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A LOOK INSIDE

3 THE BIG PICTURE

Pedro and Me: Friendship, Loss, and What I Learned written and illus. by Judd Winick

4 NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Reviewed titles include:

7 • A Gardener’s Alphabet written and illus. by Mary Azarian

8 • Hope Was Here by Joan Bauer

13 • Here We All Are written and illus. by Tomie dePaola

27 • Darkness over Denmark: The Danish Resistance and the Rescue of the Jews by Ellen Levine

41 • Memories of Summer by Ruth White

43 PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS

45 SUBJECT AND USE INDEX
EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

* Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R Recommended.
Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR Not recommended.
SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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Six years is a long time in MTV time and in young people’s lives, and many readers may not be familiar with Pedro Zamora, who appeared in the 1994 season of The Real World, became an eloquent and popular example of someone living with HIV, and died within a few months of the show’s airing. It won’t make much difference to their appreciation of this memoir: Winick, Zamora’s roommate on the show and a successful cartoonist, has used the graphic-novel form to affectingly chronicle his friendship with Zamora, his own education about HIV and AIDS, Zamora’s worsening illness, and Winick’s succeeding his friend as an AIDS education lecturer.

It’s a given from the beginning that there’s a lot of sadness in here, and this is a loving memoir that goes easy on any warts of its late subject. It’s not merely a tearjerking tragedy, however: there are insights into the on-camera life, side stories about Winick’s post-show relationship with housemate Pam Ling, and discussion of the positive experiences Winick has had as a result of this connection. Most of all, however, there’s the extensive and believable depiction of his friendship with Zamora; the dialogue-heavy nature of the medium brings readers into the middle of their bantering affection (while watching Star Trek: The Next Generation: “What is it with gay men and Beverly Crusher?” “Excuse me?” “You are the third gay man I’ve heard say Crusher is beautiful.” “Tsk. Stereotyping homosexuals. I’m so ashamed.” “Yeah, that’s me. Nazi.” “I suppose you prefer Counselor Troi?” “Well, not to say that Crusher isn’t beautiful but yes, for me, Troi has something going on.” “Especially the early episodes with those tight outfits of hers”). It’s got the authentic ring of young men hanging out and giving each other friendly grief, and it’s also effective in demonstrating both their characters (Winick appears as a glib, sometimes brittle quipmeister whose surface humor belies his deep concern) and the friendship that Winick lost when Zamora died.

The graphic narrative isn’t a usual one in young people’s trade literature. Winick is a natural storyteller in this format, however, and he makes excellent use of its flexibility. When recounting the devastating early death of Zamora’s mother, he uses a black background against which is placed small white boxes of text and an image of Mrs. Zamora and two of her children; the image is repeated twice, each time cutting out more of the children and finally ending up with her smiling out alone against a background of darkness. Pedro’s deathbed is viewed from above, a tiny square of light amid the dark, with the reader looking down at his bed just as his loved ones do in the picture. The stylized art evinces some manga
influence, especially in the tendency towards doe-like eyes, but the images are firmly grounded in reality. The result is a narrative of dignity and extraordinary accessibility that should help pave the way for other graphic novels and nonfiction.

Some of that dignity comes, of course, from the seriousness of the book's topic. We're often trained to shy away from overt messages in literature for young people, but it's earned here: this is a book largely about a man whose message was the focus of his life. The text includes factual information about HIV transmission and truthful accounts of people's lives changed (addenda include relevant organizations and updates on the people in the book); it also includes, in Winick's persona, an example of somebody HIV negative coming to grips with the difference between theory and reality ("I've seen An Early Frost and Philadelphia. The very special episodes of Thirtysomething") when it comes to people with HIV. The MTV connection and visual format will help reassure readers that this isn't a stodgy read, so they'll end up absorbing a fair bit of AIDS education as well as a compelling and moving story. It's a creditable legacy; Zamora would be proud. (Imprint information appears on p. 42.)

Deborah Stevenson, Associate Editor

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE


Mother Holly leaves Cat to do a few chores in her cottage while she is out for the day ("I have errands to do: a cooing lesson for my doves; fresh honeysuckle for my bees; and a leaky brook to mend"). Of course, rascal Cat botches the housework: first he spills the soup; then, to clean up the spill, he sprinkles water from Mother Holly's magic watering can, and a storm starts inside the cottage. Similar catastrophes occur when he tries to stoke the fire with the magic bellows (which summons up a great wind), sets a bag of corn too near to the hearth (which pops and makes the sound of thunder), and makes a small tear in the goose-feather quilt (the feathers of which turn into snow). After much work, everything is cleared away except for a single kernel of popped corn, which Cat quickly eats as he hears Mother Holly entering the cottage. The thundering popcorn in Cat's belly gives him away, and his housekeeping misadventures are revealed. Schachner's watercolor and pastel illustrations are warmly cartoonish, showing a convincingly beguiling Cat in various exaggerated poses, which are particularly effective when Cat is shown struggling against the elements that are loosed in the cottage. The cottage setting is bright and busy but not overwhelmingly cluttered, and it includes touches of humor such as Mother Holly's ruffled undies hanging in a corner. Alexander's original tale progresses with the easy feel of folklore, and children will delight in this mischievous pourquoi tale about how Cat got his purr. KM

They are separated by only 100 yards of school playground, but Fip the worm and Lerner Chanse, the new girl in sixth grade, are completely unaware that they share ostracism from their respective social groups. Fip, just moments after his birth, is rejected by the Lumbricus Clan of worms, and Lerner finds herself scorned by the MPOOE (Most Powerful Ones On Earth) club that rules the sixth grade. When Lerner wishes she could make the whole school disappear, little does she know that Fip has the power to do just that; Fip eats words, eating the ink right off of paper, and whatever he eats on paper disappears in the real world. The premise is intriguing, but the logic of Fip's magical powers is weak. Although opening chapters oscillate successfully between two settings, later chapters attempt to connect many more disparate venues, from a tack factory disguised as a school to a beauty salon where a popular hair dye has just disappeared thanks to Fip's munching. Attempts to handle this unwieldy structure overtake character development and story, and readers may find themselves mired in tangents. Nevertheless, many readers will find humor here, and the vermicular plot makes this an unusual entry in the school-story genre. KM


Readers have seen images of covered wagons roll across pages of myriad children’s books, and here Ammon takes a close look at their design, advantages and limitations, and their proud history “as the tractor-trailer trucks of their time.” Construction details abound—curved oak floors prevented cargo from shifting or rolling out, a high hitch eased the horses’ efforts with the load, differential wheel size and pitch lent stability on the rutted roads, and a brake system did away with the more primitive chain method used to control a downhill slide. Conestoga horses and their placement within the team are discussed, and even the inns where the teamsters stayed on a typical five-day, sixty-mile run get some attention. Ammon is particularly skillful at relating historic detail to modern experience. Comparing the Conestoga’s load to the weight of 160 fourth graders and tracing the roots of the Teamsters Union helps keep the tone lively and the material relevant (though his etymological explanations of “be there with bells on” and “mind your P’s and Q’s” owe more to myth than linguistic scholarship). Farnsworth’s misty paintings generally do more to evoke the romance of the Old West than to explicate the wagon’s workings, but a few occasional monochrome diagrams and annotated spreads make a useful and welcome appearance. Incorporate this title in a social studies unit, and students will consider potholes, shock absorbers, and Holiday Inns in a whole new light. EB


Two young girls are left to fend for themselves in an Iowa sodhouse when their mother slips into a debilitating melancholy. After waiting at a neighbor’s house
for her to arrive as planned, the sisters eventually find their own way home only to find Mama sitting in a rocking chair in an almost catatonic state, suffering from a more severe episode of the depression that followed the deaths of her last two babies. With their father gone for an indefinite period, eleven-year-old Polly and nine-year-old Jessie are essentially alone; Polly correctly senses that the Smiths, their nearest neighbors, are a threat and not a safety net. After her mother marches off across the prairie ("Mama pushed at Polly's hands to loosen them from her arm and... walked on, toward the west"), Polly, tired of acting like a grownup, confesses their plight. Mrs. Smith responds by arranging for the girls to join an orphan train; the girls, in turn, run away and manage to stay out of the Smiths' way until "they heard the wagon... Just the rumble" and then "ran towards their papa who had come back." The ending is happy but abrupt and minimalist; nor does the story flesh out prairie life in any detail. It does offer moments of emotional clarity in its portrayal of a believably harsh world in which Polly thinks "someone should help them. They were children," but no one does. This stark complement to the family-centered Little House on the Prairie books includes an equally stark unannotated bibliography that cites tomes such as the Encyclopedia of Schizophrenic and Psychotic Disorders and The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie, but tough-minded young readers will find enough with which to grapple in the novel itself. FK

**Atwater-Rhodes, Amelia**  
_Demon in My View_. Delacorte, 2000 176p  
Ad Gr. 7-10

Teenage Jessica has a secret life: she is the author of several horror novels under the pseudonym Ash Night. Her latest book, _Tiger, Tiger_, is attracting quite a bit of attention from the real-life counterparts of the vampire characters who frequent her dark imaginings. When Aubrey, the vampire protagonist of Jessica's latest novel, walks into her classroom, Jessica realizes that something she hadn't anticipated has stalked onto her horizon. Aubrey initially plans to make Jessica cease her literary exposés, but Jessica's affinity with the dark intrigues him. That affinity also threatens her safety, so much so that several witches have come to town to help her back to the light. It is apparent, however, that the dark is a lot more fun, and Jessica is no fool—given the option, she opts for Aubrey, and the conclusion of this novel gives a whole new meaning to selecting a life path. Plot inconveniences are resolved with surprising alacrity (Jessica's adoptive mother, with whom she has a very sketchy relationship, is handily disposed of by a newbie vampire, and despite a lot of posturing the witches don't put up much of a fight); past history is integrated into the novel via Jessica's writing, providing a motivational subtext. Following the lead of such adult vampire novelists as Anne Rice and Laurel Hamilton, Atwater-Rhodes stretches vampire lore to the max and then some (readers may be surprised to find that the right witch can give a vampire back its humanity if it really really wants to reject the howling night life). Characterization is shallow gothic, and there is enough sensing presences and exchanging life forces to require a very flexible suspension of disbelief; the language is also occasionally strained rather than rich, echoing the dusty pages of many thesauri. Nonetheless, this is a fast-paced vampire novel with an anti-Buffy heroine and a studly vampire who aren't going to let a little thing like death stand between them. JMD
AZARIAN, MARY  A Gardener’s Alphabet; written and illus. by Mary Azarian. Houghton, 2000 32p
ISBN 0-618-03380-7 $16.00  R 5-8 yrs

Azarian’s childhood love of gardening stayed with her to her adult life, and, “after almost forty years of growing all manner of plants,” she has “almost learned how to garden.” This lovingly designed volume is not so much an alphabet book about gardening as a gardening book in alphabet form. Lushly crowded watercolor-tinted woodcuts feature varied garden settings and activities from Arbor to Bulbs to Compost, from Fountains to Greenhouse to Harvest, ending with the ubiquitous Zucchini. Azarian’s affection for her topic is apparent in images of smiling members of an extended family tending to their garden plots. Each woodcut is distinguished by leafy details and spots of floral color, and while the “Japanese Garden,” “Kitchen Garden,” and “Xeriscape” may need to be explained to young viewers, the liveliness of the compositions will hold them throughout. This isn’t the perfect book to teach preschoolers their abcs (the words appear in all capitals, and there is no differentiation between the alphabet letter and the rest of the letters in the featured word), but it is a pleasant book to share with budding gardeners or even with those kids who just like to dig in the dirt. JMD

BALIT, CHRISTINA Atlantis: The Legend of a Lost City; written and illus. by Christina Balit. Holt, 2000 27p
ISBN 0-8050-6334-X $16.95  R 6-9 yrs

The legend of the lost island of Atlantis is given cohesion and style in this picture-book adaptation. The rhythmic cadence of the language is a readaloud dream: “Floating on one of Poseidon’s emerald seas was a small rocky island. Few visited its shores and no one bothered to give it a name. But the sun rose warmly over it each morning and set sleepily behind it every night.” The legend tells of Poseidon’s love for a daughter of the island, his promise to make it a fit place for a king and queen, and his subsequent disappointment when the island’s inhabitants forget their blessings and bring about their own destruction. Balit’s illustrations appear to be in constant motion due to swirling lines, rolling waves, and windswept flora. Overly busy backdrops are mitigated by elegantly stylized figures that anchor the compositions. Diverse perspectives, a sun-gilded palette cooled with fishy blues and sea greens, and unexpected placement of the players in the foreground and background adds emphasis. Gold-colored highlights sparkle here and there among necklaces, scales, tridents, and underwater scenes. A note by historian Geoffrey Ashe sets the story in its mythological context. JMD

ISBN 0-380-97865-2 $14.95  Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 4-6

Nine-year-old Alice, the only child of a single mother, meticulously documents her life in a journal. Initially both sheltered and underestimated, Alice begins bit by bit to break free of her neurotic mother’s overprotectiveness, establishing contact with her estranged grandmothers and her absent father. The conflicts herein are mostly adult and mostly Alice’s mother’s: Mum can’t get along with Gene (Alice’s paternal grandmother); she’s angry because Alice’s father does not provide
monetary or emotional support (Alice’s conception is the title “accident”); Mum is mad at her own mother because she didn’t protect her from an abusive stepfather; and she’s mad at Alice because she won’t leave well enough alone. The journal itself is rife with deliberate misspellings, and Alice’s writing assignments for her teacher (also included) are only marginally interesting. Alice is entirely too analytical about her own life, so much so that the childish misspellings and the content war with one another. The book is unbalanced in its depiction of her school life and claustrophobic in its setting (mostly inside Alice’s house and head). Unlikely truces prevail at the end of the book, due to Alice’s catching a convenient case of meningitis: Alice’s mother makes a sort of peace with both grandmothers, and Alice makes peace with her absent but soon to be present father and his new (pregnant) wife. There is little momentum and less action, and the pace gets bogged down in the overwritten plot. JMD

BAUER, JOAN  
*Hope Was Here.* Putnam, 2000  [192p]  
Reviewed from galleys  R Gr. 7-10

Teenaged Hope is a waitress extraordinaire, traveling around with her aunt Addy, a temperamental and brilliant diner cook. Now they’re settling in a town just outside Milwaukee at the Welcome Diner, owned by G. T. Stoop, who needs assistance since contracting leukemia. It turns out there’s another reason he wants some extra hands in the kitchen: he’s making a run for the mayor’s office against the corrupt and otherwise unopposed incumbent, who’s in the pocket of the local corporate dairy. Hope and the rest of the diner crew (including Braverman the grill man, with whom Hope finds a connection beyond the culinary) are solidly behind their idealistic Quaker boss, and they throw themselves into the political fray despite the possibility of dangerous repercussions. Bauer’s fiction (*Rules of the Road*, BCCB 2/98, etc.) has always had a Capra-esque flavor, and this novel takes that tendency to its height in this warm and compelling account of the little guy going up against the political Goliath. Though there’s some Capra schmaltz as well (G. T. is pretty darned saintly), there’s enough drama in the rage against the machine and in Hope’s increasing investment in the people around her (she sees her mother only once every few years and knows her father not at all, and she harbors secret yearnings for proud parents) to keep the proceedings absorbing. As usual, Bauer allows readers into a world of professional devotion and dedication on the part of her heroine, making Hope’s vocation for waitressing understandable and praiseworthy; her search for familial closure is less breezy but equally solidly drawn, and its bittersweet success is poignantly satisfying. DS

