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* Asterisks denote books of special distinction.

R Recommended.

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

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

NR Not recommended.

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

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

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The Big Picture

Through My Eyes
by Ruby Bridges

The importance of viewpoint to history is a well-acknowledged fact these days. Books such as Jim Murphy's *The Great Fire* (BCCB 5/95) address the issue directly by examining different, sometimes conflicting views, leaving us wiser about how history is made, and recorded, and remembered. *Through My Eyes* takes a historic event that we've seen from the outside and shows us the inside, allowing Ruby Bridges, who was the cynosure of media eyes at six years old when she integrated a New Orleans grade school in 1960, to tell her own story from an adult perspective.

We saw this story a few years ago in Robert Coles' picture book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (BCCB 3/95), but this approach is deeper and richer without being remotely abstruse or forbidding. The style is simple and matter-of-fact, and it's astonishingly successful in bringing the first-grader's historic experience to life and rescuing it from becoming purely a symbol fraught with more meaning than reality. The author's unique perspective allows her to expand and complicate the chronicle with details, such as the fact that representatives from the NAACP "pressured my parents," that the gathering of policemen and protesters gave an air of importance to the school that made her think that she was going to college, that her adoration for her white Bostonian teacher left her with a Northern accent, that when a white boy refused to play with her because of his mother's proscription, she understood ("I would have done the same thing. If my mama told me not to do something, I didn't do it").

The book doesn't stop at the famous photographs (which will be unfamiliar to many young readers anyway) but also gives readers a picture of what it was like to move from being the target of frenzied anger outside the school to being the cherished single student of a dedicated teacher once over the threshold. Bridges' restrained narration of her experience undercuts all the romanticization: eschewing any tendency to make herself heroic, she instead makes it clear that she acted as a dutiful child and bright student with little awareness of larger political implications (she recalls skipping rope to anti-integration chants, completely oblivious to their meaning). The book also fills in the chronicle with context of which Ruby was unaware at the time: the legal and social underpinnings of this dramatic moment (a timeline is included), the toll this action took on her family, the battle fought by the few white parents who kept their children in the integrated schools, and the celebrity attention from people such as John Steinbeck and Norman Rockwell.

Each spread sports a thematic title and provides relevant quotes (from other people involved as well as from news accounts) and photographs, which feature the events and principal players in rich brown tones that add a period
flavor as well as contributing to the smooth integrity of the pages’ appearance. The images remain memorable, and the book uses them to great impact with photographs on every page. Readers will get a first-hand look at both the jeering crowds and the bandbox-neat Ruby in her white knee socks and tidy Mary Janes towered over by somber men in dark suits.

It often seems like a sound-bite, flash-in-the-pan, fifteen-minutes-of-fame world these days; kids might be forgiven for believing that, in some ironic reversal of the secret life of animated toys, spotlighted people only have lives while one looks at them, and their existences freeze the moment the camera turns away. One of the most compelling aspects of this book is its clear demonstration that this event was part of a larger history that is one individual’s life. Dignified, devout, and decorous—but never stiff—Bridges tells of her life beyond that historic moment, discussing how she was and wasn’t changed, how she since then has rejoiced in triumphs (a happy marriage and four children) and suffered sadnesses (the divorce of her parents not long after—and a probable consequence of—her groundbreaking school attendance; the death of her younger brother). The effect is to weave a dramatic episode into a larger current of history, much of it privately experienced (Bridges remarks that the distancing of time meant she didn’t recognize herself in documentary film footage of the event) but all of it valid, worthy, and significant. No tired “Whatever happened to . . .” title, this is a compelling look at history as a living thing, focusing on one memorable individual unknowingly caught momentarily in the historical spotlight. (Imprint information appears on p. 167.)

Deborah Stevenson, Associate Editor

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE


Youngest son Koi, away hunting when his father dies, inherits only one “scraggly little kola tree.” Deciding that “what sitting won’t solve, travel will,” Koi resolves to see the world; he picks his kola nuts, loads them on his back, and sets out. He meets a snake, a column of ants, and a crocodile, all of which he rescues from peril with the help of his kola nuts. Upon arrival at a distant village, Koi completes three tasks (with the help of the snake, ants, and crocodile) and wins the chief’s
daughter in marriage and half the chiefdom. Aardema’s crisp retelling of this Liberian folktale is given additional humor by Cepeda’s jauntily irreverent illustrations. Oil paintings with backdrops of lime, apricot, and grape give a feeling of spacious plains and skies, and Koi himself is depicted as a gallant, scrappy hero. The palette is warm without being hot, and the paintings are uncluttered. Varying perspectives give the horizontal (for the most part) compositions a sense of movement that parallels the momentum of the tale towards its satisfying conclusion. Detailed source notes are included. JMD

**ALMOND, DAVID** *Kit’s Wilderness*. Delacorte, 2000 [240p] ISBN 0-385-32665-3 $15.95 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

Upon the death of Kit’s grandmother, the family returns to care for Grandpa in the town where generations of their ancestors had worked the coal mines. Here Kit meets the dark-spirited John Askew and several of his friends—all descendants of mining families—and becomes involved in their game called Death, which they play in one of the abandoned mine shafts. It soon becomes clear that Kit and Askew share the same troubling gift—the ability to see ghosts of children killed in mining disasters; Grandpa sees them, too, and his increasingly frequent periods of mental isolation (going “off with the fairies,” as he terms it) reflects Kit’s increasingly dangerous flirtation with the ghosts. On the way to the inevitable showdown between Kit and Askew deep within the collapsing tunnels, the pace slows under the burden of subplots. There’s Grandpa’s mental lapses, Askew’s alcoholic father, a classmate’s role in a school production of “The Snow Queen,” and convoluted themes concerning a story Kit is writing (fictional) about a prehistoric family (their ghosts, it turns out, actually prowl the mines) whose experiences parallel the Askews’. Almond does, however, have the knack for infecting his audience with a powerful case of the creeps, and readers who wade through the tangle of tangentials will be rewarded with a satisfactory number of shudders. EB

**BACHO, PETER** *Boxing in Black and White*. Holt, 1999 122p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-8050-5779-X $18.95 R Gr. 6-10

The history of boxing in the United States and the economic opportunity the boxing ring offered to minority males is succinctly presented in this absorbing title. The opening chapter discusses the life and career of Filipino boxer Sammy Santos, who insisted on fighting even when it meant losing his sight. Bacho links Santos to his own life, describing the scene in his living room when his father and various Filipino uncles would get together to watch the fights on television in 1957. From this very personal beginning Bacho segues into a close look at selected championship fights, those bouts that proved to be turning points for the sport. The fights between Sugar Ray Robinson and Gene Fullmer, Jack Johnson and Jim Jeffries (aka “The Great White Hope”), Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey are recreated in prose that never loses sight of the issues of race and money that influenced both the individual boxers and the sport itself. Portraits of more recent boxing legends—Joe Louis, Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier—include descriptions of styles, strengths, and strategies that exhibit a solid knowledge of and passion for the subject. Bacho communicates the beauty of this particular sport in startlingly vivid language. The book is illustrated with black and white photographs, and it
includes extensive source notes, a bibliography, and an index. Readers will eagerly step into the ring with this one. JMD

**Beller, Susan Provost** *Confederate Ladies of Richmond.* Twenty-First Century, 1999 96p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-7613-1470-9 $25.90 R Gr. 5-8

Opening with an interest-grabbing anecdote concerning a young war widow whose omen-beset nuptials foreshadowed tragedy to come, Beller retraces the course of the Civil War through the experiences of the Confederate capital and particularly through the eyes of its more privileged women citizens. The author draws liberally from their letters and diaries to demonstrate the optimism and excitement of the war’s onset, the changes within the small city occasioned by the influx of soldiers and politicians, the steadily rising prices resulting from the Union blockade, the fearsome privations (and barely acknowledged bread riots) as the war drew to a close, and finally the steel-jawed pride with which the women met defeat. Beller rightly points out the bias of these elite witnesses and frequently presents quotes that show how their experiences appeared from both within and without their select circle. One indignant woman complains, “Why indeed! any man that wears a stripe on his pantaloons thinks he can speak to any lady!” while a roguish gentleman remarked on their patriotic sewing circles that produced “deformed socks and impossible gloves for the soldier boys.” Ample illustrations, careful source notes, a reader-friendly bibliography of print and electronic resources, and an index make this an excellent choice for report writers seeking a fresh spin on a standard topic. EB


Sara’s Russian grandmother, Catherine, wants gifts from the heart instead of the pocket for her birthday. After much consideration, Sara determines that her gift will be teaching her grandmother to read and write English. The relationship between Sara and her grandmother and their relationship with the other tenants in their building are at the core of this tale. The characters are defined by their talents—Mr. Minsky dances, Mrs. Caruso sings opera, Monica’s dad is a hairdresser—and their gifts reflect their activities. Sara, the narrator, is a poet and lover of words, so her choice to give her grandmother language lessons is a logical one. Love of words notwithstanding, this based-on-family-lore story is unfortunately slow-moving and lengthy. Potter’s watercolors, however, have the naïve drafting and the accompanying charm evident in her earlier artwork (in Manna and Mitakidou’s *Mr. Semolina-Semolinus*, BCCB 7/97, Fleming’s *When Agnes Caws*, BCCB 2/99, etc.) with an earthier palette and more urban-looking environs, both interior and exterior. The compositions emphasize strong horizontal and vertical lines along with a sharp angularity that mediates the sentimentality of the tale. Despite the low-key external action, this book has an advantage: birthdays (anyone’s birthday) are one of kids’ favorite topics, so this nostalgic tale may still win them over. JMD
BLISS, CORINNE DEMAS *The Littlest Matryoshka*; illus. by Kathryn Brown. Hyperion, 1999 [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2125-6 $16.49
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

Nina, the littlest matryoshka, was carved by Nikolai the dollmaker: “From one piece of soft wood he shaped six nesting dolls, each one fitting inside the other. They all opened in the middle and were hollow inside, except for the littlest. She was the size of a bumblebee, and she was made of the heart of the sweet-smelling wood.” The dolls travel by ship to a toy shop in America where, unpacked and un-nested, the “six sisters” are lined up in a row from biggest to smallest: Anna, Olga, Varka, Vanda, Nadia, and Nina. Nina, the smallest, is mistakenly swept from the shelf and out of the store, where she is buried in the snow and carted off. The remaining re-nested sisters are put on the sale table and are purchased by a young girl (“The littlest doll is missing,” said the shopkeeper, “so I’ll let you have that matryoshka for half price”) who takes them home and cherishes them. Nina has series of adventures—a swim in a stream, an encounter with a heron, a quick journey with a squirrel—and ultimately rejoins her sisters in a satisfying (if coincidental) fashion. Bliss’ storytelling style makes this an easy readaloud and a good beginning readalone; the language is unaffected and there is real, if gentle, momentum. Brown’s watercolors have the sensibility of old-fashioned illustrations (adult readers may be reminded of *The Poky Little Puppy*), with uncluttered compositions, expressive characters, and a soothing palette. Classic elements (the animism of toys, the lost doll, adventure and rescue) winningly combined are going to make this book an unpretentious favorite. JMD

BO, BEN *The Edge*. LernerSports, 1999 [144p]
ISBN 0-8225-3307-3 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

