as the injured track star hero and his adoring grandfather begs him to keep the secret. Tomey’s writing tends to be pedestrian, and Webb’s emotional quandary disappears for long stretches of time, which suggests that a hostile classmate’s unflattering assessment (“You don’t know the first thing about compassion. All you know is how to be cool, how to have a good time”) is more accurate than the book seems to realize. The author deepens the portrait effectively, however, by suggesting that Webb’s grandfather’s motivations for his sacrifice aren’t as simple as they appear and by noting that Webb’s coming clean really isn’t going to get his grandfather, who was the responsible adult, off the hook. Ultimately, this is an accessible narrative that, despite some flagging moments, may involve readers in its ethical drama. DS

TURNER, ANN  Red Flower Goes West; illus. by Dennis Nolan. Hyperion, 1999 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2253-8 $15.49

“Clem, you can ask me to leave my home and friends, but this flower came from Mother’s garden. Where I go, this flower goes too.” Only under that condition will the narrator’s mother agree to drag her family across the continent to the California gold fields. During the long journey to follow (which seems, rather improbably, to be made without guide or fellow travelers), their scraggly geranium Red Flower gradually assumes the status of a good-luck talisman; they anxiously monitor its condition, certain that if the flower can make it past swollen rivers and through blazing deserts and over jagged mountains, they will too. As Ma tamps its resilient roots into California soil, she concludes hopefully, “Red Flower will grow new leaves and buds. And so will we, so will we.” Turner’s all-too-brief poetic journey West lacks the emotional development of her previous offering, Mississippi Mud (BCCB 6/97), or any hint of the strain of resettlement movingly detailed in Eve Bunting’s Dandelions (BCCB 9/95). However, Nolan’s illustrations, softly mottled in blue-greens and grays and sparsely brightened with splashes of red geranium blossom, effectively suggest the vastness of the land they traverse; black-eyed oxen steal the show, establishing a visceral connection with the viewer as they stare defiantly off the page. EB

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028367-X $14.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-6

Guy is convinced that he and weird Bob-o, born on the same day in the same hospital, were switched at birth because weird Bob-o’s parents are so normal and Guy’s are so, well, weird (his mother dresses in day-glo spandex pants and lucite shoes, and his father’s favorite party trick is snorting an oyster up his nose and having it come out his mouth). With the aid of Guy’s best friend, Buzz, Guy and Bob-o switch places for the weekend in order to break the news to their respective parents, but Guy discovers that quiet and normal may not be all it’s cracked up to be. Dialogue-driven and fast-paced, this title is more slick than substantive, and it reads more like the script for a movie of the week than a novel. The humor is solid if slapstick, however, and the underlying message is painless. In a sitcom-worthy
Conclusion Guy's true parental heritage is finally revealed, he learns to appreciate his weird folks, and even Bob-o gets a chance at redemption. Funny, fast, and facile, this is an easy booktalk and a good response to the question, "Got anything that'll make me laugh?" JMD


According to the author's note, this unusual picture book is based on The Promised Land (1912), a memoir by Mary (born Masha) Antin, who emigrated from Russia to America in 1894 at age twelve. Brief quotations from Antin's account of her life accompany each page of Wells' "shortened and simplified" first-person narration, which details the oppression of Jews in Russia, where "our fathers were told what kind of work they could do," "our brothers were stolen by the Czar's army when they were still little boys," "only short-nosed Jewish boys could attend school," and "Jewish girls are not allowed" to attend school at all. Once Masha gets to America, the narration focuses in a conventional way on the educational opportunities she found there. Wells also transmits what was presumably Antin's unquestioning acceptance of the need for assimilation when her first-person narrator tells us without comment that "my name was changed to an American name, Mary, so that I would fit in with everyone else." However, the story does not gloss over the squalor of the Antins' Boston home, where she has to beware of the "thieves and dope addicts" in the alleys. The interesting textures and perspectives of the warm, realistic full-page oil paintings facing each page of text evoke the old and the new country with appropriate nostalgia but without clichés. Illustrations in the sections of the book set in Russia emphasize the closeness of Masha and her father while Mary's growing independence is emphasized in the latter section. Paintings and a map of their journey by land and by sea provide a transition between these sections and visually convey the vastness of the distance from Russia to America.

FK

WILLARD, NANCY  The Tale I Told Sasha; illus. by David Christiana. Little, 1999 32p ISBN 0-316-94115-8 $15.95 R Gr. 3-6

A poetic evocation of a land where all things lost are found, this versification has an Alice in Wonderland quality that serves it well. Willard's rhythmic stanzas follow a little girl as she steps through a shadowy door to follow her lost yellow ball, chasing it "through painted trees" and across "the Bridge of Butterflies" until the King of Keys returns it to her. While the narrative line is occasionally obscure, the understanding that imaginary journeys are sometimes the most rewarding is easily grasped. Christiana's watercolors have a romantic, moody quality that reflects and expands the text, the compositions somewhat reminiscent of Marvin Bileck's illustrations for Rain Makes Applesauce in their fluid, circular complexity. Everything possesses anima in this poetic imaginary world: the clock has a human face, Gammelkesque trees twist to the sky, a shimmering web declares its mission ("'I gather cows and coins,' it sang, 'and travelers from the western shore'"). Perspectives are askew, and gravity has no meaning as strangely hatted characters and oddly distorted objects float through the pages. Willard's language is lyrical and intriguing, and the concluding stanza ("A hundred pencils, swift as rain, writing..."
on sheets of beaten gold/ would not be quick enough to hold/ the strange adventures/ shadows hide") is the perfect lead-in to a group activity. Use this with a creative writing class and see if they can take you on some imaginary journeys of their own. JMD