BRADY, LAUREL  
*Say You Are My Sister.* HarperCollins, 2000  [224p]  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028307-6  $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys  Ad Gr. 6-9

Mony—short for Ramona—is devastated when a tornado takes her mother’s life; she and her older sister, Georgie, work hard to help take care of baby Keely Faye while their bereaved father tries to eke out a living in a small Georgia town starting to feel the effects of World War II. Soon an accident takes Pa’s life as well, and sixteen-year-old Georgie struggles to support the family. Frightened by their straitened circumstances and the everpresent threat of the banker’s child-hungry wife,
who wishes to take Keely Faye in for the baby’s own good, Mony secretly goes to
work for the town doctor, a former suitor of Georgie’s rumored to have shamed
the successful applicant for her affections into going off to war. She’s troubled by
her increasing realization that Dr. Fellowes is a good man unjustly condemned by
the town, and she’s shocked when the doctor’s files reveal a family secret: Georgie
was Pa’s stepdaughter and her mother was black, which could subject Georgie to
racism and Jim Crow laws and give her a reason to abandon Mony and Keely Faye,
who aren’t her blood kin after all. The plot is every bit as soap-opera-ish as it
sounds (there’s also a mortgage-foreclosure scene thrown in for full measure), and
the good characters here are unremittingly good (Dr. Fellowes is awfully noble).
Brady infuses energy into her story with vigorous and evocative writing, however,
making the girls’ plight a compelling one and their struggle authentically costly, as
merchants cut off their credit and food shortages begin to take a physical toll.
Mony’s stubborn determination and the finely tuned (and socially themed) melo-
drama will offer readers some satisfying emotional involvement. DS

BRUCHAC, JOSEPH  Crazy Horse’s Vision; illus. by S. D. Nelson.  Lee & Low, 2000
ISBN 1-880000-94-6  $16.95  R  Gr. 3-6
A fictionalized account of the early life of Lakota leader Crazy Horse has the au-
thoritative ring of an oft-told tale. There are no specific source notes or bibliog-
graphic references, so it is difficult to say on what Bruchac is basing his account; be
that as it may, the text has the tone and emotional feel of apocryphal stories linked
together on a sturdy chain of narrative. Named “Curly” at birth for his curly hair,
the title character was an observer who “studied the world with serious eyes.” Curly
grew up brave, strong, and bold, proving himself time and again, whether taming
a wild horse or hunting buffalo. When white settlers moved into Lakota territory
hostilities between the two groups erupted into violence, and Conquering Bear,
leader of the Lakota, was killed. Curly sought a vision to tell him who should lead
his people; his vision was a man in blue leggings riding a horse, and a voice that
said, “Keep nothing for yourself.” Curly’s father decides that the vision means his
son will be a great leader, and he gives Curly a new name: Tashunka Witco, or, in
English, Crazy Horse. Nelson’s paintings are based on the traditional ledger book
style of his Lakota ancestors, and an illustrator’s note includes information on the
painting style, the important symbolism of color, and other traditional icons used
in the paintings. Nelson’s reimagining of the ledger book style in a more modern
vein results in illustrations of unusual power and substance. Diagonal lines cut
across arcs of human and equine shoulders adding an invigorating sense of energy
and motion; graceful rolls of mountain, hill, and sky give a sense of spacious, open
land as yet unsullied. The final illustration of Crazy Horse galloping over a hill on
a dappled charger is a heroic and memorable concluding image. Author’s and
illustrator’s notes are appended. JMD

BUTLER, CHARLES  Timon’s Tide.  McElderry, 2000  [192p]
ISBN 0-689-82593-5  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys

is “all of the above.” The novel is focused for the most part on the perceptions of
sixteen-year-old Daniel, whose brother, Timon, was murdered six years before
after a failed drug delivery. This haunting story (first published in Britain in 1999) opens with Daniel’s mental re-creation of the scene when seventeen-year-old Timon was staked to a sandbar and left to drown. Daniel has already had to adjust to a stepfather (his mother was deserted by his charming but unreliable father six months before the murder), a university-aged stepsister, and another sibling-in-progress, and he’s starting to spend more time thinking about a girl he likes than his late brother. Then Timon reappears, claiming to be alive and on the run, and the pieces of Daniel’s “jigsaw life” change shape again as he tries to determine if his manipulative older brother and the creepy white-faced Lockermen who are after him are physical, psychological, or metaphysical beings. The process sometimes becomes more conceptually murky than creepily dark, and the shifting viewpoints and collection of plot strands blunt the atmospheric impact. Daniel’s rescue of his stepsister from a Timon-induced doom leads to the over-resolution of the family drama around which the book centers, but there’s enough depth here to tempt readers to follow where the current takes them. FK

Cazet, Denys  *Never Poke a Squid*; written and illus. by Denys Cazet. Orchard, 2000 32p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30279-2 $16.95

Arnie and his friend Raymond are explaining their eventful first-grade Halloween day to Arnie’s mother. As the retrospective narration proceeds (in boxes of text), double spreads show the day unfolding in traditional first-grade chaos as the assembled critter-kids do pumpkin math, make Kleenex ghosts, hang a piñata, march in a costume parade, and host a Halloween party. The glorious primary-grades disarray is effectively conveyed by a forest of speech balloons from students as they get involved in multiple dramas per page: a bunny costumed as a fairy has a crush on a young wolf, a little bear doesn’t grasp the difference between Christmas and Halloween, a hapless mouse keeps getting bonked on the head, and the principal, apparently intrigued by Arnie and Raymond’s two-person squid costume, forgets “the Rule of the Sea” (“Never poke a squid in the ink bag”) and adds a crowning disaster to the day. A lot operates on inference here (including the climactic ink explosion and a few adult oriented jokes). The frenzy is still authentic and attractive, however, and the slapstick will tickle young viewers. The watercolor art softens the cacophony with restrained ochre tones and gentle lines, but the classroom remains a gathering of quirky individuals, including the intrepid Arnie and his loyal friend Raymond. Educators may find this too close to home to bear, but it’s the truth of the joyful mess that will entertain the little animals. DS

Clements, Andrew  *The Janitor’s Boy*. Simon, 2000 140p
ISBN 0-689-81818-1 $15.00

Jack Rankin is having a terrible fifth-grade year, and it’s all because of location: his father works as the janitor at the same school Jack now attends. The teasing Jack undergoes makes him increasingly angry—not at the perpetrators but at his father—and he expresses his displeasure by engaging in a massive piece of chewing-gum vandalism. Caught and sentenced to janitorial duty himself, Jack finds some pleasure in exploring the hitherto hidden parts of the school, and he also finds his resentment of his father giving way to a greater understanding. Clements has an accessible style with easily digestible vocabulary, and many youngsters will empa-
thize with Jack’s embarrassment. There’s a lot of adult-oriented wish-fulfillment going on in the rapprochement, however (and Jack’s father’s Vietnam connection is problematically treated: it’s heavy-handed and it raises some chronological questions the book never answers), and the earnestness sometimes makes the humor lugubrious. Still, this is an undemanding and easy read about that most sympathetic figure, a kid with a bad case of parent trouble. DS

COBURN, BROUGHTON  *Triumph on Everest: A Photobiography of Sir Edmund Hillary.* National Geographic, 2000 64p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-7922-7114-9 $17.95 Ad Gr. 4-8

SALKELD, AUDREY  *Mystery on Everest: A Photobiography of George Mallory.* National Geographic, 2000 64p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-7922-7222-6 $17.95 R Gr. 4-8

The National Geographic biography series (see Bausum’s *Dragon Bones and Dinosaur Eggs*, BCCB 5/00) brings forth two mountainous new titles, one about Everest’s first known conqueror and one about the mountain’s most legendary victim, who may even have preceded Hillary to the summit. Both books follow the series format of oversized pages, plenty of maps and tinted monochrome photographs (an old-fashioned effect a bit odd with the more contemporary images of Hillary), and attractively formatted quotes livening up the white space. Unfortunately, Coburn’s style is choppy and disjointed; though he pulls together a diverse and accomplished life, putting particular emphasis on Hillary’s labor to improve the social conditions among the Sherpa, it’s often hard to connect one event with another (the first mention of his second marriage doesn’t, for instance, make clear it’s to a woman who’s appeared before in the text). Salkeld has a smoother and more inviting style, and she makes the most of her additional advantages in the form of a tragically more compact life and the mystery of Mallory’s death (an afterword capably treats the recent discovery of Mallory’s body and the questions that remain—and may always remain—unanswered). Both titles fill a useful niche for adventure-hungry youngsters, however, and armchair conquerors of col and cwm will want to join these ascents. Each book includes a timeline, a resource guide, and an index. DS


Collard and Jenkins (creators of *Animal Dads*, BCCB 3/97) return with more entry-level natural history, here addressing the very beginning of life. The approach is refreshingly broad, treating asexual and sexual reproduction, oviparous and viviparous species alike. Large-print text gives streamlined information about the behavior or stage in question while smaller print gives more detailed information about the particular species exemplifying the concept in the illustration. Though the simplification occasionally makes things a little misleading (the text gives the impression that sperm fertilize eggs in the mammalian vagina), the combination of ground covered and interesting detail (it’ll be news to many that jellyfish reproduce via assembly line and that each firefly species has its own system of flashing signals in order to draw the right kind of mate) makes this a piquant and informative introduction. Jenkins’ signature highly textured collage art retains its
usual charm, with jellyfish as elegant as tigers, and the technical aspects are tastefully and restrainedly depicted (the book is a genital-free zone). The wide-ranging perspective and the attractive visuals make this a great beginning on beginnings. A glossary is included. DS

Cronin, Doreen *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*; illus. by Betsy Lewin. Simon, 2000 32p ISBN 0-689-83213-3 $15.00 R 5-8 yrs

Saddled with cows that like to type, Farmer Brown hears “Click, clack, moo” all day long. Then a message requesting electric blankets appears (nailed à la Luther) on the barn wall; an outraged Farmer Brown, a Luddite in respect to cow technology, draws the line, and the barnyard goes on strike. Duck (“a neutral party”) serves as a go-between in arbitration, in which the cows trade the typewriter for electric blankets. Unfortunately, it looks like arbitration has evolved into its own agenda when the typewriter fails to arrive and the barnyard fills with “Click, clack, quack.” Cronin keeps her absurd idea well disciplined, with poker-faced precision and simple language (the bovine notes are always politely signed “Sincerely, The Cows”) that keep this from being an airy-fairy whimsy and instead make it into solid and imaginative barnyard humor. Lewin’s illustrations use broad lines and sweeping watercolor washes, balancing a crayon-user’s naïve sense of line with a skillful comic vigor in the wide-eyed cows. The visuals parallel the loopy inspiration of the text with a sly inventiveness of their own: the striking hens line up in militant solidarity, with one holding an ultimatum in her beak; the cows peer round the barn door to see the farmer’s response to their work stoppage (viewers see only his cast shadow leaping in fury); the go-between duck is seen from a distant rear view as he waddles off to the barn with offer in hand—well, bill. These are cattle cut from the same herd as Cazet’s Minnie and Moo (BCCB 9/98, etc.), and youngsters not quite ready to read those or looking to share bovine delights with younger siblings will want to milk this for all it’s worth. DS


Thirteen-year-old Ben is looking forward to a busy summer on Martha’s Vineyard, where he’ll serve as mate on his father’s old friend’s fishing boat. Things get even more exciting when Donny Madison, local cool teen with car, starts taking notice of Ben and his friend Jeff. Donny lives at trouble’s edge, but Ben is initially convinced to keep his mouth shut over Donny’s misdeeds in the name of islander solidarity, and he takes a secret delivery job for Donny. When Ben discovers that he’s delivering pot, he wants out, but between Donny and Donny’s scary boss (one of whom is likely responsible for the death of a young tourist) getting out isn’t going to be as simple as getting in. This isn’t a book for subtle satisfactions: the plot is creaky and predictable, the characterizations perfunctory, and the detail of Ben’s father’s recent death seems more filler than additional emotional color. As an undemanding adventure, however, it’s quite satisfactory, with quick pacing and clear structure to keep the story bounding along. That combined with the serious plot elements will help make this appeal to reluctant readers as well as to kids just looking for some quick escapist drama. DS
DEPAOLA, TOMIE  *Here We All Are*; written and illus. by Tomie dePaola.  Putnam, 2000  [72p]
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 2-4

In this sequel to his Newbery Honor winning memoir, *26 Fairmount Avenue* (BCCB 6/99), dePaola opens the door of his family's new house to young readers. The plot focuses on dePaola's kindergarten experiences and the joy he feels at the arrival of his new baby sister, Maureen. The author's description of the pleasure of running through the spacious house (“Here I was, standing in 26 Fairmount Avenue. I ran up the stairs and down, into the living room, dining room, and all the bedrooms, all the way up to the attic and down to the basement. And then I ran up and down all over again”) captures the exuberant enthusiasm of the young dePaola, and the tone is faintly nostalgic and strongly affectionate. Black and white illustrations scattered throughout have the author/illustrator's signature style of spare balanced compositions inhabited by simple figures with pleasant if undistinguished features. A few of the more formidable characters, like Nana Fall-River and Miss Leah the dance teacher, are graced with more forceful visual characterizations. dePaola doesn't shrink from telling tales of his own potentially embarrassing escapades, and his obvious glee in his own shenanigans erases any trace of conscious self-aggrandizement. The nine chapters are crammed full of incident, but that won't deter new readers with a developing taste for humorous revelatory autobiography. JMD

ISBN 0-689-82251-0  $17.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7-10

The focus of these dozen original tales is the life-defining moment, that pause on the edge of committing oneself to some action that will alter one's individual history. The plots vary greatly: Ellen Wittlinger's protagonist opts to lose control and is committed to a facility for disturbed teenagers in "Stevie in the Mirror"; Alden Carter's hero takes a con man's revenge on a Neanderthal classmate and lives to tell about it in "Pig Brains." The authors selected have both name recognition and a knack for characterization: William Sleator, Gail Carson Levine, Graham Salisbury, Pete Hautman, and Liza Ketchum put their artistic spin on the theme and show how even an unexamined choice can alter a person's destiny. The brevity of the form imposes a well-met challenge on the authors, and the unique strengths of each short story brings a cumulative strength to the collection as a whole. This is a consistently compelling compilation of tonally disparate stories, the theme of which will resonate with readers facing their own edgy futures. JMD

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-026033-5  $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-026032-7  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  5-8 yrs