Alone and friendless in his new Vancouver home, Declan hooks up with a gang of toughs; trouble comes immediately, however, when a graffiti-tagging escapade leads to a building going up in flames from a carelessly discarded cigarette and all the gang but Declan perishes in the tragedy. Declan is sent off for rehabilitation in a new program that sees him working at a ski resort in the Canadian Rockies under the tutelage of an old Indian, Big Foot. There he meets Manu, an attractive and friendly girl who doesn’t know about his past, and Mad Dog, a daredevil snowboarder who resents Declan’s budding talent. Just when it seems that he’s managed to prove himself in a dangerous avalanche, Declan’s past rears its head and threatens to rob him of his newfound respect. This is familiar material pulpily written, with corny plot moves and stock characters (though there’s life in Big Foot, he’s prone to utterances like “We must fly like the bird on the wind!” and “If you believe in yourself, you will overcome any enemy and the truth will shine out of you like the sun”; Mad Dog is a clichéd hot dog). The real draw here, however lies in the snowslope adventure, and Bo delivers with downhill sequences packed with lingo and brand names and flying powder (“Snowboarders were going off in a steady stream. Carving lines between the walls of snow that banked up on either side like two parallel waves in a frozen sea. Blasting off the lip. Tumbling like acrobats in the air”). Since the plot mostly serves as a peg for the boarding moves,
readers looking for some literary action in the half-pipe probably won’t mind its deficiencies. DS

BRANFORD, HENRIETTA  *The Fated Sky*. Candlewick, 1999  156p

Sixteen-year-old Ran lives with her unaffectionate mother, Astrid, and loving grandmother, Amma, on a small farm in Viking Norway. When Astrid learns that her husband and sons have been killed, she takes Ran and, in the company of former suitor Vigut, goes to Sessing for the yearly sacrifice. Astrid is fatally injured in a wolf attack; Ran’s supposed sorcery is blamed for her mother’s death, and she is sentenced to die as part of the ritual. Instead she flees with blind bard Toki and reaches haven in Iceland, where she and Toki marry and begin new lives. Vigut, turned outlaw, descends on the community with intent to pillage. A cataclysmic volcanic eruption and a flash flood disrupts the mayhem, and Ran is swept to safety; her husband, however, is dead, and she fears for the lives of her children. Branford easily evokes a time in history when death was considered proper payment for all kinds of debt; her ability to place her characters squarely within their time while making their passions and desires understandable (as seen in her *Fire, Bed & Bone*, BCCB 5/98) is an admirable one. The difficulty of day-to-day survival, the influence of religious beliefs, and the impact of power politics are woven into Ran’s narrative with fatalistic precision. Ran herself is a character well worth knowing, blessed with a strong sense of self that lets her live despite emotional losses and physical deprivation. Tightly plotted with strong characterizations and an admirable sense of the period, this is an unusual and meaty offering. JMD

BRIDGES, RUBY  *Through My Eyes*. Scholastic, 1999  64p  illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-590-18923-9  $16.95  R*  Gr. 4 up

See this month’s Big Picture, p. 161, for review.

BROWN, DON  *Rare Treasure: Mary Anning and Her Remarkable Discoveries*; written and illus. by Don Brown. Houghton, 1999  32p
ISBN 0-395-92286-0  $15.00  R  Gr. 2-4

Brown brings his talent for succinct biography to this picture book about amateur geologist Anning. Born in 1799, Anning learned a love of fossil hunting from her father; after his death, Mary and her brother would search for fossils to sell to tourists to supplement the family’s meager income. Unlike Anholt’s *Stone Girl, Bone Girl* (BCCB 2/99), which concentrates on the events of Anning’s life, Brown dwells on Mary’s self-determination, focusing on her adventurous spirit (fossil hunting on the cliffs of Lyme was not without peril) and lifelong quest for knowledge in her chosen field of study. The weaving together of action (hunting fossils, rescuing amateur fossil hunters, narrowly escaping death from falling rocks, etc.) and personality description makes this a vibrant piece of nonfiction. While the drafting is a bit off and the characters’ faces more Anglund-ish than expressive, the understated watercolors suit the mood. Their subdued palette (ocean blues, sand browns) and simple compositions are undistracting, and they permit the reader to focus on Brown’s no-nonsense representation of Anning’s formidable life. There are unfortunately no notes or suggestions for further reading. JMD
BROWN, MARGARET WISE Another Important Book; illus. by Chris Raschka. Cotler/HarperCollins, 1999 [32p]
Reviewed from galleys Ad 2-4 yrs
An unpublished manuscript intended as a companion to Brown’s An Important Book (BCCB 7/49), illustrated by Leonard Weisgard, is buoyed by the strength of Raschka’s mixed-media illustrations. Brown’s rhyming text (“The important thing about being One/ is that life/ has just begun”) is reminiscent of A. A. Milne’s poem “Now We Are Six” (“When I was one/ I was just begun”) in its enumeration of aspects of ages one through six, but it lacks the controlled grace of that concisely rendered verse and of Brown’s more successful writing. The text tends to run on (and arrhythmically, at that), slipping into list-making as it notes the acquisition of skills at and the joys of each age. Raschka’s watercolor-and-oil paintings feature an energetic bunch of tots of various ages and demeanors engaged in a variety of activities. His use of bold curves in flowing lines of black ink to emphasize his figures gives them a sense of motion that makes them look as if they’re dancing in space, effervescent with discovery; geometric shapes (circles, stars, squares, triangles) in an assortment of colors serve both as props and background. The art carries the book, but this is still a cozy if slight little paean to the joys of growing up. JMD

The Rudi of the title is the narrator’s classmate, a friend from down the street who’s a good companion even though he’s “sick a lot.” Rudi’s heart problems worsen, however, and he eventually dies (“I never did get to talk to Rudi again because he died in that hospital”), leaving the narrator and her classmates struggling with a way to commemorate their friend; a hummingbird that turns up near Rudi’s memorial pond seems to offer her a connection to Rudi’s spirit. While the book is unsubtly purposive, it’s much quieter and more straightforwardly written than many on the subject. Bunting doesn’t sink the young viewpoint under excess philosophy, medicine, or theology; though the hummingbird aspect is on the sweet side, the book mostly just allows the permanent departure of Rudi to make its impact. Himler’s watercolors, though sometimes awkward, have a self-contained peacefulness to them that makes their simple realism emotionally effective. Smooth and understated, this is a look at mortality that will reach even younger audiences than Smith’s A Taste of Blackberries (BCCB 11/73). DS

In this exploration of the interior life of a longtime foster child struggling to accept a permanent placement, eleven-year-old Elizabeth’s defenses (“Never let them know what’s important to you”) are broken down during a summer stay with the family clan headed by the woman Elizabeth privately labels “Iron Woman” but comes to call “Grandma.” The pacing lags, and the characterizations of the family are unsubtle and adulatory (Elizabeth’s cheery articulate new cousins sound like the Box-
car Children and Grandma is described by one of them as "sort of a storybook grandmother, but real"). The emotional realities of Elizabeth's situation are patiently and evocatively explored, however, and Caldwell is perceptive both about Elizabeth's guardedness and her genuine discomfort with her boisterous new family. There's definitely some romanticization of old-school family practices (including clear rules and corporal punishment for violation thereof), but doubtless many readers will appreciate the evenhandedness with which praise and blame as well as rights and responsibilities are meted out in a story that is simultaneously high-minded and intensely emotional. FK

CARTER, ALDEN R. Crescent Moon. * Holiday House, 1999 [208p]
ISBN 0-8234-1521-X $16.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-7

The logging country of northern Wisconsin is starting to see times change with the advent of the twentieth century, and Jeremy is caught in the thick of it. He loses his best school chums to the lumber mills when an accident incapacitates their father, he becomes embroiled in the rising labor movement when friends in the IWW are targeted by management goons, and most importantly he helps his woodcarver great-uncle create a tribute to ways now past: with the help of an old Chippewa man, Uncle Mac wants to carve a Chippewa maiden "to honor his people and my craft before both are forgotten." This doesn't have the compelling flow of Carter's other novels; there's too much social studies pressed into a small space and too much foreshadowing of impending history, and the changes are more described than brought home to the reader. This is a fascinating period that rarely gets its due in children's literature, however, and the book manages to compress the economic changes and the forward-looking spirit into credible local phenomena. Readers interested in offbeat historical fiction might find this satisfying, and it might also make an intriguing comparison with Natalie Honeycutt's Twilight in Grace Falls (BCCB 6/97), which takes a contemporary look at the effect of a changing lumber economy on a small town. DS

CARTER, DAVID A. The Elements of Pop-Up: A Pop-Up Book for Aspiring Paper Engineers; written and illus. by David A. Carter and James Diaz. Little Simon, 1999 18p
ISBN 0-689-82224-3 $35.00 R* Gr. 6-12

Like magicians sharing their most arcane secrets, paper engineers Carter and Diaz reveal the mysteries behind movable books—from the simplest parallel-fold pop-ups to shapes that saw, spin, flip, rock, and ride the crests and troughs of paper grooves. It will quickly become obvious to crafters who have dabbled with some fundamental paper cuts that they're in the big league here; of the forty-two techniques covered, only a half dozen are graded as "easy." (Even the glossary moves far beyond "score," "fold," and "tab" to "tip-in," "nesting," "rocker arm," and "cam.") All techniques, however, are clearly and cleverly presented in working form and mounted on fold-out stock so that they can be viewed and studied from different angles. Crafters guided by observation and "feel" can learn by example; those of a more mathematical turn can refer to the accompanying printed explanations and the summaries of angles, length proportions, and placements. Bright colored base pages are not only attractive; they also make the white sample pop-ups and devices easy to view. A brief history of the movable book and steps for
preparing a pop-up for production/publication are included. Drawn by the complexity of the bug-eyed pop-up creature of the opening spread, serious Papermeisters as well as more adventurous beginners will find themselves on the cutting edge here. EB


Disconsolate when his best friend Possum moves to another junkyard, Rat decides "Don't need friends, don't need 'em at all." The reckless rodent rejects all attempts at friendship by other junkyard beasts, until "one day a dog moved in. He was big. He was dirty. And he was a real grouch." Dog and Rat watch each other from opposite sides of the junk heap, hurling insults at one another and freezing individually while the other animals huddle together for warmth. When Dog gets sick, though, Rat comes to the rescue with a foot-long salami sandwich, and the two become curmudgeonly friends: "'Don't need many friends,' thought Rat each night as he lay next to Dog. 'Just need one.'" Munsinger is about the only illustrator who can make rats and junkyards appealing, and here she effectively puts aside cute for a slightly rougher environment. Friendship and community flourish amongst the debris, and the various junkyard denizens exhibit touchingly human traits (the picture of a reluctantly sympathetic Rat observing lonely Dog as he howls at the full moon is an image with which young and old will empathize). Crimi's story has a certain outlaw appeal, and young listeners will recognize the hurt feelings and desire for self-protection that motivate both Rat and Dog. JMD