WITTTLINGER, ELLEN  *Hard Love.* Simon, 1999  227p
ISBN 0-689-82134-4  $16.95  R  Gr. 9-12

Sixteen-year-old John Galardi has just produced the first issue of his zine, "Bananafish," inspired by a zine called "Escape Velocity" written by Marisol, a self-described "Puerto Rican Cuban Yankee Cambridge, Massachusetts, rich spoiled lesbian private-school gifted-and-talented writer virgin looking for love." John hies himself to Boston to drop off the issue with the ulterior motive of meeting Marisol, whose zine and writing intrigues him. The two meet and become writing buddies, John finally making a connection that brings him out of the emotional isolation he embraced when his parents divorced. Despite his best intentions and despite Marisol's obvious lack of romantic interest, as their friendship progresses John falls hard. Marisol has the almost impossible task of letting John down easy while taking advantage of her own escape velocity by going to New York with some new friends before she leaves for college. Characterization is strong throughout; Marisol and John are complex and fully dimensional, while peripheral characters (parents, possible stepfather, friends) are more vignettish than stereotypical. John's first-person narration reflects a sensitive personality with a tough, judgmental veneer; the prickly Marisol's catalytic breach of his emotional walls is accomplished with rhetorical retreats and skirmishes of snappy dialogue. The format of the book is laid out like zines, with a cut-and-paste, photocopied look that increases the verisimilitude of the action. Wittlinger doesn't go for the sappy wrap-up: Marisol does leave, John's self-absorbed, irresponsible father stays that way, and John himself still has a long way to go, but readers will close this book convinced that, by the end, John is at least facing the right direction. JMD

WOOD, TED  *Ghosts of the West Coast: The Lost Souls of the Queen Mary and Other Real-Life Hauntings;* written and illus. with photographs by Ted Wood. Walker, 1999  48p (Haunted America)
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8669-3  $17.85  Ad  Gr. 4-7
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8668-5  $16.95

In this entry in the Haunted America series, Wood examines locales such as the Winchester Mystery House, the Hotel del Coronado, and the Queen Mary, reporting with a happy taste for the uncanny and with blissful credulity all the creepy stories connected with said structures. The book is more interested in effect than fact, as there's never any research outside of hearsay on the ghosts' history, and the stories often peter out quickly rather than developing atmospheric sweep or real chills. The reading is easy and benign, however (as, generally, are the ghosts, who restrict themselves to frightening people at worst and at best tidy and perfume their romantic abodes), and the topic is of perennial appeal. The photographs pull out all the stops, with the already picturesque locations enhanced by dramatic lighting as well as the series' trademark ghost presences, who shimmer obligingly at windows or flutter down corridors. The layout gets a bit busy with the borders, photo-captions, scrawled title fonts, and faux-aged paper, but it's nonetheless a scenic thematic tour of the coast (including helpful maps in case readers want to
search the specters out for themselves). Especially for reluctant readers looking to expand from or prepare for Daniel Cohen, this offers cinematic charms with an attractive if wishful veneer of fact. DS

XUAN, YONG-SHENG *The Dragon Lover and Other Chinese Proverbs*; written and illus. by Yong-Sheng Xuan. Shen's, 1999 32p ISBN 1-885008-11-2 $16.95 Ad 7-10 yrs

An English-language text accompanied by Chinese calligraphy retells five brief fable-like narratives. Lively writing and proverbial messages unfamiliar to Western readers may engage browsers. At times, however, the text is overwritten: "Basking beside its seaside friends on the smooth, glistening sand, the clam quickly opened its shell to take in the sun and fresh sea air." The moral of each story appears in the closing line, but in "The Dragon Lover" the meaning stays obscure. Single-page spreads featuring elaborate papercuts, framed by calligraphy and icons, illustrate each story. Each tale is matched with a different cutting style, the papercuts set against warm, multicolored blocks, textured paper, or a neutral background. While the layout is crowded and the presentations uneven, the craft itself is still essentially intriguing. The images in the opening tale, "The Lazy Farmer," reflect a modernist aesthetic: sharp lines, minimal texture, and blocky compositions. The traditional sharp-patterned cuttings of "The Musician and the Water Buffalo" in black paper give way to the unconnected, vibrant, watercolored papercuts of "The Crane and the Clam," where a rainbow-tinted crane and multicolored sea creatures are set against white paper, textured like a wave-washed beach. Source notes are minimal but helpful to interested readers. Use with Carmen Lomas Garza's *Magic Windows/Ventanas mágicas* (BCCB 5/99). JNH
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.

- Acting—fiction: Conford
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- Agriculture—stories: Tolstoy
- Alaska: Markle
- ALPHABET BOOKS: Cahoon
- American Indians: Left Hand Bull
- American Indians—fiction: Erdrich
- American Indians—stories: Lunge-Larsen
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- Archaeology: Dingus
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- **Arts and crafts**: Charlip
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- Babies—stories: Lawrence, M.
- Ballet—fiction: Marshall
- Baseball—fiction: Johnson
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  - Cretzmeyer; Left Hand Bull;
  - Lewin; Morpurgo; Wells
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- Birds—fiction: Hill
- Blacks—fiction: Bell
- Brothers and sisters—fiction: Barrett
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  - Priceman
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  - Cahoon
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- COUNTING BOOKS: Beaton
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- Dancers and dancing: Left Hand Bull
- Dancers and dancing—fiction: Marshall
- Death and dying—fiction: Brisson;
  - Sleator
- Dinosaurs: Dingus
- Dinosaurs—stories: Masurel
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  - Johnson; Levitin; Lindquist;
  - McMahon; Thesman; Tomey
- FANTASY: Le Guin; Levitin;
  - Lisle; Pierce; Sleator; Willard
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- Fathers and sons—fiction: Hänel;
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