While working at his uncle Dinkleschmidt's toy shop, Rudy becomes interested in three rubber balls with brightly painted faces, which were bought in by a mysterious disappearing woman. Unable to resist their siren call, he plays with them while his uncle is out, finding that they become large rubber men when bounced;
the four of them then bounce through the city streets and up into the sky, where they save an out-of-control airplane (stretching themselves out of shape in the process). Fortunately, Rudy manages to restore his globular friends and return them to the shop, whereupon he decides to purchase the balls from his uncle. Toys coming alive is always an interesting and appealing premise (the babyish balls, who cry “Waa! Waa! Waa!” when things go wrong, are promising characters), and the pleasures of secret friendship and grand adventures are satisfying additions to it. The story’s trajectory isn’t well controlled, however, so the result is more episodic than cumulatively dramatic. Egielski’s art has a toylike quality in its own right, with solidly bordered figures in solidly bordered frames packed to the gills with details in resonant contrasting colors. Unfortunately, the color values are sufficiently similar that the backgrounds of some scenes distract the eye from the red, yellow, and blue ball brothers, whose pop-eyed miens and cheerful roundity deserve center stage. The toy-action theme will nonetheless satisfy many young listeners, and there’ll doubtless be much hopeful exploration of the toy cabinet in consequence. DS


In this followup to Heap’s *Cowboy Baby* (BCCB 5/98), the baby has grown enough to become Cowboy Kid. The Kid loves his toy critters, Texas Ted, Denver Dog, and Hank the Horse, “with all his heart,” so he’s naturally quite solicitous of them come bedtime, just as Sheriff Pa is solicitous of his Cowboy Kid. Therefore it’s natural for him to put off sleeping by tending to their needs (“I think, he thought, that everyone might like to be a little bit warmer”), but the requirements of his friends snowball until Cowboy Kid is overwhelmed (“Everyone needs so many kisses”); fortunately Sheriff Pa saves the day—well, the bedtime—by explaining that “one kiss is all you need.” This is more pedestrianly sweet and less charmingly farfetched than the plot of Cowboy Baby, but the tender nighttime ritual and the pleasing repetition make this a cozy nocturnal saga nonetheless. Heap’s mixed-media illustrations use intense colors (rich warm garnet is a predominant background for both text and illustrations) and solid shapes, giving the people and toys open, friendly faces that balance the weight of the colors (and Cowboy Kid’s fetching striped pajamas are echoed on the endpapers); there’s an effective rhythm to the page design as smaller vignettes alternate with larger framed images and gradually expand into full-page spreads as Cowboy Kid’s bedtime winds down into sleep. This’ll help young cowpokes round up the critters and hit the hay. DS


Accelerated eleven-year-old eighth-grader Khyber (a name she gave to herself after the Khyber Pass in Afghanistan) spends her time away from school assisting her mother Tammy (a former stripper) with autistic twin five-year-old brothers in an apartment in a poor section of Toronto, Canada. Khyber is fiercely loyal to her homeless friend X, who lives in the park, and to her family, defending her mother’s former lifestyle and her brothers’ awkward social behaviors. Tammy strictly forbids her to fight, but Khyber’s loyalty to her brothers, and later to X, lead her to do just that. Ellis weaves a compelling story, exploring trust in the context of a strong
family unit. Khyber’s search for X is an element of the climax that indicates the desperation of her otherwise practical, logical character. Her rescue by a van full of female Elvis impersonators (“The All Girls Elvis Group”) is hokey, but the bond that forms between Khyber and the troupe is not. The story wraps up a bit neatly, but readers looking for a female protagonist with a bold, honest voice will enjoy exploring with Khyber.


The blonde and pigtailed young narrator wants to know what is inside of her mother’s big “tummy” (“My mommy is wonderful. She has a big fat tummy, and she waddles around, tired and slow. ‘What do you have in there?’ I ask”). Her mother responds with the playful euphemism, “A Special Something,” and urges the child to look (“Come closer and see”), listen (“Woofity-boom . . . woofity-boom . . . woofity-boom”), and feel (“Kick, kick, kickety-kick!”). The child’s observations lead to wild guesses as to what is in her mother’s belly (hippopotamus, drumming dinosaur, crocodile, soccer-playing kangaroo, monkey), all of whom she expects would make her life more difficult than pleasant. When the time comes to visit the hospital to see the Special Something, our young narrator asks viewers to make their own guess as to what is inside the yellow blanket in her mother’s arms. Though the imaginative conceits are diverting, this is more coy than sympathetic, and the concentrated sweetness of the story doesn’t temper the oddness of a mother’s failing to explain that she’s going to have a baby. Expressive line and watercolor illustrations are soft-hued and warmly dappled, and unlike the story they’re more sweet than saccharine. This won’t help youngsters looking for information, but grandparents and parents who want to ease into birth explanations may welcome this playful look at the advent of a new sibling.


Having found some help for his ADHD (Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key, BCCB 11/98), Joey is now less “wired,” but he’s got another reason to be excited: he’s going to spend the summer with his estranged father. His father proves to be exciting and upbeat, thrilled to have Joey pitching for the baseball team he coaches and sorry for his past wrongs, and Joey’s able to find a new, less thorny relationship with his grandmother. Joey’s mother’s uneasiness about the visit, however, soon proves to be justified, with Joey’s dad not only projecting his wishes and desires onto his son but also deciding that Joey needs to stop taking his medication—with predictably disastrous results. Gantos lifts this account of a kid with a lot of problems well above the stock problem novel: Joey’s view of the world is compelling regardless of what he’s dealing with, and it’s realistic in both its perceptions and their limitations. Characters are sharply and truthfully drawn; the common brutality of the denigrations around Joey’s father’s house is chilling, but Dad’s gutsy new girlfriend is a ray of hope for everybody. The book is also refreshingly original in some respects—despite the fact that many aspects of Joey’s life deviate considerably from most didactic ideals (Joey’s mom drives him to Dad’s on an expired license and in an uninsured car, for instance), mere difference from the putative norm isn’t enough to make something a problem here, and there’s a resulting
acceptance of the less-than-ideal that young readers will find unusual and, probably, reassuring. Joey isn’t leading the easiest of lives, but he’s a tough and triumphant kid with an absorbing story. DS

GARDEN, NANCY *Holly’s Secret.* Farrar, 2000 132p ISBN 0-374-33273-8 $16.00 Ad Gr. 4-7

Eleven-year-old Holly isn’t thrilled about moving to the country, but she’s going to make the most of an opportunity to be a new person: she rechristens herself Yvette, adopts a frillier, more Yvette-appropriate style, and pretends that her lesbian moms are really her widowed heterosexual mother and a stray resident aunt. While this clearly saves her some grief from the mean popular girls, it’s also difficult to keep up (the more time she spends with her new friends, the more lying she has to do) and hurtful to her mothers and little brother. There aren’t many surprises here: Holly’s “tangled web” (a phrase her mother oddly attributes to Shakespeare rather than Scott) breaks down and exposes her to ridicule from some shallow classmates and support from truer friends, and both she and her family are happier when she owns up. The book has a full measure of awkward contrivances and some logistical confusion (why does the narrative sometimes hyphenate Holly’s moms’ last name and sometimes give them different surnames? Why, if the kids were adopted by both mothers, does one go by her first name?), and the family relationship is overcompensatorily idyllic. Garden paints a recognizable portrait of middle-school familial embarrassment, however, and there’s a fascination in watching Holly’s self-created dilemma expand as she flails about in the quicksand of mild deceit. Being true to yourself might not really be this easy, but it’s salutary to be reminded of the possibility. DS

GILBERT, BARBARA SNOW *Paper Trail.* Front Street, 2000 161p ISBN 1-886910-44-8 $16.95 Ad Gr. 6-8

Fifteen-year-old Walker witnesses his gentle mother’s murder at the capable hands of the Soldiers of God, an anti-government militia based in modern-day Red Cedar, Oklahoma. Fleeing the SOG, Walker attempts to rendezvous with his militia-member father. While searching for his dad, Walker recalls his upbringing in the militia community and the events leading to his present danger. Hunger, exhaustion, and snakebite drive him from the woods to the main road and to capture by the Soldiers of God. Brought before the Reverend General, the leader of the militia, Walker is told that his mother’s death was “a terrible mistake” and the militia was only searching for him so he could “begin to deal with this tragedy.” Walker escapes, setting fire to the weapons stockpile barn before he goes; a nagging premonition turns him back, and he rescues his father (who had been, unknown to Walker, imprisoned in the barn) in the nick of time. Immediately after this bang-up climax, Gilbert reveals that Walker has imagined the whole thing: his flight through the woods, his capture and escape, and his rescue of his father (really an undercover federal agent) are all delusions. The trauma of witnessing his mother’s (real) murder has put Walker into a sort of dream state where he hears the “Voice of God” telling him what to do. Gilbert does a decent job maintaining the pace and suspense of her novel despite a choppy text. Unfortunately, the story depends on confidence in the narrative voice for its emotional impact, and after the effects of Walker’s traumatic state are revealed, the integrity of the narrator has been thoroughly compromised. Gilbert intersperses Walker’s
story with excerpts from interviews with, manuals by, and articles about anti-government militia members in the United States, which adds an undertone of urgency to the proceedings. JMD

GOODMAN, SUSAN E. Ultimate Field Trip 4: A Week in the 1800s; illus. with photographs by Michael J. Doolittle. Atheneum, 2000 [50p] ISBN 0-689-83045-9 $17.00 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-6

With its resemblance to PBS' The 1900 House, this chronicle of contemporary Canadian boys and girls going back in time for a week at a historic settlement has some trendy time-travel appeal. The immersion here isn’t quite as rigorous, since the kids are allowed to sleep in a more modern house outside the village, but during the day they’re under the constraints of their respective eras (some houses are maintained in 1820s style, some as late as 1870s), doing period chores and apprenticeship labors and attending school. The book makes it clear that their experience was more than just playing with old tools, and there’s definitely an added layer of interest in seeing the contemporary youngsters grappling with the conditions of the past, finding some aspects to their liking (“I liked the quiet. . . . No car horns or sirens, no jackhammers”) and some onerous (“At home, I’m used to acting normal instead of being so very, very, very polite”). The account goes from topic to topic without ever really developing any of the examination, unfortunately, so the result is a rather superficial and guidebooky treatment. The multitude of color photographs are often rather small, but they’re picturesque; section headings help divvy up the text, and “What Is This Thing?” sidebars offer historical guessing games. This provides a viewpoint that other historical approaches lack, and some readers may well find their own appetites whetted for a trip back. Information about the settlement-visit program and selected titles for further reading are appended. DS


The term “gilded age” (circa 1870-1910) generally conjures robber barons in palatial estates, with perhaps an undercurrent of Tammany Hall shenanigans for spice; Greenwood, however, presents selections of primary source materials topically arranged to examine ten aspects of the period that are not always considered side-by-side. From big business to Populism, from urban life to the emergence of the New South, spokespersons for particular interests articulate their ideologies. Juxtapositions are sometimes predictable—Andrew Carnegie vs. Henry Demarest Lloyd, Jane Addams vs. William Graham Sumner—but other, less obvious comparisons are made as well. A dumbbell tenement floor plan contrasts with that of a suburban “country house”; two polarized reports of General Custer’s defeat lead into Sioux Zitkala-Sa’s memories of her terrifying first day at an Indian boarding school. More a source book than a comprehensive history, this title offers political cartoons, photographs (there’s a full chapter on how to “read” Jacob Riis photos), conference minutes, advertisements, maps, and song lyrics in a demonstration of the wealth of material that can be culled for historical evidence. Students looking for a fresh approach to research can find inspiration here. EB
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

Twelve-year-old Destiny takes care of her siblings—injured nine-year-old Nathan, developmentally disabled five-year-old Ethelene, and eighteen-month-old Roberta—while her irresponsible mother, Virginia, and Virginia’s small-time-hood boyfriend, Jack, watch television and dream about the big score. Desperate to avoid accompanying Jack on his twice-weekly scam selling old potatoes to the neighbors, Destiny finds a job reading to and gardening with Mrs. Peck, an elderly former schoolteacher. Mrs. Peck’s failing eyesight has not affected her memory, and she shares her knowledge of literary classics and floral perennials with the sensitive Destiny. In the meantime, the subplots are speeding along at a breakneck pace: Virginia spends all her time on the phone with her psychic and all her money on lottery tickets; Jack is arrested for arson and Virginia lies to get him out of jail; social services wants Ethelene in a special class; Nathan searches for buried treasure at their old trailer park; and Destiny discovers that Mrs. Peck was driving one of the cars in the accident that crippled her brother. The revelation of Jack’s deliberate manipulation of the crash for insurance money propels Virginia into reality and she finally writes him off. Grove generally makes order out of a chaotic jumble of plot threads, tying off the loose ends with a largely tolerable amount of convenience. Players are stamped with specific characteristics that make them identifiable and believable, with the dynamic among the siblings especially memorable. Destiny herself is an intelligent girl who finds solace in “found art” (projects made of at hand materials) and dreams of an artistic future. The plot is more than a little overwrought, but the pace is swift, and readers with a yen for melodrama will be right at home here. JMD

Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

Guiberson, author of *Mummy Mysteries* (BCCB 2/00), abandons the rock-hard realities of archaeology for the stuff of legend as she briefly addresses sea-monster sightings, wraith-guarded pirate gold, haunted lighthouses, and ghostly sailing ships. The tabloid horror of the cover (a sea monster chases fleeing sailors from the water with predatory intent) is certain to attract reluctant as well as enthusiastic readers. The workmanlike writing lacks suspense, but the subject will engage its own audience despite the dearth of truly fearful chills. Small black-and-white illustrations by the author are clumsily drafted and difficult to see, adding little to the text; there are some photographs scattered throughout. A final section called “You Tell the Story” is a collection of five possible starting points for spooky sea stories with accompanying illustrations. A bibliography and index is included. JMD


Woody Guthrie’s tongue-twisting song “Howdi Do” presents a cheerfully goofy series of greetings and hand shakings, which Radunsky illustrates with retro-looking paper collages, placing brightly colored figures against simple rectangular or white
backgrounds. Friendly figures of people and creatures are composed using shapes and lines that convey nonstop action, not unlike the rhythm of Guthrie’s song. A CD of the song (and other songs for children written by Guthrie, performed by Band of Weeds) is included, but unfortunately the lyrics on the CD fail to correspond to the written lyrics in numerous places, with the entire last verse of text left out of the recorded version. Although there is no story here beyond the simple delight of greeting, young watchers will be drawn to the simplicity of the dynamic illustrations, and for those who know the song (or can learn the tune from the CD) this may make an effective storytime sing-aloud. KM

HARRIS, TRUDY Pattern Fish; illus. by Anne Canevari Green. Millbrook, 2000 38p ISBN 0-7613-1712-0 $20.90 R 3-6 yrs

"From a dark and rocky nook/ An eel slips out to take a look. Stripe-dot-dot, stripe-dot-dot, stripe-dot... " A flip of the page confirms what the audience has already, by this time, shouted out; "dot" comes next. If the word sequence isn’t a broad enough clue, certainly the grinning eel, stretched across the double spread and sporting all the improbable designs and hues of a child’s coloring book fantasy, will be. Not only do black-yellow-yellow stripes run along its spine and red band/green dot/green dot sequences adorn its belly, but even the underwater vegetation and the page borders echo the pattern. A septet of variations offers plenty of search challenges and pushes the limit of complexity with a quartet of jellyfish that wiggle-jiggle-jiggle-float as squadrons of birds fly overhead, worms slither below, a striped crustacean spurts bubbles, and the very sun beams its rays in an ABC pattern. Preschool educators may call this math readiness or sequencing if they will; kids will simply regard it as a juicy puzzle book and snap up the bait. EB