In the brief biography of Dunbar that prefaces this illustrated collection of his poems, Ashley Bryan and Andrea Davis Pinkney point out that during his lifetime Dunbar "was both praised and criticized for his poems written in Black dialect." This collection centers on four of the best known of these lively poems, with their driving rhythms and engaging stories, while also offering others written in the more conventionally poetic English typical of turn-of-the-century verse. Each of these fourteen poems is accompanied by a striking illustration by one of five distinguished African-American illustrators (each of whom also contributes a brief personal comment on their relationship to Dunbar's poetry in an "About the Artists" section). The eclectic illustrations include two Faith Ringgold story quilts as well as works in tempera and gouache (Bryan), oils (Byard), acrylic and oils (Gilchrist), pencil and watercolor (Jerry Pinkney), and scratchboard, luma dyes and acrylics (Brian Pinkney). They successfully capture the drama of the moment "W'en de colo'ed ban' comes ma'chin' down de street," the more tranquil moments "when sparkling eyes/ Troop sleepywise" or when "the dew-drops shine like fairy rain," and the color of a mythic moment when "an angel, robed in spotless white,/ Bent down and kissed the sleeping Night." While both dialect and the use of archaic/poetic diction can present some difficulties for young readers and for readers aloud, the individuality and mastery each artist brings to the task of inter-
preparing the culturally significant texts in this child-friendly sampler offer a rich experience to readers, listeners, and gazers. Jump back and get it. FK


Sim Webb, Casey Jones's African-American fireman, knows that the train whistle that Casey acquired from a rather devilish gentleman is really Gabriel's trumpet and that when it blows the world will end. Speeding along with Casey and the new whistle, Sim sees that their train is going too fast. Casey refuses to slow down, and his fate is sealed when his engine collides with an oncoming train. Sim jumps from the train and escapes, hence tale, whistle, and world are saved. Lacking the rapid pace and precise form of the oral tales it emulates, Sim's story still contains some attractive elements: trains, speed, and dangerous races have a romantic charm that will easily draw young readers. Dramatic play of light and shadow, unusual perspectives, and romanticized images of the period illustrate Sim's life and Casey's final journey. The characters are expressive and heroically handsome, except the devil, who can't quite hide his horn-like curls or long, sharp nails. Although Sim questions Casey's orders and reveals his moral backbone, this is, despite the title, still Casey's story (he orders Sim to jump and then heroically sacrifices himself). Contemporary listeners will want to know more about the historical Sim, whose autobiography is mentioned in an endnote. JNH


Military history buffs will be delighted with this carefully crafted and engrossing account of the naval and land operations that led to Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown, and the improbable victory of a tattered band of colonists over the disciplined forces of a world power. For Ferrie, America owed its success largely to Washington's bullheaded determination, willingness to take risks, and faith in his French allies—not to any innate brilliance as a military strategist. Although he acknowledges that historians continue to debate the culpability of various British officers, Ferrie traces their defeat to professional rivalries and jealousies that impeded any efforts at concerted action. A remarkably helpful collection of addenda and supporting material enhance this presentation—from the timeline and thumbnail sketches of "The Key Players" (complete with portraits) that open the volume, to the period engravings and well-placed maps throughout the text, to the appendices that offer information on battleships, weaponry, and uniforms of the Revolutionary War. Of course, most readers come for the battles, and chapters on the French victory in Chesapeake Bay and the Americans' audacious ground attack at Yorktown deliver all the bang, boom, and bloodshed military history fans could desire. EB


Several years of scientific debate over the significance of the chunk of green Martian rock discovered in Antarctica has been distilled into children's science books
(see, for example, Bortz' Martian Fossils on Earth?, BCCB 4/98), but here Fradin places that debate into the broader context of our ongoing fascination (obsession?) with locating extraterrestrial life. Retracing the history of scientific understanding of Mars, Fradin demonstrates how earlier astronomers argued as passionately over their telescopic observations as astrogeologists now haggle over rock sample ALH84001, and how a popular speculation such as manmade Martian canals, once raised, is mighty difficult to lay to rest. Readers are led to consider how science reporting influenced fiction that embraced the possibility of Martian life and that, in turn, created a popular predisposition to view new scientific discoveries as "evidence" of that life. Fradin's discussion is both cogent and thought-provoking, and if his closing chapters on the future colonization of Mars might be considered, well . . . fanciful, readers will nonetheless be engaged by his vision. Color and black-and-white illustrations, an index, and a bibliography with a list of websites are included. EB


One might contest the subtitle's claim, but certainly the siege of Vicksburg was at the very least a pivotal event on the road to Northern victory—not to mention General Grant's career—deserving of a share of the attention that children's histories lavish on the Virginia campaigns. Fraser concisely explains the strategic importance of the Mississippi city to the South's defense and details the Union's string of failed strategies for approaching its formidable guarded and armed perimeter. Likewise, she conveys a clear sense of the wearying length of the siege and the growing tension and, finally, desperation among the civilians blockaded within their city. Little background information on the Civil War is offered, and although the brevity, tight focus, and generous period photos and illustrations may attract younger readers, some previous knowledge of the battle's larger context is desirable. Endnotes, a bibliography, glossary, and list of websites are appended. EB


Eight-year-old Giotto, a shepherd boy in medieval Italy, angers his father by his constant "scribbling": "He draws pictures of sheep, trees, and birds on everything he finds: on light-colored stones with a piece of charcoal, on dark stones with a piece of chalk, in the sand with a stick." Sent back to the hills to find a lost lamb, Giotto is captivated by a religious procession featuring a painting of the Madonna and Child. The painter, Cimabue, welcomes the art-struck boy and explains how to mix pigment into paint, eventually taking the boy on as his apprentice. Giotto becomes a great artist, surpassing his teacher, creating "frescoes that even time will not erase." Guarnieri, an art critic, has succeeded in making artistic inspiration understandable to young readers. The story of Giotto, his relationship with his father, and his longing to make art is told simply and understandably and is superbly reflected in the paintings of Bimba Landmann. Landmann employs triptych-style compositions and frames that give the illustrations iconographic impact; gold detailing adds the sparkle often seen in religious paintings of the period, while rich pigments in earth tones of deep greens and ochres add depth and energy. A masterful
conjunction of illustration and text, this title combines history, art, and biography in a tribute even the very young reader will find inspiring. JMD

**Haskins, Jim**  *The Geography of Hope: Black Exodus from the South after Reconstruction*; illus. by Stephen Alcorn and with photographs. Twenty-First Century, 1999 137p
Library ed. ISBN 0-7613-0323-5  $22.90 R Gr. 7-12

Eleven well-organized chapters describe the exodus of southern slaves to the frontier and the leaders who inspired it. With chapter openings that hook the reader’s attention (“Benjamin Singleton was born a slave in Davidson County, near Nashville, Tennessee, in 1809. Trained as a carpenter and cabinet maker, he probably had a life easier than that of most slaves, for he had a skill and was not forced to do the backbreaking agricultural work of field slaves”) and chapter endings that provide bridges to the next topic, the work takes an in-depth look at a frequently overlooked side of black history. Haskins reveals information that will be new to many readers: that Frederick Douglass initially opposed the exodus movement, that western communities found themselves overwhelmed by the immigrating “Exodusters,” and that all-black towns were established in several states. Stephen Alcorn’s orange and black, Art Deco-style chapter illustrations on creamy paper join with the book’s inviting design to create a rhythmic balance of text, negative space, and illustrations. Historical documents, lithographic reproductions, and clearly captioned black-and-white photographs accompany the text. An informative timeline is provided along with a bibliography of sources, source notes, a three-page index, and endpapers mapping locations in the text. Teachers attempting an exodus from dry, textbooky histories will happily travel this road. JNH

**Hausman, Bonnie**  *A to Z Do You Ever Feel Like Me?: A Guessing Alphabet of Feelings, Words, and Other Cool Stuff*; illus. with photographs by Sandi Fellman. Dutton, 1999 48p
ISBN 0-525-46216-3  $15.99 R 5-7 yrs

This alphabet book couples a brief, fill-in-the-blank narrative with color photographs of children demonstrating selected emotions: “When my sister takes my stuff without asking first, I could just scream. This morning I found my bow on her teddy bear. I know she’s little, but sometimes she makes me so a______.” The paragraphs are more descriptive than inspired, but the energized layout and design override textual flaws. Photographed borders reminiscent of Wick’s canny arrangements for Marzollo’s *I Spy* series include objects that begin with the featured letter (for the letter “H,” observant readers will see a horse, heart, hanger, hat, hose, hot dog, etc.). Glossily reproduced technicolor portraits and candy-store colors combine to make this a slick visual treat. The result of an alphabet project Hausman (a first grade teacher) does with her classes, this title offers a number of possibilities for children working on letter and word recognition and retrieval. An answer key and explanation of the book’s origin are included. JMD

**Hegedus, Alannah**  *Shooting Hoops and Skating Loops: Great Inventions in Sports*; by Alannah Hegedus and Kaitlin Rainey; illus. by Bill Slavin. Tundra, 1999 80p
Paper ed. ISBN 0-88776-453-3  $17.95 R Gr. 4-8

Sports history has a loyal following among recreational readers as well as report
writers, and this Canadian import highlights not only games of multinational popularity such as basketball and hockey but a host of other competitive sports and recreational pursuits less familiar to kids south of the border. How many U.S. readers know about competitive snowshoeing, the rules for snowsnake pitching, the origins of five-pin bowling, or the genesis of the snowmobile? On more familiar turf, are they aware of the early use of frozen horse dung for hockey pucks, or that a bad case of sinusitis led to the first hockey goalie mask, or how James Naismith’s adherence to “muscular Christianity” influenced his invention of basketball? Hegedus and Rainey present their ten entries in lively prose, interspersed with did-ya-know sidebar information closely coordinated with the text. Line-and watercolor vignettes in subtle earth tones, a glossary, and an index round out the volume. All that’s missing is a bibliography or set of source notes for readers who are bound to want more.

EB

HOOKS, BELL  Happy to Be Nappy; illus. by Chris Raschka. Jump at the Sun/Hyperion, 1999 32p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0427-0 $14.99 R 4-8 yrs

hooks’ happy homage to “girlpie hair . . . soft like cotton . . . full of frizz and fuzz . . . pulled tight, cut close/ or just let go/ so wind can carry it/ all over the place” has a freewheeling joy that is admirably captured by illustrator Raschka. The verse celebrates nappy hair in all its forms, exuberantly extolling its virtues as “hair to take the gloom away” and seeing it as “a halo—a crown.” Aimed at a younger audience than Herron’s Nappy Hair (BCCB 2/97) this volume showcases not only hooks’ playful poem but Raschka’s watercolor wondergirls, who appear in an astonishing array of hairstyles, colors, and moods. Spatters of color on white pages give the compositions the feeling of a party room splashed with confetti and occupied by a group of very energetic girl-guests-of-honor. The text runs on just a touch, and hooks avoids any references to boys’ having nappy hair; still, the rhythm of words and images here is pretty irresistible. All it needs is a melody to make it music—the dancing words and pictures are already there.

JMD

HOPKINSON, DEBORAH  Maria’s Comet; illus. by Deborah Lanino. Schwartz/Atheneum, 1999 32p
ISBN 0-689-81501-8 $16.00 Ad 5-9 yrs

Inspired by the life of Maria Mitchell, America’s first woman astronomer, Hopkinson has created a fictional story of one young girl’s quest for knowledge about the night sky in an era that did not support that quest. Narrator Maria describes her family life, her astronomer father, her brother’s restless longing for adventure, and her own longing for the stars in spare but imagistic prose. The accompanying acrylic paintings teeter on the edge of sentimentality; the characters’ big-eyed faces are more than a bit sweet, and the drafting of the figures is sometimes clumsy. Still, viewers will find the cobalt-blue nights, lit with constellations that make imaginary (and actual) pictures in the sky, every bit as attractive as Maria does. Hopkinson’s text, with its inherent emotionality and family drama, will carry readers and listeners to the promising conclusion. Biographical information about the real Maria Mitchell is included in an author’s note, and there is a brief section on “More about Astronomy Terms in This Story.”

JMD
Beatty revels in her peripatetic existence, moving seasonally from aunt to aunt as her father eked out a living as a pilot in the Depression. Now in Texas, she finds herself getting involved in life at the local airfield where her uncle works; she makes herself useful in the manager’s office while yearning for a trip aloft with her father. Her interest in flight is sharpened when she discovers that her late mother was herself a famous and daring pilot, and Beatty determines not only to fly but also to find out more about the past of which her distant father never speaks. Ingold writes a solid story that’s old-fashioned in the good sense of the word, and the multiple final resolutions (Beatty steers her father down in a bad-weather landing and stays happily with the current aunt) have a fictional validity if not a genuine reality. Beatty herself is a heroine of vim and vigor, and the book’s provision of an incipient boyfriend, in the form of a nice young Okie who stays around to work, is obliging and pleasing. It’s also refreshing to see a book interested in early flight that gives the ground crew its due; young barnstormers might want to touch down on this before soaring on to the Flambards trilogy. DS

Nonfiction can tell more than just facts, it can tell a story, and that is just what Jenkins (a conservation biologist) does in this thoroughly enjoyable look (reminiscent of the publisher’s successful Read and Wonder series) at the fatherly duties of the male Emperor Penguin. The presentation will elicit giggles from the intended audience even as it opens the door to the ingestion of some painless natural science: “Down at the very bottom of the world, there’s a huge island that’s almost completely covered in snow and ice. It’s called Antarctica, and it’s the coldest, windiest place on earth. The weather’s bad enough in summer, but in winter it is really terrible. It’s hard to imagine anything living there. But wait... what’s that shape over there? It can’t be. YES! It’s a penguin!” Chapman’s acrylics reflect the gleeful tone of the text without anthropomorphizing the subject, relying on the odd perspective and occasional close-up of the penguins’ naturally comic visage to do the trick. The primary text is supplemented by text in italics that gives additional details about penguin lifestyles. Parents and teachers of primary schoolers are going to flock to this one, and beginning readers will get a charge out of something that’s interesting, accurate, and theirs. A short index is included. JMD

This self-described “rhyming, counting, lift-the-flap book” has an appealing simplicity that is going to engage the very little ones with very little effort. As the viewer lifts the flaps to count from one to nine, the kittens chase yarn, jump on fences, and follow the fish wagon, until “Nine naughty kittens find a cozy den.... ‘Come to me,’ says Mother Cat, and then there are... TEN!” The cartoon felines do indeed have a kittenish allure, although describing their actions as “naughty” is
a bit of a stretch. The scansion of the rhyme is occasionally forced, the extrapolation of the theme is unimaginative, and Mother Cat is not, technically, a kitten despite her inclusion in the final quota. Still, the lift-the-flap action and eye-catching colors will make this an agreeable bit of fluff for individual or group sharing. JMD


Life with her stepmother and bratty twin stepsisters is not all that Ashley would desire. The final straw is when stepmother Phyllis begins to recant her permission for Ashley to go to the fabulous millennium party at the Ocean Crest Country Club. To Ashley’s horror, permission is reinstated only because Phyllis wangles an invitation for the twins as well; Ashley boycotts out of humiliation and spite until Phyllis’ Grammie sends Ashley off in the limo with a new dress and shoes. The book wavers uncertainly between cartoon (the twins are caricatured preteen monsters), justification (Ashley really is being asked to give up a lot), and undercutting (her constant embarrassment at Phyllis’ behavior is clearly adolescent oversensitivity), so it’s not always clear what readers are expected to make of the proceedings. However, it’s diverting to see the blend of the teen social whirl with fairy-tale archetypes (Jukes tosses in a few other nods to folktales, such as Ashley’s beloved stuffed frog). The author is particularly good at a Judy Blume-ish froth of adolescent speech that makes the whole account so easily readable it might well be magazine fare. Like “Cinderella,” this is a glossy little outing, and readers will get a kick out of seeing Ashley spared of her ashes and whisked off to the ball. DS


Predictable rhymes, alliteration, concrete images, and ludicrously delightful incongruities (an elephant high jumper?) fill poems describing the winter and summer Olympics of fourteen elephant athletes: “Big Elmo gobbled down a ton/ Of peanuts and grew snoozy,/ So when he came to make his jump/ He felt a wee bit woozy./ He took off smoothly through the air,/ But—oh—when he landed/ He hit a snowbank upside down./ He’ll end up empty handed.” Bold watercolor and pencil illustrations pose the ele-athletes against intensely blue skies, ice, and water; despite the cuteness of the cartoons, Percy’s pachyderms display solid physicality and grace. This isn’t Kennedy at his best—the verse here depends more on rhyme scheme than inspiration—but readers will enjoy the silliness of elephant divers, gymnasts, and figure skaters with names like Elfantina, Trelawney, Trumpette, and Trinker. JNH

KESELMAN, GABRIELA  The Gift; tr. by Laura McKenna; illus. by Pep Montserrat. Kane/Miller, 1999  32p ISBN 0-916291-91-X $15.95 R 3-6 yrs

Mikie’s birthday is just around the corner, and Mr. and Mrs. Goodparent take to the “Thinking Chair” for gift ideas. After discovering that the chair evokes “a pain in their bottoms,/ A pain in their heads,/ And still not a single idea,” they decide to ask Mikie what he wants. The enthusiastic youngster replies, “I want a very special present . . . And I want it to be very . . . BIG!” After a shared glance, Mr. and Mrs.
Goodparent reply, "He wants an elephant!" The demands progress, while Mr. and Mrs. Goodparent continue their charades to figure out what he wants. Fold-out pages reveal the parents' greatest fears ("He wants a weight lifter! . . . He wants a smokestack!") and assumptions ("He wants a teddy bear! . . . He wants a big bowl of candy!"). Mom and Dad are baffled, "and since they didn't know what else to say, they gave him a BIG, STRONG, SOFT, SWEET, WARM hug. Then they ROCKED him from side to side, TOSSSED him up in the air and made him LAUGH, for a looooong time." Boldly colored figures with thick black outlines are highlighted on silver background to assist the telling of this spirited family anecdote. The minimalist style echoes William Steig's Pete's a Pizza (BCCB 12/98), but in this case, the joke's on Mr. and Mrs. Goodparents, because, as Mikie's final wink conveys, a hug is what he wanted all along. EAB

KLINE, LISA WILLIAMS  
Eleanor Hill. Front Street/Cricket, 1999  [256p]  
ISBN 0-8126-2715-6  $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys

Spending the rest of her life in her North Carolina fishing village holds no charm for Eleanor; she pines for adventure after the fashion of her older brother Frank, who incurred the wrath of their dour papa by setting out on his own and earning a fair living on the construction of the Panama Canal. Eleanor jumps at the chance to live with her aunt in bustling New Bern, where Pepsi Cola, high school, automobiles, and fashionable clothing are not considered luxuries. Aunt Velma pulls strings to arrange Eleanor a "good" marriage with a charming but weak-willed society scion; Eleanor's affections turn to an "unsuitable" Italian immigrant, and her aunt's autocratic decrees regarding proper social behavior eventually lead the young woman to wonder whether she's much better off than at home. There's no real doubt that Eleanor's road will lead straight to happily-ever-after with the dark and dashing Niccolo Garibaldi, and pampered rival Ray Hamilton never rises enough beyond a stock figure to generate much romantic intrigue. Kline is, however, effective at illuminating the life Eleanor most fears: the transformation from glowing bride at fifteen to work-worn, impoverished mother at twenty, which is the lot of her older sisters. Readers may find that their sympathies linger with those worthy young matrons rather than the sister who made such an easy escape. EB

LEUZZI, LINDA  
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-11527-5  $24.00  
Ad  Gr. 7-12

Basic self-help information and interviews provide an overview of and role models for creativity in this three-part examination. In the first part, Leuzzi draws on secondary sources to explain creativity's importance, interweaves anecdotes from the lives of contemporary and historical figures, and suggests ways to become more creative. The second part presents an eclectic, gender-balanced selection of interviews with creative adults: e.g. an actor, an artist, a scientist-educator, a chef-restaurateur, and a conductor. Part III recognizes people who have never appeared on front pages or in history books: a paraplegic cab driver, a student activist, a sixth-grade teacher. The advice is generic and the dense text is more exhortatory than helpful. The book is nonetheless upbeat and encouraging, and the author's obvious good intentions and chatty style are still inviting. Endnotes, a bibliography, a list of Internet sites, an index, and an author's note are included. JNH
The animals arrive at the sock hop, and Jazz-Bo the cat unpacks his sax to lead his combo into the swingin’ night. The canine keyboardist makes “black and white/light up the night”; the doggy drummer tosses his sticks in the air; Jazz-Bo himself “squeezes them blues/right out of his shoes.” Cole’s lively pastel-hued lions, sheep, frogs, rabbits, and snakes kick up their heels (or whatever they’ve got to kick) against simple matte backgrounds, generating a lot of visual energy. There are some oddly discordant notes, however: “sock hop” has more to do with fifties rock ’n’ roll than with be-bop, and frequent changes of rhythm and tongue twisters around every corner will trip up the unwary and the unpracticed: “Hip de-dip/and hop hop hop,/ we like to bo-bip/and do-wop the bop.” Still, the musically inclined animals have a loony humor that is contagious. When pandemonium is the order of the day, run this past the story rug crowd and let ‘em bop til they drop.

EB

LUNGE-LARSEN, LISE, ad. The Troll With No Heart in His Body and Other Tales of Trolls from Norway; illus. by Betsy Bowen. Houghton, 1999 96p ISBN 0-395-91371-3 $18.00 R Gr. 3-6

Lunge-Larsen presents nine Norwegian tales about the greed and foolishness of trolls in a casual style that makes these stories ripe for reading aloud and storytelling. Her liveliness of language and easy turn of phrase give these retellings a comforting tone despite the sometimes scary events. Bowen’s colored-ink woodblock prints, inspired by traditional Norwegian woodcarving and design, suit the monumental nature of the subject in full-page, framed illustrations, while smaller spot art and decorative motifs add graceful details. Lunge-Larsen includes notes for each tale describing print sources as well as her own experiences with hearing the tales as a child; an introduction explains her belief in the need for storytelling in today’s world. While folklore aficionados familiar with Asbjornsen and Moe will know the majority of these tales (“The Three Billy Goats Gruff,” “Butterball,” etc.), younger readers will find them both unusual and refreshing. JMD


A plump green crocodile lives happily and voraciously in Egypt until Napoleon captures him as a novelty and takes him to Paris. There he’s the toast of the town, but he finds the meals disappointing; he’s more than disappointed, when his novelty has faded, to discover that the menu may soon feature him. Managing his escape in the nick of time, he wends his way to that natural urban home of the crocodile, the sewer, whereupon he finally satisfies his palate by snacking on elegantly attired French gentry seized from the streets. Flap copy attributes the plot to “a nineteenth-century satire by an unknown French author,” which may account for some of the otherwise unaccountable plot elements (what’s the point of
the tossed-off ballooning accident that distracts the chef and allows the croc to flee?), and the resolution is probably more satisfying when underpinned with political implications. Nonetheless, the big reptile is an engaging and sympathetic narrator whose simple desire to fill his belly will be completely understandable to young viewers, and the twist on the alligators-in-the-sewer legend will give rise to all manner of audience storytelling. Marcellino’s watercolors give the snaggletoothed crocodile an expressive mien and googly eyes that contrast with the snooty hauteur of the sharp-edged and narrow Parisiens; there’s no question that the croc would make better company than his prey, so audiences will resoundingly approve of his choice to eat rather than be eaten (and he’s not exactly racked with guilt as he lolls comfortably in the sewer picking his teeth with the feather from a victim’s fashionable hat). Dish this one up to kids starting to find Lyle a little tame. DS