Lucy’s great-aunt Liza is not interested in moving from Maryland to Illinois along with the rest of the family (“Nothing but hog music out there,” the old lady insists), and waves them off down the National Public Road, in the nineteenth century “the main route of travel between east and west in the United States.” When Lucy’s birthday comes along, Aunt Liza buys her “a plain straw hat... in a plain wooden box with a latch,” and gives the box to old friend Dr. Edwards, who was “traveling west by mail coach.” The box falls off the stage during a particularly rough stretch of road, and it is picked up by Silas Turner, miniature portrait painter, who puts in a small portrait of his grandma’s pet hog. He turns the box over to a wagoner who adds some coffee beans and takes the box further west, but loses it crossing a river. The box is retrieved by young Henry, who adds a clay marble; he and his mother hand it off to Mrs. Marryat (whose husband, a country store owner, adds a silk ribbon), who is going to Indiana to visit her sister. From stranger’s hand to stranger’s hand, the box makes its way to the Vandalia, Illinois general store and post office. A surprised Lucy writes a thank-you note that more than puzzles her great aunt; it inspires her: “Perhaps,’ she said at last, ‘I should take the stage and see if I can have as many adventures as one wooden box.’” So she does. Helldorfer’s catchy cumulative tale was inspired by the memoirs of a nineteenth-century wagoner. The paintings (watercolor and gouache on parchment paper) have an antique but still energetic look that evokes a sense of times gone by. A
combination of prairie vistas, the setting of the dusty road, and uniquely appointed characters adds to the old world charm. The illustrations communicate a sense of time and place in an unstilted, subtly folk-art style that complements this far from didactic historical tale. JMD

HENKES, KEVIN Wemberly Worried; written and illus. by Kevin Henkes. Greenwillow, 2000 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-17028-5 $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-17027-7 $15.95 R 5-8 yrs

Wemberly is the opposite of Henkes' self-confident Lilly (Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse, BCCB 10/96), instead being a worrier par excellence. Her family can't seem to dissuade her from this tendency (her mother tries to modify her concern, her father points out that she just makes him worry, and her "go with the flow" grandmother tries to show her a better way), and even the comfort of her stuffed bunny, Petal, can't get her mind off the worry track. Needless to say, the start of school looms dreadfully; once there, however, Wemberly is introduced to another worrier, Jewel, and bonds with the kindred timid spirit. As usual, Henkes' depictions are tenderly authentic yet funny: Wemberly's ability to make any situation into a concern and to shift her worries as the situation demands (she first worries that she'll be only one of many butterflies in the Halloween parade, then worries because she's the only one) is all too true, as is her mounting specific and general panic about school ("What if the teacher is mean? What if the room smells bad? What if they make fun of my name?") captured in increasingly large type. Henkes' mice are the classic animal kids; slightly calico Wemberly ("What if no one else has spots?") is permanently indented with worry lines that send imitative ripples across her parents' faces, but those perky pink ears and slender expressive tail suit her eventually brightened aspect. Youngsters will relate to Wemberly's collywobbles, and they'll also appreciate the realistically restrained victory: "Wemberly worried. But no more than usual. And sometimes even less." DS

HEST, AMY Mabel Dancing; illus. by Christine Davenier. Candlewick, 2000 34p
ISBN 0-7636-0746-0 $15.99 R 3-6 yrs

"On the night of the dancing party, Mabel blew bubbles in the bath while Mama dressed up and Papa tied his dancing shoes," and when Mabel is finally dry, her parents tuck her into bed (before the guests arrive) and go downstairs. "And there was Mabel, alone in the night." But not for long: the "one, two, three—one, two, three" of the music lures a not-unwilling Mabel first to the stairway overlooking the dancers, then to the dance floor itself, where the red-night-gowned dance-party crasher "twirled and jumped in the bright party light." Afterwards, "Mama's gown swooshed and Papa's bow tie tickled and they danced up the stairs—one, two, three—one, two, three—up and up the stairs with Mabel blowing kisses." Hest's pithy nighttime fantasy is given airy humor by Davenier's watercolor and ink illustrations, the muted, limited palette reinforcing the old-fashioned image of the child watching the party from a safe stairway distance. Mabel's happy dance through the party guests, accompanied by dog Curly, is the dance of the blissful, the swirls of her blanket and strong curve of her body adding an exuberantly graceful sense of unselfconscious movement. This is sure to inspire many domestic renditions of Shall We Dance?, much to the delight of young would-be dancers hoping for their moment in the chandelier light. JMD
HIRSCHFELDER, ARLENE B. *Photo Odyssey: Solomon Carvalho’s Remarkable Western Adventure, 1853-54.* Clarion, 2000 118p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-395-89123-X $18.00 Ad Gr. 5-10

On his fifth and final expedition into the West, John Charles Fremont engaged the services of prominent East Coast portrait artist and “daguerrian” Carvalho to make a detailed photographic record of the trek. Urbanite Carvalho had never chopped firewood, much less hunted buffalo, and his published account of the journey, which Hirschfelder liberally cites, reveals him as a man both amused and amazed by the skills which necessity forced him to accrue along the way. The expedition’s life-threatening passage through the Rockies, deliberately made in winter to demonstrate the possibility of running a transcontinental railroad along a northern route, provides *Photo Odyssey’s* most engrossing chapters. Unfortunately, Hirschfelder vacillates between an account of the expedition as a whole and a thinly developed biography of Carvalho. Much is made in opening and closing chapters of the artist’s contributions to Jewish congregations on both coasts, but except for a few references to ritual dietary taboos during a time of near starvation, Carvalho’s own silence on the subject forces Hirschfelder to neglect this theme throughout most of her text. Likewise, she sheds little light on the challenge of pursuing a studio craft under rugged outdoor conditions. Since virtually all of the Fremont daguerreotypes have been lost, illustrations of varying quality and usefulness appear here. Armchair adventurers who have thrilled to Rhoda Blumberg’s *The Incredible Journey of Lewis and Clark* (BCCB 1/88) or David Lavender’s *Snowbound: The Tragic Story of the Donner Party* (6/96) will be less satisfied by this unfocused account. Source notes, bibliography, and index are included. EB

HOBAN, RUSSELL *Trouble on Thunder Mountain;* illus. by Quentin Blake. Orchard, 2000 40p ISBN 0-531-30206-7 $14.95 R Gr. 2-4

The life of the O’Saurus family (aptly named for their dino-like appearance) is overturned when a money-grabbing developer named J. M. Flatbrain of Megafright International determines to tear down their mountain to build an amusement park. Young Jim O’Saurus suggests a violent response (“Maybe we could stomp on him and his machines and show him what flatness is all about”), but Dad O’Saurus reminds them of their commitment to pacifism (“Any fool can resort to violence, but that is not our way”), and they pack their pickup to relocate to their corporation-selected new residence in the garbage dump. Explosions from their old home on Thunder Mountain spark some clever ingenuity from Mrs. O’Saurus (“I have an idea. But we will need a little faith and a lot of Monsta-Gloo for it to work”) and they conspire to save their home sweet home. Though the morals are clear as day, the kids will enjoy the story for its jokes and justice as the O’Saurus family reassembles their mountain with glue, creating a natural attraction that rivals the appeal of Flatbrain’s synthetic monolith. Breezy ink and watercolor pictures feature friendly turtle-headed dinosaurs and a mustachioed corporate villain sporting comic demeanors. EAB


Grace, heroine of *Amazing Grace* (BCCB 9/91) and *Boundless Grace* (BCCB 6/95), returns in this easy chapter book. It is summer vacation, and Grace and her
friends are spending most of their time making up games in which they try out their various talents at various vocations—circus performer, explorer, doctor, astronaut—with the obvious approval of sometime participants, Grace's Ma and Grandma. Episodic chapters make the narrative choppy, however, and the rife-with-incident plot lacks cohesion. Inclusion of a neighbor, a victim of the Holocaust helped to emotional recovery by the children, and Grace's own emotional quandary regarding her reaction to her mother's dating is a bit too heavy for the lighter-weight opening chapters. The solid characterization evident in Grace's first two outings is missing here, and the forced text is more labored than the graceful storytelling of the previous books. Still, Grace has lots of fans who will be happy to see her, and they will welcome this addition to her life story. Black-and-white illustrations feature a cheery multicultural cast. JMD

HONEY, ELIZABETH  

Don't Pat the Wombat; illus. by William Clarke.  
Knopf, 2000  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-80578-8  $14.95  
R Gr. 4-8

Mark ("Exclamation Mark") Ryder is the narrator of this seriously funny account of a sixth-grade-class campout in the Australian countryside. The trip is almost poisoned by what the kids clear-sightedly recognize as the "stinking alcoholic stupidity" of one unhappy teacher and his particular antipathy for Jonah, the quiet, self-possessed new kid. Full of profound truths about the joys of camp ("I love watching things burn, and burning things, but I'm never allowed to do it at home") and peopled with grownups and kids you know, Mark's story captures the essence of preteen exuberance and resilience without ignoring these kids' equally essential vulnerability. Illustrated with the sorts of goofy camp photos and doodles you'd expect from the narrator, the novel presents a dead-on kid's eye view of both the natural world and the less natural world—leeches and all—that allows readers to see and appreciate both more clearly. FK

HUGHES, CAROL  

Jack Black & the Ship of Thieves.  
Random House, 2000  
[240p]  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-80472-2  $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
Ad Gr. 4-7

Jack Black gets his dearest wish: to tag along on the maiden voyage of the world's largest dirigible, Bellerophon, captained by his father. Sworn to obey all the captain's orders (particularly the order to stay at his assigned posts), Jack quickly breaks his promise; after overhearing a plot to blow up the ship, Jack tries to crawl across the top of the aircraft to escape the terrorists, but instead drops like a rock right through the decking of the pirate ship Hyperion. Buccaneer captain Quixote has troubles of his own, particularly avoiding his nemesis, the Nemesis, the ultimate unmanned warship that destroys everything in its path. An unlikely number of impossible adventures and escapades are crammed between launch and happy landing, and Hughes seems uncertain whether to go for the thrills or the laughs. Unreined energy resoundingly triumphs over cohesive plot, and the reader who sticks with Jack Black as he rescues the downed crew of the Bellerophon and blows the Nemesis to smithereens is likely to be as exhausted as entertained. EB
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029220-2  $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-17382-9  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 2-4

Curtis is having a rough time after his parents' divorce, so his mother finally relents and permits him to acquire a dog. Sammy is an appealing and energetic young cocker mix, and Curtis is thrilled with his new buddy. Unfortunately, it’s not that simple; not only is Sammy a bit of a chewer and barker (especially when left alone in Curtis' father's "no pets" apartment), he's also inclined to snap when his right to take toys or human food is questioned. Curtis is nonetheless devastated when his mother tells him things aren't working out and Sammy will have to go back, but when Curtis' runaway attempt fails and he has his own run-in with Sammy he sadly accepts the facts. This is a little different from many new-dog dramas: there's an implicit point (made explicit in the afterword from a dog trainer and AKC judge) that this well-meaning family has failed to think through either the acquisition or keeping of this dog, and that both kid and dog are suffering as a result of this all-too-common situation. Hurwitz brings in a false note of resolution with Sammy not returning to a shelter but rather being sent off, in what sounds like a variant of the classic soft-pedal coverup (beware, Curtis!), to a farm where he's "going to be very happy." Overall, however, she doesn't pull her punches—Curtis' specific and general troubles are convincing, and he simply has to deal with the sad outcome as best as he can (a budding author, he finds solace in writing). deGroat's illustrations are fairly literal, but Curtis and his little brother have a comforting "regular kid" look. DS


These slightly oversized board books feature color photographs of pristine tankers, fire engines, garbage trucks, concrete mixers, etc. set against glossy backgrounds in a variety of crayon colors. The very simple text (in a large, clear black typeface) identifies the kind of truck and gives a sentence or two about its specific function ("Tankers carry different liquids, such as gasoline, milk, and chemicals, from one place to another"). Trucks displays a variety of vehicles, sometimes two to a spread, successfully taking advantage of the horizontal layout. Construction Trucks devotes a full spread to each piece of mighty machinery, resulting in dramatic showroom-shiny images. While these titles aren't going to take the place of Ken Robbins' Trucks (BCCB 12/99), they are definitely going to find an enthusiastic audience among toddler truckers. JMD

JACQUES, BRIAN  Lord Brocktree. Philomel, 2000  [320p]
ISBN 0-399-23590-6  $22.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 4-8

The thirteenth animal fantasy in the popular Redwall series chronicles the salvation of Salamandastron by the doorstop-sized novel's eponymous Badger Lord and his sidekick, Dorothea Duckfontein Dillworthy ("Dotti"). The story also chronicles—in alternating chapters—the tribulations of the animals trapped in
Salamandastron by the blue hordes of the evil wildcat Ungatt Trunn and the journey of an old warrior hare, Fleetscut, who escaped from the besieged fortress in order to gather troops. A brief prologue and epilogue in which the story is presented as a work written by a later Badger Lord “for the young 'uns, to teach them a little of our mountain's history” adds to the busyness of this multifaceted narrative, but the series' formulaic plotting, conventional characterization (rats are amoral, owls are wise), and black-and-white morality will keep readers on track and in a position to appreciate the sensory appeal of the novel's landscapes, pageantry, feasts, songs, and the accessible dialects and colorful phrases of the locals (“How's your snout twitchin', mate? It must be four seasons since I clapped eyes on ye”). Readers with a yearning for rude justice and a stomach for battle cries of “Blood and Vinegar” will relish this addition to Jacques' oeuvre. FK

Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0511-0 $14.99 R 4-6 yrs

Poppy and Ella are birds of a feather—well, most of the time. In three cleanly written stories, the two feathered friends hurt each others feelings, get mad, make up, and help each other out in an overwhelming spirit of comradely affection. Their relationship is exemplified by honest communication (“That Poppy can be such a goober at times,” says Ella) and an understanding of each others' fears and foibles (Poppy saves Ella from being afraid of the dark with a box of flashing fireflies). Kaminsky's line and watercolor vignettes have a naïve Jack Kentish flair to them, featuring very simple figures in even simpler compositions with light washes of color. Poppy's and Ella's faces consist of dot eyes and cocked eyebrows, simple features that are all the more impressive for their apparent artlessness. Kaminsky unfolds the action unhurriedly, giving readers time to appreciate his sometimes crotchety characters. These three teaching tales about how to be a friend are distinguished by an ease of delivery that alleviates any messagey feeling, and young listeners will flock to these encouraging tales. JMD

Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 1-3

Hippopotami Dorothy and Mikey are best friends who will immediately remind savvy readers of those other best hippo friends, George and Martha. Three stories show the push and tug of friendship. “The Knight and the Princess” proves Dorothy's mettle—she wants to be royalty, but not at the price of always playing the distressed damsel to Mikey's heroic knight. Mikey starts “Bragging” at the beginning of the second story, insisting—and proving—that he can jump higher, run faster, and stand on one foot longer than Dorothy. But Dot is of the “don't get mad, get even” school, and she tricks Mikey into standing on one foot with his eyes shut: “All through the hot afternoon, Mikey stood sweating in the field, bragging away all the while. ‘I'm faster than you, Dorothy, and I can jump higher, too.’” Meanwhile, Dorothy muses in her living room: “Yes, all that's true,” thought Dorothy, as she sat down to a cool lemonade. “But who's smarter, kid?” Mikey hides “The Poem” from an ever-more-impatient Dorothy, who, when all is revealed, is pleased as punch to discover that she is the subject of Mikey's verse. The
Illustrations feature a pair of Bill Peet-ish hippos, with the attitudes and body language of ornery middle graders, operating in minimal compositions. While the art isn’t particularly striking, both it and the text have a sense of humor about the competition and affection between beginning buddies learning to navigate the choppy currents of enduring friendship. JMD

**Keller, Laurie**  *Open Wide: Tooth School Inside;* written and illus. by Laurie Keller. Holt, 2000  [34p]
ISBN 0-8050-6192-4  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 2-4

Keller (*The Scrambled States of America, BCCB 10/98*) takes her chaotic compositions and equally chaotic sense of humor to school—tooth school, that is, where Dr. Flossman is attempting to impart dental knowledge to a full set, um, class of student-teeth. Puns, jokes, and visual humor abound, along with some easily digested bits of information about the physical structure, functions, and care of teeth. Individual student-teeth comment on the action without pause, while the indefatigable Dr. Flossman tries to maintain control over the unruly bicuspids, grinding molars, and gifted wisdom teeth. Keller’s mixed-up mixed-media (acrylic, pencils, markers, and collage) compositions contain echoes of Lane Smith in their cuspid caricatures, while her text (some floating in dialogue balloons) has an irreverent air. Two quizzes (True or False and Multiple Choice) close out the book, allowing aspiring wisdom teeth to test their knowledge. Pair with Selby B. Beeler’s *Throw Your Tooth on the Roof* (*BCCB 11/98*) for a bitingly funny combination. JMD

**Krull, Kathleen**  *Lives of Extraordinary Women: Rulers, Rebels (and What the Neighbors Thought);* illus. by Kathryn Hewitt. Harcourt, 2000  95p
ISBN 0-15-200807-1  $20.00  R  Gr. 4-8

The title is a bit vague, but the book’s focus is fairly specific: the women chronicled here are extraordinary for their political effects. Some achieved those effects through influence (Eva Perón), some through monarchical rule (Elizabeth I), some through determined activism (Rigoberta Menchú), and some through election (Wilma Mankiller). As usual, Krull makes a point of casting a wide net chronologically (she starts with Cleopatra) and globally (only four of the twenty subjects represent the U.S.). Many of the individuals featured may be new to some readers, who will benefit from knowing Nzinga, Jeannette Rankin, Gertrude Bell, and others, and the bubbly text achieves its usual balance of personal tidbits and more serious acknowledgments of achievements and controversies. Sometimes the brevity makes things slightly confusing—it’s not clear when Golda Meir moved to Palestine, for instance—but in general the overviews are tasty book-bite biographies. Hewitt’s now-familiar caricatures tend to err on the side of flattery, but they too provide vivid portraits. Birth and death dates are included in the entries, and a list of titles for further reading is appended. DS

**Lambert, David**  *DK Guide to Dinosaurs.* DK, 2000  64p  illus. and with photographs
ISBN 0-7894-5237-5  $19.95  R  Gr. 3-6

This appealingly oversized compendium of the latest in dinosaur facts and tidbits will make an excellent browsing book for dinosaur aficionados. Richly illustrated
double-page spreads feature a few dinosaurs, united by habitat or living habits, accompanied by a small map of the globe showing where fossils have been found as well as a timeline of when each dinosaur lived and a scale drawing comparing the size of an average human with the size of each species of dinosaur. Lambert acknowledges the changing field of paleontology, presenting competing theories side by side and pointing out that, although most scientists take one view or another, there are many cases in which conclusions are still contested. Illustrations consist of photographs of fossil remains, photographs of dinosaur models, and paintings of dinosaurs as their long-vanished flesh may have appeared; one spread even shows a single dinosaur with a variety of possible skin pigmentation, from reptilian green to tiger stripes, in a sort of epidermal fashion show. A list of websites, an index, a glossary, and a dinosaur family tree all contribute to the usefulness of this volume. From gross-out facts to fascinating fossils, Lambert has assembled an unusual depth of information in a highly browsable format, making this a dinosaur lover's dream.


Before she died, the legendary Madam C. J. Walker “was the richest colored woman in America.” Lasky tells Walker’s story with a minimum of sentimentality in this picture-book biography, the reportorial style reflecting the no-nonsense grit and determination of the subject. Sarah Breedlove Walker was born into a life of poverty in the rural South, but she grew to be a successful inventor and wealthy entrepreneur. Her creation and marketing of beauty products specifically for African-American women made her a small fortune, and, in giving back to her community, she impacted the lives of “thousands of colored women.” While the prose is not particularly riveting, Walker’s life story is, and Lasky gives readers enough detail to spark a continuing interest in this remarkable woman. Bennett’s colored-pencil and watercolor illustrations depict a sanitized, rather generic historical world highlighted by effective images of Walker picking cotton, hanging laundry, and doing experiments in her tiny room in Denver. The facial expressions seem set in permanent lines of discontent, and unarticulated backgrounds and crowd scenes are sometimes foggy. The slightly oversized picture book has the advantage of full-page and other art and manageable text blocks, an accessible design that makes this an eminently useful biography for younger readers. Although this title lacks specific references, Lasky discusses her research in an author’s note, referring to interviews with Madam Walker’s great great granddaughter; an illustrator’s note is also included. JMD


This useful introduction to the life and works of the first African-American woman to win a Pulitzer prize for fiction opens by describing Walker’s triumphant homecoming to her small Georgia town for the premier of the 1986 movie version of The Color Purple, an event that serves to highlight how far America has come from the days when Walker had to sit in the “colored” section of the theater. The rest of the chapters are organized chronologically, their text supplemented by numerous
black-and-white photographs of Walker and people important to her (like her teacher, the poet Muriel Rukeyser, and Zora Neale Hurston, whose life and works inspired Walker), in addition to other photos that provide cultural or historical context, and several movie stills. Lazo's frequent quotations of Walker's own words from interviews and autobiographical essays ground this life story but also give it a slight taste of the authorized biography (for example, the reader is told not much more than that “Mel and Alice did not disclose the reasons for ending their 10-year marriage”); however, one real strength of the book is the information it provides on other sensitive topics likely to engage its teenaged audience: Walker's out-of-wedlock pregnancy, flirtation with suicide, and abortion get the same honest attention as her influences, awards, activism, and lifelong use of poetry to work through emotions. A bibliography, index, and source notes for all quotations make this a rich source for upper-grade report writers and a solid jumping off point for those in search of Alice Walker. FK

LEEDY, LOREEN  

Narrator Lisa is studying maps at school, and she practices at home by mapping the nearby environs frequented by her dog, Penny. After reviewing the parts of a map, from key to compass rose, Lisa measures her bedroom, yard, and the route to her neighbor’s house, then paces out the town park and converts all her data into maps. Explanations are concise and accessible, and the maps themselves are models of clarity, but the overall book design presents a pair of annoying problems for newcomers to cartography. Double spreads of the actual sites precede map spreads, forcing the reader to flip back and forth to compare the real view with its graphic representation, and the drab colors and frozen, doll-like figures offer little visual compensation. Moreover, Lisa/Leedy offers no mathematical hints for calculating scale, a process that can be the most frustrating step for novice mapmakers. Still, the regions selected are pertinent to most children’s experience and the zoom-out sequencing (from bedroom to park trails) is effective, making this a useful resource for introductory lessons. EB

LEVINE, ELLEN  

Levine’s preface says much in few words—“Something unusual happened in Denmark during World War II: Hitler’s plans to kill the Danish Jews failed.” The author proceeds to tell the story of Danes united in defense of Danes, of a nation that, according to the author, refused to see Jews as “other” and thus refused to give them up to the Nazis. Levine eschews rosy revisionism, discussing the Danish Nazis, betrayals of Jews by Danes for money, and the conflict among various Danish political factions. The narrative is lucid and organized, the history interspersed with stories of families and individuals: twenty-one year old Leib Beilin published news articles in an underground paper that corrected deliberate falsehoods in German-controlled papers; Tage Seest made guns for the resistance in a garage rented from a Danish Nazi landlord; seventy-year-old Aunt Dux happily permitted her resistance-member nephew to hide weapons in her basement. Levine gives her
heroes names and faces, providing an opening "Who's Who" that introduces those
she follows throughout the war, ending in "Who's Who Continued," which tells
what happened to each person after the armistice. Maps, black-and-white cap-
tioned photographs (credited to The Museum of Danish Resistance and family
members of Levine's subjects, among others), source notes, a chronology of events,
bibliography, and index are included. Levine (author of A Fence Away from Free-
dom, BCCB 11/95) tells the facts but also tells the story, and the combination
results in an engaging and informative read. Pair this with Lowry's Number the
Stars, and see how history compares to fiction. JMD

LOWELL, SUSAN  Cindy Ellen: A Wild Western Cinderella; illus. by Jane
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027447-6  $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027446-8  $15.95  Ad 6-9 yrs

Cinderella rides again in this retelling of the eternally popular tale. As expected,
Cindy Ellen goes from ashes to riches thanks to the assistance of her Fairy God-
mother, but Cindy Ellen's fairy godmother isn't one of those frilly, gauzy, tinkly
fairy godmothers. She's a rootin' tootin' granny with a golden pistol, and she
arrives just in time to dress Cindy Ellen like a blue-ribbon cowgirl and send her to
the local cattle king's rodeo and square dance. At the rodeo Cindy Ellen meets Joe
Prince, bronco-bustin' son of the cattle king, and the two are smitten at first sight.
The conceit here is more labored than in Lowell's previous westernization of a
traditional tale (The Bootmaker and the Elves, BCCB 12/97), and the humor is laid
on with a clumsier hand. The illustrations are a bit sweet, the suburban south-
western palette of muted reds and browns doing little to mitigate the perpetual
chirpiness of the apple-cheeked main characters. The compositions are divertingly
detailed, however, and the spot art evinces strong drafting skills. Despite being
somewhat text-intensive, Lowell's story is amiably paced and suitable for reading
aloud. Kids will enjoy the transposition of an old favorite from fairy-tale France to
the wild and woolly West. JMD

MASOFF, JOY  Colonial Times, 1600-1700; ISBN 0-439-05107-X; American Revo-

These two Chronicle of America titles, which tidily but inaccurately divide Ameri-
can epochs at neatly rounded century markers, take readers on a brisk sprint through
United States history, covering standard political/military/social textbook fare in a
chatty, informal style. Frequent direct appeals to audience imagination are effec-
tive, and often riveting: "The [colonists'] ship keeps going up and down, way too
fast. Imagine that three people have just thrown up. All you can hear is moaning
and creaking and you believe that any second the entire ship will be ripped apart
by the fierce seas." To enhance the you-are-there experience, the text is heavily
embellished with color photos of period reenactors from several living history
museums. Engaging though they may be, they present a sanitized, even romantici-
cized view of the grit and hardship Masoff tries to impart through her prose. The
immaculately garbed children crammed belowdecks appear more sulky than terri-
fied or physically distressed; a dead Patriot sprawls on the ground in histrionic,
bloodless glory; a suspected witch makes her trial on a dunking stool look as enticing as a theme-park water ride. Each “chapter” of America’s story is shoehorned into a double spread and a lot is lost in the shuffle—Loyalists, for example, are barely mentioned; Indian alliances before the Revolution are discussed, but overlooked during the War itself. Despite these shortcomings, though, the Chronicle series’ entertaining tone and format carry the day and the visceral appeal should kindle some genuine curiosity about days past. EB

MAYER, MARIANNA  
The Twelve Apostles: Their Lives and Acts.  
Fogelman, 2000 32p illus. with photographs  
R Gr. 3-6

As she did in Young Jesus of Nazareth (BCCB 11/99), Mayer again draws from Scripture, legend, and non-canonical texts, this time to reconstruct brief vitae of Jesus’ closest followers. Each disciple’s entry comments on his calling, his relationship (through region or kinship) with the other apostles, his activities during Jesus’ lifetime and ministry following his death, and cults subsequently established in his honor. (Report writers will also be happy to note that standard feast day, symbols, and patronage information is included.) The material is handsomely presented, with line-bordered full-page portrait to the right of the text, and a small inset at the upper left of the text. Although Mayer includes selections from centuries of sacred artwork, she does not specify the year of each painting in her list of illustrations—an omission which may lead younger viewers to lump all the pictures together as generically “classical.” Likewise, readers may be somewhat confused that an apostle’s symbol indicated in the text is not consistently shown in his portrait (Andrew’s X cross is shown twice with a horizontal crossbar; Simon holds a saw blade rather than a book; Thomas’s T-square is nowhere to be found). Still, Mayer’s careful notes and respectful acknowledgment of differing viewpoints make this title a strong choice for religious collections. EB

MCALLISTER, MARGARET  
Hold My Hand and Run.  
Dutton, 2000 150p  
R Gr. 5-8

Kazy has tolerated the cruelty of her Aunt Latimer for long enough. After seeing the profound effects of the abuse on her younger half-sister, Beth, Kazy decides that they must run away. As the wealthy daughters of the well-known canon of Cutherham cathedral, they find it difficult to conceal their flight; their fine clothing contrasts starkly with that of the peasants among whom they travel, and, in England in the 1600s, two young girls traveling alone are an unusual sight. Their father, who has been too absorbed in his clerical duties to notice Aunt Latimer’s abuses, sends search parties after them and offers a reward for their return. Fearing her aunt’s retribution, Kazy leads Beth to one refuge after another, fleeing repeated betrayals by would-be protectors. Eventually their remorseful father finds the girls and brings them home, where Aunt Latimer now lives as an invalid, debilitated by a recent stroke. Kazy’s devotion to her younger sister is convincingly portrayed, and readers will be delighted to see Kazy’s tireless efforts rewarded by the reemergence of Beth’s spirit. Although the themes and characters display modern sensibilities installed against a historical backdrop, young readers will be swept along by the thrills and spills of this survival adventure story. KM

Miami (a nickname coming from "Mike Andy") can hardly contain his excitement about the end of the school year and beginning of summer, when he and his best friend, String, will depart the heat of Missouri for camp in Wisconsin. Before he gets there, however, he must work with his third-grade class president and personal enemy, Destinee Tate, in order to procure a goodbye gift for their teacher. When an injury lays Destinee up, Miami goes present-shopping on his own; determined to trounce Destinee and her jeering female cohort at the gift thing, he's thrilled to find the perfect present—and devastated when he loses it in the mall, leaving him with only his own purchased treat, a historic coin, as the item for his teacher. The plot and moral here get a bit complicated, with String's point about the problem with Miami's gift (his motivation in giving it) somewhat abstruse; the time-clock subheadings chop things up without adding any particular information, and the use of colloquial transliteration ("The girls aine never forgot it") in Miami's narration as well as his dialogue may reassure some young readers but may also confuse others. The strong point here is the McKissacks' easy and unforced depiction of the kids: Miami has an energetic voice and a believably individual turn of phrase, and his thorny relationship with classmate Destinee (and with his older sister) is completely credible. The multicultural classroom is also effectively woven into the story (Miami and String are African-American, Destinee is white), with the clear and authentic third-grade fact that the gender split is the significant division in class (which String, at least, has managed to overcome). Chesworth's black-and-white illustrations are a refreshing change from much early-reader art; his exuberant lines radiate character, and the caricaturish edge to the draftsmanship points up the story's humor. Despite the plot problems, this is a highly likeable early read also imbued with readaloud possibilities. DS