A pair of intriguing opening chapters on a typical passage through the Panama Canal and on its construction seem to promise a lively examination of the waterway on the eve of its transfer to the Panama government. However, once Markun reaches the heart of her topic—preparation of Panamanians for smooth operation of the canal and its chance for financial success—the remaining chapters spiral into a dry and often confusing discussion of the intricate political maneuvering and outright corruption that mark both the history of the canal and, in Markun’s view, its probable future. Although these issues are undeniably germane to her analysis, Markun’s explanations of successive treaties and current leadership make laborious reading, and it is doubtful that young readers’ intrinsic interest in these convoluted shenanigans will propel them through her murky text. Moreover, the speculative phrasing of her predictions for the December 31, 1999 transfer will make the prose sound quaintly obsolete after January 1, 2000. Only the most determined report writers will cull what they’re looking for here. EB


Kids with a love of animals often don’t see much alternative to veterinary medicine, but Maynard, the director of the Cincinnati Zoo, offers a bookful of additional possibilities. He begins with insight into different aspects of veterinary practice, ranging from research to veterinary technician, and he then goes into five chapters about careers in research, education, conservation, and in institutions such as zoos and aquariums. The book not only describes a variety of careers but also offers a gallery of people pursuing paths of which readers may never have dreamed: there are zookeepers and reproductive physiologists, spider behaviorists and wildlife photographers, working all over the world. What’s particularly useful is the clear emphasis on how a variety of talents can be made to serve an interest in animals; another utilitarian assist comes in the form of specific advice on education and rough estimates about pay (a key provides scales for years of schooling and for salaries). Maynard’s familiarity with many of the professionals adds a personal touch, and the “How to Get There from Here” chapter provides concrete
suggestions for taking steps towards one's career goals. The black-and-white photographs are unfortunately dim and indistinct (the color inserts have better viewability, but the captions are often odd and disjointed); the text is the real draw here, and young people in search of assistance in realizing their dreams will find this helpful indeed. A glossary, index, and list of sources (print and electronic) for further information are included. DS


Clara Wilson is caught between disappointment and promise: she's been dumped by her best friend and her parents' tense marriage is now in full unravel mode, but she's also beginning to see genuine possibilities in her crush on Amos Mackenzie. Amos has his own challenges: though he likes Clara, he's struggling with the sudden death of his father, he's dealing with a rise in his social status following his intervention in an act of vandalism and subsequent hospitalization, and the vandals, the notorious Charles and Eddie Tripp, have it in for him. As Amos and Clara draw closer, the menace of the Tripp brothers looms larger, since Eddie has taken a shine to Clara. The McNeals offer some insightful exploration of social dynamics here, both among peers and between parents and children. It's believable that even near-saintly Amos succumbs at times to cruelty and to betrayal (to get his hand on a popular girl's breast, he fulfills her request to declare Clara a "dink") and that Clara, ignorant of Eddie's role in Amos' attack, would be flattered by his attentions and capable of using them against Amos. The book keeps its protagonists admirable, however: Clara stands on her limits even with the dangerous boy, and Amos manages both to defend Clara and to make reparations. The final drama, in which Clara is held captive and threatened with rape by Charles Tripp, seems to belong to a less subtle and more thrilleresque novel; it certainly discharges the built-up tension, however, and provides the final push to bring Amos and Clara satisfyingly and completely together. DS

McPherson, Stephanie Sammartino  Sisters against Slavery: A Story about Sarah and Angelina Grimke; illus. by Karen Ritz. Lerner, 1999 64p Creative Minds Biographies ISBN 1-57505-361-6 $15.95 R Gr. 3-6

Grimké is hardly the first name to surface in elementary school discussions of abolitionism, but McPherson's thoughtful exposition should win these heroines a following. A South Carolinian raised to a life of ease, elder sister Sarah expressed her disapproval of slavery from an early age; when the path to a law career was closed to her, she gravitated to the Society of Friends, among whom her anti-slavery notions were not outlandish. The much younger Angelina found her own way to the cause years later, and as the sisters' impulse to activism grew, their affiliation with the Quakers began to dissolve. Much of their public lives as women's rights and abolitionist speakers were spent together, but McPherson carefully traces the different roads that led them to their life's work, their differences in temperament and often even in interests, and the different sacrifices and consolations that shaped their experience. McPherson is particularly adept at demonstrating that the abolitionist movement was no monolith, and that women in a public role were so antithetical to much of the Grimkés' society that their forward behavior even threatened the cause. When procrastinating report writers find all the Harriet
Tubman and Frederick Douglass books checked out, hand them a copy of *Sisters* and promise them, despite the stodgy illustrations and layout, a rewarding read. A bibliography and index are included. EB

**Monceaux, Morgan**  *My Heroes, My People: African Americans and Native Americans in the West;* written by Morgan Monceaux and Ruth Katcher; illus. by Morgan Monceaux. Foster/Farrar, 1999 64p
ISBN 0-374-30770-9 $18.00 Ad Gr. 4-6

Although the title suggests that these brief biographies feature historical heroes of the American West, Monceaux includes individuals from South America, North America, and the Caribbean. Beginning with Montezuma, Pocahontas, and Toussaint L’Ouverture (whom the author lists under the heading “The Legends”), the book describes historical figures under categories such as “The Fur Trade,” “The Cowboys,” “The Women,” “Buffalo Soldiers,” etc. Successful entries include human interest information, such as quotations, physical descriptions, and anecdotes; the least successful entries resort to generalities to supplement a paucity of information. Mixed-media portraits, outlined with text giving biographical information about their subject, accompany each entry and vary in size from small block inserts to full-page illustrations. Each portrait has a sense of tension, drama, and dimension enhanced by backgrounds busy with irregular lines, energetic scoring, and dynamic hues. This is essentially a captioned gallery, the point of the book being the glossy portraits more than the shallow information. Students requiring in-depth accounts will want to consult other works, but art teachers will find this a good example of a visual approach to history. Source notes, suggestions for further reading, and an index are included. JNH

ISBN 0-15-200888-8 $20.00 R Gr. 4-8

Seven Algonquin tales of Trickster (or Wistchahik, Wichikapache, or Wesucechak, as he is also called in Algonquin Cree) are retold here with style and wit. From the opening tale, “Trickster and the Best Hermit,” the personality of this complex antihero (who appears in his many guises as fool, braggart, destroyer, and helper) is humorously trotted out. What will appeal to younger readers about this character and his adventures (besides the physical humor) is that Trickster is very childlike in his naïve resistance to considering the consequences of his actions. The elegantly spare language (arranged in brief paragraphs with ragged right margins) gives the impression of rhythmic free verse. Pohrt’s watercolor and pen and ink illustrations have a modern solidity that easily makes these stories believable as happening in the present and not in some distant past. The depiction of the natural world, from landscape to animals, has a formal stateliness that contrasts effectively with the stories’ humor. Norman collected these tales from individuals over periods of time, and his notes for each tale and his introduction are clear and specific on that process, evincing a laudable attention to cultural authority. JMD

**Pak, Soyung**  *Dear Juno;* illus. by Susan Kathleen Hartung. Viking, 1999 32p
ISBN 0-670-88252-6 $15.99 R 4-7 yrs

A young boy misses his grandmother in Korea, but he alleviates his yearning through their correspondence. Though he cannot read Korean, he knows what his
grandmother's letter says, because she has sent a picture of herself cuddling a new cat and enclosed a dried flower: "'Grandmother has a new cat,' Juno said as he handed the letter to his mother. 'And she's growing red and yellow flowers in her garden.'" Juno decides to send his grandmother a letter in return, so he sketches his tree swing, picks her a leaf from the tree, and draws a picture of himself. The love between boy and grandmother is touchingly depicted; Pak's language has a lyrical lilt that quietly underscores the beauty of their relationship. Hartung uses oil paint glazes to create delicate paintings that illuminate Juno's world in a gentle play of dark and light: fireflies spot the evening, Juno and his dog, Sam, sit in the yellow glow of the porch light or in the warm light of a bedside lamp. The final illustration of Juno's grandmother ("whose gray hair sat on top of her head like a powdered doughnut") sipping tea in her garden brings Pak's tale to a quiet close. This is an elegantly understated yet effectively told story of a long-distance but still important emotional bond. JMD

Pullman, Philip  
*The Firework-Maker's Daughter*; illus. by S. Saelig Gallagher. Levine/Scholastic, 1999 97p
ISBN 0-590-18719-8  $15.95  Ad  Gr. 4-7

Lila, daughter of a master firework-maker, has been trained in the art of combustibles by her father, and she wishes to become a master firework-maker herself. Her father, on the other hand, thinks she should get married. This familial conflict spurs Lila's quest to Mount Merapi, to get royal sulfur from the Fire Fiend. Hapless pirates, a talking sacred white elephant, and a crucial fireworks-display contest punctuate a contrived plot. Pullman rushes the action somewhat, not taking the time to give even the main character enough depth or motivation to emotionally involve the reader. The setting ("a thousand miles ago, in a country east of the jungle and south of the mountains") is sketchily evoked, and the humor in the fireworks contest (with mildly satirical descriptions of German, Italian, and American fireworks displays) may elude young readers. Still, there are moments when Pullman's talent for imagery sparks to life ("little lotus flowers made of white fire suddenly popped open on the water . . . the flowers began to float across the dark lake like little paper boats"), and the fast pace does guarantee a breathless adventure. Gallagher's black and white illustrations add style to the plot, and the elegant running borders enhance the classy book design. This fireworks fantasy doesn't burn very brightly, but those individuals looking for a quick flashy read may still appreciate it. JMD

Rapp, Adam  
*The Copper Elephant*. Front Street, 1999 247p
ISBN 1-886910-42-1  $16.95  R  Gr. 9-12

Whensday is a Digt Kid, a child under twelve whose job it is to labor in the Pits busting rocks, one of the many bleak existences in Rapp's postapocalyptic world of chaos, Orwellian fascism, rampant disease, and radioactive rain. Saved by a kindly coffinmaker, Whensday flees him upon discovering that he plans to sell her to a rich lady who yearns for a child; she meets up with Honeycut, a mentally disabled adult mourning the little brother who was taken away, and with Oakley Brownhouse, who miraculously escaped from the Pits. The fellowship of three is shattered when Honeycut is seized by the all-powerful Syndicate (for killing the officer who raped Whensday), and Whensday and Oakley must struggle with the high price and slim chance of survival in this nearly hopeless world. Rapp, whose
ear for language was evident in *The Buffalo Tree* (BCCB 7/97), effectively constructs Whensday’s narration to reflect an alien but credible society; in her voice, naïveté blends with bitter practicality, and she’s sometimes densely poetic and sometimes tartly direct. The book doesn’t shirk from the requisite dystopian despair (Oakley, with Whensday’s help, eventually joins up with the Syndicate, and Honeycut faces public stoning at the hands of his brother’s fellow Pit workers) but does provide Whensday with a more hopeful future with the Babymakers, a secret enclave of women who defy the Syndicate by remaining fertile and reproducing (Whensday carries a child as a result of her rape). This is deftly and convincingly constructed, and young adults who read for the pleasures of darkness will find it grimly satisfying. DS

RINALDI, ANN  

The infamous feud between the Hatfields and the McCoys is seen through the eyes of Fanny, youngest McCoy daughter and favorite of older sister Roseanna, who exacerbates the ill-feeling between the families by running off with Johnse Hatfield. The historical events that surround this feud have been romanticized into a tale of star-crossed lovers, but Rinaldi posits that the conflict was rooted in the two families’ being on different sides during the Civil War, the theft of McCoy pigs by the Hatfields, and the refusal of Devil Anse, Hatfield patriarch, to allow Johnse to marry a pregnant Roseanna. Fanny’s voice is informed more by innocence than anything else; it is only after much terror and death that her voice becomes weighted with knowledge beyond her years. The relationships between family members are the key to this tale, and Fanny’s observations about those relationships and what fuels them drive the breakneck momentum of the novel. Violence, revenge, honor, love, and justice are forces that tower over the players, inexorably moving them toward their fated ends. In the center of the tale is the coffin quilt, made by the beautiful and doomed Roseanna, embroidered with the names of both the Hatfields and the McCoys. Essentially a family genealogy, its macabre design—coffins around the edges stitched with birth dates of individuals, which are moved into the center “graveyard” with death dates added when the time comes—becomes the symbol for the doomed destinies of both families. Broken vows, murder, and suicide are classic stuff, and this novel has a sensational sweep that will carry readers pell-mell to the final tragic moments. JMD

RINGGOLD, FAITH  

An animated bus pulls up to Marcie’s stop, and, not wanting to be late for school, she hops on. It turns out she is riding the “Rosa Parks bus,” and the bus proceeds to tell Marcie all about “the patron saint of the Civil Rights movement,” the auto-narrative punctuated by choruses of “Amen! Amen!” from the other passengers. The bus ride ends with the arrival of Rosa Parks, a celebration of her birthday, the singing of a spiritual, and the appearance of other legendary figures of the civil rights movement. Ringgold’s stylized acrylics feature sharp contrasts, an intense palette, and hints of modern masters (Cézanne, Matisse) in single and double-page spreads depicting images of a segregated South and of Rosa Parks’ life. The night-
mare vision of the Ku Klux Klan is compelling, and the whites-only swimming pool makes its own commentary as several of the white swimmers appear to be drowning. The narration is text-heavy, however, and it encyclopedically catalogues Parks' life in the choppy rhythms of a student's oral report; Marcie's closing statement ("When I got up this morning, little did I know that I would be attending Mrs. Parks' birthday party on the very bus she was arrested on. I can't wait to tell my class about this!") pretty much exemplifies the pedantic nature of the text. Still, Ringgold does provide some context for Parks' remarkable life, even if the presentation is unnecessarily contrived and driven by myth (no, Mrs. Parks did not just decide "right then and there . . . to do something" about unfair segregation laws by not giving up her seat). Quotations from Parks are not attributed, and the work provides no source notes. JNH


Skye's plate is already pretty full: her single mother works two jobs, so Skye is largely responsible for her older brother, Sunny, who has Down syndrome; she's also a dedicated swimmer, hoping to make it to the state meet this year. She's distracted from all this, however, by her new boyfriend, the handsome, sexy, and demanding Mike, who wants more from her than she's sure she's ready to give. To find time for Mike, Skye lies to her mother about giving swimming lessons to Sunny, but soon things heat up on both the family and boyfriend fronts and Skye is in hot water all around. The boyfriend who wants too much (Skye in fact fights off a rape attempt) is a fairly stock character, and the plot here (Skye's family loyalties win out over her own desires) is fairly predictable. Rottman paints effective portraits, though: of Skye, both a serious athlete and a starry-eyed girl flattered by Mike's attentions, and especially of Sunny, worshipping his capable younger sister and beginning to see the start of his own athletic dreams when his swimming abilities lead him to the Special Olympics. While it's clear that some of Skye's family obligations are unfair, it's also clear that there's no alternative, and that Sunny is Skye's most loyal champion. Readers who don't mind the absence of surprises will enjoy this examination of family life and loyalties. DS


In this emotionally resonant African-American folktale set "back in the olden times," the childlessness of hard-working protagonists John and Clara is resolved through the fantastic means of two little white stones, found by Clara, that "shone as pale and round and smooth as twin moons in her cinnamon-colored palm." As predicted in wise Aunt Easter's "prophesyn' dreams," these stones turn into an "orphan boy an' girl . . . barefoot and raggedy, but beautiful" who clean house for the couple while they are working in the field. So these children can live "happily ever after with their new Pa and Ma," John and Clara must face down the cruel conjure man who orphaned and bewitched them and take from him three ingredients for Aunt Easter's magic charm. The standard English of the narration contrasts jarriingly with the imposed dialect of the dialogue ("Put de corn bread on de table, den hide. When de chillen eat de bread, yo' say dese words") and the story itself is unnecessarily lengthy. The somewhat romanticized oil paintings are rendered in a
dark palette highlighted by intense primary colors; the warmth of the tale is reinforced by the emphasis on the characters’ luminous faces. This story invites comparison with European folkloric motifs as well as other African and African-American tales (a note sources the tale in the Congo and in Arkansas). FK

Schachner, Judith Byron  
*The Grannyman*; written and illus. by Judith Byron Schachner. Dutton, 1999 32p  
R 5-8 yrs

Simon is “a very old cat,” lucky enough to have a family that adores him and does all they can to “keep him comfy in his old age.” The aged feline spends his time baking his old bones on radiators and “staring into space while he shuffled through a lifetime of old memories.” But Simon is feeling pitiful, and “he felt so useless that at ten o’clock on a Tuesday night, Simon stuck his bony old legs into the air and breathed his last. Or so he thought—but then, in less than a minute, his family plopped something soft right on top of their old cat’s tummy.” The new kitten requires demonstrations of whisker-washing, litterbox using, and, finally, grooming, and Simon happily obliges, until “a grumbly rumblly purr stirred deep within his chest and he curled himself around his little pet,” thus earning his new name, Grannyman. The story neatly balances between sweetness and wry humor, and the Siamese Simon and his kitten are depicted in typically catlike poses in impressionistic watercolor and pencil illustrations that make the most of the uncluttered space. Whether playing the piano, curled up on a chair, or stretched out on top of the stove, Simon is a memorable purr-sonality, and cat lovers, old and new, are going to appreciate him as much as his kitten does. JMD

Scott, C. Anne  
*Lizard Meets Ivana the Terrible*; illus. by Stephanie Roth. Holt, 1999 115p  
ISBN 0-8050-6093-6 $15.95  
R Gr. 2-4

Third-grader Lizzy Gardner is the new girl in school, and more than anything else she wants a best friend. Taken under the collective wings of classmates Tiffy and Crystal, Lizzy avoids Ivana (“the Terrible”), an outspoken, sometimes alarming individual. Assigned to one another as “journal buddies,” however, shy Lizzy and tempestuous Ivana begin a tentative relationship. Misunderstandings, miscommunication, and the usual grade-school angst interfere, but the girls come out on the right side of camaraderie in the end. Earth-shattering this isn’t, but it is eminently readable lower-grade fiction with plot and characterizations that ring true. Scott’s language is unassuming but effective, with a natural cadence that will easily draw in readers. Her descriptions of classroom politics, interpersonal dynamics, and social hierarchy are right on the money, and her adults, while not overwhelmingly intrusive, are present and loving. Roth’s black-and-white drawings have a masterful ease that adds to the ambiance. Young readers will see themselves in Ivana and Lizzie and perhaps be heartened in their own search for best-friendship. JMD

Shannon, David  
*David Goes to School*; written and illus. by David Shannon. Scholastic, 1999 32p  
ISBN 0-590-48087-1 $14.95  
R 3-6 yrs

Those familiar with *No, David* (BCCB 9/98) will realize that David’s encounter with school will not be all gold stars and smiley faces. He starts off late (“David!
You're tardy!"), goofs off at the chalkboard ("Sit down, David!"), gazes out the window ("PAY ATTENTION, David!")
and eventually lands himself in after-school detention, wherein his desk-cleaning labors earn him teacherly approval.
As in the previous book, David is clearly not a bad kid, just one who has difficulty reconciling his energetic impulses with the constraints of adult demands. The text (here childishly scrawled on scraps of penmanship-lined paper), which in most spreads is all we know of David's teacher, operates largely as captions or punch lines for the illustrations, and the art is independently eloquent enough to carry the weight. Round-headed David has a surreal yet friendly and child-drawn look, with his grin of randomly placed teeth, his shiny face, and his round, sneakered feet. His antics such as his cheerful drum solo in the library—and especially his pleading cross-legged squirm as the teacher sighs, "Again?"—will be recognizable (and perhaps inspiring) to viewers, who are unlikely ever to say "No" to David.

SONENKLAR, CAROL Mighty Boy. Orchard, 1999 118p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30203-2 $15.95 Ad Gr. 3-5

Howard Weinstein is having a hard time in his new fourth-grade class; he's in trouble with his teachers for not paying attention, and Eddie, the class bully, has chosen him as the object of his hostilities. Howard gets through it all by constantly daydreaming about Mighty Boy, a television superhero who has become his only (and imaginary) friend. Howard wins a chance to play a bit part in an episode of Mighty Boy, and, lost in the woods with the TV hero, discovers his own self-worth by saving Mighty Boy (real name Seymour) from a black bear, poison berries, and hungry mosquitoes. Howard's fifteen minutes of fame makes him more popular at school with everyone but Eddie, who he ultimately (and unbelievably) finesses with a swarm of bees. Sonenklar has a good ear for school-age dialogue, but unfortunately the sketchy plot is more farfetched than credibility will allow. Characterizations are shallow and convenience drives transition. Still, this title has cover art that should attract readers along with a facile story that won't tax them. JMD

ST. GEORGE, JUDITH In the Line of Fire: Presidents' Lives at Stake. Holiday House, 1999 142p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-8234-1428-0 $18.95 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-8

Four presidential assassinations and a host of near-tragedies are analyzed in this serviceable but erratically organized volume. The murders are covered first, and each episode includes information on the victim, the assassin, policies within the administration that bore on the president's death, and the impact of the killing upon the nation. A final chapter focuses on the near-misses, offering abridged treatments of attempts on F. Roosevelt, Truman, Ford, and Reagan. Topical shifts within the major accounts and the break with chronological order in the closing chapter somewhat impair the readability of this title. Covering the same ground as Rebecca C. Jones' The President Has Been Shot! (BCCB 9/96), St. George scores points for detail about the political aftermath of the murders and attempted murders, but comes in a far second to Jones' smoother storytelling. Although The President will be the preferred choice for casual readers, students researching a
particular episode would do well to consult both accounts to cull complementary information. An index and black-and-white photos are included. EB

TORRES, LAURA  November Ever After.  Holiday House, 1999  [208p]
ISBN 0-8234-1464-7  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7-10