Jason and his two siblings discover a strange egg, out of which a baby dragon emerges. The children try to keep the dragon secret from their parents and are amazed when both parents are as enchanted with the new family pet as the children are. Drag, as she is named by youngest sibling Rose, soon outgrows the family living room. Jason's father has long had a dream of starting a business as a kite builder, and he uses this dream as an excuse to the neighbors for expanding the family's garage, which will be Drag's new home. The kite business also offers a cover for exercising Drag, who flies alongside Jason's father's new kites. Eventually, Drag outgrows her domesticity and finds a home in an island cave, but the scales on Drag's old shed skins from her many growth spurts have all turned to gold, allowing the family to buy the island (which they name "Dragonfly") and live there happily ever after. Jason's tensions with his older and younger siblings are believably portrayed, although his voice is occasionally lost in the densely plotted writing and the tone here is strangely matter-of-fact. There's a wide appeal in this old-fashioned Disney-esque family adventure, however, and it will captivate readers and leave them wishing for a dragon hatchling of their own. KM
Keath is uncomfortable at his school, where he stands out for being one of the only white kids and ends up the object of much bullying, especially from the angular and frightening Toothpick. His best friend, Lynda (whom Toothpick sneers at as “Zebra” for being biracial), provides him with another world after school, when she joins her dog-walker father in a world of canines that thrills dog-loving Keath (his neatnik dad is allergic to dogs). Lynda’s own pooch is the aptly named Leftovers, a beagle bouncing through life on three legs and sporting a prosthetic ear, and she’s determined, with Keath’s help, to exhibit him in a special dog show. This is an amiable and slightly offbeat middle-grades story. The plot strands are tied together with more force than necessary (and the third plot line about Keath’s adjusting to his post-stroke grandmother doesn’t tie in well at all), but there’s a freshness to much of the approach (the school situation is an unusual one), to the characters (Keath’s model-plane building granny is a solid literary citizen), and to the casual writing that gives proceedings a particular zip. The fistfight that leads to Keath’s accidental cold-cocking of Toothpick is a trifle convenient but much more believable a resolution to the bullying problem than the pacifist adult approach Keath’s father encourages. This is a neat, humorous, and enjoyable account of one boy’s making his place in the dangerous middle-grade world. DS

Minor begins his tribute to jack-o’-lanterns with a visit to a pumpkin patch (“October is here. It’s time to pick a pumpkin!”), then describes a variety of shapes and personas the orange shells can assume (“Some are big. Some are small.... Some pumpkin heads pretend to be cowboys”) as they perform their seasonal duties (“Some peek from windows. And some go for a hayride. . . . And some will scare crows”). Oranges, browns, greens, and yellows dominate the compositions in the full-page paintings, contrasting with smooth cream pages featuring spare large-print text. While Minor’s artwork offers a stirring variety of pumpkin possibilities, the pumpkin-painted hot-air balloon stretches the point, and the text is formless and unshaped, jumping between jack-o’-lantern incarnations and duties in a randomly assembled gallery. Nonetheless, children may be drawn to and possibly inspired by the variety of pumpkin shapes and faces. EAB

T. J., a Siberian tiger born at the Denver Zoo, lost his mother at only ten weeks old, and although the zoo staff struggled to nurture the cub, T. J.’s food rejection and subsequent weight loss seemed to foretell his own early death. Nagda follows his decline and eventual recovery and progress through photo-illustrated text and accompanying graphs on facing pages. Picture, pie, bar, and line graphs present
data ranging from world tiger populations to weight comparisons between T. J. and his father, and Nagda interprets each graph regarding both its design and its content. Although math is the ostensible focus, T. J.'s plight is so compelling that readers will probably wish that the text were more comprehensive. Why didn't the staff realize T. J.'s mother had cancer? What were the shots the zoo veterinarian gave T. J.? How was the human-raised cub reintroduced to the company of other tigers? Still, Nadga has paved an inviting path to the skill of graph interpretation, and T. J.'s story will beckon even the math-reluctant to follow. EB

NOLEN, JERDINE  Big Jabe; illus. by Kadir Nelson. Lothrop, 2000 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13663-X $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13662-1 $15.95  R 6-9 yrs

Addy, enslaved on the Plenty Plantation in the pre-Emancipation South, is sitting by the river trying to catch some fish for Mr. Plenty; she doesn't catch any fish, but she does snag a basket floating down the river. In the basket is the boy Jabe, about five or six years old, who, to thank her for fishing him out of the river, gives her a sweet pear that Addy says "must be the fruit of heaven." Jabe plants the seeds ("They want to grow") and a pear tree flourishes on the riverbank. In the space of a few months Jabe "was a full-grown man and had the strength of fifty." Big Jabe (as he becomes known) lightens the load of the plantation slaves, so much so that he brings down the wrath of overseer Sorenson, who, forbidden to harm Jabe, takes his anger out on others. Those "others" disappear, and Addy realizes that Jabe has helped them to freedom. Tall-tale-hero Jabe is informed by echoes of traditional folk heroes like High John the Conqueror, John Henry, and old Toby from the African-American folktale "The People Could Fly." Nelson's watercolor and gouache illustrations evoke a sense of bucolic beauty on the one hand and tall-tale merriment on the other (a pastoral picture of Addy fishing quietly by the side of the river contrasts humorously with the following picture of Jabe surrounded by fish flying through the air). Characters' faces and bodies have expression and weight, the figures set against dramatically shadowed interior scenes of the slave quarters and smokehouse jail and light-filled panoramas of sky and field. The drafting is reminiscent of Trina Schart Hyman but more robust than delicate, the colors muted and suited to the tone of the tale. The final illustration of Big Jabe walking through the woods, towering over the trees, is a fitting image of this new hero. JMD

NOVAK, MATT  Jazzbo and Googy; written and illus. by Matt Novak. Hyperion, 2000 [26p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0388-6 $14.99  Reviewed from galleys  R 4-6 yrs

Jazzbo's best friend is his stuffed animal, Big Bear. His schoolmates have different ideas: "Weeza is my best buddy," said Skitter. "And Skitter is my best buddy," said Weeza. "I don't have a best buddy," said Googy. Astute listeners will guess immediately that Googy and Jazzbo are destined to be friends, and so it goes, but it's how it goes that's so much fun. The well-intentioned but clumsy Googy makes a mess every time he tries to help out, so much so that Weeza and Skitter refuse to play with him. Good-natured Jazzbo steps in, and he immediately falls victim to
googiness. When Googy drops Big Bear in the mud, Jazzbo despairs, but Googy (who has been paying attention while being scrubbed clean after each disaster) handles the crisis beautifully: "I know all about getting clean," he said. 'The water must be warm, not hot. Not too much soap.'" A jolly triumvirate, Googy, Jazzbo, and Big Bear "made each other happy, and that is what best buddies do best." Novak’s bubbly illustrations depict goofily anthropomorphized animals in a baby-mobile kind of world, complete with pastel colors and clean mud. JMD


Not many primary schoolers realize that dirigibles, now regarded as novelties, were once serious contenders for passenger air travel until the Hindenburg’s demise at Lakehurst, New Jersey decisively squelched public trust in the technology. O’Brien offers here a brief history of dirigibles, a cursory description of the Hindenburg’s construction, and an account of the infamous explosion and its aftermath. The text is peppered with, if not outright glitches, at least annoyances. In spite of a century’s worth of progress in hot-air ballooning, O’Brien oddly labels Count Zeppelin’s plan to encase a row of balloons inside a rigid structure a “curious idea.” He notes that early dirigibles were prone to myriad accidents but never comments on the reasons for their failures. A spread that illustrates the construction phases of the Hindenburg fails to show when and how the gas cells, passenger compartments, and gondola were built. Moreover, the dramatic but uncaptioned spread of the swastika-emblazoned Hindenburg cruising over land does not indicate whether the site is Rio de Janeiro or Lakehurst, New Jersey, both of which are mentioned in the accompanying text. Still, the description of the Hindenburg’s final journey and fiery watercolor spreads of the blaze and fleeing passengers will rivet the audience and perhaps spur interest toward Lynn Curlee’s more complete coverage of dirigibles in Ships of the Air (BCCB 10/96). EB


Mr. and Mrs. Noah own a pet store in a big city. Their pet shop is built like a great ark, with seven levels filled with all sorts of animals (“It filled two whole blocks of the city they lived in and, instead of rocking on the deep blue sea, it sat in the middle of a wide, green park. It had tall sails made of white glass. Birds nested high in the masts, and sang and swooped back and forth and up and down inside the sails”). They have everything they want in life except grandchildren. Sophie is a seven-year-old girl who lives in an apartment building across the park with her parents and baby twin brothers. She wants a pet, and grandparents. The Noahs and Sophie inevitably meet, and, while Sophie doesn’t get to have an at-home pet, she gets the run of the ark and the love of the benevolent owners. This uncomplicated story of friendship and generosity gains spice from the inclusion of exotic animals, humor, and the underlying belief that anything is possible. Orr’s streamlined text is given added richness by Millard’s pen and ink illustrations. The characters have an Oxenbury-like air in the larger illustrations, while the smaller images are enhanced with Ruth Krauss-like perspectives. Beginning readers will appreciate the brief chapters as well as the echoes of that old familiar story of Noah. JMD
PAULSEN, GARY  The White Fox Chronicles: Escape; Return; Breakout. Delacorte, 2000  281p
ISBN 0-385-32254-2  $8.95  Ad  Gr. 6-9

In three novelettes (Escape, Return, and Breakout) combined under one cover, Cody Pierce is fourteen and the sterling example of successful indoctrination under the new regime that has conquered the United States in 2056. (The regime stockpiled chemical and nuclear weapons while the rest of the world was disarming, and, when nobody was looking, they took out Washington, D.C., plunged the nation into chaos, and conquered.) In the first book (Escape), Cody is determined to gain his freedom and gain it he does, taking with him a captured major who knows the way to the rebel base housing all that remains of the once mighty U.S. Army. In Return, Cody falls in with a band of rebels, learns about weapons and hand to hand combat (he already knows how to pick locks and open combinations), meets a girl, and plans a return to the camp to release still languishing prisoners. Breakout is the concluding novelette, in which Cody and friends destroy the prison camp and free the prisoners. Characterization is strictly POW-movie stock, so much so that the depiction of the enemy has Nazi overtones. The politics are jingoistic, the comic-book violence is relentless, and the resolution is explosive and highly unlikely. This title lacks the sophistication and depth of John Marsden's Tomorrow, When the War Began (BCCB 4/95) and its sequels, but it is fast and flashy, and it boasts a manga-style cover illustration that will make it appealing to a lot of reluctant and other readers. JMD

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-98915-3  $17.99  R  Gr. 5-8

Keladry of Mindelan (aka Kel), heroine of Pierce's first book in this series (Protector of the Small: First Test (BCCB 7/99), begins another year of training to be a knight at the royal school. Her circle of friends is small but solid, as is her circle of enemies: classmate Joren is still seeking to undermine Keladry, only now his methods are more subtle and even more dangerous. Kel acquires a dog, a maidservant, and a shadow in young Owen, a new student with a bad case of hero(ine) worship. When her maid and friend Lalasa is kidnapped on the day of the final exams, Kel has to choose between completing her training as page and saving her friend. Her choice is further complicated by demands of secrecy from the kidnappers and her own paralyzing fear of heights: the kidnappers are holding their prize at the top of Balor's Needle, the highest point on the palace grounds. Pierce has proven herself a master of plot and pace in her previous novels, and this title is no exception. The momentum is steady throughout, with a few satisfying, pulse-pounding moments. Keladry is steadfast in her appreciation of being female (when the training master says "Gods, Mindelan.... I would you had been born a boy," she thinks to herself, "But I like being a girl") as well as in her determination to succeed while being true to the knight's chivalric code. Characterizations are concise and effective; Keladry and friends are a likable bunch with realistic concerns about their futures, and even peripheral characters are given strong identifying traits. Kel's tenacity is not always a comfortable virtue, but, even so, readers may empathize with a heroine who exhibits as much integrity as courage. JMD

The Werewolf Club gets together to run on all fours and howl at the moon under the supervision of their teacher, Mr. Talbot, who wears his coat, hat, scarf, and sunglasses at all times to prevent others from discovering that he is stuck mid-transformation, half-wolf and half-man. The club joins together to help Mr. Talbot, whose evil half-brother owns a magic pretzel that will complete their teacher’s transformation. Despite the buildup, the plot devolves into absurdity; Mr. Talbot’s half-brother simply hands over the pretzel when his mommy tells him to and, in the end, the magic pretzel fails to transform Mr. Talbot, although he clearly feels transformed and stops covering his face and hands. Rounded cartoon figures in illustrations and spot art add appeal, as do short lists of statistics about each of the members of the Werewolf Club, which are incorporated into depictions of each member’s ID card. Many first chapter books focus on stories of school and friends, and transitional readers who are looking for something different may be amused by this quirky story. KM

POUPENEY, MOLLIE  *Her Father’s Daughter.* Delacorte, 2000 250p  ISBN 0-385-32760-9 $15.95  Ad  Gr. 6-10

Maggie’s childhood and early adolescence in Oregon timber country is dominated by the presence and absence of her alcoholic father. Although she comprehends the havoc his swings among sobriety, drunken abuse, and boozy affection wreak on a family already struggling with the economic burdens of the Depression, she cannot quite release him from her heart, even as it becomes increasingly clear he will never be the father she needs. Poupeney follows Maggie’s trials over several years and, employing devices reminiscent of Coman’s *What Jamie Saw* (BCCB 12/95), explores family dysfunction through a child’s eyes. This is less successful (and now less novel) than Coman’s work, however; shifts between first and third person voice seem arbitrary, and the passage of events over an extended period of time diffuses the cinematic immediacy which gives *Jamie* its power, producing in its stead a simple accretion of miseries. Still, there’s a dark moodiness to Maggie’s tale that many will find enticing, and YAs who delight in peeking at the skeletons in literary closets will gladly put their eyes to the keyhole. EB


Would-be racers are going to leap into the driver’s seat of this automotive fantasy. The very happy kid narrator is at the big race with his grownup crew, getting ready to compete: “I have a race car. I drive it all the time.” Viewers follow the young driver through each stage of the race, from the fall of the starter’s flag to the final lap. Our hero wins, of course, making this a fully satisfying little daydream or dream-inspiring bedtime spin. Rex gives the audience a perfect spot from which to appreciate the action: the perspectives are dead on, and the action-packed scenes include some driver’s-eye views. The comic-book primary colors and stylized graph-
ics of each composition make a strong visual impact. Women are conspicuous by their absence (there is one in the crowd scene around the winner) but hey, maybe that’s just a reflection of racetrack reality. Gender-inclusion problems aside, this will have a lot of kids begging for a ride. JMD

Reviewed from galleys

Nigel the chipmunk keeps a very neat house, in fact, “he lived for tending.” Neatnik Nigel therefore doesn’t understand how his new hummingbird friend, Dipper, can be such an unconcerned housekeeper. Disparate points of view don’t keep the two from conversing like a couple of old ladies in lavender over tea, however, and the general theme of the conversation is who can outdo the other in being the most polite. Nigel, Dipper, Mudpuppy the lizard, Claudius the garter snake, Copper the butterfly, and Little Owl are the very best of friends, tolerant of one another’s faults and concerned about one another’s needs. This easy fiction title is as coy and precious as it sounds, and there is little action and even less momentum. The watercolors feature bright-eyed little beasties set in predominantly pink and verdant landscapes detailed along the lines of the Brambly Wood series, but with less interesting particulars. The text blocks for each of the four chapters are bordered with thematically appropriate bands of flowery garlands, quaint knickknacks, water lilies, and bursting strawberries. This is animal fantasy with pretensions to Grahame’s Wind in the Willows but without its strong story. JMD

SALKELD, AUDREY  Mystery on Everest: A Photobiography of George Mallory. See review under Coburn, p. 12.