Sixteen-year-old Amy is still reeling from her mother’s death; while the congregation is eager to minister to her and her pastor father, Amy really relies on her vivacious best friend, Sara. Her relationship with Sara takes a new turn, however, when she realizes that Sara’s interest in Anita isn’t just a secondary friendship but a romance. The preacher’s-kid aspect gives an interesting slant to the changes Amy’s undergoing (she’s concerned with Sara’s lesbianism theoretically as well as socially, and it bothers her that the boy she really likes is a serious churchgoer approved of by her father just as she herself is drifting away from the church). Though the book glides past some questions (it never seems to occur to Amy that Sara might be attracted to her), it’s open about others: it’s clear, for instance, that Amy is so dependent on Sara that she’d have trouble with anyone who might start to take up Sara’s time. Teens not up to the complexities of Yamanaka’s similarly themed Name Me Nobody (BCCB 12/99) will warm to this treatment of a friendship surviving change. DS

Trade ed. ISBN 0-88899-369-2  $15.95  R  Gr. 5-8

This collection of seven stories covers a wide variety of topics (ranging from an ambitious summer money-maker finding romance in the arms of a competitor in “The Entertainer and the Entrepreneur” to an understated but creepy ghost story in “Cabin Fever”), but a recurring theme is that of young people defining themselves. Often this new understanding is in light of their parents (“When you’re little you think the giants know everything. Then you get older and the world gets real scary because you realize they may be bigger but they aren’t always using a compass that works”) but sometimes it’s in response to a neighbor (“Mrs. Galoshers” provides a new view of the world when city-boy Jeremy moves to the country) or even a friend (the narrator of “The Sand Sifter” realizes that he missed his friend’s distress signals). Throughout, Valgardson has a smooth perceptivity and an easily inventive turn of phrase that’s reminiscent of the short stories of his fellow Canadian Tim Wynne-Jones (Lord of the Fries, BCCB 3/99, etc.); these stories are less whimsical and more grounded, however, and therefore likelier to strike a chord with kids looking for compact insight into the young human condition. DS

Trade ed. ISBN 0-88899-358-7  $14.95  Ad  Gr. 4-6

The apus (spirits) of the Andean mountain Ampato have not been kind to their Incan worshippers; smoke and ash have shrouded the sun’s light and drought has been a continual plague. So desperate are the priests to appease the apus that they decide to send Timta, one of the chosen maidens of their temple, to deliver their prayers personally, an act that requires her sacrifice. Vande Griek gracefully blends genuine tension over the sacrifice with reverent respect for religious beliefs into an
imaginative speculation about the Ice Maiden, the teenage girl sacrificed some five hundred years ago, whose frozen remains were found on Ampato in 1995. Italicized introductions to each chapter contrast the archeological find with the fictional tale, and readers with even passing familiarity with the Ice Maiden will understand that the story's sad conclusion is inevitable. Instead of bringing her heroine Timta to this logical end, however, Vande Griek springs an awkward twist in which Timta switches places with a more zealously religious maiden and thus cheats fate. The abrupt, strained climax, together with Timta's modern sensibilities, strikes a false note in an otherwise engaging tale. Still, readers intrigued by Johan Reinhard's *Discovering the Inca Ice Maiden* (BCCB 5/98) will want to join Vande Griek in her musings. Stylized but effective pencil drawings punctuate the text. EB


Drawing its young pupils from New York City public schools, Ballet Tech provides many kids with their first introduction to dance. Varriale describes the program and the classes, making clear that while "the school hopes to introduce many children to ballet, its real purpose is to train professional ballet dancers, young people who will make a career of dancing onstage." Whether they be short-timers or lifers, however, the young dancers' enthusiasm is clear (the book includes a multitude of quotes from the students); it's also clear that for those who accept the special offer to attend full-time, the work in both academics and dance is rigorous. The photographs are vivid, memorable, and elegant: artistically grainy, they rely on both color and black-and-white images, emphasizing the art of ballet (an enfilade of spread legs *en pointe* is positively architectural) as well as the students themselves (the serious faces seem filled with destiny). Unfortunately, there's little connection between the quotes, the text, and the pictures; it's often clear that the pictured dancer isn't the one who's quoted nearby (and the quotes sometimes have visual contrast problems that make them difficult to read), and the placement in the book seems to relate more to aesthetic than conceptual effect, which will frustrate readers who want to know which of these kids said what. The magnificent photography offers an alluring look at a focused and unusual life, however; pair this with Barboza's *I Feel Like Dancing* (BCCB 6/92) for an overall introduction to dance. DS


Bernard is transfixed by the painting of the stranger named Vincent, whom he happens upon in Central Park; the boy guides Vincent through New York, taking him "north to Harlem, south to the Statue of Liberty, and east to the Brooklyn Bridge," watching as the artist paints the city "in bright and beautiful colors." In return, Vincent takes Bernard to the Museum of Modern Art and a painting called *Starry Night*, whereupon he disappears—and Bernard himself begins to draw. The story is gossamer thin, existing mainly to hang the artwork on and lacking any independent narrative drive. The plot's events are illustrated in black and brown sketchwork on beige backgrounds, with effects that vary from workmanlike to
awkward. The real achievement is the imagined art of Van Gogh in New York, where scenes offer homages to the artist in subject (there's a Greenwich Village version of Night Café) as well as in style. While no one's going to mistake the art for Van Gogh, no one's going to mistake it for an evocation of another artist, either; the Vincent Van Waldman composite is both compellingly contemporary (the strong contrasts evoke not only the postimpressionists but also John Steptoe) and true to its influence, providing a gaudy and memorable look at New York. Artistic "what if's" tend to be limited to satire these days; it's invigorating to see the old tradition of working in the style of the masters given new life, and young art students might find some inspiration here. DS

WEST, DELNO C. Uncle Sam and Old Glory: Symbols of America; by Delno C. and Jean M. West; illus. by Christopher Manson. Atheneum, 2000 [40p] ISBN 0-689-82043-7 $17.00 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-5

Fifteen images that have come to symbolize patriotic values within the United States are examined here in an attractive, clearly-presented format that will be welcomed with open arms by both primary school teachers and their primary student researchers. Each entry features a full page, intricately detailed tinted woodcut and a single page of concise information that covers the genesis of the symbol (at least, as far as it can be known), how it has evolved over time, and how it has come to resonate on an emotional level among American citizens. Although the Wests keep the youth of their intended audience ever in mind, they do not neglect the controversies or darker sides of the symbols. They acknowledge, for example, that "sometimes people use the flag to protest when they disagree with government actions... each group uses the American flag to symbolize its own beliefs." Discussing the images on the buffalo nickel, they wryly observe, "It is interesting to note that these two symbols of America—the buffalo and the Indian—were only used after both had almost been eradicated from the American scene." (Smokey the Bear seems a bit out of place here, however, and there's no indication that his official name is actually "Smokey Bear.") Teachers will be sorely tempted to keep the school copy of this title as a year-round reference, so it might be wise to purchase an extra copy for the kids. EB

WIESNER, DAVID Sector 7; written and illus. by David Wiesner. Clarion, 1999 48p ISBN 0-395-74656-6 $16.00 R* 6-10 yrs

In Wiesner's newest wordless outing, a boy travels with his class to the Observation Deck of the Empire State Building, where he meets a playful and friendly cloud. Boy and cloud soar together to the Cloud Dispatch Center for Sector 7, where the assembled clouds grumble over the relentless sameness of their assigned appearances; our human hero assists by providing the delighted clouds with suggestions for alternative shapes (with an emphasis on fish). Management objects and the boy is summarily sent back, but a veritable aquarium of clouds now glides fluidly through the skies. While there's a sweet edge to this fantasy (the friendly cloud has a distinctly marshmallowy look), it never clods, and Wiesner drafts the figures and landscape (skyscape?) with a poker-faced literalness that makes things more adventurous than dreamy. The details of the Cloud Dispatch process are inventive and absorbing, ranging from the Grand-Central-worthy architecture to the organizationally necessary arrival and departure board that lets the clouds know
whose turn it is to go out which tube. There’s also something of Raymond Briggs’ *The Snowman* in the appeal of a fluffy white friend who flies you through a wordless fantasia, and the fish clouds (ichthyonomibi?) offer up a magnificent display that understandably sends cats thunderstruck and yearning to their windows and fish leaping from the bay in an attempt to swim along. Aside from creating an alluring fantasy outing, Wiesner may have spawned a new genre here: the picture book for in-flight reading. DS

**Williams, Laura E.** *The Ghost Stallion.* Holt, 1999 104p ISBN 0-8050-6193-2 $15.95  Ad  Gr. 4-7

Mary Elizabeth lives with her father and little sister, Nellie, since the departure of her mother months ago. Her heightened awareness of family tensions makes her realize that she wasn’t actually Pa’s daughter in the first place, and she begins to believe that she might really be the daughter of a newly arrived stranger. The stranger has come to shoot the wild stallion that’s wrecking local ranchers’ fences and stealing mares; Mary Elizabeth, a defiant champion of the stallion, believes the stranger to be on her side in secretly wanting to keep him free, and thinks perhaps the man will be the agent of her own freedom. The lawless stallion targeted by callous ranchers and defended by a headstrong young girl is a romantic and hoary plot, and the book lays the motifs on thickly with the nameless stranger, Mary Elizabeth’s mother’s locket, and Mary Elizabeth’s own namelessness until the last page when her father addresses her with her—and her mother’s—name. Williams is a capable and restrained writer, however, and the story flows smoothly if predictably; the revelations are carefully paced, the understated narration effective, and the story concise without being telegraphic. If you thought they didn’t make ‘em like this any more and you’ve been avoiding breaking that news to the Thoroughbred series fans, give thanks and hand them this. DS


Starting with a general assessment and then focusing on the life of a particular family, Wolf’s photoessay provides a look at a country U.S. kids don’t get to hear much about firsthand. Despite the country-inclusive title, the text focuses entirely on the city of Havana, taking as its main subject Ana Moreira, a twelve-year-old girl with dreams of being a ballerina, whose parents are “among Cuba’s foremost artists.” The book details Ana’s daily life, explaining her schedule for school and ballet, and discusses her parents’ careers as well, giving an idea of at least one family’s life in contemporary Cuba. It’s hard, however, to imagine that this is supposed to be an account of a typical family, engaging though it is. The national extrapolations are often vaguely phrased (“Since the revolution, artists have been given every possible encouragement and support”) or simply elusive, and the prose tends towards traveloguish generalities whether discussing difficulties or benefits (“While the future of this troubled island appears clouded with uncertainty, for Ana the future seems bright with hope and expectation”). The photography is the book’s most inviting characteristic: Ana’s family is an appealing group, and the portraits of various Cubans and historic Havana have an allure that may send kids agitating for an unusual vacation destination. Though this doesn’t effectively address the vacuum of information about Cuba for young readers, it will at least provide a personable introduction. DS
ISBN 0-19-521556-7  $18.95  
R  Gr. 3-6**

This introduction to fine art takes a usefully thematic approach, with each spread featuring two or three works of art and addressing topics such as figures, imagined creatures, patterns, and letters. In addition to brief discussion of each work, the spreads include a "Look Closer" section that prompts further lines of inquiry ("In which season was Holiday painted? How can you tell?") and an Activity section ("Listen to a piece of music. What sort of ideas and pictures come into your head? Make a picture of the music") that move the experience beyond merely gazing. The book occasionally slips into problematic assumptions ("You can see the fear on this animal's face"), and the end Picture List oddly omits countries from information about the museums housing the featured art, but this is generally a refreshingly undogmatic introduction. There's a piquant variety in the included works, and the questions genuinely provide occasions for further examination of the art (a final Art Detective Quiz provides additional seek-and-find fun); the activities are both plausible and relevant, as well as being appropriately messy. A few of the images are a bit small for careful viewing, but most are sizeable and clearly reproduced. This will be a useful baptism of paint for readers not yet ready for Rosemary Davidson's *Take a Look* (BCCB 2/94). An index is included. DS