The protagonist of this domestic voyage is about six or seven years old, and he has a fuzzy purple-and-green bathrobe, penguin slippers, and a skull-and-crossbones on his hat: “He was Captain Bob, and he was the bravest and best captain that ever sailed the Soapy Seas.” Captain Bob maneuvers among a rubber duck, a bath-diving dinosaur, and “a ruby-ringed Sea Hand” (Mom washing ears and hair) in “the warm waters of Bath Bay.” Schotter’s descriptive text is a bit choppy for reading aloud, but a quick read-through will assure smooth sailing. Cepeda’s tight compositions put boy and bathtub center stage, in thickly layered oil paintings lush with saturated shades of tropical orange, peacock blue, and electric green. Aerial, x-ray, and panoramic views of Captain Bob and his soapy environs bring the viewer into the bath for a vicarious voyage. Too bad this title isn’t waterproof, because it’s surely a pirate’s dream. JMD


This historical fiction is “based on a true story” that the author herself first en-
countered in Julius Lester’s *To Be a Slave*. The novel begins with the birth of blue-eyed Eliza, the child of a white slave owner and an eighteen-year-old slave he has designated a “breeder”; the narrator is Eliza’s twelve-year-old cousin, Abram. Because of the special care Eliza receives from Abram (who “crow[s] over Eliza like some bossy old rooster”), from her mother (who was allowed to keep her firstborn; subsequent children were sold away from her immediately after birth), and from the young Creole nanny at the big house who gives her food and trains her to be a nanny, Eliza is an exceptionally healthy child; because of her training, she is saved from field work. Eventually, she is freed by an abolitionist, who is persuaded to take her to New York as a nanny for his children. Schwartz’ exploration of “what helped Eliza change her fate” overtly demonstrates her sense that it was “not chance” but “grace”—along with the unrelenting unselfishness of others—that preserved this young woman from the worst deprivations and degradations of slavery. But Schwartz’ focus on the exceptional circumstances of a girl whose Caucasian features set her apart from other slaves in the novel (most of whom remain nameless, even those Abram “had slaved over cotton with”) undermines the novel’s usefulness as social history, while some stock characterization and the interpolation of explanation and commentary into narration and dialogue (“‘Master’s her father,’ Granny muttered. ‘Master Turner, owner of us all!’”) flatten its effectiveness as fiction. The portrait of a nurturing young man is effective, however, and his narration offers a different slant on this tale of a potentially tragic character. FK

SEABROOKE, BRENDA *The Haunting at Stratton Falls.* Dutton, 2000 151p ISBN 0-525-46389-5 $15.99 R Gr. 4-6

Abby's father has been missing in action for several months during World War II when Abby and her mother leave their Jacksonville, Florida home to stay with relatives in the north for the Christmas holidays. Although Abby had looked forward to meeting her relatives in Stratton Falls, her cousin Chad pelts her with snowballs (which she has never seen before) and excludes her from games with his friends. Chad's bravado melts when he and Abby encounter damp footprints in the hallway made by the ghost of a young girl wearing a wet red velvet dress. Although Chad retreats and denies what he saw, Abby is more curious than frightened, and she asks around until she hears the local legend of a girl who drowned at Christmastime while waiting for her father to return from the Civil War. In the dramatic climax, Abby falls into a frozen lake on Christmas Day wearing her own new red velvet dress, and she is miraculously saved by the ghostly hand of the girl who drowned many years ago. The dynamic between the cousins is believable as they slowly—sometimes too slowly—progress from enmity to grudging acceptance and finally to friendship. This is a classic spine-tingling ghost story, offering just enough drama and suspense for a creepy late-night read without being too scary. Readers will admire Abby’s fortitude and may even follow her investigative lead and uncover a few of their own local ghost stories. KM


The grandfather/grandson team depicted in these lilting watercolor illustrations apparently share a lot of likes (peanut butter, early rising) and dislikes (dress clothes and “funny looking food”). There’s a delightful twist to this story of their shared
activities, however: the first time through, the viewer is led to believe that the
grandson is narrating; the last line of the book reveals that it is Grandpa who has
been enthusiastically describing his love of “lucky pennies, hot chocolate, and
knock-knock jokes.” This revelation sends the reader back to the story to recons-
sider the text (so it’s Grandpa who has a “dipsy doodle double-curve fastball”) and
the evocative illustrations (Grandpa’s face offers clues that he’s the one who lost at
dominoes). The art cheats slightly by focusing largely on the child, but the cheer-
fully haphazard watercolors depict a clearly related pair of dot-eyed, button-nosed
figures. This is in fact a better story the second time through, when viewers have
come to their own terms with some awkwardness in the story, which pairs an
occasionally disjointed and slightly saccharine text about the sorts of things these
two birds of a feather like to do when they get together and detailed pictures of
what they do on a specific visit. The concept works, however, and the result is a
book for anyone who can relate to a character who enjoys construction sites and
hates to lose at dominoes. FK

SPINELLI, JERRY Stargirl. Knopf, 2000 [192p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-88637-0 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys

Eleventh-grader Leo is infatuated with Stargirl, a previously homeschooled new-
come to Mica High School. Stargirl attracts the attention of her classmates in less
than subtle ways: she carries her pet rat, Cinnamon, around in her knapsack, sings
“Happy Birthday” to lucky folks in the cafeteria, accompanying herself on the
ukulele, and decorates her desk with a lace tablecloth and fresh flowers. At first the
student body accepts Stargirl’s nonconformities, even approving her appointment
to the cheerleading squad, but when Stargirl’s enthusiasms extend to cheering the
opposing team, things begin to get ugly. The student body literally shuns Stargirl—
they will not look at, talk to, or acknowledge her in any way. Leo is so in love that
at first he doesn’t notice, but when the shunning extends to him, he makes a fatal
error: he tells Stargirl she needs to be more like everyone else. Out of love for Leo,
Stargirl gives conformity a whirl, but when popularity proves elusive, she reverts to
her own individual style, sadly releasing Leo, who prefers to conform to the norm.
The risks (and joys) of individuality and the dangers of groupthink are given a
promising context here; unfortunately, characterizations do little to reinforce the
theme. In particular, the characterization of Stargirl, the focus of the novel, is
forced and unconvincing. Leo’s inability to buck the tide of popular opinion gives
the novel a core of truth that is weakened by a determinedly upbeat conclusion.
Still, Leo is an appealing, credible narrator; this has the tone of a well-intentioned
semi-memoir, and as such may invite readers to consider their own ties to majority
rule. JMD

STAPLES, SUZANNE FISHER Shiva’s Fire. Foster/Farrar, 2000 276p
ISBN 0-374-36824-4 $17.00

The latest novel from the author of the Newbery Honor book Shabanu (BCCB
10/89) is a contemporary anti-Cinderella story about a young Indian woman who
finally chooses to follow her career and not her modernized prince. The novel
begins with the birth of its remarkable main character, an event that coincides
with a natural disaster that kills her father and destroys her village. Parvati is a
born dancer who “thumped [her mother’s] sides in an odd slow rhythm” even before her birth. Her extraordinary natural talent—and the social isolation that results from people’s fear of her inexplicable abilities (her memory extends to the day she was born; she dances on fire) and the “many small miracles” that surrounded her birth—lead her to accept the offer of dance training from a Guru who had “revived the ancient art of bharate natyam, a classical dance form.” She eventually becomes a devadasi, one to whom “dance is prayer as well as art.” Though the tone is sometimes oddly disaffected, this is compelling young adult fiction, full of family drama, intriguing cultural details, romance, and mysterious/mystical coincidences. The focus on a cultural tradition that may strike contemporary Indians as somewhat exotic gives the book an old-fashioned tone that conflicts with the modern setting (an author’s note and authoritative preface obliquely sets the story “some forty years” after India’s independence). However, the possibilities offered, accepted, rejected, and embodied by these characters will fire reader’s imaginations. A glossary is appended. FK


Elizabeti, of Elizabeti’s Doll fame, has returned, this time setting aside Eva, her rock (which she cared for like a baby in the previous book), to take care of her younger brother, Obedi. Despite her practice with Eva, Elizabeti finds that taking care of a squirming human baby is more challenging than taking care of a rock, as Obedi causes her to fail at one daily task after another. When Elizabeti turns her back on Obedi for a moment, he disappears; after a panicky interlude, she discovers him toddling along on his own two feet, having learned to walk. Obedi’s sudden mobility is a little convenient (this is clearly a kid who’d have plenty of pre-walking getaway power anyway), but Elizabeti’s frustrations in caring for her brother are engaging and credible. Watercolor illustrations feature warm earth tones, and, despite a few awkwardly drafted figures, the softness of the pictures lends a comfortable atmosphere to Elizabeti’s village home (which CIP information places in Tanzania). Senior siblings of children on the verge of toddlerhood may identify with this simple family story of an older sister helping her mother and finding it more difficult than expected. KM


Based on Vos’s own experiences in World War II, this novel provides a moving look at the emotional and psychological effects of the Holocaust on survivors. When the Nazi threat becomes imminent in Holland, Eva and her sister Lisa change their names and go into hiding with their parents. At first, the girls are delighted to be reunited with their two best friends and their friends’ parents who went into hiding some time before. Unfortunately, one hiding place after another becomes too dangerous, until Eva and Lisa are separated first from their friends and then from their parents. Vos’ prose speaks directly from the perspective of an imaginative child trapped in unbearably cramped physical and mental circumstances. As days, weeks, and months of isolation accumulate, the effects of the strain on both girls are movingly portrayed through occasional lapses of reason that border on
hallucinations. As they move from place to place, their protectors vary in kindness and enthusiasm for the task of hiding the sisters, until finally the girls are transported (via a staged ambulance ride) to the home of an old friend, a puppeteer, who protects the frightened girls and coaxes them back towards normal childhood (the book offers the optimistic if nonrepresentative conclusion that the girls’ family survived the war and that a reunion is forthcoming). The text is dense and the subject sober, but readers will be sustained by the suspenseful tension of the story. KM

WAHL, JAN  The Field Mouse and a Dinosaur Named Sue; illus. by Bob Doucet. Scholastic, 2000  32p ISBN 0-439-09984-6  $12.95  Ad  5-8 yrs

Field Mouse is dozing in his bone-burrow in the South Dakota hills when he is awakened by the sounds of people digging: archaeologists are excavating a fossilized dinosaur, including the bone in which Field Mouse lives. The rodent’s curiosity and an open crate are the means by which the Field Mouse gets transported to the Field Museum in Chicago. There he manages to survive until the dinosaur, “Sue,” the biggest Tyrannosaurus rex ever found, is put together and mounted, at which time F. M. finds “his bone! His very own bone!” Since this is “a fine place for a secret nest,” he settles in for a permanent stay. The compressed time-frame (excavation, transport, and mounting all happen in a seemingly brief span) is confusing, and the choppy non-cohesive text is more a promotion for a visit to the Field Museum than a fully realized story. Doucet’s illustrations are a combination of framed images and double-spread bleeds; while the South Dakota hills are bland and undistinguished, views of various Field Museum exhibits and workrooms are more successful at providing a sense of place. The human figures are poorly drafted, however, and Field Mouse is anthropomorphized rather than realistic, making him more mascot than protagonist. Still, young listeners with a penchant for the prehistoric may be intrigued by the little mouse and the great big dinosaur. JMD

WHATLEY, BRUCE  Captain Pajamas: Defender of the Universe; by Bruce Whatley and Rosie Smith; illus. by Bruce Whatley. HarperCollins, 2000  [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-026614-7  $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-026613-9  $15.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  5-8 yrs

Younger sibs who have envied their older sibs’ reading of Pilkey’s Captain Underpants can take some comfort from the arrival of a new superhero. Brian (aka Captain Pajamas, Defender of the Universe) is certain aliens are invading Earth (starting in his sister Jessie’s room) and only Captain Pajamas can save the day. The Defender of the Universe’s attempt to rescue his sister from the incoming extraterrestrials fails abysmally, mostly because there aren’t any aliens. A remarkably unimpressed Jessie finally gets an insistent Brian back to bed, only to discover a little green three-eyed alien in her bed in the final spread. Stylistically, Whatley’s illustrations are informed by everything from Marvel comics to Maurice Sendak to Roy Lichtenstein. Beginning readers as well as viewers will appreciate the uncluttered frames, the clean compositions, and the large typeface. Shadow, Brian’s canine sidekick, comes complete with a black costume mask that makes him look like Johnny Quest’s dog Bandit, albeit a tad more confused. A clever text works with the clever compositions to bring the story home at light speed. JMD
WHITE, RUTH  *Memories of Summer.* Farrar, 2000  [144p]
ISBN 0-374-34945-2  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7-10

Thirteen-year-old Lyric is in awe of her beautiful older sister, Summer, and they both dream of life beyond their small Southern town in the 1950s. They are therefore excited when their widowed father decides to leave coal mining behind and try his hand in the factories of Michigan, but the move to the North isn’t all they’d dreamed. Not only are they poorer there than they’d expected, the change sends already eccentric Summer into frightening and dangerous behaviors and delusions that indicate not just oddness but genuine mental illness. Though the writing sometimes tips into the sentimental, White is honest and empathetic in her depiction of Summer’s deterioration (it turns out that she in fact suffers from schizophrenia) and Lyric’s complex responses to it: Summer becomes a tremendous social and personal liability just as Lyric seeks to make a niche for herself in this new place (“I was thinking that night that it was getting harder and harder to love Summer, and to forgive her for her weirdness. When I discovered that thought in my head, I felt so guilty I went into the bedroom where she was supposed to be sleeping to check on her and give her a hug”). Lyric’s narration also subtly and believably demonstrates the change in the whole family wrought by Summer’s descent, with everyone both hypervigilant to Summer and blinded by custom to much of her disintegration. This makes an interesting contrast with Angela Johnson’s similarly themed *Humming Whispers* (BCCB 4/95) as well as a compelling exploration in its own right. DS

WILCOX, CHARLOTTE  *Mummies, Bones, & Body Parts.* Carolrhoda, 2000  [64p] illus. and with photographs
Library ed. ISBN 1-57505-428-0  $25.26
Paper ed. ISBN 1-57505-486-8  $7.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 4-8

In *Mummies & Their Mysteries* (BCCB 7/93), Wilcox examined natural and artificial mummification processes throughout various times and cultures; here she discusses the evidence that human remains can supply to criminologists, archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians. Not all explanations are equally clear or satisfying. While her chapter “How Old Are They?” uses Meenymbaddon Woman and the Lindow mummies to demonstrate the difficulty of accurately dating the bodies with even the most sophisticated scientific techniques, the following chapter blithely opens with, “After determining the age of human remains, scientists often next look to see how a person died.” In a chapter concerning coastal Chilean mummies, Wilcox observes, “Nearly all the Chinchorro mummies studied had serious infections on their legs. Scientists believe these infections could have been caused by constant contact with dead bodies” but then leaves this intriguing speculation unexplained. In the concluding chapter, however, Wilcox conducts a remarkably bold, detailed examination of the controversies surrounding remains preservation. Acknowledging that some of the photos included may shock and, in fact, depict unethical treatment of bodies, she introduces readers to attitudes toward the dead ranging from the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act to carnival sideshow displays, from grave robbers’ wanton destruction to an artist’s sculpting of remains through plastination. While Reinhard’s *Discovering the Inca Ice Maiden* (BCCB 5/98) and Jackson’s *The Bone Detectives* (4/96) discuss with greater
depth and clarity how to "read" remains, Wilcox's insightful treatment of the ethical dimension of this topic argues powerfully for including this title in a collection. Glossary and index are appended. EB

Paper ed. ISBN 0-8050-6403-6  $15.00  R*  Gr. 6-12
See this month's Big Picture, p. 3, for review.