**WONG, JANET S.  Behind the Wheel: Poems about Driving.  McElderry, 1999  44p  
ISBN 0-689-82531-5  $15.00  
Ad  Gr. 7-10**

Thirty-six free-verse poems describe a teenager's driving experiences: "Ask a friend/to give you a ride,/ to help you out,/ to get you home./ When you've found some better times,/ you won't forget, you'll pay him back./ Let your friends be good to you./ Go along for the ride,/ face in the wind." The poems are simple and concrete, and readers may enjoy the wordplay ("Crackety-crack/ crackety-crack/ Grandmother's knuckles/ begin their attack"—"Crash") and the humor (after teens' third traffic violation, they will be forced to "direct traffic,/ head shaved bald,/ singing in a microphone,/ flanked by parents/ dressed in pajamas"—"Insurance for Teenage Drivers: A New Plan"). Several poems hint at the poet's Chinese heritage ("After the war with the Japanese/ the money markets crashed/ and Grandmother's Chinese paper dollars were worth nothing—"), and teens will connect to the poet's growing sense of independence ("You've got to believe/ there's a place for you / in this amazing world—/ and you owe it to yourself"). The language is unfortunately lackluster and Wong's depiction of a teen's inner world is shallow; it's not off the mark, though, and the poems address matters dear to the young-adult heart. This is appropriate for teens who enjoy Mel Glenn's books or have a driving interest in poems about kids like themselves. JNH

ISBN 0-689-82617-6  $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
R  Gr. 3-6**

These fifteen poems explore the psychic deeps where "a tangle of roots/ sends up/ green shoots/ and dreams grow/ wild." The unselfconsciously multicultural cast of dreamers depicted in the striking gouache on paper illustrations provide diverse
voices for poems about the terrible reality of a “news-at-seven true nightmare,” the fluid fantasy of “swimming free,/ water washing/ over me,/ seeing clear/ through eyes like glass,” and the more down-to-earth dreams of the child who doesn’t want to fly but instead likes “to go to sleep at nine/ curled up round/ in my safe bed,/ dreaming soft and fuzzy/ things.” The combination of the impressionistic and the prosaic in these vivid poems invites rereading just as the fabulous images of the illustrations and the dreamy monochromatic backgrounds invite re-viewing. Even wide-awake readers will find something they can relate to in this collection. FK


Jack Carlton unwittingly invites ghost Nathaniel Witherspoon into his life when he brings home an old lighthouse lamp purchased from a garage sale for two dollars. The ghost materializes in Jack’s bedroom (Mr. Carlton has moved the family 1500 miles from Ames, Iowa to Minty, Maine), and, after a rocky start, the two become friends. They also become allies, as Nathaniel shares his seafaring experience with Jack, and Jack promises to clear Nathaniel’s father of accusations of cowardice in a past tragedy. Woodruff’s simmering plot rolls to a boil with Jack’s heroic rescue of his mother after a sailboating accident (allowing Jack’s perfectionist father to recognize Jack’s gifts) and his accidental discovery of Mr. Witherspoon’s knife inside a museum display, which provides crucial evidence to prove Nathaniel’s father’s heroism. Unfortunately things simmer for too long before the action heats up, and some of the events seem to occur more for expedience or didacticism than plot necessity. Nonetheless, kids will appreciate the idea of being chummy with a ghost, and they’ll revel in wondering, like Jack, if Nathaniel is real or not—until the story turns up the obligatory brass button from the ghost’s coat. EAB


This elegantly appointed collection includes poems by Robert Graves, Ben Jonson, Sir Walter Scott, Fiona MacLeod, Shakespeare, and others; the tales (adapted by Yolen) include stories of fairy folk from Scotland, France, New Zealand, Greece, and Africa. Retold with an ear for reading aloud or storytelling, the selections include both the unfamiliar (the Maori “The Stolen Wife”) and the classic (Scotland’s “Thomase the Rhymer”). While Mackey’s drafting is sometimes awkward, the full-page paintings and oval cameos framed with a thin line of gold have an otherworldly air that suits the content of this anthology. The palette is earthy and green, giving a sense of substance to creatures usually envisioned as gauzily pink and overly sprightly. The text pages have a dusty gold edging that adds to the careful design, resulting in a visual presentation that will greatly please lovers of things magical and fey. Source notes and a bibliography are included. JMD

YOUNG, KAREN ROMANO  Video.  Greenwillow, 1999  186p ISBN 0-688-16517-6  $16.00 Ad Gr. 6-9

Eighth-grade semi-jockette Janine is being left behind by her longtime buddies because of their interest in boys and cheerleading and because of Janine’s smart mouth and bad attitude. When new kid Eric arrives (on crutches due to a skiing
accident), Janine barely tolerates his presence at her bus stop. Their big eighth-grade assignment is to observe someone from a distance and write their observations in their notebooks; Janine crossly chooses herself, and Eric finds himself observing Janine. The novel alternates between entries in the two notebooks done in two different typefaces, with a third text in italics. While the voice in italics is omniscient, unfortunately the reader isn't, and the chronology of events gets confused. Janine's notebook entries show her desperately trying to hold onto her old friends and only alienating them further; they also include her encounter with a masturbating flasher. Eric, videotaping Janine from a distance as he is hampered by his broken leg, moves from believing Janine a bully to understanding her dilemma to realizing that she is in trouble and needs help. The plot here isn't nearly as tight as in Young's previous novel *The Beetle and Me* (BCCB 3/99), and the triadic narrative and the precipitating crisis of the flasher are clumsily contrived. Janine and Eric's voices seem very naïve for eighth graders; nonetheless, as characters, they are articulate and complex. Janine is heartbreakingly credible as a girl who inadvertently sabotages her own success, and Eric, in a voice that echoes the anger and confusion he feels due to changes in his own household (new school, divorcing parents), is a sympathetic counterpoint. JMD
To become a Bulletin Blue Ribbon a book must undergo severe trials, including close scrutiny by the committee and competition with other strong works. The titles that remain on the field after this qualitative tournament are awarded the colors of honor. Blue Ribbon books are not a publishing year’s worth of books that all libraries should buy and all children should read (although they should), nor is it a list of “best” books. Blue Ribbons are the knighthood of the literary realm, the books that are noble, honest, and true. All in all, it was a good year. Here’s to the next one.

Janice M. Del Negro, Editor

PICTURE BOOKS

Daly, Niki. *The Boy on the Beach*; written and illus. by Niki Daly. McElderry. (July/August)

Dörrie, Doris. *Lottie’s Princess Dress*; illus. by Julia Kaergel. Dial. (November)


Lester, Julius. *What a Truly Cool World*; illus. by Joe Cepeda. Scholastic. (February)

Myers, Christopher. *Black Cat*; written and illus. by Christopher Myers. Scholastic. (February)

Priceman, Marjorie. *Emeline at the Circus*; written and illus. by Marjorie Priceman. Knopf. (July/August)

Sandburg, Carl. *The Huckabuck Family: and How They Raised Popcorn in Nebraska and Quit and Came Back*; illus. by David Small. Farrar. (September)

Say, Allen. *Tea with Milk*; written and illus. by Allen Say. Lorraine/Houghton. (June)

Sierra, Judy, ad. *Tasty Baby Belly Buttons*; illus. by Meilo So. Knopf. (June)

Thomas, Frances. *What If?*; illus. by Ross Collins. Hyperion. (September)


Wiesner, David. *Sector 7*; written and illus. by David Wiesner. Clarion. (January 2000)

Zimmerman, Andrea. *Trashy Town*; by Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemesha; illus. by Dan Yaccarino. HarperCollins. (May)
FICTION

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. Farrar. (October)
Barrett, Tracy. *Anna of Byzantium*. Delacorte. (July/August)
Billingsley, Franny. *The Folk Keeper*. Karl/Atheneum. (October)
Cooney, Caroline. *Tune in Anytime*. Delacorte. (October)
Hoobler, Dorothy. *The Ghost in the Tokaido Inn*; by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler.
          Philomel. (September)
Horvath, Polly. *The Trolls*. Farrar. (February)
Koss, Amy Goldman. *The Ashwater Experiment*. Dial. (June)
Lawrence, Iain. *The Smugglers*. Delacorte. (July/August)
Pennebaker, Ruth. *Conditions of Love*. Holt. (March)
Perkins, Lynne Rae. *All Alone in the Universe*; written and illus. by Lynne Rae Perkins. Greenwillow. (October)
Wittlinger, Ellen. *Hard Love*. Simon. (July/August)

NONFICTION

Florian, Douglas. *Winter Eyes*; written and illus. by Douglas Florian. Greenwillow. (October)
Hamanaka, Sheila. *In Search of the Spirit: The Living National Treasures of Japan*; written and illus. by Sheila Hamanaka and Ayano Ohmi and with photographs. Morrow. (April)
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.

**Adoption—stories:** San Souci

**African Americans:** Bridges; Haskins; Monceaux; Ringgold

**African Americans—folklore:** San Souci

**African Americans—poetry:** Dunbar; hooks

**African Americans—stories:** Farmer; hooks

**ALPHABET BOOKS:** Hausman

**American Indians:** Monceaux

**American Indians—fiction:** Vande Griek

**American Indians—folklore:** Norman

**Animals:** Maynard

**Animals—stories:** Crimi

**Antarctica:** Jenkins

**Art:** Carter; Guarnieri; Leuzzi; Monceaux; Waldman; Wolfe

**Art appreciation:** Wolfe

**Art history:** Guarnieri

**Assassinations:** St. George

**Astronomy:** Fradin

**Astronomy—stories:** Hopkinson

**Aunts and uncles—fiction:** Ingold

**Aviation—fiction:** Ingold

**Ballet:** Varriale

**BIOGRAPHIES:** Bridges; Brown; Guarnieri; McPherson; Ringgold

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**Boxing:** Bacho

**Brothers and sisters—fiction:** Rottman

**Brothers and sisters—stories:** Hopkinson

**Bullies—fiction:** Sonenklar

**Careers:** Maynard

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**Civil rights movement:** Bridges; Ringgold

**Civil War:** Beller; Fraser

**Clouds—stories:** Wiesner

**Crafts:** Carter

**Crime and criminals:** St. George

**Crime and criminals—fiction:** Bo; McNeal; Young

**Crocodiles—stories:** Marcellino

**Cuba:** Wolf

**Dancers and dancing:** Varriale

**Death and dying—fiction:** McNeal; Torres

**Death and dying—stories:** Bunting

**Disabilities—fiction:** Rottman

**Dolls—stories:** Bliss

**Dreams—poetry:** Wong *Night*

**Driving—poetry:** Wong *Behind*

**Ethics and values:** Torres; Vande Griek

**Fairies—poetry:** Yolen

**Fairies—fiction:** Yolen

**Families—fiction:** Rinaldi; Rottman; Williams

**FANTASY:** Pullman; Rapp; Wiesner

**Fathers and daughters—fiction:** Ingold; Pullman; Williams

**Fathers and daughters—stories:** Hopkinson

**Fathers and sons—fiction:** Woodruff

**Fireworks—fiction:** Pullman

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Behind
Uncles-fiction: Carter
Vikings-fiction: Branford
Vocational guidance: Maynard
Voyages and travel-fiction:
Woodruff
Women's studies: Beller; Brown;
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