WONG, JANET S.  *This Next New Year*; illus. by Yangsook Choi. Foster/Farrar, 2000 32p
ISBN 0-374-35503-7  $16.00  R 5-9 yrs

A young boy catalogs his preparations for Chinese New Year, a holiday that his family enthusiastically celebrates even though, as he explains, he is "half Korean." While his friend Glenn (French and German) marks the day with Thai food, and Evelyn (Hopi and Mexican) looks forward to "red envelopes stuffed with money from her neighbor who came from Singapore," the narrator focuses on all the rituals that will ensure good fortune in the coming year. He observes that his palms are itching (a sure sign that money's coming), helps his mother scrub the house "rough and raw so it can soak up good luck like an empty sponge," and even cleans the dirt out "from the corners of my big toenails so the luck can squeeze itself in here." Unfortunately, Choi's paintings aren't quite up to the standard set by the ebullient text; figures are stiff and doll-like, and her overuse of shortened foreground makes the scenes repetitively flat. Nonetheless, the narrator's joyous obsessions offer a delightful contrast to more staid primary-grade explanations of Chinese New Year, and listeners will chuckle at his ambitious list of good intentions that, like their own, is unlikely to last until the next new moon. EB

ISBN 0-399-23182-X  $19.99  R  Gr. 5-9

Eight original short stories based on the Robin Hood legend comprise this varied collection. Yolen's offering, "Our Lady of the Greenwood," tells of the birth of Robin, the sacrifice of his mother, and his naming by the queen of faerie herself. Maxine Trottier's "Marian" meets a young Robin lost in the wood, and the seeds of an adventurous future are sown; Nancy Springer's hero is the vengeful Rafe, member of Robin's band, who finds peace in "Know Your True Enemy." Each story is introduced with a verse from a traditional ballad about Robin Hood, and each has its own unique take, whether modern or traditional, on the hero. Dennis Nolan's brooding full-page color paintings have a forest-primeval tone that suits the shadowy vales of Sherwood. Not only will this be fun for Robin Hood fans, but those looking for a jumping off point for creative writing assignments can start here. JMD

Professional storyteller Czarnota has put together an accessible collection of tales about cultural heroes in this short volume. William Tell, Robert Bruce, Robin Hood, Joan of Arc, King Arthur, Eleanor of Aquitane, Boudicca, and Beowulf, among others, all have their shining moments in Czarnota's retellings. The stories themselves "are just skeletons that give the main ideas," and children are encouraged to flesh out the tales in order "to make them their own." Each tale includes "Tips for Telling" and a "Story History" that places the tale in its historical and cultural context. Storytelling pointers, a glossary, and source notes are appended. JMD


Holt and Mooney (Ready-to-Tell Tales) return with a new compendium of tales collected from a wide range of modern tellers. Each storyteller introduces his or her own story, opening with a recommended age for the intended audience and closing with advice for the novice teller ("A Word from the Wise"). Tellers, tales, and cultures represented include J. J. Reneaux ("Jean Sot and the Bull's Milk," Cajun); Taffy Thomas ("The Farmer's Fun-Loving Daughter," English); Susan Klein ("Little Frog and Centipede," Tanzanian); Len Cabral ("How Rabbit Lost Its Tail," Haitian); Dovie Thomason ("Dog Tails," Iroquois); Antonio Sacre ("The Barking Mouse," Cuban); and James "Sparky" Rucker ("Against the Law," African-American). This eclectic bunch of folktales, fables, urban legends, original stories, and literary adaptations are succinct and pointed, making them easy to learn and remember. An "Index of Stories by Cultural Source" and an "Index of Stories by Recommended Audience" are appended; the acknowledgments give written sources when available. JMD


Livo (author of *Storytelling: Process and Practice*) has compiled a collection of traditional folktales related to the perennially popular theme of food and eating. The forty-five stories come from a wide variety of countries and cultures, and they are divided into thematic units: Legends and Beliefs, Fables and Rhymes, Noodleheads, Variations on a Theme (four variants of "The Gingerbread Boy"), Herbs, Seasonings, and Spices, and Magic and Trickery. Each section ends with "Food for Thought," a suggested list of activities to extend and expand the story
experience. The stories themselves are a bit literary in tone, and would need some adaptation for oral storytelling. Some tales have specific source notes while others do not, but Livo does include an annotated bibliography for readers seeking additional information. JMD


McDonald presents twenty folktales from around the world arranged in ethnopoetic transcription, that is, the stories are “set on the page in a format designed to evoke the spoken telling.” (Beginning tellers will especially appreciate this type of arrangement, which MacDonald has used before with great success, as it automatically creates natural pauses when reading or telling aloud.) The origins of these participatory pieces range from China (“The Terrible Nung Guama”) to Panama (“El Conejito”), from Italy (“Buchettino”) to Benin (“The Hare Who Married a Princess”). Tips for adding chanting, singing, dancing, and drumming to told tales, as well as sections on call-and-response stories, tandem tales, story theatre, and more, are included. While this practical title is an excellent resource for beginners, the annotated bibliographies, suggestions for additional stories, tips for telling, and detailed source notes makes it a valuable tool for more experienced tellers as well. JMD


Vigil prefaces this hefty volume with an explanation of his enthusiasm for and research into traditional Hispanic tales. In addition to the more than forty tales contained herein (all in English, fourteen also in Spanish), Vigil includes in his introduction a brief history of Mexico, information about Mexican folk arts, a cogent explanation of the types of tales selected, and a pronunciation guide to Aztec and Mayan names. Vigil divides his tales into three categories: Essential Legends, Creation Stories from Indigenous Mexico, and Stories from Spanish Colonial Mexico. Each category includes historical and cultural background in order to provide context for the tales. An opening insert of color plates includes images of folk art and costumes, and a glossary of Spanish words, a list of suggested readings, and an index are appended. This will make a fine companion to Patricia Aldana’s *Jade and Iron: Latin American Tales from Two Cultures* (BCCB 1/97). JMD


Yolen’s collection of essays advocating the use and preservation of traditional folk and fairy tales has been reissued in this expanded volume. Six essays addressing the definition of story, the morality of fairy and folk tales, and the need for same in the lives of children and adults, have been added to the ten essays contained in the 1981 edition. The original edition, out of print for five years, was a standard resource for the educators, storytellers, and librarians who are certain to welcome the book’s return in this refurbished form. JMD
Subject and Use Index

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

ADVENTURE STORIES: Coburn; Hughes; Pierce; Salkeld
Africa–stories: Stuve-Bodeen
African Americans: Lasky; Lazo
African Americans–fiction: McKissack
African Americans–stories: Nolen
AIDS: Winick
Alcoholism–fiction: Honey; Poupeney
Aliens–stories: Whatley
ALPHABET BOOKS: Azarian
American Indians–fiction: Bruchac
Animals–fiction: Jacques; Orr; Rylant
Archaeology: Wilcox
Arithmetic: Harris
Aunts–fiction: Bauer; McAllister
Autism–fiction: Ellis
Aviation: O'Brien
Aviation–fiction: Hughes
Babies–stories: Fearnley
Baths–stories: Schotter
BEDTIME STORIES: Eilenberg; Hest
BIOGRAPHIES: Coburn; dePaola; Krull; Lasky; Lazo; Mayer; Salkeld; Winick
Birds–stories: Kaminsky
Birthdays–stories: Helldorfer
Brothers–fiction: Butler; Pinkwater
Brothers and sisters–fiction: McLerran
Brothers and sisters–stories: Stuve-Bodeen; Whatley
Bullies–fiction: McNamee
Camping–fiction: Honey
Cars–stories: Rex

Cats–fiction: Alexander
Child abuse–fiction: McAllister
CONCEPT BOOKS: McAllister
Cowboys–stories: Eilenberg
Cowgirls–stories: Lowell
Crime and criminals–fiction: Butler; Clements; DeFelice; Gilbert; Grove
Dancers and dancing–fiction: Staples
Dancers and dancing–stories: Hest
Death and dying: Winick
Death and dying–fiction: Brady
Depression, the–fiction: Poupeney
Dinosaurs: Lambert
Dinosaurs–fiction: Hoban
Dinosaurs–stories: Wahl
Disabilities–fiction: Ellis; Gantos
Disasters: O'Brien
Dogs–fiction: Hurwitz; McNamee
Dragons–fiction: McLerran
Ethics and values: Garden; Grove; Levine; Staples; Wilcox
Explorers and exploring: Coburn; Hirschfelder; Salkeld
Families–fiction: Grove
FANTASY: Amato; Jacques; McLerran; Pinkwater
Farms–stories: Cronin
Fathers and daughters–fiction: McAllister; Poupeney
Fathers and sons–fiction: Clements; Gantos; Hughes; McNamee
Fathers and sons–stories: Eilenberg
FOLKTALES AND FAIRYTALES: Alexander; Guiberson; Lowell; Nolen; Yolen
Food and eating—fiction: Amato; Bauer
Friendship—fiction: DeFelice; Hoffman; Honey; Kasza; McKissack; McNamee; Orr; Rylant; Spinelli
Friendship—stories: Henkes; Kaminsky; Novak
FUNNY STORIES: Cronin; Pinkwater
Gardens and gardening: Azarian
Ghosts: Guiberson
Ghosts—fiction: Butler; Seabrooke
Grandfathers—stories: Shields
Halloween—stories: Cazet; Minor
Health: Keller; Winick
HISTORICAL FICTION:
Arrington; Brady; Helldorfer; McAllister; Poupeney; Schwartz; Seabrooke; Staples; Vos; White
History, U.S.: Ammon; Goodman; Greenwood; Hirschfelder; Masoff
History, world: Krull; Levine; O’Brien
Holidays—stories: Wong
Holocaust, the: Levine
Holocaust, the—fiction: Vos
Homelessness—fiction: Ellis
Homosexuality—fiction: Garden
India—fiction: Staples
Journals—fiction: Banks
Knights and chivalry—fiction: Pierce
Maps and map-making: Leedy
Mathematics: Nagda
Mental illness—fiction: Arrington; White
Mice—stories: Wahl
Militias—fiction: Gilbert
Mothers and daughters—fiction:
Arrington; Banks; Ellis; Garden; Grove
Mothers and sons—fiction: Hurwitz
Museums—stories: Wahl
Myths, classical: Balit
Nature study: Collard
Paleontology: Lambert
Parties—stories: Hest
Pets—fiction: Hurwitz; Orr
Photography: Hirschfelder
Pirates—fiction: Hughes
Pirates—stories: Schotter
Politics—fiction: Bauer
Pumpkins—stories: Minor
Racing—stories: Rex
Reading aloud: Alexander
Reading, easy: dePaola; Hoffman; Kasza; McKissack; Orr; Pinkwater; Rylant
Reading, reluctant: Duncan; Lambert; Winick
Religious instruction: Mayer
Saints: Mayer
School—fiction: Amato; Clements; Garden; McNamee; Pinkwater; Spinelli
School—stories: Cazet; Henkes; Novak
SHORT STORIES: Duncan; Yolen
Sisters—fiction: Arrington; Brady; McAllister; White
Slavery—fiction: Schwartz
Slavery—stories: Nolen
Social studies: Ammon; Goodman; Greenwood; Masoff
Storytelling: Alexander; Balit; Nolen
Storytime: Guthrie; Minor; Novak
Summer—fiction: Hoffman
Teeth: Keller
Terrorists—fiction: Hughes
Tigers: Nagda
Toys—stories: Egielski
Transportation: Ammon
Trucks: Imershein
Uncles—stories: Egielski
Vampires—fiction: Atwater-Rhodes
Voyages and travel—fiction: Bauer
Voyages and travel—stories:
Helldorfer; Schotter; Wahl
Waitresses—fiction: Bauer
War—fiction: Paulsen
Werewolves—fiction: Pinkwater
West, the—stories: Helldorfer; Lowell
Women’s studies: Krull; Lasky; Lazo
World cultures: Wilcox; Wong
World War II: Levine
World War II—fiction: Brady; Vos
Worms—fiction: Amato
Writers and writing: Lazo
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## Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>ISBN 13</th>
<th>ISBN 10</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<td>All ages</td>
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<td>A Vocabulary Disaster</td>
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<td>There's a Zoo in Room 22</td>
<td>Judy Sierra</td>
<td>Ages 3-7</td>
<td>0-15-202035-0</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td>August</td>
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<td>The Pig in the Spigot</td>
<td>Richard Wilbur</td>
<td>All ages</td>
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<td>October</td>
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<td>Illustrated by J.otto Seibold</td>
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## Science

<table>
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<td>Thomas Locker</td>
<td>All ages</td>
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<td>The Sun Is My Favorite Star</td>
<td>Frank Asch</td>
<td>Ages 3-7</td>
<td>0-15-202127-2</td>
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## Social Studies

<table>
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<td>Joseph Bruchac</td>
<td>Ages 6-9</td>
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<td>The Trip Back Home</td>
<td>Janet S. Wong</td>
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<td>Let It Shine Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters</td>
<td>Andrea Davis Pinkney</td>
<td>All ages</td>
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<td>Illustrated by Stephen Alcorn</td>
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## Biography

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<td>Lives of Extraordinary Women Rulers, Rebels (and What the Neighbors Thought)</td>
<td>Kathleen Krull</td>
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